



**BUILDING CAPACITY FOR YEAR 9 REFORM:
LEARNING FROM THE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES**

A thesis submitted by
Rebecca Seward-Linger B.Ed. (hons), Dip. Lang

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Abstract

In Australia, Year 9 is generally the third year of secondary school catering for students aged 14-15 years. Year 9 has been identified in the literature as a problematic period with high levels of student disengagement, absenteeism and teacher stress. In order to improve Year 9 education, some Australian schools have instigated separate campus programmes dedicated solely to Year 9. This instrumental case study centred on a Tasmanian independent school that engaged in such reform. Whilst research regarding the middle years of schooling (Years 5-9) has grown significantly in Australia over recent decades, studies on middle years' reform have often neglected teachers' voices. This study examined the process of Year 9 reform with a specific emphasis on the teachers' perspectives, recognising that teachers are the key agents in enacting school change.

The study was underpinned by constructivist inquiry and collected qualitative data from multiple sources, using the tools of: full participant observations, semi-structured interviews, school document analysis and Email dialogues. The researcher gained full access and participation in the Year 9 reform as a teacher employed at the case school.

From the teachers' perspectives, this study uncovered the case school's rationale and vision for Year 9 reform; eight key roles teachers play in reform; and factors that contribute to capacity building for successful change. The findings of this study resulted in two significant recommendations for reform in the middle years. Firstly, in order for reform to be holistic and successful, schools need to adopt a strategic, research-guided approach that involves teachers at every stage. Secondly, schools need to take a three-fold approach to capacity building so that all facets of capacity – personal, interpersonal and organisational – are duly developed for successful change.

This study provided the first Tasmanian perspective on the rationale and vision for Year 9 reform. Importantly, it identified eight key roles that teachers play

during reform and gave recommendations on how these roles could be enhanced for greater teacher leadership. The findings of this study are significant for future middle years' reform; the generation of theory on the roles of teachers in reform; and rationale and vision for Year 9 reform in Australia.

Certification of Thesis

This thesis is entirely the work of Rebecca Seward-Linger except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at USQ.

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List of Abbreviations

AMLE	Association for Middle Level Education
ACER	Australian Council of Educational Research
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
CSABCYFIM	Committee on the Science of Adolescence Board on Children, Youth and Families Institute of Medicine
DEECDV	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Victoria
DET	Department of Education Tasmania
DETEV	Department of Education, Training and Employment Victoria
ICT	Information and Computer Technology
MYSA	Middle Years of Schooling Association
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NMSA	National Middle School Association
NSWDET	New South Wales Department of Education and Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLC	Professional Learning Community
QGDET	Queensland Government Department of Education and Training
RSQ	Research Sub-Question
WADE	Western Australia Department of Education

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Personal Reflection

At the beginning of my teaching career in 2005, if someone had have asked me whether or not I would like to work exclusively with Year 9 students in a campus away from the rest of the school, my answer would have been an unequivocal 'no'. My first experiences of teaching Year 9 students could only be described as tough. Lessons were usually characterised by students' poor behaviour, lack of interest in the curriculum and underachievement. I was not alone in feeling quite helpless when it came to teaching Year 9. In my first years of teaching, Year 9 students were frequently referred to as the 'feral' year group. It was the difficult grade that nobody seemed to want to teach, particularly in the compulsory subjects of mathematics, English, religion and science.

Fast forward around ten years and here I am: a Year 9 teacher working at a purpose-built, separate campus for Year 9 students, whilst completing a PhD in Year 9 reform. So what changed and why did I decide to devote this part of my career to Year 9? My progression towards Year 9 started in 2009 when leaders at my school announced that they wanted to reform the year level and provide a separate campus designated to this group of students. The separation of the Year 9 group meant that the school would then be divided into three distinct sub-schools: a Junior School for Years 7 and 8; a Senior School for Years 10, 11 and 12; and a Year 9 School. Each sub-school would have its own leadership group and designated teaching team.

At first I was merely curious about the Year 9 development, but also a little intrigued by the prospect of doing something so innovative. A short time later, the Year 9 Leadership Group was announced. On hearing their passion for the project and seeing their energy and excitement, I felt quite inspired. I saw the Year 9 reform project as a means of doing something dramatic and meaningful for a group of students who were clearly not thriving in the traditional, Grades 7-12, college. With this reform, I felt our school had the opportunity to make a positive difference to the lives of our Year 9 students, and this was an opportunity I did not want to miss.

At the beginning of 2010, with a heart full of fear and excitement, I took a risk and signed up to be part of the Year 9 Team. The team of teachers I joined would work with the Year 9 leaders in initiating and driving the separate campus reform. This doctoral study is based on the experiences of my colleagues and myself during our school's journey through Year 9 reform.

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

1.2 Introduction

In Australia, Year 9 caters for 14-15 year old students and typically represents the third year of secondary school. In recent decades, Year 9, as a sub-group within the broader field of the middle years of schooling, has received negative attention with reportedly high levels of student absenteeism, student disengagement and teacher stress (Cole et al., 2006a; Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Victoria [DEECDV], 2009). As a result of this, schools and researchers have searched for ways to improve Year 9 education and to make it more meaningful for students. By far the most substantial response to improving Year 9 has been the establishment of separate Year 9 campuses with dedicated teaching teams and programmes focussing specifically on this year level. This instrumental case study examines and explores one school's experience of initiating and implementing separate campus Year 9 reform. The study places specific emphasis on the teachers' perspectives understanding that teachers are the key agents in enacting school change. It explores both the rationale and vision for Year 9 reform, as well as the roles of teachers in the reform process. Importantly, this study also examines the notion of capacity building for successful and sustainable Year 9 reform.

Chapter 1 of this thesis provides a background to this study. The personal reflection introducing this chapter (Section 1.1) describes the position of the researcher as well as the impetus and context for this study. Section 1.3 presents background information and literature on Year 9 students, their development, and the current social and political contexts of their learning. Section 1.4 then outlines the methodological design of this study, with Section

1.5 stating the aims of the research. Section 1.6 presents the over-arching research question and research sub-questions used to frame this study. Section 1.7 describes why this study is significant and how it will contribute to the research fields of middle schooling, particularly Year 9 education, and capacity building for successful and sustainable change. Finally, Section 1.8 presents an overview of all of the chapters within this thesis.

1.3 Background to the Study

Year 9 students are adolescents typically aged 14-15 years. They represent a single, critical year level within the broader spheres of adolescence and the middle years of schooling (Cole, 2006). With the states of Queensland and Western Australia moving Year 7 into secondary schooling in 2015 (Queensland Government Department of Education and Training [QGDET], 2015; Western Australia Department of Education [WADE], 2015), Year 9 now represents the third year of secondary schooling in all Australian states with the exception of South Australia. That means that in a Grades 7-10 high school, Year 9 marks the penultimate year of study, whereas in a Grades 7-12 college, Year 9 is very much a middle grade within a six-year study programme. As research specifically focussed on Year 9 students in Australia is limited (Cole, 2006; Cole, Mahar, & Vindurampulle, 2006a, 2006b; DEECDV, 2009), literature from the broader fields of adolescence and the middle years of schooling will be used to provide a sufficient background for this study.

‘Middle schooling’ or ‘the middle years of schooling’ is associated with the education of adolescents spanning Grades 5-10. It refers to a constructivist philosophy of curriculum and pedagogy that aims to respond to the broad range of middle school learners’ needs (Chadbourne, 2001; Middle Years of Schooling Association [MYSA], 2008). More on middle schooling philosophy is found in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1. The term ‘adolescence’ has been a source of contention amongst researchers (Bahr, 2010). Age alone is not considered a sufficient means of defining adolescence, as it does not cogitate the full complexity of this stage of development (Bahr, 2010; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Lipsitz 1990).

Bahr and Pendergast (2007) explain that: “adolescence refers to the multifaceted set of maturational sequences and elements that impact on life for people moving from childhood to adulthood” (p. 13). Further, Lipsitz (1990) suggests that a broad definition that encompasses not only physical or biological factors, but also developmental and social-institutional perspectives, is necessary in order to better understand adolescence. She also argues that adolescence is innately connected with both culture and history and therefore should not be examined outside a socio-historical perspective (Lipsitz, 1990). It is for this reason that the socio-political and socio-cultural contexts of Year 9 education are examined as part of the background to this study (see Sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.3).

The following sub-sections provide background information on Year 9 learners as adolescents within the middle years. Section 1.3.1 examines organisational structures within current Australian secondary schools as well as the socio-political factors impacting on Year 9 learners. Of particular note is the advocacy and movement towards middle schooling practices and middle school reform in Australia. Section 1.3.2 examines the developmental characteristics of Year 9 learners, drawing on literature from the fields of adolescent development, psychology and cognitive learning theory. The final sub-section, section 1.3.3, examines the socio-cultural context of Year 9 learners with reference to the impact of technology and recent social trends.

1.3.1 The socio-political context of Year 9 education in Australia.

As mentioned previously, Year 9 students are typically aged 14-15 years and are in the second or third grade of high school education in Australia. This year level forms part of a schooling system that has remained unchanged for decades. Australian primary schools are traditionally organised so that students work with small groups of teachers (generally one main teacher and a small group of specialists) and teaching and learning is highly flexible (Braggett, 1997). In primary school settings there is more scope for integrated curriculum, heterogeneous groupings and non-interrupted learning time (Braggett, 1997). Secondary schools on the other hand, tend to be less flexible, more rigid and

discipline-focussed in their approach to curriculum and timetabling. Braggett (1997) observed that Australian secondary schools tend to have:

- Students working with large numbers of teachers;
- Students moving throughout the school to different classrooms and learning areas for timetabled lessons;
- Learning programmes governed by rigid and often inflexible timetables;
- Compartmentalised teaching and learning facilitated by specialist teachers; and
- The ability to stream classes into ability based groups.

More recent research suggests that little has changed in terms of organisational features of Australian secondary schools. The Australian Council of Educational Research [ACER] (2012) explain that secondary schools are still structured by groups of students working with large numbers of teachers who adopt subject-centred approaches to teaching. Research on Year 9 education (Cole, 2006; Cole et al., 2006a, 2006b) suggests that traditional educational practices, such as those described by Braggett (1997) previously, are not meeting the needs of students in this grade. Critics of traditional secondary schooling practices are also found in literature from the broader field of the middle years of schooling (for example: Smyth & McInerney, 2007; Cormack & Cumming, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c). In fact, various research publications on the middle years of schooling have emerged over the past three decades, from a desire to better understand and cater for the changing learning needs of Australian adolescents (ACER, 2012; Cormack & Cumming, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c; Barratt, 1998; Department of Education, Training and Employment Victoria [DETEV], 2002; Luke et al., 2003; Pendergast et al., 2005).

Despite a growing appetite for change in the middle years, actual change has been slow. There have been grand political gestures of support for reform in the middle years; the best example of this being the inclusion of the middle years of schooling as a key area for development in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008). The declaration

identified the middle years as an “important period of learning” where student motivation and engagement is critical and can be enhanced by “tailoring approaches to teaching, with learning activities and learning environments that specifically consider the needs of middle years students” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 12). The declaration also stated that federal and state governments will commit to working with all schools in order to “provide programmes that are responsive to students’ developmental and learning needs in the middle years, and which are challenging, engaging and rewarding” (2008, p. 12).

Other examples of political support include government-sponsored research projects such as: ACER (2012); DETEV (2002); Cole et al. (2006a, 2006b); O’Sullivan (2005, 2006); and New South Wales, Department of Education and Training [NSWDET] (2006). The Queensland government’s *A Flying Start for Queensland Children* (see ACER, 2012; QGDET, 2015) give recent examples of political support for improving the middle years of schooling. Interestingly though, this movement only gives recognition to Years 7 to 9 as a “distinct phase of schooling” and labels this phase “junior secondary” rather than the broader and more publicised middle years of schooling (ACER, 2012, p. 5).

At this point in time, both federal and state governments’ level of commitment towards middle school reform appears to be confused. Whilst MCEETYA’s (2008) declaration on schooling; government support for middle years’ research; and initiatives such as Queensland’s *Flying Start for Queensland Children* (QGDET, 2015), show some commitment to middle years’ development, curriculum initiatives such as the *Australian Curriculum* (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2016) and lesser known former state curricula, such as the Tasmanian government’s *Tasmanian Curriculum* (Department of Education Tasmania [DET], 2013), have lacked reference to middle schooling. This presents a somewhat confusing environment for teachers and schools wanting to improve education in the middle years and implement middle years’ reform.

For the large part, the application of middle years' approaches is left to the discretion of individual teachers and individual school communities in Australia (Bahr & Crosswell, 2011; Main & Bryer, 2004; Merifield, 2007). In fact, explicit direction for schools wanting to adopt middle school practices is rare (Bahr & Crosswell, 2011). Similarly, appropriate curriculum designs for the middle years of schooling are not well developed (Dowden, 2007, 2014). Again, it seems that the majority of planning and design for middle years' programmes is left to individual schools. It is no surprise then to see that most middle school reform efforts in Australia over the past decade and a half, have taken place at the grassroots level, predominantly in the private school sector (Bahr & Crosswell, 2011; Chadbourne, 2001). On a positive note, grassroots reform has had a noticeable impact on secondary education. The movement has seen the establishment of middle school campuses and schools adopting middle school principles and practices (Bahr & Crosswell, 2011; Chadbourne, 2001). The negative side to this is that a whole range of middle years' structures and approaches have been implemented in an ad hoc fashion making it difficult to obtain evidence of the movement's effectiveness (Dinham & Rowe, 2008b).

Year 9 reform has followed a similar pathway in that reform has largely occurred within individual schools. There is very little research that evaluates the Year 9 reform that has taken place and no research to determine how many reformed schools have been able to achieve what Aspland and Nicholson (2003) label *Holistic Reform*. Holistic Reform refers to middle school reform that has grown from the "ground upwards" where school communities have engaged in capacity building from the onset and middle years' philosophy permeates all school practices (Aspland & Nicholson, 2003, p. 36). It is this type of reform that has the most positive impact on students and is most desired by reformers.

The state of Victoria has been at the forefront of Year 9 reform in Australia. This reform has involved state government sponsored research initiatives (see Cole et al., 2006a & 2006b; DEECDV, 2009) and the establishment of separate campuses and programmes for Year 9 students initiated by individual schools, again predominantly private schools. Examples of such schools include:

Christian Brothers' College, Geelong Grammar School's (2016) Timbertop; St. Kilda (2016) Balaclava Campus for Year 9; Strathcona's (2016) Tay Creggan Year 9 Campus; Yarra Valley Grammar's (2016) Year 9 Larkin Campus; St. Kevin's College's (2016) Waterford Campus for Year 9; Mackillop College Werribee's (2016) St. Mary's Campus for Year 9 students; and Star of the Sea College Melbourne's (2016) Anzac House dedicated to Year 9. The Alpine School Campus (2016) is a rare example of a state (government) school initiative that runs separate campus, intensive programmes specifically for Year 9 students. Under the Alpine School Campus (2016) programme, small groups of Year 9 students (a maximum of 45 students) are selected from Victorian government schools to live on campus and engage in alternate programmes dedicated to Year 9.

Self-initiated, school-based Year 9 reform is also visible in other states of Australia, however this is at a much smaller level than in the state of Victoria. To date, no other state has completed specific research on Year 9 education, including Tasmania, where this research was undertaken. Likewise, no other state apart from Victoria has made specific recommendations to schools about appropriate future directions for Year 9 education or Year 9 reform as a unique, single year level within middle schooling.

In summary, the state of middle schooling and Year 9 education is somewhat confusing as a mixture of both support and indifference can be seen from both state and federal governments. It is interesting that Chadbourne (2001), and ten years later Bahr and Crosswell (2011), both reported that change in the middle years was being driven by grass-roots reform, initiated in most cases by private schools. This shows that in the decade from 2001 to 2011, despite government advocacy for change in the middle years, the required funding or practical support for schools wanting to make changes has not ensued.

1.3.2 Developmental characteristics of Year 9 learners.

Aged 14-15 years, Year 9 students are in the midst of adolescence characterised by rapid changes and growth. As Caskey and Anfara (2014) explain, adolescents

experience not only significant physical growth, but intellectual, psychological, emotional, social, moral and spiritual growth as well. Whilst there are some discernible characteristics in adolescent growth, individual development is always influenced by factors such as race, ethnicity, sociocultural contexts, family, community, the environment and gender (Caskey & Anfara, 2014). Adolescence and the rapid changes associated with this stage of life can be unsettling for students, bringing about various implications for teachers and schools.

The basic physical changes associated with adolescence include the body gaining the ability to reproduce and the development of observable gender differences (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2007). As Woolfolk and Margetts (2007) explain, such changes are highly variable amongst adolescents due to the influence of genetics, nutrition, sleep, protection from the elements, exercise, levels of exposure to sunlight, drugs, toxins and emotional wellbeing. Brain development is also significant during adolescence. After the generation of grey matter peaks at the age of 11 or 12 years, the adolescent brain then moves through a process of both strengthening and stabilising connections, and pruning excess connections (Cole et al., 2006a).

The extreme physical transformations that occur during puberty can impact on adolescents' emotions and emotional development. Firstly, changes in hormones have been cited as the reason for seemingly unstable emotions in adolescents and the appearance of "being happy one moment and absolutely miserable the next" (Cole et al., 2006a, p. 7). Anxiety associated with physical changes is not uncommon amongst adolescents, particularly if they feel that they are not a desirable weight, or do not have a desirable level of strength or attractiveness (Jaffe, 1998; McInerney & McInerney, 2010). Anxiety can also occur as a result of adolescents simply not knowing what they will look and feel like once the changes are complete (Jaffe, 1998). Jaffe (1998) explains, "Teenagers receive a lot of feedback about their bodies. They realise that their appearance plays an important role in their popularity with peers. Depending on how they evaluate their 'look', adolescents may experience excitement,

confusion or dread” (p. 72). In general, adolescents that judge their own development to be abnormal when comparing themselves to their peers can become distressed and anxious about their bodies (Jaffe, 1998). This in turn has been found to have a negative impact on the behaviour, emotional development and body image of adolescents (Bee & Boyd, 2010; Jaffe, 1998; Sweeting & West, 2002).

Intellectual development in adolescents includes gradual growth towards more advanced and abstract forms of thinking (Braggett, 1997; Caskey & Anfara, 2014; Kellough & Kellough, 2008). Using Piaget’s *Stages of Cognitive Development*, Braggett (1997) explains that over a period of approximately five years, adolescents move through the final two stages of Piaget’s theory, namely the *Concrete Operational* stage and the *Formal Operational* stage. Whilst Piaget’s theory has been criticised for over and under-estimating people’s attributes and capabilities at different ages, and neglecting individual differences (Braggett, 1997; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; McInerney & McInerney, 2010), it remains a useful reference point in discussing adolescent development (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007).

As adolescents move into the Formal Operational stage of cognitive development, they develop the ability to engage in abstract thinking, including critical reasoning (Braggett, 1997). They also begin to: understand more complex humour, nuances and metaphors (Caskey & Anfara, 2014); understand and engage in metacognition (Braggett, 1997; Caskey & Anfara, 2014; Kellough & Kellough, 2008) and become better problem solvers through testing hypotheses, analysing data, examining complex concepts and engaging in reflective thinking (Caskey & Anfara, 2014). Braggett (1997) explains that Formal Operational thinking is acquired at different times for different adolescents who may use this advanced thinking in some subject areas but not necessarily all areas. Taking this into consideration, a typical 14-15 year old Year 9 student would be at the stage of building and extending their formal thinking capacities but not necessarily be a master of them nor be expected to use them in all contexts.

Psychologically, Year 9 students are likely to be engaging in characteristic adolescent behaviours such as risk-taking, exploring identity and increased peer group socialisation. Risk-taking, novelty or sensation seeking and impulsive behaviours form a natural part of the maturation process (Committee on the Science of Adolescence Board on Children, Youth and Families Institute of Medicine [CSABCYFIM], 2011; Sturman & Moghaddam, 2011). Taking part in risky activities enables adolescents to: explore and practise adult tasks, behaviour and privileges (Cole et al., 2006a); experience positive feelings from the novelty, danger, complexity or intensity of the risk taken (Spear, 2000); and gain more self-esteem and recognition from peers (Spear, 2000). Risk-taking can also be a means of coping with depression or stress (Spear, 2000). At the extreme end, serious risk-taking behaviour regarding sexual activity, substance use, illegal activity and dangerous driving can present significant dangers and consequences for adolescents (CSABCYFIM, 2011).

The adolescent developmental need to search for and explore their identity is a consistent theme in middle years of schooling literature (for example: Bahr, 2007; Barratt, 1998; Braggett, 1997; Groundwater-Smith, Breannan, McFadden, Mitchell, & Munns, 2009). Bahr (2007) explains that young people form their identities through interactions between idealised concepts (from peers, the media and idols), their experiences (including time spent with family, friends and teachers) and their sense of personal acceptance (including feelings of belonging, rejection and isolation). Groundwater-Smith et al. (2009, p. 65) explain that adolescents' "self-concept[s]" are conscious perceptions of their strengths, weaknesses, abilities, attitudes, roles, social statuses, physical appearance, personality traits and values. Young people negotiate multiple self-concepts in different contexts and collectively, these multiple concepts form a global identity (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2009). Adolescent exploration and establishment of identity is therefore a highly complex phenomenon that is in constant flux.

Socially, Year 9 students are likely to experience the adolescent desire for increased peer group socialisation. Researchers believe that peer group socialisation is an important aspect of adolescence because of its role in identity formation (Bahr, 2007; Groundwater-Smith et al., 2009). Bahr (2007) explains that, for adolescents, “peers are the measuring stick for how successful an experimental identity has been” (p. 159). During an average school week, adolescents can spend close to one third of their waking hours socialising with their peers whom can provide positive experiences and opportunities for adolescents to learn social skills away from the home (Spear, 2000). Not all peer socialisation is positive however. As Bahr (2007) explains, peers can provide adolescents with the rewards of belonging and status but are also capable of punishing through isolation and exclusion.

Significant growth in terms of moral and spiritual development can be viewed during adolescence. Caskey and Anfara (2014) explain that moral development is associated with an individual’s attitudes, beliefs, values and choices that help form their identity. In adolescents, students move from a self-centred perspective to one that begins to understand and appreciate the rights, feelings and opinions of others (Caskey & Anfara, 2014). Spiritual development is closely linked to moral development. In spiritual development, adolescents begin to explore meaning within their lives and the connections they develop with others (Caskey & Anfara, 2014).

Gender differences are an important factor for educators and researchers to consider when examining adolescent development. Firstly, female adolescents are said to mature earlier than males (Cole et al., 2006a) and tend to display more advanced language skills, particularly verbal language skills (Cook & Cook, 2009) placing them in better positions to communicate with others and develop supportive social networks. Female adolescents are more likely to seek and receive help from others, whereas male adolescents are considered less skilled at understanding emotions and less likely to seek support when dealing with feelings of sadness, shame or guilt (Cook & Cook, 2009).

As 14-15 year olds, Year 9 students are well within the critical life-stage of adolescence. This section has explained that adolescence is characterised by rapid and dramatic physical growth as well as significant development in intellectual capacity for students. During adolescence, students also experience growth and development in terms of their spirituality, morality, ethical thinking and decision-making capacities. Psychologically, adolescents are exploring and experimenting with their own identities whilst socially, they are seeking more peer group socialisation. Anxiety surrounding this turbulent stage of growth is common, especially when students feel that their development is abnormal or as though they do not belong. This section also identified that adolescent changes are influenced by factors such as race, ethnicity, sociocultural contexts, family, community, the environment and gender, making development complex and variable.

1.3.3 Socio-cultural issues affecting Year 9 learners.

As Australian adolescents, Year 9 students are faced with an array of socio-cultural issues, which impact on their daily lives and learning. Of particular note is the emergence of the Information Age and the impact this has had on adolescent socialisation. Current socio-cultural conditions also mean that Australian adolescents are often found facing changes in family structures; a growing consumerist culture; and an economic landscape that acknowledges a growing gap between the affluent and the poor.

The emergence of the Information Age and the subsequent accessibility and manipulation of information has had a significant impact on adolescents and their interactions with others (Carrington, 2006; Pendergast, 2007; Rosebrough & Leverett, 2010). Whilst most Australian adolescents would be considered “digital natives” or people who have developed a natural fluency in the digital language of computers, electronic games and the Internet (Prensky, 2005, p. 29), levels of ICT access, use and literacy amongst adolescents can vary (Fraillon, 2012). For the majority of Australian adolescents, technology is deeply embedded in daily life and social relationships (Carrington, 2006; Pendergast, 2007). The Internet provides adolescents with: a context for identity

experimentation (Pendergast, 2007); 24-hour advice; worldwide participants; information and different perspectives in an accessible, social, candid, familiar and yet private setting (Goldman & McCutchen, 2012). The Internet is attractive to adolescents due to its anonymity, accessibility and affordability (Goldman & McCutchen, 2012). It is also attractive because it allows adolescents to communicate instantly and share information with little adult mediation (Carrington, 2006).

Generally speaking, Australian adolescents, including those in Year 9, have been found to have greater access and are more frequent users of Information and Computer Technology (ICT) than peers elsewhere (Fraillon, 2012). The level of ICT access, use and eventual ICT literacy however, can differ greatly according to students' socio-economic background, indigenous status and geographical location (Fraillon, 2012). The diversity that exists within adolescents' ICT literacy has significant implications for middle years and Year 9 teachers. It cannot be assumed that all adolescents have proficient levels of ICT literacy.

The last decade has shown that increased use of ICT and Internet based communications have continued to place adolescents at risk of online conflict and cyberbullying (Carrington, 2006; Srivastava, Gamble & Boey, 2013). In the state of Victoria, Hempill, Tollit, and Kotevski's (2012) study found that 14% of Year 9 students experience cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is defined as behaviour and communication through digital means that "repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort to others" (Tokunaga, 2010, p. 278). Adolescent cyberbullying can take various forms but commonly includes behaviours such as: text-based name calling; using coarse language or profanities; personal attacks (including racial or sexist attacks); harassment or denigration; cyber-stalking; and sending humiliating photos or video messages (Srivastava et al., 2013). The media for cyberbullying also varies but commonly includes: social networking sites, personal websites, Emails, blogs, message boards, online games and mobile phone messages (Srivastava et al., 2013). The affects of cyberbullying can be devastating and far-reaching. It is often difficult for adults to intervene in adolescent cyberbullying because

perpetrators can remain anonymous (Hanewald, 2009; Hemphill, Tollit, Kotevski, & Heerde, 2015) and bully large numbers of people simultaneously at any time of day and from any location (Hemphill et al., 2015).

With the propulsion of the Information Age and an increasing global economy, an influx of consumerism and advertising has ensued. As Carrington (2006) writes, in recent decades Australian adolescents have had to face an increasing consumerist culture where rampant advertising and marketing encourage them to spend in search of happiness, success and identity. Australian adolescents are also enticed with globally marketed products designed for worldwide consumption. As Groundwater-Smith et al. (2009) observed, the same popular music, television programmes, clothing and fast foods are being bought and consumed in all different countries across the globe. The purchasing power of adolescents is lucrative (Carrington, 2006) making them a key target for clever and manipulative advertising. The funding for adolescent spending does not always come from parents but also from money-earning teenagers themselves (Carrington, 2006). This is particularly relevant when discussing Year 9 students who, at the age of 14-15 are reaching the legal age for paid work.

Year 9 students have been influenced by social trends and changes in family structures over the past three decades. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) predicts increases in single-parent families and decreases in couple families with children from 2011-2036. This prediction comes at the same time that Gemici and Lu (2014) have argued that belonging to a nuclear family presents an educational advantage for adolescents. Their research found that students from non-nuclear families were less emotionally engaged in education when compared to students from nuclear families (Gemici & Lu, 2014). In the past two decades, concerns have been raised regarding the increase of time-poor families and the impact of this on children and adolescents (Baxter, 2013; Carrington, 2006; Goodin, 2011). Baxter (2013) explains that many parents feel time-poor as a result of attempting to balance work, family and other responsibilities. Carrington (2006) argues that because of increased work demands on parents, smaller families and with less siblings and greater

perceptions of risk in the community, adolescents are more likely to spend time on home entertainment devices or online rather than meet with others in neighbourhoods and play in parks and streets.

Whilst according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] (2015) Australia performs well in most measures of wellbeing, there remains a considerable gap between the affluent and the poor (Carrington, 2006; OECD, 2015; Smyth & McInerney, 2007). There also remains a significant number of adolescents who consistently experience low levels of wellbeing, particularly from marginalised groups such as: adolescents with disabilities; adolescents from diverse cultural backgrounds; indigenous adolescents; rural adolescents; and adolescents in out of home care (Redmond et al., 2016). Indigenous Australians and new migrants are most affected by income gaps with noticeably higher levels of poverty and unemployment seen in these minority groups (Carrington, 2006). Stanwick, Lu, Karmel, and Wibrow's (2013) report also found that young people from Indigenous backgrounds or remote locations are obtaining far lower levels of education and training in comparison to the general population. Smyth and McInerney's (2007) research revealed that economically disadvantaged students were stigmatised and disparaged by others, making education for such students more challenging. The socio-economic gap that is growing amongst Australian families means that diversity and levels of advantage and disadvantage within Year 9 classrooms is also growing.

In summary, Year 9 students as modern day Australian adolescents are living in a fast-paced, information-driven, constantly changing consumerist world. Whilst Australian adolescents are generally competent and consistent users of ICT, their levels of access, usage and ICT literacy can differ greatly according to socio-economic backgrounds, indigenous status and geographical locations. The extent of cyber-bullying that has resulted from increased adolescent use of ICT has concerned researchers, educators and parents over the past two decades and remains a pressing issue for schools and policy makers. The upsurge of non-nuclear families and the lack of community time within families and broader

society have resulted in some educational disadvantage for students. The current economic landscape has also impacted on student achievement with a visible gap growing between the affluent and the poor in Australia. These factors combined suggest a highly diverse and complex socio-cultural context within which Year 9 students live and learn.

1.4 Design of the Study

This research is theoretically underpinned by constructivist inquiry and takes the form of a single site instrumental case study. The 'case' for this study is the experiences of Year 9 teachers and school leaders who engaged in separate campus Year 9 reform. The context for the study is an independent Tasmanian secondary school. The pseudonym 'St. John's College' has been used throughout this thesis to refer to the case school. The data-gathering tools of this research include: full participant observations, semi-structured interviews, Email dialogues with participants and school document analysis.

Data collection for this research project took place over an approximate 2½-year period. The aims and research questions for this study are presented in the next two sections. Descriptions and explanations of the research paradigm, research epistemology and methodology are found in Chapter 3.

1.5 Research Aims

The purpose of this study is to investigate and describe the experiences of Year 9 teachers and leaders engaged in separate campus Year 9 reform. This will include:

- Determining the rationale and vision behind the planned Year 9 reform at the case school;
- Examining the roles teachers play during the reform at the case school; and
- Uncovering factors that appear to assist the case school in building capacity for sustainable change.

This study aims to provide the first Tasmanian perspective to the field of Year 9 educational research, particularly with regards to the rationale and vision for Year 9 reform. This study also aims to build new knowledge and theory on the roles of middle years' teachers during reform and factors which can assist schools wanting to build capacity for middle years' reform in Australia.

1.6 Research Questions

This study is centred by an over-arching research question that encompasses the case under investigation. The over-arching question is then complemented with a series of sub-questions, which aim to further refine aspects of the inquiry. As a reminder, the pseudonym 'St. John's College' is used to refer to the case school. The research questions for this study include:

Over-arching Research Question:

What can be learnt from the teachers' perspectives about the process of Year 9 reform?

Sub-questions:

1. What is the Year 9 Team's rationale and vision for the reform?
2. What roles do teachers play in the reform process?
3. What do teachers engaged in Year 9 reform perceive their professional learning needs to be?
4. What factors appear to assist St. John's College in building capacity for sustainable change?

As a point of clarification, the 'Year 9 Team' mentioned in Research Sub-question 1 includes the Year 9 teachers and leaders (including the Principal, Head of Year 9, Head of Year 9 Curriculum and Head of Year 9 Pastoral Care) that engaged in the separate campus Year 9 reform at the case school.

1.7 Significance of the Research

This research is significant for four distinct reasons. Firstly, research into Year 9 education as a sub-set within the broader fields of secondary education and the middle years of schooling is very limited, despite alarming research findings suggesting that traditional high school practices are failing to meet these students' needs (Cole, 2006; Cole et al. 2006a; DEECDV, 2009). This study will add to the limited field of Year 9 research in Australia. It will contribute by offering a Tasmanian perspective on the rationale and vision for Year 9 reform. This is a perspective that has currently not been examined in Year 9 literature.

As a second point of significance, this study will contribute to the field by providing a concrete example of how Year 9 reform can be implemented and what it might look like in practice. With the exception of Yates and Holt (2009), case studies such as this one on Year 9 reform are rare. Yates and Holt's (2009) case study examined Year 9 teachers' experiences and their contending desires during their first year of a new Year 9 programme. This study on the other hand, examines the experiences of teachers over a period of approximately 2½-years during the initiation and implementation of separate campus reform.

The third point of significance for this study is that it provides the facility to explore Year 9 reform in action and develop theory on the roles that middle years' teachers (particularly Year 9 teachers) play during that reform. Currently in Australia, literature on the roles of middle years' teachers is limited (Main & Bryer, 2004; Rumble & Aspland, 2009, 2010). All of the fore mentioned studies have sought to examine the key characteristics and roles of teachers engaged in middle school practices. The roles teachers play during reform of the middle years is something that is neglected in current research, despite school improvement literature suggesting that the teacher is the key agent in effecting change (Fullan, 2007; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2000). By examining teachers' roles and experiences during reform, this study aims to build new theory on the work of middle years' teachers.

As the final point of significance, this study addresses the research need for more empirical studies into capacity building in action. Crowther (2011) commented that empirical studies, which examine the notion of capacity building in pragmatic terms, have only recently started to emerge. Studies such as this one, whilst adding to the literature, also paint a more realistic and pragmatic picture of capacity building in action.

1.8 Thesis Overview

This thesis contains seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study including information on Year 9 students, their development and the current contexts within which they learn. Chapter 1 also introduces the concept of the middle years of schooling and provides an overview of the middle years' reform movement in Australia. The chapter then outlines the research aims, over-arching research question and research sub-questions, which framed this study. Section 1.7 explains the significance of this study and the contribution it will make to research on Year 9 education, middle years' reform and capacity building for sustainable reform.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on key research themes related to this study. The chapter begins with a discussion on the rationale for reform of the middle years of schooling and later, Year 9. It also examines contemporary vision for middle years' and Year 9 reform drawing on literature from Australia but also comparable Western nations such as the United States of America, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Following this, Chapter 2 examines the notion of capacity building for sustainable reform using Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) theory of capacity as a framework for examining the literature. Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) three categories of *Personal Capacity*, *Interpersonal Capacity* and *Organisational Capacity* are used to examine research that has contributed to understanding capacity building for successful and sustainable school reform. Section 2.8 presents a summary of literature on the roles of middle years' teachers. This section identifies that whilst research on middle years' teachers is growing, to date the roles of middle years' teachers in reform is under-

researched, making a study such as this one significant. The chapter also highlights research gaps in vision for Year 9 reform and empirical studies on capacity building in action. These are further areas in which this study will contribute new findings.

Chapter 3 presents information on the constructivist paradigm, which provides the overall framework for the methodological design of this research. This research took the form of an instrumental case study with inquiry driven by the over-arching research question. Chapter 3 explains the key data collection tools used in this study, including: full participant observations, semi-structured interviews, Email dialogues and document analysis. Chapter 3 also describes the data analysis process and issues relating to reflexivity, trustworthiness and the limitations of this study.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the findings for this study. Chapter 4 firstly gives an overview of the case school both before and during the Year 9 reform. The chapter then presents findings in relation to the first research sub-question, which asked: "What is the Year 9 Team's rationale and vision for the reform?" Chapter 5 is devoted to findings that relate to Research Sub-questions 2 and 3 which asked: "What roles do teachers play in the reform process?" and "What do teachers engaged in Year 9 reform perceive their professional learning needs to be?" Chapter 6 is the final findings chapter and focuses on data relating to Research Sub-question 4, which asked: "What factors appear to assist St. John's College in building capacity for sustainable change?" This chapter examines capacity building in action by exploring the case school's successful approaches to building organisational and interpersonal capacity.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter of this thesis and presents a detailed discussion on the major findings and conclusions of this research. Chapter 7 also addresses the limitations of this study and makes recommendations for future research and practice.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature from two fields on key issues related to this study. The two fields are that of school improvement, particularly capacity building, and the middle years of schooling where Year 9 forms a distinct sub-group. Section 2.2 begins with a discussion on the rationale pertaining to reform of the middle years of schooling (Sub-sections 2.2.1 & 2.2.2) and later the sub-group and focus of this study, Year 9 (Section 2.2.3). Particular attention is paid to Australian literature calling for reform of the middle years, however some reference is made to key international publications from similar Western nations such as the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and New Zealand. Section 2.3.1 presents a detailed discussion on vision for middle years' reform in Australia, with Section 2.3.2 summarising the limited literature on vision for Year 9 reform in this country. By adding a new perspective on the rationale and vision for Year 9 reform, this study makes a needed contribution to research on Year 9 education.

Sections 2.4 through to 2.7 explore the notion of capacity building for successful and sustainable reform. These sections are framed by Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) theory of capacity, where capacity is defined by three clear, yet highly interrelated categories including: *Personal Capacity* (Section 2.5), *Interpersonal Capacity* (Section 2.6) and *Organisational Capacity* (Section 2.7). Section 2.4 highlights the need for further research in this growing field of literature, particularly empirical and pragmatic research, which examines capacity building in action, like this study.

Section 2.8 reviews literature on the roles and characteristics of the Australian middle years' teacher. Research on the roles of middle years' teachers in Australia is limited with little mention of how teachers contribute to and operate during reform. This case study therefore aims to add empirical findings to the emerging field of research on Australian middle years' teachers and the

roles they play in reform. The final section of this chapter, Section 2.9, concludes the literature review with a chapter summary.

2.2 Rationale for Reforming the Middle Years of Schooling

This literature review identifies two central arguments in works pertaining to the rationale for middle years' reform in Australia. The first of these argues that the middle years are a distinct period of learning, which differs from any other stage of schooling. Acknowledging and addressing the acute needs of middle years' adolescents with developmentally appropriate teaching, curriculum and programmes is the first key point in the rationale for reform of the middle years of schooling and is examined in Section 2.2.1. The second major argument identifies that middle years' learners are increasingly disengaged from traditional forms of education which do not recognise their distinct phase of growth and instead, simply place them in the upper segment of primary school and the lower realms of secondary school. Disengagement from learning and the associated causes and effects present a broad and yet poignant argument for middle years' reform. This argument is discussed in Section 2.2.2. Section 2.2.3 then discusses the rationale for Year 9 reform as a distinct sub-group within the middle years of schooling.

2.2.1 The middle years – A developmentally distinct period of schooling.

The first key point in the rationale for middle years' reform claims that middle years' students have acute developmental learning needs, which are concomitant and distinct from other stages of schooling. This argument has been propelled by researchers across Australia (ACER, 2012; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Barratt, 1998; Pendergast, Whitehead, De Jong, Newhouse-Maiden & Bahr, 2007; MYSA, 2008), New Zealand (Dinham & Rowe, 2008b; Shanks & Dowden, 2013) and particularly the USA (Association for Middle Level Education [AMLE], 2010; Caskey & Anfara, 2014; Jackson & Davies, 2000; Kellough & Kellough, 2008; Manning & Bucher, 2012; National Middle School Association [NMSA], 1995, 2001, 2003). The diversity that is found within the intellectual,

psychological, physical, moral, emotional and social development of adolescents and the learning needs associated with this diversity are significant in the middle years (Kellough & Kellough, 2008; Pendergast et al., 2007) and create further challenges for middle years' educators.

Barratt's (1998) *Shaping Middle Schooling in Australia: A Report of the National Middle Schooling Project* was an early, yet significant and frequently cited Australian publication that asserts a strong argument that middle years' students have distinct learning needs. Barratt's (1998) work identifies a list of seven learning needs for middle years' adolescents. The seven learning needs are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1
Learning Needs of Middle Years Students

Needs	Elaborations
<i>Identity</i>	Exploring how individual and group identities are shaped by social and cultural groups.
<i>Relationships</i>	Developing productive and affirming relationships with adults and peers in an environment that respects difference and diversity.
<i>Purpose</i>	Having opportunities to negotiate learning that is useful now, as well as in the future.
<i>Empowerment</i>	Viewing the world critically and acting independently, cooperatively and responsibly.
<i>Success</i>	Having multiple opportunities to learn valued knowledge and skills as well as the opportunity to use talents and expertise that students bring to the learning environment.
<i>Rigour</i>	Taking on realistic learning challenges in an environment characterised by high expectations and constructive and honest feedback.
<i>Safety</i>	Learning in a safe, caring and stimulating environment that addresses issues of discrimination and harassment (e.g. Racism).

Adapted from *Shaping Middle Schooling in Australia: A Report of the National Middle Schooling Project* (pp. 29-30), by R. Barratt, 1998, Deakin West, ACT: Australian Curriculum Studies Association.

Barratt's (1998) list of learning needs span a range of developmental characteristics associated with adolescence, however some aspects of

development, including emotional, spiritual and psychological development have been neglected. Recent publications from the USA such as Caskey and Anfara (2014), Kellough and Kellough (2008) and AMLE (2010) identify a wider range of developmental characteristics of adolescents and the associated implications these have on teaching and learning in the middle years. According to Caskey and Anfara (2014), adolescent developmental characteristics can be examined in relation to the following categories:

1. Intellectual development;
2. Physical development;
3. Psychological;
4. Social and emotional development;
5. Moral development; and
6. Spiritual development.

It is argued that teachers need to have a deep understanding of all aspects of adolescent development in order to work effectively in the middle years of schooling (ACER, 2012; AMLE, 2010; Kellough & Kellough, 2008; Shanks & Dowden, 2013). Whilst Barratt's (1998) list of *Learning Needs for Middle Years Students* presents a useful starting point in identifying the learning needs of Australian middle years' adolescents, the picture is incomplete. Considering all aspects of student development, in terms of their physical, intellectual, psychological, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development is needed to gain a more holistic picture of the needs of middle years' learners.

Addressing the developmental learning needs of middle years' adolescents is evidently important because failure to address such needs could contribute to student disengagement and under achievement in the classroom. For example, failure to cater for the middle years' learner's need for relationships (Barratt, 1998) could lead to unsatisfactory student-teacher relationships, which has been cited as a key reason for disengagement (O'Sullivan, 2005). Failure to cater for middle years' learners' needs for purpose and empowerment (Barratt, 1998) could lead to an unsatisfactory or irrelevant curriculum, which has again been identified as a precursor of student disengagement (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Beane, 2004; O'Sullivan, 2005; Tadich, Deed, Campbell, & Prain, 2007). The

prevalence of disengagement in the middle years is another reason for reform and is discussed in the next section (2.2.2).

2.2.2 Disengagement and dissatisfaction from learning in the middle years.

Reportedly high levels of student disengagement, dissatisfaction and academic decline is the second key argument found in literature calling for middle years' reform. Student disengagement from learning and academic decline in the middle years have been well documented in comparable Western nations such as the USA, UK and New Zealand (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007; Dinham & Rowe, 2008b; Jackson & Davies, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2009; Ross, 2009; Rumberger, 1995; Shanks & Dowden, 2013). In Australia, early research into the middle years of schooling (Cormack & Cumming, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c; Barratt, 1998) began to identify problems and needs associated with middle years' learners. The findings suggested middle years' learners were displaying high levels of disengagement and dissatisfaction with their learning (Barratt, 1998; Cormack & Cumming, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c).

More contemporary Australian publications (ACER, 2012; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Carrington, 2006; Knipe & Johnstone, 2007; Luke et al., 2003; MYSA, 2008; O'Sullivan, 2005; Smyth & McInerney, 2007; Tadich, Deed, Campbell, & Prain, 2007) suggest that disengagement and dissatisfaction with schooling is still prevalent amongst middle years' adolescents. Disengagement from learning and schooling manifest in different ways but can include students: having low levels of intrinsic motivation; increased negative attitudes towards learning; increased anxiety about school; and a decline in self-esteem (ACER, 2012). Student disengagement from learning can be very deliberate where adolescents actively reject aspects of their education (Olafson, 2006; Smyth & McInerney, 2007). As Carrington (2006) explains, students may be physically present in their classrooms but "many of them are 'absent' in ways that range from passivity and disinterest, through disruptive behaviour and violence, to truancy and early leaving" (p. 90). It is little surprise then that Australian research has called for intervention and a re-think of approaches in the middle years (ACER,

2012; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Knipe & Johnstone, 2007; Luke et al., 2003; Smyth & McInerney, 2007).

Academic decline; decreased interest in schooling; and inappropriate student behaviour, are key flow-on effects of student disengagement and present great concerns for educators and researchers (ACER, 2012; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Dinham & Rowe, 2008a). Understanding why students disengage from their education has naturally been a question pondered by many middle years' researchers. This literature review identifies several factors, which potentially contribute to disengagement and dissatisfaction in the middle years. These factors include: a lack of opportunities for students to be independent and autonomous (Rubin, 2012); a lack of positive student-teacher relationships (O'Sullivan, 2005); adolescents wanting to escape the pressures of the school social environment (Olafson, 2006); irrelevant or inappropriate curriculum (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Beane, 2004; O'Sullivan, 2005; Tadich et al., 2007); developmentally inappropriate teaching (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Beane, 2004; Shanks & Dowden, 2013; Tadich et al., 2007); poor assessment processes (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Rowe, 2007) and inadequate teacher training programmes at the in-service and undergraduate level (Dinham & Rowe, 2008a; Luke et al., 2003; Main, Pendergast, & Virtue, 2015; McEwin, Dickinson, & Smith, 2004; Pendergast et al., 2007; Shanks & Dowden, 2013).

Several of the factors are not unique to the middle years of schooling alone. For example, Ryan and Deci (2009) argue that all humans are motivated by the need for autonomy and competence. They believe that the consistent controlling of students' behaviour through extrinsic rewards and the removal of autonomy and choice found in schools can have a negative impact on all students' motivation to learn (Ryan & Deci, 2009), not just those in the middle years. Wentzel (2009a, 2009b) likewise explains that the quality of student-teacher relationships is a critical factor in motivating and engaging students of all ages in their learning. Teachers are encouraged to develop relationships with their students that are "emotionally close, safe and trusting" and create a classroom culture of care and support (Wentzel, 2009a, p. 301). Positive student-teacher

relationships is again thought to be a general need of all students, rather than one that only applies to middle years' learners.

Escaping the social pressures of the school environment is arguably more poignant to the middle years of schooling, where the importance of peer relationships is at an all-time high (Bahr, 2007; Groundwater-Smith et al. 2009). The needs for developmentally appropriate curriculum and teaching approaches and high-quality, authentic assessment processes however, could again be considered important to all aspects of schooling, not just the middle years. This then poses the question of whether or not reform of the middle years is indeed distinct or separate from educational reform in general. The fact that middle years' adolescents are in a phase of growth unlike any other stage of life, and that their developmental needs will change in conjunction with this suggests that the middle years are indeed a distinct area of education in need of reform. Whilst middle years' learners may have needs that are comparable to other areas of schooling, it is fair to suggest that until recently, this stage of development has been largely ignored by education systems in Australia. Reports that traditional high school structures are failing middle years' adolescents, particularly those in Year 9 is also worrying and gives more cause for reform (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Cole, 2006; Knipe & Johnstone, 2007; Luke et al., 2003; Smyth & McInerney, 2007).

In summary of Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, middle years' adolescents have acute developmental learning needs that are distinct from other stages of schooling requiring a tailored, developmentally appropriate education programme. This is the first major point in the rationale for middle years' reform as found in the literature. Student disengagement and the significant flow-on effects of loss of interest in learning; academic decline; and poor behaviour and decision-making, present the second poignant point in the rationale for middle years' reform.

2.2.3 Rationale for Year 9 reform.

Year 9 has emerged as a distinct sub-group within the broader field of the middle years of schooling within Australia (Cole, 2006; Cole et al., 2006a,

2006b; DEECDV, 2009). As Chapter 1 explained, in almost all Australian states, Year 9 caters for 14-15 year old adolescents and represents the third year of compulsory secondary schooling. Specific research into Year 9 learners' needs and characteristics is limited (see Cole, 2006; Cole et al., 2006a, 2006b; DEECDV, 2009; Khoo & Ainley, 2005), however this small deposit of research does present a poignant argument for reform of the year level. Key points in the rationale for Year 9 reform include: Year 9 marking an important decision making time for adolescents; alarming levels of student disengagement and dissatisfaction with learning at Year 9; the significant impact working with Year 9 students has on teachers; addressing negative perceptions of Year 9 found in teaching circles and the community; and addressing the lack of identity or perceived significance of Year 9. These points are examined in further detail in this section.

Firstly, Year 9 is recognised as an important decision making time for adolescents. More specifically, it marks a time where adolescents are making choices about whether or not they will complete further education. In an extensive study from the *Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth*, Khoo and Ainley (2005) discovered that 87% of Year 9 students who indicated that they planned to complete Year 12 did in fact do so. At the same time, 79% of Year 9 students that indicated they planned to leave school before completing Year 12 did so (Khoo & Ainley, 2005). The findings show a high correlation between the intentions and attitudes of Year 9 students and their participation in Year 12 education. Some correlation also exists between Year 9 students' intentions and their actual participation in university study. Khoo and Ainley (2005) found that 52% of Year 9 students who intended to enter university followed through with their plan whereas only 14% of those who did not intend to go to university eventually participated.

High levels of disengagement from learning within Year 9, presents another strong argument for reform. It has been revealed that Year 9 students absent themselves from school at a rate (average 19 full days per year), which is higher than any other grade (Cole et al., 2006a; DEECDV, 2009). Students' levels of

resilience, their attitudes towards schooling and their perceptions of teacher-student relationships have been found to decline significantly at Year 9 (Cole, 2006; DEECDV, 2009). Low levels of engagement and lack of motivation have led to increased incidences of poor student behaviour amongst Year 9 students (DEECDV, 2009). Further, literacy and numeracy skills have tended to plateau at the Year 9 level (Cole, 2006; DEECDV, 2009). All of these findings paint a worrying picture of disengaged, unmotivated and uninspired Year 9 students.

As Section 2.2.2 identified, disengagement and dissatisfaction with schooling is not unique to Year 9 students alone. In fact, Smyth and McInerney (2007, p. x) suggest that on average in Western countries between 30% and 40% of high school students are not completing their secondary schooling and are “actively rejecting the version of schooling being served up to them.” They argue that high schools have become a “wasteland” for adolescents where students “switch off” from schooling and regress in terms of motivation and expected academic achievement (Smyth & McInerney, 2007, p. 5). Whilst statements such as these are perhaps exaggerated and designed to be evocative, the findings emerging from Year 9 research (Cole, 2006; Cole et al. 2006a; DEECDV, 2009) suggests some truth to Smyth and McInerney’s (2007) words.

The impact of disengagement on Year 9 teachers, particularly the flow-on effects of poor student behaviour and negative attitudes towards schooling, presents another poignant reason for reform. In a similar case study to this one, Yates and Holt (2009) articulated: “in Australia, Year 9 is widely seen as a problem, a time when young people disengage and when curriculum and student identity often fail to cohere with each other” (p. 28). They explained that teaching at the Year 9 level is usually viewed by teachers as being the least desirable place to work, as secondary teachers tended to prefer the serious, subject orientated curriculum of the senior secondary years or the more pliable junior years (Yates & Holt, 2009). Cole (2006) and Cole et al. (2006a) also describe Year 9 as being a particularly difficult year for teachers. Whilst the reasons for these difficulties are not clearly explained in their research, one can assume that the declining attitudes towards schooling, increased

disengagement and poor student behaviour that were mentioned in their reports contribute to such sentiments. The fact that high levels of diversity in terms of ability, interests and achievement have been found in Year 9 (DEECDV, 2009) could also contribute to teachers' stress and difficulties in working with Year 9 students.

Interestingly, Year 9 seems to have gained a negative reputation in not only teaching circles but also in larger society. Tulloch's (1982) youth-oriented play *Year 9 are Animals*, is an example of how Year 9 has been viewed as a problematic year, even as early as the 1980s. The fact that academic research (Cole, 2006; Cole et al., 2006a; DEECDV, 2009; Yates & Holt, 2009) is beginning to identify and explore the difficulties and problems faced by Year 9 students and teachers is positive. More work into this topic is required however, in order to paint a more holistic picture of why Year 9 appears to be such a difficult year level and to strengthen the case for Year 9 reform. This is an area of research, which this study will contribute to.

The final point of rationale for Year 9 reform relates to Year 9 students' identity as a single year group. It is understood that Year 9 students as adolescents are exploring their own individual identities and that this remains a key learning need for students within the middle years of schooling (Bahr, 2007; Barratt, 1998; Groundwater-Smith et al., 2009). At the same time though, Year 9, as a grade within secondary school, appears to be struggling with its own collective identity. In navigating this collective identity, it is thought that Year 9 needs to be transformed from previous perceptions of it being a grade lost in the middle of secondary schooling to one that was special and something to look forward to (Cole, 2006; DEECDV, 2009). It is also believed that Year 9 needs to be "developmentally appropriate, not just a little more difficult than that in previous years of school or a little less difficult than that in the following years" (Cole, 2006, p. 11).

The separate campus Year 9 education model is, in part, an attempt at enhancing the collective identity of Year 9. Researchers argue that establishing

dedicated Year 9 learning and teaching centres, preferably separated from the remainder of the school is beneficial for Year 9 students (Cole, 2006; Cole et al., 2006b) giving them and their teachers greater opportunities to take ownership of Year 9 education and make it more distinctive (DEECDV, 2009).

In summary of this section, there are several pressing points of rationale that argue for the reform of Year 9 education. The alarming levels of student disengagement and absenteeism found within Year 9 suggest that this is a critical group of learners in need of attention. The fact that Year 9 has gained a reputation as being a difficult year level and are viewed as a lost grade in the middle of secondary school, suggests a need for a more positive collective identity and again, educational reform. The work of Khoo and Ainley (2005) in identifying Year 9 as a critical decision-making time for adolescents must not be ignored. Year 9 needs to be viewed as an important time in adolescence and educational programmes need to reflect and support this critical stage of development.

2.3 Vision and Philosophy for Reform of the Middle Years and Year 9

This section provides a preamble to the discussion on vision and philosophy for the middle years of schooling and Year 9 reform. The section defines the term 'vision', and discusses the role that it plays in school reform.

Wallace (1996) describes vision as the mental image of the future we hope to create. It needs to be realistic, credible and attractive so that it can "guide the content and processes of the desired future state of a school in its mission as a learning institution, imagining the best possible conditions for students to learn and for teachers to teach" (Wallace, 1996, p. 4). Vision has an important role to play in shaping middle years' reform. Creating a shared vision for change is thought to be an essential element in successful school improvement (Fullan, 2007; Stoll & Fink, 1994), particularly when effecting positive change in the middle years of schooling (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Pendergast et al. (2005) also argue that conceptualising a vision for learning within schools is an important

step in founding and promoting lifelong learning. Further, shared vision that incorporates an early examination of teachers' own values and beliefs is considered an essential feature of successful school reform (Stoll & Fink, 1994).

Sergiovanni (2005) argues, "successful schools know how to make their visions useful. They do this by turning visions into action statements" (p. 55). A clear, written philosophy stating the vision and actions of a school is therefore required for school improvement initiatives. Middle school researchers have also argued that published vision statements outlining the curricular, environmental and instructional practices schools aim to provide is an essential element in reforming the middle years of schooling (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mannings & Bucher, 2012; MYSA, 2008).

Literature on vision for Year 9 reform in Australia is limited and so it becomes necessary to examine vision for this year level from the broader sphere of middle years of schooling philosophy. Section 2.3.1 therefore examines current literature pertaining to vision and philosophy for the middle years of schooling in Australia. Following this, Section 2.3.2 examines the limited literature on vision for Year 9 reform.

2.3.1 Vision and philosophy for middle years of schooling in Australia.

As Chadbourne and Pendergast (2010) explain, philosophy on the middle years of schooling consists of "the assumptions and beliefs underpinning the purpose, design elements and recommended practices of middle schools" (p. 23). These assumptions and beliefs are all socially constructed (Chadbourne & Pendergast, 2010), contextually influenced (MYSA, 2008; Prosser, 2008) and brought to life by individual teachers rather than institutions (Beane, 2001; Prosser, 2008). This means that whilst some definite agreement exists in the discussion of Australian middle school philosophy (Pendergast, 2010), it remains a living, organic phenomenon that will change with people, contexts and time.

Vision for improving the learning outcomes of adolescents has been at the forefront of middle years of schooling agendas in Australia. Philosophy and vision for the middle years of schooling in Australia began to emerge with key research reports into the failings of traditional education and the changing needs of middle years' adolescents (Barratt, 1998; Cormack & Cumming, 1996a, 1996b & 1996c; Luke et al., 2003). The *National Middle Schooling Project* (see Cumming, 1998) identified eight key principles that were believed to be essential to middle schooling. It stated that the education in the middle years needed to be:

1. Learner-centred;
2. Collaboratively organised;
3. Outcome-based;
4. Flexibly constructed;
5. Ethically aware;
6. Community-oriented;
7. Adequately resourced; and
8. Strategically linked to other areas of schooling.

(Cumming, 1998)

Cumming's (1998) research also identified three goals for middle years' reform including: (1) engaged, focused and achieving adolescents; (2) effective curriculum, teaching and organisational practices; and (3) genuine partnerships and long-term support from those with key roles in the education of adolescents.

Three years later in 2001, after an extensive examination of the literature, Chadbourne (2001) compiled his own list of eight characterising elements of philosophy on the middle years of schooling. This frequently cited list provides a distinct synopsis of Australian middle schooling philosophy at the time. The list states that in practice, middle schooling involves:

- Higher order thinking, holistic learning, critical thinking, problem-solving and life-long learning;
- Students taking charge of their own learning and constructing their own meanings;

- Integrated and disciplinary curricula that are negotiated, relevant and challenging;
- Cooperative learning and collaborative teaching;
- Authentic, reflective and outcomes based assessment;
- Heterogeneous and flexible student groupings;
- Success for every student; and
- Small learning communities that provide students with sustained individual attention in a safe, healthy school environment.

(Chadbourne, 2001, p. 2)

A greater emphasis on student-centred learning where “students [are] taking charge” and programmes are negotiated, individualised and strive for “success for every student” can be seen in Chadbourne’s (2001, p. 2) compared to Cummings (1998) work. The focus on student-centred learning has continued in the development of middle years’ philosophy (Chadbourne & Pendergast, 2010; MYSA, 2008) and research on appropriate curriculum for the middle years (Dowden, 2007, 2014).

MYSA’s (2008) position paper on the middle years of schooling in Australia presents a succinct, general philosophy on the middle years of schooling. In essence, they believe that middle schooling is “an intentional approach to teaching and learning that is responsive and appropriate to the full range of needs, interests and achievements of middle years’ students in formal and informal schooling contexts” (MYSA, 2008, p. 1). MYSA (2008) also constitute that middle schools need to have a clear and contextually relevant philosophy and employ a range of “signature practices” in order to engage adolescents in relevant, meaningful and challenging learning (p. 1). Signature practices designed to both assist the learning process and facilitate the implementation of middle schooling philosophy include:

- Higher order thinking strategies;
- Integrated and disciplinary curricula that are negotiated, relevant and challenging;
- Heterogeneous and flexible student groupings;

- Cooperative learning and collaborative teaching;
- Small learning communities that provide students with sustained individual attention in a safe and healthy environment;
- Emphasis on strong teacher-student relationships through extended contact with a small number of teachers and a consistent student cohort;
- Authentic and reflective assessment with high expectations;
- Democratic governance and shared leadership; and
- Parental and community involvement in student learning.

(MYSA, 2008, p. 1)

MYSA (2008) also promote evidence-based approaches, which include clear outcomes. Examples given of these include: developing lifelong learner attributes, enhancing academic outcomes and creating a love of learning (MYSA, 2008).

The recent ACER (2012) report on junior secondary schooling in Queensland argues for six key principles when designing programmes for students in Years 7 to 9. The six-principles include:

1. A distinct identity for junior secondary;
2. Quality teaching;
3. Student Wellbeing;
4. Parent and community involvement;
5. Leadership for adolescents; and
6. Local decision-making.

(Adapted from ACER, 2012, p. 11)

An important feature that the ACER (2012) report adds to the literature is the explicit focus on student wellbeing in designing middle years' programmes. Researchers have touched upon issues relating to student wellbeing in the past, by suggesting that the middle years' programmes need to include aspects such as a focus on relationships (Chadbourne, 2001; DETEV, 2002; Hill & Russell, 1999; MYSA, 2008) and supportive environments (Chadbourne, 2001; MYSA, 2008). The ACER (2012) report however, expressly calls for schools to "meet the social and emotional needs of junior secondary students with a strong focus on pastoral care" (p. 16). Redmond et al. (2016) identify that whilst most middle

years' adolescents are faring well in terms of student wellbeing, there is still a significant proportion of students who experience low levels of wellbeing. Students with low wellbeing face issues such as: frequent health complaints; bullying; low levels of engagement at school; and low levels of social support (Redmond et al., 2016). They are also at risk of carrying disadvantage into adulthood and missing out on "opportunities for healthy development and strengthening their human capital" (Redmond et al., 2016, p. 4). On the positive side, enhanced student wellbeing is thought to improve motivation; increase academic achievement; increase participation and attendance at school; and decrease poor student behaviour (ACER, 2012).

It is evident that as research into the middle years has grown in Australia, so too has agreement on what the middle years of schooling should entail. For example, themes such as constructivism (Chadbourne, 2001; Chadbourne & Pendergast, 2010); student-centred approaches (ACER, 2012; Barratt, 1998; Chadbourne, 2001; Chadbourne & Pendergast, 2010; Cumming, 1998; DETEV, 2002; Pendergast et al. 2005); developmentally appropriate and needs based curriculum/pedagogy (Barratt, 1998; Chadbourne, 2001; Cumming, 1998; Dowson, Ross, Donovan, Richards & Johnson, 2005; Hill & Russell, 1999; Shanks & Dowden, 2015); teacher collaboration (Chadbourne, 2001; Main, 2010; MYSA, 2008; Pendergast et al., 2005); a strong emphasis on student-teacher relationships (Chadbourne, 2001; DETEV, 2002; Hill & Russell, 1999); and a strong emphasis on student wellbeing (ACER, 2012; Redmond et al., 2016) are themes common throughout middle school literature and join to form a growing philosophy for the middle years of schooling in Australia.

Chadbourne's (2001) early examination of the middle years of schooling philosophy and MYSA's (2008) current position paper reveal much consistency. Both papers present a philosophy advocating for student-centred approaches, the use of thinking strategies, cooperative learning, collaborative teaching and authentic assessment. These two papers also present several links to middle years' philosophy in the USA, particularly the *This We Believe* statements of the National Middle School Association (see NMSA, 1995, 2001, 2003) and more

recently the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE, 2010). An accumulating agreement of middle years of schooling philosophy appears to be growing within Australia, which is certainly encouraging. It is important to note though that vision and philosophy for middle years' education needs to be contextually relevant (MYSA, 2008) and adapted to suit individual schools. It has been readily argued that middle years of schooling philosophy should be cognisant of, and adaptable to, the increasing amount of diversity in classrooms and the changing social and technological contexts of learners (Carrington, 2006; Luke et al., 2003; Prosser, 2008).

What still appears to be lacking in terms of middle years' literature is direction and guidance for schools wanting to implement such approaches. Vision for teacher collaboration for example, is readily found in philosophy for the middle years of schooling, however this statement alone can be ambiguous. Direction and guidance for middle years' teachers asked to work in teams is often limited within schools (Main, 2010) and the type of collaborative work that is desirable is not well established. Chadbourne (2004) identifies six different typologies of teacher collaboration (see Section 2.8) however it is unclear within middle years' literature as to what types of collaboration are needed and when. Advocacy for integrated curriculum is also readily present within middle years' literature (Carrington, 2006; Chadbourne, 2001; MYSA, 2008) however, it appears schools and teachers are still wanting assistance to understand what integrated curriculum should actually entail and how it can be implemented in ways that are responsive to adolescents' developmental needs (Dowden, 2014).

As Bahr and Crosswell (2011) noted, and as discussed in Section 1.3.1, explicit direction for Australian schools wanting to adopt middle years of schooling practices is rare. And further, explicit direction for integrated curriculum models for the middle years of schooling are underdeveloped (Dowden, 2007, 2014). Middle years' approaches have largely been bottom-up in nature or at the grassroots, individual school level (Bahr & Crosswell, 2011; Dowden, 2014). This has most likely contributed to the lack of explicit curriculum direction and the weak and dispersed curriculum messages that exist amongst middle years'

programmes and literature in Australia (Dowden, 2014). At best, curriculum direction has been holistic and general in nature, describing over-arching characteristics of middle years' curriculum rather than specific elements and strategies for teachers. An example of this is Dowson et al.'s (2005) model which argues for the following broad elements in middle years' curriculum: relevance, responsibility, belonging, awareness, engagement, competence, ethics and pedagogy. Whilst models such as Dowson et al. (2005) and broad visionary statements such as MYSA (2008) are useful starting points for schools, more guidance and direction is required to assist schools in developing and implementing practical middle years' approaches. The recent introduction and implementation of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016) provides further implications for teachers in designing middle years' curriculum and programmes. Schools wanting to adopt middle years' approaches are now required to do so within the parameters and constraints of the Australian Curriculum. This is another area where further guidance for schools would be welcomed.

In summary, this section has examined the emerging vision and philosophy for the middle years of schooling in Australia. There appears to be growing agreement amongst researchers that the middle years of schooling need to provide a developmentally appropriate education for students. In fact, vision for the middle years of schooling has not changed significantly in the past decade as illustrated by an examination of Chadbourne (2001), MYSA (2008), Chadbourne and Pendergast (2010), and ACER's (2012) works. Whilst broad visionary statements and curriculum models have assisted in solidifying middle years' philosophy in Australia, it appears that schools are still seeking more direction and guidance to assist them in adopting middle years' approaches.

2.3.2 Vision for Year 9 reform in Australia.

Year 9 students have emerged as a distinct sub-group within the broader field of the middle years of schooling. As section 2.2.3 argued, a strong rationale for reform of this year level exists. Literature on vision for Year 9 education and Year 9 reform however, is very limited. The most substantial research on vision

for Year 9 reform comes from Cole (2006) and Cole et al. (2006b). These researchers provide a list of suggestions for future practice and reform initiatives in Year 9. These suggestions and the parallels they share with more general vision for the middle years of schooling are examined in this section.

Cole (2006), as well as Cole et al. (2006b), provide a list of six suggestions designed to enhance the educational experiences of Year 9 students. In examining these suggestions, it is important to acknowledge as Cole (2006) does, “there is no blueprint for Year 9 reform that can be applied to all school situations” and “each school will need to find its own reform pathway” (p. 8). The suggestions nonetheless provide some vision for Year 9 reform. They also identify middle schooling approaches that, in Cole’s (2006) words, accentuate “the most promising approaches for transforming Year 9” (p. 8).

Cole’s (2006, pp. 8-13) suggestions for enhancing Year 9 education include:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Suggestion 1 | Provide structures and procedures that deliver timetable flexibility and enable a strong bond to be developed between staff and students; |
| Suggestion 2 | Provide classroom organisation and teaching and learning practices that are responsive to the diverse learning, social and emotional needs of young adolescents; |
| Suggestion 3 | Provide a distinct physical environment dedicated to Year 9; |
| Suggestion 4 | Provide learning opportunities that support students to engage with adults from their community and provide practical support to their community; |
| Suggestion 5 | Provide opportunities for students to experience adult-like roles of leadership and responsibility; and |
| Suggestion 6 | Provide opportunities for students to participate in special events or programmes that are of substantial interest and/or challenge to them. |

Vision for strong relationships between teachers and students (Suggestion 1); developmentally appropriate curriculum and pedagogy that meets students' needs (Suggestion 2); and opportunities that are engaging, challenging and interesting for students (Suggestion 6) are certainly advocated for in general middle years of schooling philosophy both in Australia and the USA (see for example: AMLE, 2010; Barratt, 1998; Chadbourne, 2001; Cumming, 1998; DETEV, 2002; Dowden, 2014; Hill & Russell, 1999; MYSA, 2008; Shanks & Dowden, 2013). Likewise is the vision for adolescents to have greater connections with the adults in their lives and their own communities (ACER, 2012; AMLE, 2010; MYSA, 2008).

Vision for a distinct physical space dedicated solely to Year 9 is a significant suggestion of Cole (2006). Other researchers have noted the importance of developing a distinct identity for students in the middle years (ACER, 2012), which is propelled and developed by middle years' teachers (Rumble & Aspland, 2010). The development of a distinct identity and physical space for a single year level however, is something distinguishing of Year 9 philosophy.

Vision for providing students with opportunities to experience adult-like roles of leadership and responsibility is a suggestion in response to the natural adolescent progression towards independence (ACER, 2012; Cole, 2006; Spear, 2000). Whilst seeking independence is not unique to Year 9 students alone, it would be fair to suggest that the level of independence sought by an older Year 9 student would be greater than those at the other end of middle years' education, namely Years 5 or 6. Therefore, the need to experience more adult-like roles of leadership and responsibility are perhaps more acute at the Year 9 level as opposed to earlier middle years' grades.

As it should be, vision for Year 9 reform is grounded in philosophy and vision for the middle years of schooling in general. Because of this, many similarities can be found in the vision for Year 9 and the vision for the wider field of middle years of schooling. The suggestions that Cole (2006) and Cole et al. (2006a) make for reforming Year 9 provide some much needed pragmatic direction for

schools seeking reform. What is missing from discussion on vision for Year 9 are more voices from states other than Victoria to create a more complete vision for Year 9 education and reform in Australia. By examining vision for Year 9 reform in a Tasmanian school, this study aims to contribute to this emergent philosophy.

2.4 Capacity Building for Sustainable School Improvement

Capacity building has become an important focus point within school improvement research in recent decades. Capacity, in its simplest form, is defined as “the collective competency of the school as an entity to bring about effective change” (National College for School Leadership [NCSL] cited in Hopkins & Jackson, 2003, p. 84). It is by focussing on capacity building that schools develop the ability to sustain continuous improvements (Hopkins & Jackson, 2003). Indeed, the notion of school improvement itself has been referred to as the ability to not only change school culture but also the ability to manage and sustain change (Hopkins, Ainscow, & West, 1994). Capacity building therefore remains a central part of improving and reforming schools. This section of the literature review gives a contextual background to explain why capacity building has received increased attention in recent decades. The section then uses Mitchell and Sackney’s (2011) theory of capacity to define and discuss key developments in the literature on various aspects of capacity building.

Increased attention on capacity building occurred after it was revealed that despite several decades of research on school reform and a vast amount of time and money invested in school reform projects, the longevity and actual impact of reform efforts have rarely had a significant influence on pedagogy, classrooms or young people (Cuban, 2013; Harris, 2003; Harris, 2011a, 2011b; Levin, 2008). It is thought that one of the key reasons for this repeated failure is the ignorance of how important capacity building is in sustaining school change (Harris, 2011a). Perhaps another reason is the fact that pragmatic and empirical research, which examines how capacity is created, sustained and managed by

school leaders, is only just emerging (Crowther, 2011). Studies such as this one, which explore aspects of capacity building in practice, are therefore needed to fill this research void.

Definitions, models and theories on building school capacity have been contentious, and whilst several commonalities exist amongst the published research, there seem to be many inconsistencies (Cosner, 2009; Crowther, 2011). The inconsistencies could be due to the fact that capacity building is contextually bound to individual schools, meaning that differentiated approaches are necessary (Stoll, 2009). It is also difficult to create exact models for capacity building because of the constant changing nature of schooling and the need to address both present and future contexts (Stoll, 2009).

Mitchell and Sackney's (2000, 2011) theory of capacity is considered one of the most significant models for understanding capacity building in schools (Crowther, 2011; Crowther & Dinham, 2011). It is for this reason that the model was selected to frame this section of the literature review on capacity building for sustainable school improvement. Mitchell and Sackney's (2000, 2011) model identifies three highly interrelated categories of capacity building for learning communities. The three categories include: *Personal Capacity*, *Interpersonal Capacity* and *Organisational Capacity* (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). The following features of the model show the strong interrelationships that exist between the categories:

- The three categories are recursive and mutually influence each other;
- Growth in each category is affected by prior growth in itself and other categories;
- Boundaries between the categories are permeable and borders are expandable;
- Circumstances may occasionally position one of the categories ahead of another;
- Circumstances may occasionally make it difficult to distinguish between categories;
- Growth and limits will occur simultaneously in all three categories; and

- Building capacity in each of the categories is likely to occur in a non-linear, organic fashion.

(Adapted from: Mitchell & Sackney, 2011, p. 16)

Figure 2.1 from Mitchell and Sackney (2011, p. 16) illustrates the three categories of the model and their interrelationships:

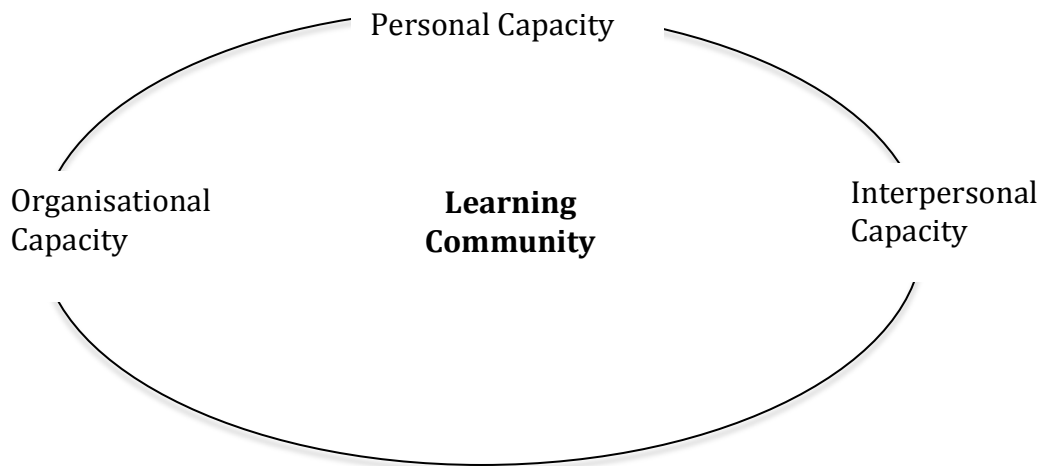


Figure 2.1. Capacity building for learning communities. Adapted from *Profound Improvement: Building Capacity for a Learning Community 2nd Edition* (p. 16), by C. Mitchell and L. Sackney, 2011, New York, NY: Routledge.

Mitchell and Sackney (2011) begin their theory by repositioning schools as *learning communities*, which focus on facilitating the growth and development of all members within them including students, teachers, support staff and parents. Learning communities are defined as: “a group of people who take an active, reflective, collaborative, learning-oriented, and growth-promoting approach towards the mysteries, problems and perplexities of teaching and learning” (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011, p. 12). They are also considered “living systems” influenced by diversity, complexity, relationships, interrelationships, collaboration and collegiality (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011, p. 12).

The term *Professional Learning Communities* (PLCs) refers to a similar concept to that of Mitchell and Sackney's (2000, 2011) learning communities. In the past two decades, the PLC concept has gained significant support with several researchers arguing that the establishment and maintenance of PLCs are essential in building capacity for sustainable school improvement (DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Fullan, 2000; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Stoll, 2009; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). The distinction between PLCs and Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) learning communities is that learning communities offer a broader perspective where learning "unfold[s] within a wide array of events, experiences, activities, interactions and interests" and all members are considered from support staff, to students, parents and of course teachers (p. 9). PLCs on the other hand focus more specifically, though not exclusively, on the professional work of teachers. Stoll et al. (2006) define PLCs as "a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way" (p. 223). PLCs are designed to promote "rich conversations" amongst teachers and "stimulating, challenging [and] rewarding professional relationships" (Hargreaves, 2007, p. 182). They are also results orientated where facilitating and supporting the learning of all students is the primary objective (DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Table 2.2 presents a comprehensive summary outlining the key dimensions of PLCs according to Hipp and Huffman (2007, p. 121).

Table 2.2

Dimensions of a Professional Learning Community

Shared and Supportive Leadership – School administrators participate democratically with teachers by sharing power, authority and decision making, and promoting and nurturing leadership amongst staff.

Shared Values and Vision – staff shares vision for school improvement that have an undeviating focus on student learning. Shared values support norms of behaviour that guide decisions about teaching and learning.

Collective Learning and Application – staff at all levels of the school share

information and work collaboratively to plan, solve problems and improve learning opportunities. Together they seek knowledge, skills and strategies and apply this new learning to their work.

Shared Personal Practice – Peers visit with and observe one another to offer encouragement and to provide feedback on instructional practices to assist in student achievement and increase individual and organisational capacity.

Supportive Conditions (Relationships & Structures) – Collegial relationships include respect trust, norms of critical inquiry and improvement, and positive, caring relationships amongst students, teachers and administrators. Structures include a variety of conditions such as size of the school, proximity of staff to one another, communication systems, and the time and space for staff to meet and examine current practices.

Adapted from “Using Assessment Tools as Frames for Dialogue to Create and Sustain Professional Learning Communities,” by K. K. Hipp & J. B. Huffman, 2007, In L. Stoll, & K. S. Louis (Eds.), *Professional Learning Communities: Divergence, Depth and Dilemmas* (p. 121). Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

Several researchers have supported Hipp and Huffman (2007) by suggesting that shared vision is a vital element in the establishment and maintenance of PLCs (DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Hipp & Huffman, 2007; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Stoll et al., 2006; Hargreaves, 2007; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000, 2011). Schein (2010) argues that schools must develop a shared concept, which outlines their “primary task”, “core mission” or “reason to be” (p. 74). Forming and making decisions about this shared concept reflects the identity of a school (Schein, 2010) and paves the way the way for strategic planning and school improvements.

Hipp and Huffman’s (2007) dimensions of PLCs also highlight the need for democratic processes and leadership models, as well as supportive conditions that allow PLCs to function effectively. The topics of leadership and supportive conditions that allow PLCs to function effectively are explored further in Sections 2.6 and 2.7 on interpersonal and organisational capacity respectively. Of particular interest to this study is the establishment of PLCs in high schools. The functions and core elements of PLCs in high schools as opposed to primary schools do not change, however as McLaughlin and Talbert (2007) discovered,

the high school context presents substantially more challenges for schools wanting to establish and maintain a PLC. In particular, they identify the following factors that appear to inhibit PLCs in the high school context:

Table 2.3

Inhibitors for High School Professional Learning Communities

1. *Structural Impediments* - particularly high school timetables, which often leave little time for teacher collaboration. Demands on teachers' time such as paperwork, classroom management tasks and multiple course preparation also impedes on teachers' abilities to work collaboratively.
 2. *High School Leadership* - it is difficult for high school leaders to provide instructional advice or serve as a model across a wide range of teaching areas.
 3. *Professional Culture* - traditional norms of teaching subjects rather than teaching students shape teachers' self concept, perceptions of professional responsibilities and attitudes towards students.
 4. *Culture of Student Disrespect Towards Teachers* - disrespect, which can lead to violence, cheating and discipline problems place extra demands on teachers. Disrespect and perceived lack of support can draw away from teachers' professional commitment.
 5. *External Contexts* - political pressure and increased accountability affect teachers' abilities to work in professional learning communities. Often teachers focus heavily on performance tests, which creates competition amongst departments and individual teachers. Such pressures are a disincentive for teachers to spend time critically evaluating their own practice.
-

Adapted from "Building Professional Learning Communities in High Schools: Challenges and Promising Practices," by M. W. McLaughlin & J. E. Talbert, 2007, In L. Stoll, & K. S. Louis (Eds.), *Professional Learning Communities: Divergence, Depth and Dilemmas* (pp. 152-153). Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

Despite the increased inhibitors in establishing and maintaining PLCs in high schools, such communities are possible and highly effective in promoting high school improvement and teacher commitment to learning (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2007). By viewing schools as PLCs, schools place themselves in a greater position to build capacity for sustainable improvement (DuFour &

Fullan, 2013; Fullan, 2000; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011; Stoll, 2009; Stoll et al., 2006).

Sections 2.5 to 2.7 define and explain Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) three categories of capacity building, including Personal Capacity, Interpersonal Capacity and Organisational Capacity. The three categories form a framework from which a broader field of capacity building literature is examined and discussed.

2.5 Personal Capacity

Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) first category of capacity focuses on the individual or personal capacity of teachers. According to Mitchell and Sackney (2011), personal capacity is structured by the following embedded elements: values, assumptions, beliefs and practical knowledge. Building personal capacity begins by exploring and confronting these elements, which can be both implicit and explicit in nature. The exploration of personal capacity involves both internal and external searches (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). The internal search comprises deep, critical reflection where teachers can deconstruct the elements of their own personal capacity to discover their own personal narratives and search for what is termed a "personal theory of professional practice" (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011, p. 21). Teachers' personal theories of professional practice influence teacher efficacy, collegial practice and professional learning (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). The external search involves networking and the assessment of new, available information and knowledge (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011).

It has been argued that the development of teachers' personal capacities play a pivotal role in school improvement and in building a school's capacity to sustain change (Crowther et al., 2002; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Kaniuka, 2012; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). In fact, individual teacher capacity has been considered the most influential element in improving student learning outcomes (Hall & Simeral, 2008; Kaniuka, 2012; Marzano, 2003). Hall and Simeral (2008) acknowledge that this is not a new argument and that the correlation between

teacher efficacy and student learning has been noted since the beginning of the Twentieth Century. Hall and Simeral (2008) also acknowledge that despite a vast amount of research on improving the practice of teaching, very little actual change has resulted. Like Mitchell and Sackney (2011), they argue that improving teachers' skills is realised through self-reflection, but also through providing specific, targeted administrative feedback and school leaders building and maintaining strong relationships with every teacher (Hall & Simeral, 2008). Therefore, whilst building personal capacity requires much individual reflection, it is not an individual pursuit. As Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) model explains, building personal capacity is mutually influenced by both interpersonal and organisational capacity. Growth in personal capacity is therefore shaped and influenced with the growth of interpersonal capacity and the capacity of the organisation.

The following sub-sections explore factors impacting on building the personal capacity of teachers (Section 2.5.1) and the notion of building personal capacity through teacher leadership (Section 2.5.2).

2.5.1 Factors impacting on building the personal capacities of teachers.

Recent research on the personal capacities of teachers has identified several factors, which impact on teachers' abilities to improve their own practice and contribute to school improvement. These factors include: demands on teachers in the workplace; teachers' prior experiences in teaching and reform initiatives; and teachers' self-concepts. Firstly, the demanding and stressful nature of teachers' work has been identified as an inhibitor for teachers wanting to improve their practice (Caine & Caine, 2010; Fullan, 2007; Kaniuka, 2012; Stoll, Fink, & Earl, 2003). High levels of stress, alienation and job dissatisfaction are factors that have contributed to the decline in teaching conditions in recent times (Fullan, 2007). Levin (2008) argues that too much is expected from schools and that educators often feel as though they are blamed for social problems and expected to remedy all of the deficiencies in society. These

increased expectations on schools create more pressure for teachers and detract from developing personal teacher capacity.

Teachers' prior experiences have been found to impact on their ability to develop personal capacity. More specifically, teachers' abilities to adopt new techniques and implement new pedagogies are influenced by their previous experiences in the classroom and in reform (Kaniuka, 2012; Vitale & Kaniuka, 2009). Routines and habits in the classrooms, for example, have the potential to restrict teachers from considering how to enhance their own practice and can limit them from adopting research-proven practices (Kaniuka, 2012; Vitale & Kaniuka, 2009). Kaniuka (2012) argues that school leaders need to provide teachers with mastery experiences so that they can "develop a new sense of what is possible, not only in terms of student performance, but also what can be considered as viable school reform options" (p. 344). By giving teachers the chance to experience positive professional development, school leaders can increase teacher capacity by ensuring that teachers are more open to initiatives and that they see the benefits of self-evaluating their own practice.

Teachers' experiences are closely linked to their own sense of self or self-concepts. As Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) write, teachers who have good self-concept and self-efficacy are more likely to consider the influence their practice has on student learning. These teachers are improvement focussed in that they do not blame poor learning outcomes on factors beyond their control (such as home environments) and instead focus on what they can improve – their own teaching practice (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

The sometimes stressful and demanding nature of teachers' work; prior experiences; and self-concepts can impact directly on teachers' abilities to develop personal capacity. These factors present inhibitors for the deep personal reflection required when teachers examine and deconstruct aspects of their personal theory of professional practice. Addressing these inhibitors therefore becomes a necessary part of the work required for building personal capacity within schools.

2.5.2 Building personal capacity through teacher leadership.

The notion of teacher leadership has emerged in several publications surrounding capacity building over the past decade (for example: Crowther, 2011; Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson & Hann, 2002; Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, 2011). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2011) provide the following definition for teacher leaders: “Teacher leaders lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership” (p. 6). This definition has four clear elements. Firstly, teacher leaders need to lead not only within their own classrooms, but also beyond this, in the wider school community (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2011). This implies sharing work with other teachers and leads naturally on to the second point. The second element of Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (2011) definition calls for teacher leaders to contribute to professional learning communities. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2011) argue that teacher leadership develops naturally when teachers work, learn, share and address problems together. Thirdly, teacher leaders influence those around them in improving educational practice. They influence colleagues through their personal relationships; by motivating others; showing initiative; experimenting with new ideas; sharing work with others; and exhibiting the behaviours that they advocate for (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2011). Finally, as Katzenmeyer and Moller (2011) write, “leadership assumes accountability for results” (p. 9). This means that teacher leaders must be prepared to accept accountability for their actions and those of their colleagues.

Another important publication on teacher leaders comes from Crowther et al. (2009) who offer a comprehensive summary of the key roles and functions of teacher leaders. Table 2.4 shares this summary.

Table 2.4

Characteristics and Functions of Teacher Leaders

Teacher Leaders...

Convey convictions about a better world by

- Articulating a positive future for all students
- Contributing to an image of teaching as a profession that makes a difference

Facilitate communities of learning by

- Encouraging a shared, school-wide approach to core pedagogical processes
- Approaching professional learning as consciousness-raising about complex issues
- Synthesizing new ideas out of colleagues' professional discourse and reflective activities

Strive for pedagogical excellence by

- Showing genuine interest in students' needs and wellbeing
- Continuously developing and refining personal teaching gifts and talents
- Seeking deep understanding of significant pedagogical practices

Confront barriers in the school's culture and structures by

- Standing up for children, especially disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and groups
- Working with administrators to find solutions to issues of equity, fairness and justice
- Encouraging student 'voice' in ways that are sensitive to students' developmental stages and circumstances

Translate ideas into sustainable systems of action by

- Working with the principal, administrators, and other teachers to manage projects that heighten alignment between the school's vision, values, pedagogical practices, and professional learning activities
- Building alliances and nurturing external networks of support

Nurture a culture of success by

- Acting on opportunities to emphasise accomplishments and high expectations
 - Encouraging collective responsibility in addressing school-wide challenges
 - Encouraging self-respect and confidence in students' communities
-

Adapted from *Developing Teacher Leaders, 2nd Edition* (p. 3), by F. Crowther, M. Ferguson, & L. Hann, 2009, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Crowther et al.'s (2009) extensive list shows that teacher leaders are not only focussed on building their own teacher capacity but also their own school's capacity. By nurturing cultures of success and confronting barriers in school culture, teacher leaders are contributing to their school's capacity to develop,

support and sustain improvements. This complements Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) theory of personal capacity whereby the capacity of individuals is built in conjunction with the interpersonal and organisational capacity of entire learning communities.

Similarities can be seen between Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) three elements of capacity and Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) theory of *Professional Capital*. Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) professional capital is built upon the three pillars of human capital, social capital and decisional capital. Like Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) personal capacity, human capital is associated with individuals and the knowledge and skills they bring to the profession. Social capital on the other hand is associated with interpersonal capacity or the cultures, interactions, relationships and collegial workings of groups (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Whilst Mitchell and Sackney (2011) highlight the importance of supportive organisational structures in building personal capacity, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) argue that decisional capital, where teachers are able to "make discretionary judgments" about their work, is essential (p. 93). In other words, allowing for and promoting teacher agency is essential in building capacity and facilitating teacher leadership. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) also state that teacher experience is vital in developing decisional capital and transforming teachers from "keen amateur[s]" to "skilled professional[s]" (p. 95).

In summary, personal capacity is associated with the values, assumptions, beliefs and practices that individual teachers embrace. Building personal capacity involves deep internal and external reflection on teachers' parts. It is also influenced and shaped by the work of others in both interpersonal and organisational capacities. Various factors have been shown to impact on the building of teacher capacity including the demands on teachers' workloads; prior teaching and reform experiences; teachers' self-concepts; and the levels of teacher agency teachers are afforded. Building teacher leadership is a facet of building personal capacity, which remains an effective tool in enhancing learning communities and enacting reform.

2.6 Interpersonal Capacity

Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) second category of capacity, interpersonal capacity, shifts the focus from individuals to groups. Interpersonal capacity concentrates on collegial relationships, collective practices and perhaps most importantly, collective learning. As Mitchell and Sackney (2011) explain:

The construction of professional knowledge is not the solitary pursuit of one individual. Instead it is a culturally embedded process of negotiation among individuals who come into the shared space with different knowledge bases, different histories, different hopes and aspirations, different personal styles and emotions and different desires and needs. (pp. 53-54)

It is through the building of interpersonal capacity that PLCs operate and grow. Building interpersonal capacity involves the development of a collaborative team that is supported by open communication where members can contribute without fear of recrimination or reprisal (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). Developing interpersonal capacity also involves "collective inquiry" and collaborative learning so that shared understandings regarding a school's purpose, values and commitments are established (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011, p. 69). Attention needs to be paid to school culture when building interpersonal capacity, including the affective and cognitive conditions that allow for open, respectful and trusting relationships to transpire (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). Sub-section 2.6.1 defines school culture and outlines its function in building interpersonal capacity and contributing to school improvement. Sub-sections 2.6.2 and 2.6.3 then explore the affective and cognitive elements of school culture respectively.

2.6.1 Interpersonal capacity and school culture.

The interactive, contextually influenced notion of interpersonal capacity is impacted significantly by school culture. School culture is an elusive, largely implicit and difficult concept to define (Stoll & Fink, 1996). Broadly speaking, school culture refers to "the way that everyone in the school's system behaves,

thinks and treats others” (Webster-Smith, Albritton, & Kohler-Evans, 2012, p. 57). It is also the outward exhibition of collective values and beliefs present within a school (Webster-Smith et al., 2012). As Scagliarini (2008) found, researchers’ attempts to define school culture have produced a host of analogies and metaphors ranging from glue, to complex webs and patchwork quilts. Perhaps the only consensus found within these descriptions is the idea that whilst culture is elusive, it has the power to bring people and hold people together. For Deal and Peterson (1999), school culture represents the “unwritten rules and traditions, norms and expectations that seem to permeate everything” within an organisation (p. 2). This general definition of school culture begins to highlight the power that it holds within an organisation. The idea that culture can “permeate everything” (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 2) is significant because it means that culture has the potential to influence all aspects of a school community including, not the least, its staff.

Schein (2010) has been influential in directing contemporary theory on culture. He describes culture as a “‘here and now’ dynamic phenomenon” that is created and shaped by people’s behaviour and their interactions with others (Schein, 2010, p. 3). As the previous paragraph began to explain, culture has the power to influence people in various ways but can also evoke a sense of stability and even rigidity in that people learn how to perceive, feel and act in given situations through their socialisation experiences (Schein, 2010). Schein argues that the central element of culture is the assumptions members have about their shared identity, purpose and function. This again highlights the need for shared vision so that school personnel can work collaboratively towards a common purpose. As Schein (2010) warns however, consensus on shared vision and identity does not guarantee that all school personnel will work towards a common goal. Schools with a shared vision are still at risk of sub-cultures, which may not always work towards the agreed purpose (Schein, 2010). Combatting this involves adopting a common language so that vision is clearly articulated and holding shared assumptions about how the vision is to be carried out (Schein, 2010).

Mitchell and Sackney (2011) argue that certain conditions need to be present within school culture in order for interpersonal capacity to develop and grow. In particular, the affective and cognitive elements of school culture help to facilitate growth in interpersonal capacity (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). The following two sub-sections are dedicated to exploring the affective (Section 2.6.2) and cognitive (Section 2.6.3) elements of school culture.

2.6.2 Affective elements of culture.

Put simply, affective elements of school culture are associated with how people feel within schools. According to Mitchell and Sackney (2011) building the affective elements of culture involves two tasks: “valuing the contributions of colleagues (affirmation)” and “involving them as participants (invitation)” (p. 55). It is by inviting people to contribute and affirming and valuing their ideas and contributions that affective culture, including trust begins to grow.

Researchers who have explored the concept of school culture have argued that affective conditions such as trust (Bryk, 2010; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Crowther et al., 2009; Cosner, 2009; Handford & Leithwood, 2012; Kochanek, 2005; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011), mutual respect (Crowther et al., 2009) and the listening to, and valuing of, others’ opinions (Bryk, 2010; Crowther et al., 2009; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011) is integral to building interpersonal and subsequently organisational capacity for improvement. These elements are explored further in the remainder of this section.

The concept of trust is strongly argued to be a vital element in enhancing school culture and contributing to school improvement (Brewster & Railsback, 2003; Bryk, 2010; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Crowther et al., 2009; Cosner, 2009; Handford & Leithwood, 2012; Harris, Caldwell, & Longmuir, 2013; Kochanek, 2005; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). Trust however, remains a difficult concept to define, leading to various “fuzzy” interpretations (Brewster & Railsback, 2003, p. 1). Noteworthy research on trust has identified different types of trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), facets of trust (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998) and the benefits of trust, particularly in relation to school

improvement (Brewster & Railsback, 2003; Harris, 2002; Kochanek, 2005). Bryk and Schneider's (2002) seminal work on trust in schools identifies three distinct forms of trust including: organic trust, contractual trust and relational trust. It is relational trust, which focuses on and values social relationships that is most relevant and important when examining trust in schools. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's work (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998) concentrates on understanding the concept of relational trust in schools. They identify five key facets of trust including: benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability and competence (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Brewster and Railsback (2003, pp. 4-5) provide a pragmatic synopsis of Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (1999) five facets of trust as shown in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5
Overview of the Five Facets of Trust

Benevolence	Having confidence that another party has your best interests at heart and will protect your interests is a key ingredient of trust.
Reliability	Reliability refers to the extent to which you can depend upon another party to come through for you, to act consistently, and to follow through.
Competence	Similar to reliability, competence has to do with belief in another party's ability to perform the tasks required by his or her position. For example, if a principal means well but lacks necessary leadership skills, he or she is not likely to be trusted to do the job.
Honesty	A person's integrity, character and authenticity are all dimensions of trust. The degree to which a person can be counted on to represent situations fairly makes a huge difference in whether or not he or she is trusted by others in the school community.
Openness	Judgements about openness have to do with how freely another party shares information with others. Guarded communication, for instance, provokes distrust because people wonder what is being withheld and why. Openness is crucial to the development of trust between supervisors and subordinates, particularly in times of increased vulnerability for staff.

Adapted from *Building Trusting Relationships for School Improvement: Implications for Principals and Teachers* (pp. 4-5), by C. Brewster, & J. Railsback, 2003. Retrieved from http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/463

The benefits of trust in relation to school improvement and school effectiveness are well established. Trust is thought to mitigate uncertainty and vulnerability during school reform; assist in decision-making; promote greater understanding of the roles, expectations and obligations of people within schools; and increase school leaders' ability to make decisions, as teachers and parents will believe in the good intentions of trusted leaders (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Cosner (2009) writes that trust is vital in building school capacity because it supports the development of individual teacher capacity as well as knowledge and skills that are necessary for carrying out school improvements. Cosner (2009) identifies the following benefits of trust in school improvement:

1. Trust reduces uncertainty and predispositions people to cooperate during social interactions;
2. Trust promotes information exchanges between colleagues;
3. Trust acts as a support for conflict resolution;
4. Trust between colleagues contributes to the psychological safety of others; and
5. Trust has a positive impact on teamwork, task performance and perceptions of support within an institution.

Kochanek (2005) highlights that trust is significant to school improvement as it facilitates conversations between teachers that focus on improving practice.

Bryk (2010) also argues that trust acts as a "lubricant" for change and a "moral resource" for sustaining the difficult task of school improvement (Bryk, 2010, p. 27).

Whilst there appears to be consensus amongst researchers that trust is a key ingredient in improving and enhancing interpersonal capacity within schools, there is less agreement when it comes to practical advice for schools on how to build trust. A useful model for building trust in schools comes from Kochanek (2005) who draws on Bryk and Schneider's (2002) theory of trust in order to create a trust building framework. The model begins by "setting the stage for positive interactions" which in turn creates an environment from within which trust building is possible (Kochanek, 2005, p. 19). This setting of the stage is led by the school principal and involves: (1) communicating a vision of doing what

is best for students, and (2) reshaping the school or school's faculties to create a cohesive and competent team (Kochanek, 2005). As Kochanek (2005) explains, by bringing together a team of teachers with more compatible beliefs, trust is more likely to result.

Following this setting of the scene, Kochanek's (2005) model then prompts the fostering of low-risk, followed by high-risk exchanges amongst the school community, particularly teachers. Low-risk exchanges need to be respectful and promote personal regard (Kochanek, 2005). Low-risk exchanges are characterised by the following three points. Low risk exchanges:

1. Are purely social in nature and often simply involve conversation;
2. May be arranged around easily accomplished projects; and
3. Come in the form of daily informal social interaction or special school events.

(Adapted from Kochanek, 2005, pp. 22-23)

The second step, high-risk exchanges, encourages people to work together to make schools better (Kochanek, 2005). These types of exchanges are likely to promote respectful judgements of competence and in time will increase the overall competency and integrity of staff (Kochanek, 2005). Possible outlets for high-risk exchanges include: year level meetings; various school committees; faculty meetings; peer-assessments or evaluations; increased shared decision-making; and home-school connections such as newsletters, daily bulletins, and parent committees (Kochanek, 2005). Technology opens further outlets for both high-risk exchanges such as teacher-parent contact via Email; school websites and blogs; and content management systems for learning. Two pivotal activities regarding high-risk engages include developing a school vision or mission to determine what it is that students need and what the school is aiming to achieve, as well as a strategic plan centred on improving the productivity of the school (Kochanek, 2005). Kochanek (2005) explains that promoting successful, high-risk exchanges and interactions involve:

1. Implementing formal structures where people can engage in high-risk, complex interaction;
2. Developing a school vision or mission statement;

3. Pursuing a strategic action plan to increase the productivity of the school; and
4. Shifting control from administrators and formal leaders to teachers (distributed leadership).

Adapted from Kochanek (2005, p. 32)

Figure 2.2 taken from Kochanek (2005, p. 19) shows the full scope of the model including how each of the processes relate to Bryk and Schneider's (2002) theory of trust.

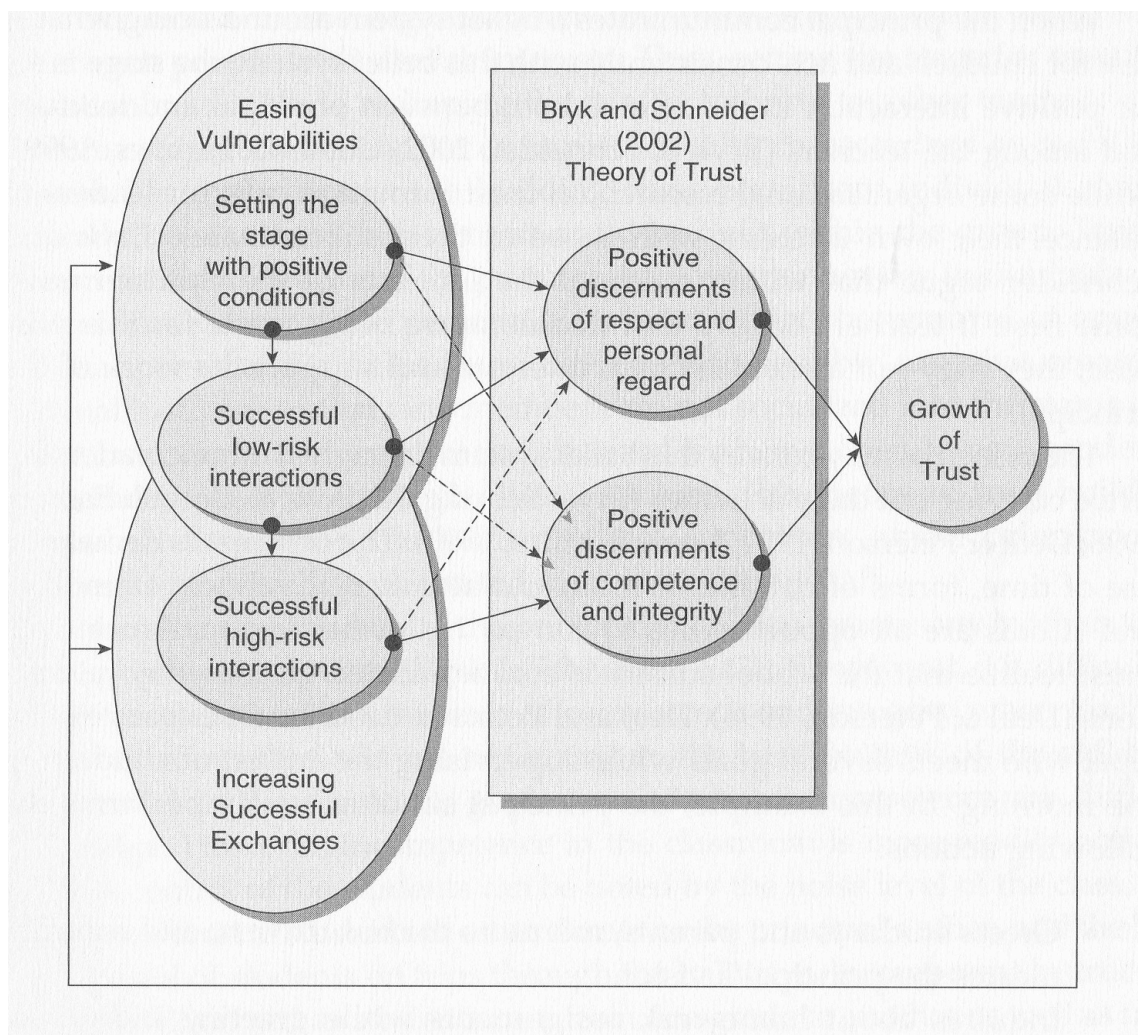


Figure 2.2. Trust building model. Adapted from *Building Trust for Better Schools: Researched-based Practices* (p. 19), by J. R. Kochanek, 2005, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Mutual respect and the valuing of others' opinions are both highly related to and influenced by trust. Bryk and Schneider (2002) argue that respect in schools involves "recognition of the important role each person plays in a child's education and the mutual dependencies that exist among various parties involved in their activity" (p. 23). They also argue that school personnel need to genuinely listen to what others have to say as this very action shows mutual respect (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). For Crowther et al. (2009) mutual respect is paramount to building teacher leadership, collaborative cultures and thus interpersonal capacity.

2.6.3 Cognitive elements of culture.

Mitchell and Sackney (2011) explain that once the affective elements of culture have been addressed and characteristics such as trust, respect and the valuing of others' opinions are present within a school's culture, the cognitive elements of a school's culture can be enhanced. Cognitive elements of culture explicitly refer to a school's ability to engage people in collective and collaborative cognition and learning. Mitchell and Sackney (2011) explain that the collective learning is governed by social constructivism where learning is considered a process of negotiation amongst individuals. In practical terms, this means that all people within learning communities have the opportunities to "verify, modify, or discard ideas but that the community ultimately decides which ideas are worth keeping and which ought to be discarded" (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011, p. 61). The cognitive environment of a school is therefore constructed through collective reflection; professional conversations about specific professional issues, problems, concerns, perplexities, and mysteries; and the creation and maintenance of shared understandings and vision (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011).

The tasks that Mitchell and Sackney (2011) specify bear much resemblance to Kochanek's (2005) high-risk exchanges (see Section 2.6.2). Both encourage meaningful, collaborative discussion and planning on authentic issues surrounding teaching and learning. Both also involve the establishment of shared understandings and vision for schools. Whilst Kochanek's (2005) high-risk exchanges were initially considered as trust building tasks, one can see that

they are also tasks for building the wider field of interpersonal capacity. It is here that the highly interactive nature of capacity building, particularly interpersonal capacity building can be seen.

Structural elements and processes, which facilitate a more trusting affective culture and productive cognitive culture, are important to building interpersonal capacity. Such elements are discussed in the next section on organisational capacity.

2.7 Organisational Capacity

Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) third category of capacity is that of organisational capacity. Organisational capacity is associated with the structural arrangements, discourse patterns and socio-cultural conditions within school communities (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). These three aspects will be discussed briefly in this section. Following this is a detailed discussion on two important drivers in building organisational capacity: support for ongoing teacher professional development (Section 2.7.1) and leadership (Sections 2.7.2 and 2.7.3).

Structural arrangements within schools include aspects such as school timetables, meeting structures, school procedures and student and staff groupings. Traditional school structures have been criticised in the past for encouraging the professional isolation of teachers (Fullan, 1993; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000, 2011) and discouraging teachers to seek or give advice regarding teaching and learning for fear of being seen as weak or over confident (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). Isolation has also in some ways protected teachers from having their practice examined or scrutinised by others (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). Mitchell and Sackney (2011) argue that with focussed attention on building organisational capacity, "structural arrangements can open doors for teachers and break down walls between them" (p. 87).

Discourse patterns are associated with the ways in which people communicate with one another in school communities. As Mitchell and Sackney (2011) explain, in a learning community, organisational capacity aims to bring “people together to work out purposes, meanings, and practices of teaching and learning” through the process of “collegial talk” (pp. 100-101). Discourse patterns are of course highly related to and influenced by a school’s interpersonal capacity and the affective and cognitive elements of school culture.

The socio-cultural conditions of schools are directly associated with school culture (see Section 2.6.1). Mitchell and Sackney (2011) explain that in any community people endure a process of socialisation where they learn the correct ways to think, feel, act and interact with others in different social contexts. Over time this socialisation evolves into the socio-cultural conditions that shape a person’s views and behaviours (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). Schools can influence socio-cultural conditions through their investment in interpersonal capacity and by building a PLC culture which values trust, collegiality, openness and ongoing professional development. A discussion on support for ongoing teacher professional development follows in the next section.

2.7.1 Support for ongoing teacher professional development.

As mentioned in Section 2.5, individual teacher capacity and teacher quality is considered one of the most important factors in improving learning outcomes for students (Hall & Simeral, 2008; Kaniuka, 2012; Marzano, 2003). It is therefore not surprising that supporting teachers in enhancing their own personal capacity and professional development is an important element of building organisational capacity in schools.

The terms ‘professional development’ and ‘professional learning’ have often been used interchangeably to refer to activities and changes associated with improving teaching. Mayer and Lloyd (2011) argue that it is important to differentiate the two terms and that both are important when building capacity within schools. Firstly, *professional development* is used to describe “activities”

that teachers engage in, in order to improve skills, knowledge and teacher characteristics (Mayer & Lloyd, 2011, p. 3). *Professional learning*, on the other hand, is used to refer to the “changes in the thinking, knowledge, skills, and approaches to instruction that form practicing teachers’ or administrators’ repertoire” (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] cited in Mayer & Lloyd, 2011, p. 3).

Professional development activities can be both formal and informal in nature (Mizell, 2010). Whilst teachers often associate formal professional development activities with external providers running workshops, seminars, conferences and presentations, formal activities can also include participation in post-graduate studies at university; the obtaining of formal qualifications; and peer mentoring or reviews (Baguley & Kerby, 2012). Informal professional development activities can involve participation in: discussions amongst colleagues; independent reading and research; informal observations of a colleague’s work; and peer learning (Mizell, 2010).

Livingston, Smaller, and Clark (2012) explain that teachers’ participation in both formal and informal professional development activities is high, suggesting active teacher involvement. Researchers have noted various inhibiting factors however, which encroach on teachers’ abilities to effectively engage in professional development. Firstly, Baguley and Kerby (2012) identify that teachers are often disenchanted by the gap that exists between theory encountered in formal professional development and the practicalities of their day-to-day teaching. On a similar note, Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, and Goe (2011) explain that too often professional development activities are disconnected from teachers’ classroom practice and individual school improvement goals. Diaz-Maggioli (2004, p. 2) identifies several “stumbling blocks” that can restrict professional teacher development. These include issues such as: top-down decision-making; lack of teacher ownership of the professional development process; the standardisation of professional development activities; lack of variety in delivery modes of professional development; inaccessibility of professional development activities; lack of

support in transferring professional development ideas into the classroom; lack of systemic evaluation of professional development activities; and professional development planners failing to recognise the learning characteristics of teachers (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004).

Archibald et al. (2011, p. 3) suggest that schools and education systems need to commit to what they term “high-quality professional learning activities” which have the following five characteristics:

1. Alignment with school goals, state and district standards and assessments, and other professional learning activities including formative teacher evaluation;
2. Focus on core content and modelling of teaching strategies for the content;
3. Inclusion of opportunities for active learning of new teaching strategies;
4. Provision of opportunities for collaboration amongst teachers; and
5. Inclusion of embedded follow-up and continuous feedback.

In 2012, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL] (2012) published the *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders* document, which provides modern, research-based guidelines on professional learning for Australian teachers. Like Archibald et al. (2011), AITSL (2012) argue for professional learning that is linked directly to individual school goals and meeting the learning needs of students. They also argue for professional learning that is relevant, collaborative and future-focussed (AITSL, 2012).

Establishing organisational structures that are supportive of ongoing professional development and learning is an important element in building organisational capacity. Organisational supports such as establishing learning teams and opening spaces that encourage collaboration and networking within and beyond schools are important first steps in building organisational capacity for professional learning (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). Archibald et al. (2011) argue that professional learning is most effective when it forms part of an

ongoing professional development programme. AITSL (2012) similarly believe that professional learning is most effective where a “high quality professional learning culture” exists (p. 3). High-quality professional learning cultures include the following characteristics:

1. A high degree of leadership support for ongoing adult learning and risk taking;
2. Collective responsibility for improving practice;
3. Disciplined collaboration aimed at specific and relevant goals that relate to the learning needs of students;
4. High levels of trust, interaction and inter-dependence;
5. Support for professional learning through school structures, explicit planning and the allocation of time; and
6. A focus on the professional learning that is most likely to be effective in improving professional practice and student outcomes.

(AITSL, 2012, p. 3)

Again, what AITSL is describing with these characteristics is a PLC as discussed in Section 2.4. It appears that by re-establishing schools as PLCs, institutions place themselves in the best position to cater for the professional development of teachers, and thus increase organisational capacity. In particular, establishing communities, which encourage deep self-reflection; involve collaborative learning, rich conversations, challenging and rewarding relationships; and a clear focus on improving student learning outcomes are desirable characteristics within PLCs (Hargreaves, 2007; Stoll et al., 2006).

2.7.2 Leadership for school improvement.

Leadership for sustainable school improvement has been a substantial topic of research and discussion in education over the past three decades. Recent research suggests that leadership is about changing cultures within schools (Schein, 2010) and that shared or distributed models of leadership are most productive for building PLCs and capacity within schools (Crowther, 2011; Dimmock, 2012; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011; Timperley, 2005). The importance of facilitating teacher leadership has also gained significant momentum as it has been recognised as a

means to develop capacity within schools (Crowther, 2011; Crowther et al., 2002; Crowther et al., 2009; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, 2011; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). This section explores recent thinking on the concept of educational leadership and distributed or shared models of leadership within schools.

Schein (2010) explains that leadership occurs when people are influential in shaping the behaviour and values of others and create conditions for new cultures to form. Leadership can therefore be seen as the ability to influence, shape and change culture. School leaders begin to create culture, but must also manage and shape the desirable cultures within their workplaces (Schein, 2010). Leadership within PLCs have tended towards shared or distributed models so that members can feel empowered, autonomous and a deep personal connection to the school (Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). Whilst formal school leaders have still been deemed necessary (Harris, 2013; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000, 2011; Youngs, 2013), their roles have changed so that power-sharing and teacher leadership can emerge (Dimmock, 2012; Harris, 2012, 2013; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011; Mullen & Jones, 2008). For example, a school's principal changes from being the "apex of the organisation" to a person whose key role is to develop "the leadership capacity and capability of others" under a distributed leadership model (Harris, 2012, p. 8).

Despite a growing preference for distributed models of leadership, academics argue that the progress of research into what distributed leadership actually involves and how it changes during school improvement processes has been slow (Crowther, 2011; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003; Levin, 2008; Spillane & Healey, 2010). In fact, researchers have noted that many of the new theories and labels attached to shared models of leadership have emerged with little empirical evidence or testing (Dimmock, 2012; Harris, 2007; Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, & Hopkins, 2007; Spillane, 2006). Literature on distributed leadership has also been criticised for over-simplifying the concept and not recognising the complex social conditions that leadership exists within (Youngs, 2013). It therefore remains an area of

capacity building requiring further research, particularly field-based research that examines leadership in action. Whilst examining leadership was not an explicit aim of this study, by focussing on factors that appeared to increase capacity for sustaining change, an examination of leadership ensued. This study therefore provides some empirical insight into leadership, including teacher leadership, when building capacity for sustainable change.

Defining and describing distributed leadership has led to large variances amongst researchers. Distributed leadership is said to have a “chameleon like quality” (Harris et al., 2007, p. 338) where it can mean different things to different people (Harris et al., 2007; Timperley, 2005). Whilst ‘shared’ and ‘distributed’ leadership sound synonymous, Sergiovanni (2005) highlights some clear differences in philosophy when examining these two terms. Firstly, shared leadership implies that leadership belongs to a designated leader whose choice it is to share or not share with others (Sergiovanni, 2005). Distributed leadership on the other hand has been associated with functional tasks rather than a position of virtue (Sergiovanni, 2005). Spillane et al. (2004) for example, describe leadership as an ‘activity’, which is constituted by the interaction of multiple leaders, followers and their situations. Distributed leadership begins then, with the distribution of leadership tasks or activities (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2005; Spillane et al., 2004) that are shared amongst those with the appropriate amount of expertise and commitment required to see them through (Copland, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2005). As Copland (2003) writes, “decisions about who leads and who follows are dictated by the task or problem situation, not necessarily by where one sits in the hierarchy” (p. 378).

Researchers have also noted the important functions of social interactions and social influence when defining and theorising distributed leadership (Dimmock, 2012; Robinson, 2008; Spillane, 2006; Timperley, 2005). Timperley (2005) explains that distributed leadership “comprises dynamic interactions between multiple leaders and followers” (p. 396). Spillane (2006) theorises distributed leadership with three essential elements including: leadership practice;

interaction between leaders, followers and their situations; and the actual situations within which schools operate. For Spillane (2006), leadership practice is the central concern of distributed leadership, however this can only be generated through interactions amongst school personnel including formal leaders and their followers.

Youngs' (2013) research reconceptualises distributed leadership identifying that a hybrid of organisational and emergent forms of distributed leadership exist. Organisational forms of distributed leadership are centred on people accessing authoritative capital, or in other words, leadership positions through role or team structures (Youngs, 2013). Emergent forms of distributed leadership on the other hand, are centred on people accessing human, cultural or social capital (Youngs, 2013). Emergent forms of distributed leadership are often experienced as "influence" which can affect other people's judgements and decision-making (Youngs, 2013, p. 16). Youngs (2013) also argues that context is important when analysing distributed leadership, as is the past and the shifts in leadership that have taken place over time. Youngs' (2013) research has paved some way to providing better understandings of the complexity of distributed leadership and the lenses from which it needs to be examined.

Assessing the benefits of distributed leadership has been difficult due to the lack of empirical studies on the matter (Dimmock, 2012; Harris, 2007; Harris et al., 2007). As Dimmock (2012) argues however, it would be reasonable to assume that increasing the quality and quantity of leadership through distributed models would be beneficial in promoting the professional development of teachers within schools. School-wide benefits such as increased motivation and satisfaction gained by teachers engaged in leadership are also acknowledged (Dimmock, 2012). The limitations of distributed leadership include the ambiguity that exists around its definition (Harris et al., 2007; Timperley, 2005); the over-simplification of distributed leadership as a concept (Youngs, 2013); issues associated with changing power structures (Harris, 2013; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011); and the paucity of empirical evidence or models for implementing distributed leadership structures in schools (Dimmock, 2012;

Harris, 2007; Harris et al., 2007). These limitations are prompting further research in the field and more practical guidance for schools wanting to implement distributed leadership models. The next sub-section looks at one such practical model, from Crowther et al. (2002) and refined by Crowther et al. (2009) for enabling distributed leadership.

2.7.3 Parallel Leadership: A practical guide for distributing leadership.

Crowther et al. (2002, 2009) introduce the term *Parallel Leadership*: a concept which offers a practical explanation of how distributed leadership is applied in schools whilst recognising the sophisticated and professional position of the teacher. To begin with, parallel leadership is defined as the following: “A process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity. It embodies three distinct qualities - mutual trust, shared purpose and allowance for individual expression” (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 53). The three pillars of (1) mutual trust, (2) shared purpose and (3) allowance for individual expression are distinguishing of parallel leadership. Crowther et al. (2009) explain that mutual trust is comprised of dignity, respect, caring and nurturing. Mutual trust creates an environment where teachers act in the collective interests of others (Crowther et al., 2009). The idea of shared purpose or shared vision is something readily advocated for in school improvement research (Fullan, 2000, 2007; Stoll & Fink, 1994). Dimmock (2012) explains that shared vision or purpose mitigates risks by ensuring that school personnel are working towards common goals.

Allowance for individual expression however, is not discussed to such extent in the literature. Crowther et al.’s (2009) research found that whilst allowance for individual expression may appear inconsistent with emphases on teamwork, collaboration and collegiality, it appeared to enhance leadership and school improvement processes. They concluded that the capacity to accommodate the values of others was important and that shared leadership was associated with recognising “strong, skilled, autonomous individuals and with collaboration among them rather than with consensus” (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 56).

Distributed models of leadership, where leadership is viewed as not just a series of tasks but also as dynamic interpersonal interaction, is considered favourable in building capacity for sustainable school improvement. Crowther et al.'s (2009) parallel leadership with its three pillars of mutual respect, shared purpose and allowance for individual expression, provides an informative perspective on sharing leadership within schools. Crowther et al.'s (2009) work also opens a much needed discussion on what distributed models of leadership might actually look like in pragmatic terms in schools. Empirical, field research such as this study will continue to provide insights into the role of leadership in building capacity for sustainable improvement.

2.8 Teachers in the Middle Years

As Chapter 1 explained, research on the roles of middle years' teachers in both driving and reforming middle years' education in Australia is only beginning to surface. There has been some recent discussion on the roles and characteristics of middle school teachers in practice, however this remains an emerging topic of inquiry. This section examines the limited Australian literature on the desirable characteristics and roles of middle years' teachers. It also provides comparison and discussion on how Australian philosophy and theory on the roles of middle years' teachers compares to thinking internationally.

In Australia, researchers such as Rumble and Aspland (2009, 2010), Pendergast (2002) and Main and Bryer (2004) have begun to explore the desirable characteristics and functional roles of Australian middle years' teachers. Other recent works have looked at specific aspects of teachers' roles such as collaboration (Chadbourne, 2004; Main, 2012) and teacher-student relationships (Keddie & Churchill, 2010). Broadly speaking, effective middle school teachers have been described as specialists in adolescence (Beane & Brodhagen, 2001; Rumble & Aspland, 2009; MYSA, 2008) who "choose to work with and advocate for young adolescents" (AMLE, 2010, p. 15). They have also been described as a "companion on the 'rollercoaster ride' of constant change"

(Rumble & Aspland, 2009, p. 4) and one that facilitates lifelong learning, resilience and a love of learning (MYSA, 2008).

Beane and Brodhagen's (2001) work has been influential in shaping international thought on the attributes of middle years' teachers. Their literature review identified five common expectations for middle years' teachers, which include the following:

1. Teachers should have a thorough understanding of the young adolescents with whom they work;
2. Teachers should participate in collegial teaming arrangements;
3. Teachers should act as affective mentors for young adolescents;
4. Teachers should use varied teaching and learning activities; and
5. Teachers should use curriculum approaches beyond the traditional separate subject approach.

(Beane & Brodhagen, 2001, p. 1159)

Rumble and Aspland's (2010) more recent Australian theory bears several similarities to Beane and Brodhagen's (2001) work. Rumble and Aspland's (2010) theory offers a list of four key characteristics of middle school teachers in Australia. The *Four Attributes Model of the Middle School Teacher* (Rumble & Aspland, 2010, p. 8) suggests that middle years' teachers in Australia need to have the following four attributes:

Attribute 1: A capacity to forge a middle school identity;

Attribute 2: A designer of a wholesome curriculum;

Attribute 3: A specialist in adolescence as a socio-cultural construct; and

Attribute 4: A capacity to sustain middle school reform.

Rumble and Aspland's (2010) third attribute as well as Beane and Brodhagen's (2001) first expectation are almost identical. With support from others, they argue that middle years teachers need to have thorough understandings of the adolescents with whom they work (Beane & Brodhagen, 2001; Rumble & Aspland, 2009; MYSA, 2008). It is argued that middle years' teachers need to be "sensitive" to the characteristics of adolescents which implies having to know

about this stage of development (Beane & Brodhagen, 2001, p. 1159). Rumble and Aspland (2010) explain that “a specialist in adolescence highlights that the teacher should not just be learner-centred, but also adolescent-centred, adolescent-focussed and adolescent-driven” (p. 7). Like several others they list (Barratt, 1998; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Jackson and Davies, 2000), Rumble and Aspland (2010) believe middle years’ teachers need to have a passion for working with adolescents and be dedicated and committed to working with students in the middle years.

A significant point that Beane and Brodhagen’s (2001) work raises is the importance of student-teacher relationships and the impact that teachers have on students’ wellbeing. They believe that middle years’ teachers need to be “affective mentors” for students who “know about and will be sensitive to the developmental characteristics and concerns of young adolescents” (Beane & Brodhagen, 2001, p. 1163). The importance of teacher-student relationships has been echoed in Australian literature (Barratt, 1998; MYSA, 2008; O’Sullivan, 2005). What Beane and Brodhagen (2001) importantly highlight is the need for structural arrangements within schools to ensure that every student is known by at least one teacher who can monitor, guide and advocate for them.

Rumble and Aspland’s (2010) second attribute calls for teachers to firstly be knowledgeable of middle schooling philosophy so that they can then transform curriculum to be a wholesome, relevant, lifelong learning experience (Rumble & Aspland, 2010). A wholesome curriculum is described as being one which is differentiated; delivered by a team of teachers; and centred around themes that are relevant to young peoples’ lives (Rumble & Aspland, 2009). Beane and Brodhagen (2001) offer some pedagogical direction as to how to implement a wholesome or holistic curriculum. Firstly they suggest that teachers need to think and teach beyond the separate subject or discipline driven approach that has dominated secondary education (Beane & Brodhagen, 2001). They also suggest that by varying teaching strategies to include things such as hands-on experiences, peer or group learning, and student choice within learning, middle years’ teachers can begin to transform curriculum and learning for students

(Beane & Brodhagen, 2001). Bishop and Pflaum (2005) agree that young people need to have a degree of choice in their learning and that middle years' education needs to provide more opportunities for active rather than passive learning. They see the middle school teacher's role as one that facilitates relevance, choice and active learning within the curriculum (Bishop & Pflaum, 2005).

Rumble and Aspland's (2010) first attribute of middle years' teachers initially asks educators to recognise the middle years as a distinctive phase of learning that is characterised by the development of "critical, literate, socially aware young people who demonstrate a strong sense of community responsibility" (Rumble & Aspland, 2010, p. 5). In order for teachers to be able to have this first attribute, various enabling factors are required, including: dedicated spaces for middle school learning, the ability to re-culture a school and new leadership patterns (Rumble & Aspland, 2010). Central to the process of re-culturing schools includes: teacher collaboration that is valued by all; prioritising pedagogical reform; responding to change on a daily basis; and continuous professional learning for staff (Rumble & Aspland, 2010). The new leadership patterns Rumble and Aspland (2010) refer to include acknowledging the centrality of the teacher; encouraging teachers to assume new roles and responsibilities; encouraging the uptake of new approaches and risk taking; and working within learning teams. The encouragement of teachers to take on new tasks and responsibilities alludes to the notion of teacher leadership (see Section 2.5.2).

The call for teacher collaboration or teaching within a team in both Rumble and Aspland's (2009) and Beane and Brodhagen's (2001) works is another significant similarity. Teacher teaming has been considered an important aspect of middle years' practices, with some suggesting it is a "non-negotiable" part of middle schooling (Chadbourne, 2001, p. 25). Combining different teachers' strengths can lead to more dynamic and exciting classrooms (Main & Bryer, 2004). Collaboration also has the potential to bring about more positive staff relationships and positive changes in teaching practice (Chadbourne, 2004;

Main & Bryer, 2004). On the negative side, teacher teaming presents some hurdles for individual teachers and schools. Firstly, working in teams has been shown to increase teachers' workloads compared to those who work in conventional, isolated practices (Chadbourne, 2001). It has also been found that many teacher teams in Australian middle schools have been implemented from a top-down approach where teachers are not given enough support or guidance to understand how to work in such teams (Main, 2010). Chadbourne (2004) also warns that high levels of teacher collaboration do not necessarily lead to better teaching. The type and quality of teacher collaboration, as well as the supports that are needed to ensure quality collaboration are pressing issues for schools and researchers.

In his research on teacher collaboration, Chadbourne (2004) identifies six typologies of teachers' collaborative work. These are listed alongside examples of collaborative tasks in Table 2.6.

Chadbourne's (2004) typologies provide an expanded and more detailed view of what is meant by teacher collaboration. Chadbourne (2004) concludes that optimal teacher development occurs when teacher learning is both self-determined and collegial. He also suggests that out of the six typologies, joint classroom-based work, has the most powerful impact on improving teaching (Chadbourne, 2004).

Table 2.6

Typology of Teacher Collaboration

Typology of Collaboration	Examples of tasks
1. <i>Political and industrial collaboration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing information on conflicts and issues with students, peers, parents, policies and practices - Discussing issues at team meetings - Taking action to support members faced with the above issues/conflict - Discussing teachers' industrial work conditions and taking action to improve them
2. <i>Social collaboration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having lunch and morning tea together - Celebrating one another's birthdays/achievements - Meeting outside of work for social activities - Sharing stories about themselves and their families - Support each other in times of need - Engage in team building exercises
3. <i>Technical collaboration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing of materials such as worksheets, lesson plans, programs, books and equipment - Sharing practical advice on teaching - Sharing professional advice on compliance with regulations and bureaucracies
4. <i>Collaborative planning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Democratically determining team policies and decisions on things such as timetables, class allocations, assessment and recording - Collaborative lesson planning - Collaborative curriculum planning
5. <i>Academic collaboration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussing educational journal articles at team meetings - Engage in professional dialogue (sharing ideas from professional development days, extra study and experiences) during break times - Collectively analysing and reflecting on the value, purpose and direction of their work.
6. <i>Joint classroom-based work</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducting joint action research and action learning projects to research their own teaching. - Visiting each other's classrooms and observing each other teach - Providing each other with feedback on observed classes - Jointly and critically examining samples of students' work - Showing and discussing videos of themselves teaching - Engaging in sustained peer coaching (e.g. Cycles of modelling/demonstrating, observing, critiquing, acting on feedback) - Team teaching and critiques of joint work

Adapted from "A Typology of Teacher Collaboration in Middle Schools," by R. Chadbourne, 2004, *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling*, 4(1), pp. 9-16.

Finally, Rumble and Aspland's (2010) fourth attribute of middle years' teachers is the capacity to sustain middle years' reform. They believe middle years' teachers need to be alert to new knowledge and pedagogy so that they can continue to learn and evolve as teachers (Rumble & Aspland, 2010).

Professional development is viewed as "the vehicle to improving learning conditions for students" (Rumble & Aspland, 2010, p. 8). Middle years' teachers need to be open to exchanging ideas with colleagues and forging a new professional identity where evidence-based research is embedded into their teaching and learning practices (Rumble & Aspland, 2010).

An earlier report by Rumble and Aspland (2009) identifies that part of middle years' teachers' work in reform involves developing a change strategy. They are not alone in suggesting that teachers need to develop an understanding of the processes of change (Fullan, 2007; Rumble & Aspland, 2010; Stoll et al., 2003). Rumble and Aspland (2009) advocate for the empowerment of teachers as central figures in implementing middle school reform. It has been agreed that the teacher plays the most pivotal role in the implementation of school reform (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Rumble & Aspland, 2009; Sergiovanni, 2000). However, research has neglected to examine the roles of teachers during the reform process in comparison to their usual roles as middle school teachers. This is a research void that this doctoral study will address.

The roles and characteristics of Australian middle years' teachers are gradually becoming clearer with emerging theory and philosophy from both Australia and abroad. The work of middle years' teachers is firstly centred on the idea that teachers need to be specialists of adolescents who are sensitive and cognisant of adolescent developmental characteristics and needs. Middle years' teachers are called to work collaboratively and deliver a holistic curriculum utilising a range of teaching strategies. Professional development is vital in middle years' teachers' work and having an understanding of educational change process is considered important in assisting with middle years' reform.

2.9 Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 has presented a literature review on key topics associated with this study including: the rationale for the reform of the middle years of schooling and Year 9; vision and philosophy for the middle years of schooling and Year 9 reform; the notion of capacity building and its three categories of personal capacity, organisational capacity, and organisational capacity; and finally, the roles of Australian middle years' teachers. The review of literature identified two key themes in works pertaining to the rationale for middle years' reform. These included: (1) the idea that the middle years represent a developmentally distinct period of schooling, and (2) high levels of disengagement and dissatisfaction amongst middle years' learners and the associated flow-on effects. The limited field of research on Year 9 education added further weight to the argument that, middle years' adolescents are disengaging with their education. It was revealed that Year 9 students absent themselves from school at a rate higher than any other year level; that relationships with teachers and attitudes towards schooling decline at Year 9; and that incidences of poor student behaviour increase (Cole et al., 2006a; DEECDV, 2009). Further, Year 9 was identified as a key decision-making time for adolescents with high correlation existing between Year 9 students' intentions to complete further education and the rates of them actually doing so (Khoo & Ainley, 2005). Finally, this literature review found that Year 9 is lacking in identity, and thus is thought of a grade 'lost' in the middle of secondary schooling. All of the fore mentioned points form a collective rationale for Year 9 reform.

In examining philosophy and vision for middle years' reform, this literature review identified growing agreement amongst Australian researchers on what they think middle years' education should constitute. Common themes such as constructivism; student-centred approaches; developmentally appropriate and needs based curriculum and pedagogy; teacher collaboration; and strong emphases on student-teacher relationships were found in vision for middle years' reform in Australia. Whilst a common agreement appears to be forming on what the middle years of schooling should involve in Australia, publications on vision for the middle years often lack specific direction for schools. Much of

the vision for middle years' reform consists of broad, over-arching statements with little direction on how things such as integrated curriculum, collaborative teaching approaches and authentic assessments should be implemented in practical ways.

This literature review found that publications on vision for Year 9 reform are sparse. The work of Cole (2006) and Cole et al. (2006b) provide a much-needed discussion on vision for Year 9 education. Their work makes six key suggestions, which were examined as part of this literature review. Many similarities were found in these suggestions and the review of literature on vision for middle years' reform in general. Some notable differences were also identified, including the suggestion that Year 9 be given a distinct physical environment (Cole, 2006; Cole et al., 2006b). The limited amount of research into Year 9 education implies that more of such research and discussion is needed in order to create a more holistic picture of the Year 9 educational experience; the rationale for Year 9 reform; and vision for a better Year 9 education in the future. To date, the bulk of Year 9 research has emerged from the state of Victoria. In order to further validate current research, other contexts, including other states need to be examined. This study will provide a first insight into reasons and vision for Year 9 reform in Tasmania, a previously unexplored context.

Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) theory of capacity was used to frame Sections 2.4 to 2.7 of this literature review. These sections examined the three categories of capacity building including personal capacity, interpersonal capacity and organisational capacity. Mitchell and Sackney (2011) reposition schools as learning communities where teachers work collaboratively, learn alongside one another for the purpose of improving practice and ultimately student outcomes. Regarding personal capacity, it was found that teachers are considered the most influential factors in improving student learning (Hall & Simeral, 2008; Kaniuka, 2012; Marzano, 2003) and that teacher capacity can be built through the notion of teacher leadership. The examination of interpersonal capacity identified the pivotal relationship of school culture in school improvement. Building a culture

to support school improvement involves tending to the affective conditions of trust, mutual respect and the valuing of others' opinions. Building a culture of trust in particular, becomes an important element of building interpersonal capacity. Once affective conditions are in place, schools are then in a better position to develop cognitive elements of school culture.

The third category of Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) theory of capacity provided a framework to examine key elements of organisational structures within schools including: school leadership and support for teacher professional development. This literature review suggested that distributed models of leadership such as Crowther et al.'s (2009) Parallel Leadership are most appropriate for the creation and maintenance of PLCs and for building capacity. The chapter also made the suggestion that PLCs provide the most effective structure for teacher professional learning and development. When examining capacity building literature, this literature review found that pragmatic and empirical research that examines how capacity is created and maintained by schools is only just emerging (Crowther, 2011). This therefore identifies a need for more empirical research, such as case studies like this one, which examine aspects of capacity building in action.

Section 2.8 of this literature review examined the limited field of research on middle school teachers in Australian schools. Seminal works by Rumble and Aspland (2009, 2010) have theorised the characteristics of Australian middle school teachers stating that teachers need to have the capacities to forge a middle school identity and sustain middle school reform; need to be a designer of wholesome curriculum and need to be a specialist in adolescence. Whilst it is acknowledged that middle school teachers need to be able to sustain middle school reform (Rumble & Aspland, 2009, 2010), the roles of middle years' teachers during reform processes is currently not well examined in research. This study will therefore open a new discussion, which aims to generate theory on the roles of middle years' teachers during reform. It also gives an empirical account of the Year 9 reform process through the eyes of the teachers involved.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study took the form of an instrumental case study utilising a “from-through” perspective (Saldana, 2003, p. 7) and operating within the constructivist paradigm. This chapter provides an overview of the epistemological and ontological features of the constructivist paradigm, which underpins this study and the notion of case study research, which provides the conceptual design for this research. Section 3.4 describes the research context for this study or, in other words, the case school. The data gathering tools used in this case study, including participant observations, semi-structured interviews, Email dialogues and school document analysis are discussed in Section 3.5.

Miles and Huberman’s (1994) *Interactive Model for Qualitative Data Analysis* was chosen to guide the data analysis process for this study. Section 3.6 outlines how data analysis was conducted in a cyclic pattern throughout the research period and how the data analysis process was managed during the study. Issues of trustworthiness and the limitations of case study research are discussed in Section 3.7 with Section 3.8 providing a brief overview of the presentation of findings and the writing style chosen for the findings section of this thesis.

3.2 Research Paradigm

This study is theoretically underpinned by the constructivist paradigm. As Willis, Jost, and Nilakanta (2007) explain, a paradigm is a “comprehensive belief system, world view, or frame-work that guides research and practice in a field” (p. 8). Choosing a research paradigm therefore needs to begin with an examination of the researcher’s own philosophy, including their ontological and epistemological views of the world and the nature of knowledge.

When designing this study, I first spent time considering my own world-view and philosophical positioning. My relativist world-view and the qualitative

nature of this research made the constructivist paradigm the ideal choice as a framework for this study. Ontologically, constructivism asserts a relativist world-view, which means that “realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them” (Guba, 1990 cited in Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 102). Constructivism therefore invites a transactional epistemology whereby knowledge is co-constructed amongst participants in inquiry (Hatch, 2002; Lincoln et al., 2011).

3.3 Case Study Design

Case study is not a research method in itself but rather a decision on what to research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Stake, 2000). Fundamentally, it involves selecting and examining in detail a case of interest or value. As Simons (2009) notes, “case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a real-life context” (p. 21). Studying the complexities and unique aspects of cases has the potential to bring about rich data and deep understandings of the phenomena being examined (Burns, 1997). The ‘case’ for this research was the collective experiences of a group of Year 9 teachers and leaders that engaged in separate campus Year 9 reform. This section explains the advantages of case study methodology for qualitative researchers and discusses the instrumental nature of this study.

Case studies present several advantages for qualitative researchers. Firstly, they can provide researchers with holistic understandings of phenomena in natural social contexts (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). This natural setting is permeated throughout case study research, creating data that is “strong in reality” whilst acknowledging the complexity and interwoven nature of social truths (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 184). Case studies are particularly appealing to researchers working under the constructivist paradigm because they acknowledge the relativist nature of cases under investigation. Case studies are also beneficial for their intelligibility and the way in which they speak to their

audiences. They present data in an easily accessible manner making them open to a larger audience than just academics (Cohen et al., 2000). Finally, the rich descriptions and complexities captured within the final product of case studies can be archived and used in comparison studies and re-interpretations (Cohen et al., 2000).

This research takes the form of an instrumental case study whereby individual cases are investigated in order to develop more general understandings on wider topics (Stake, 1995, 2000). Instrumental case studies are designed so that they can be compared to and applied in other, similar contexts. It is intended that the findings generated from this study can be compared with subsequent research on Year 9 education, the middle years of schooling and capacity building for school improvement. As an instrumental case study, the findings from this research will help create a more complete picture of the state of Year 9 education; goals for the future of Year 9 education; the roles teachers play during middle years' reform; and factors that can assist schools in building capacity for successful reform.

The approximate 2½-year data collection timeline of this research is a significant element in the case study design. As Saldana (2003) writes, longitudinal studies such as this one, which attempt to analyse change, require two reference points in time. Due to the fluid nature of change however, finding two distinct reference points in time can present some difficulties. According to Saldana (2003, p. 7), it is not always achievable to pinpoint the exact beginning and end of change, nor refer to periods as “then” (meaning before the change) and “now” (meaning after the change). Instead, he suggests that researchers should look at change using a “from-through” approach (Saldana, 2003, p. 7). The word “from” can refer to the initiation of change, however by using the word “through”, Saldana (2003) implies that change is more like a “journey” and that the process is more worthy of examination than the end product (p. 8).

By adopting Saldana's (2003, p. 8) “from-through” perspective, this study examined change from its initiation (2010-2011) through the journey of

implementation (2011-2012). It remained longitudinal in that it examined the case school over a lengthy period of time with two clear time points, that of initiation and implementation. It is also a study that focuses more intently on the process of change rather than one that tries to examine an end product of change.

3.4 The Research Context and Case

This section provides a brief overview of the research context and case. As explained in Chapter 1, the context for this study was a large, co-educational Tasmanian independent school. The pseudonym 'St. John's College' is used throughout this research to refer to the case school and participants' names have also been changed to pseudonyms in an effort to protect their identities. As the key researcher, I was employed as a full-time teacher at St. John's College throughout the study period. I was fully involved in the Year 9 reform project and remained a full participant observer in this research. Whilst St. John's College provided the context for this research, the experiences of the Year 9 teachers and leaders who engaged in Year 9 reform, including my own experiences as a teacher and researcher, represent the actual 'case' for this study.

As a brief introduction, St. John's College's Year 9 reform involved the establishment of a team of Year 9 teachers (10 out of 15 participating in this research) and the Year 9 Leadership Group (all of whom became participants and informants in this research). The reform was fundamentally about improving Year 9 education and providing a new physical and organisational structure for the expanding school. The Year 9 reform included building a new and separate campus for the year level and upgrading the Year 9 curriculum. The new campus aimed to cater for approximately 270 students. Section 4.3 in the next chapter provides more detail regarding the case school and the teachers' experiences during Year 9 reform.

3.5 Data Collection Tools

On the advice of Denscombe (1998), this study employed a multiple source and multiple methods approach to data collection. This section outlines the informants, data collection tools and data collection procedures of this study. Sub-sections 3.5.1 to 3.5.4 explain in detail the choice of data collection tools and the procedures undertaken in their use. The data sources used in this study include both informants (participants), myself as a full participant-observer in the study and school documents. The full list of data sources is listed next.

Informants:

- The Year 9 Leadership Group (including the Principal, Head of Year 9, Year 9 Pastoral Care Coordinator and Year 9 Curriculum Coordinator);
- Year 9 Teachers (10 in total out of 15); and
- Myself (researcher) as a full-participant observer and Year 9 teacher.

Documents:

- St. John's College's 2012 Year 9 Handbook for students; and
- St. John's College's Strategic Plan 2010-2015.

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary and participants could choose to withdraw at any time without implications. Table 3.1 shows which methods of data collection the participants contributed to during the study period. I purposefully use pseudonyms beginning with the letter 'L' to signify 'leader' for all four members of the Year 9 Leadership Group including the School Principal, Head of Year 9, Head of Year 9 Curriculum and Head of Year 9 Pastoral Care. I did this so that readers can easily distinguish who was in fact in a leadership position and who was not when reading the findings chapters of this thesis.

Table 3.1

Participation in Relation to Data Collection Tools

Data Collection Tool (Method)	Participants (pseudonyms)
Semi-structured Interviews	<p>Teachers: Arlene, Bruce, Catherine, Dana, Emily, Felix and Gabrielle</p> <p>Leaders: Lincoln, Lewis, Lesley and Leyton</p>
Participant Observations	Observations of all teachers within the reform conducted by the researcher only.
Email Questionnaires	<p>Teachers: Catherine, Dana, Emily, Hannah, Indigo and John</p> <p>Leaders: Lincoln, Lewis, Lesley</p>

The study also utilised multiple data collection tools including:

- Full participant observations conducted by myself as both a researcher and Year 9 teacher in the reform. Observations were documented in a reflective journal.
- Semi-structured interviews with Year 9 leaders and teachers.
- Email-dialogues with Year 9 leaders and teachers.
- School document analysis.

Table 3.2 presents an overview of the data collection tools, research timeframe, data sources and key topics of inquiry used within the study.

Table 3.2

Overview of Data Collection

Tools	Timeline	Data Sources	Research Sub-Questions (RSQ) and Key Topics of Inquiry
Participant Observations by Researcher	March 2010- June 2012	The researcher Observations were made of all 15 teachers and 4 leaders from the researcher's perspective	RSQ 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rationale/vision for Year 9 reform RSQ 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experiences of Year 9 reform ▪ Roles of teachers in Year 9 reform RSQ 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Professional learning needs of teachers RSQ 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Factors that assist in sustaining change
Semi-structured Interviews	April 2011- October 2011	4 Leaders of Year 9 (including: Principal, Head of Campus, Head of Year 9 Curriculum & Head of Year 9 Pastoral Care) 7 out of 15 teachers of Year 9	RSQ 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rationale/vision for Year 9 reform RSQ 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experiences of Year 9 reform ▪ Roles of teachers in Year 9 reform RSQ 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Professional learning needs of teachers RSQ 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Factors that assist in sustaining change
Email dialogues	April 2012- December 2012	3 leaders of Year 9 (Including: Principal, Head of Campus & Head of Year 9 Curriculum) 6 out of 15 teachers of Year 9	RSQ 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experiences of Year 9 reform ▪ Roles of teachers in Year 9 reform RSQ 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Professional learning needs of teachers RSQ 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Factors that assist in sustaining change
School document analysis	2012	2012 Year 9 Handbook School Strategic Plan	RSQ 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rationale/vision for Year 9 reform

3.5.1 Participant observations.

Participant observations were used as a key data collection tool in this study from March 2010 until June 2012. Denscombe (1998) notes that researchers generally assume one of the following stances when observing cases: a *complete observer*, *observer-as-participant*, *participant-as-observer*, and finally a *complete*

participant (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Mertens, 2010). The level of interaction between the researcher and the researched gradually increases from the first category of complete observer, to the final category of complete participant. Complete participant observations are a successful means of data collection due to the direct experiential value researchers can gain (Scott & Usher, 1999). This tool also allows greater access to the case being studied where direct relationships are established between participants and the researcher (Scott & Usher, 1999).

For me, being employed as a full-time teacher and member of the Year 9 Team at the case school meant that I was indeed a complete participant in this research. I recorded my observations in a reflective journal written in the first person in order to encourage reflection, analysis and interpretation of sociocultural contexts (Chang, 2008). There were two central foci for observations, including:

1. My own experiences and self-reflection as a teacher engaged in Year 9 reform (observations of self); and
2. The work, interactions, conversations and dealings of my colleagues who engaged in Year 9 reform (observations of others).

Whilst at school and whilst completing work for the reform, my primary role was that of a teacher. The written observations (reflective journal entries) were completed outside of school hours. On several occasions, I was able to use my teacher status to make more inquiries about the reform or to ask further questions about my colleagues' experiences in the reform. These observations were also recorded, but again outside of school hours.

The frequency of journal entries were not specified because often processes and activities associated with the reform were not linear or held on a regular basis. When interesting developments, activities or events occurred that were associated with the reform, observations were made and recorded in my reflective journal. Such events included:

- A staff camp for teachers interested in joining the Year 9 Team;
- Planning sessions for the reform;

- Whole school meetings regarding the Year 9 reform;
- Year 9 Team meetings;
- Conversations between colleagues regarding the reform;
- Interactions between Year 9 Team and non-Year 9 Team staff;
- Self-reflection regarding the reform;
- Visits to the campus site;
- The opening of the Year 9 Campus;
- Exploring the physical space of the new campus and using facilities for the first time; and
- The first 6 months of work at the Year 9 Campus.

The lengths of the journal entries were not specified to allow for longer, deeper reflection when required. The journal was kept as an electronic document on Microsoft Word with the date of each entry recorded in the heading. I did occasionally use names within the journal, however these were changed to pseudonyms to protect the identity of my colleagues on the completion of data collection. Journal entries were also protected by the use of a computer password. A total of 23 entries were recorded during the observations period (March 2010- June 2012).

3.5.2 In-depth semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were used as a data collection tool in the planning year of St. John's College's Year 9 reform (from April 2011 to October 2011). Interview was chosen as a data-gathering tool because of its ability to access perceptions and beliefs of people involved in education (Scott & Usher, 1999). Interview methods are complementary of constructivist inquiry as they acknowledge that humans are not simply manipulable subjects, and instead, knowledge is generated between humans through conversation (Cohen et al., 2000). It is therefore through the interview process itself that shared understandings are formed. Interview participants, including the interviewer and interviewees, have the ability to discuss their opinions and interpretations of the world around them in an inter-subjective manner (Cohen et al., 2000).

When designing this study, I realised that the participants' experiences of Year 9 education, as well as their expectations and vision for the new Year 9 campus, could be varied which could potentially make data difficult to predict. As Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) state, the semi-structured approach is the best fit in these situations as it allows for flexibility and gives researchers the capacity to probe and explore unexpected data when required. They explain:

Interviewees often have information or knowledge that may not have been thought of in advance by the researcher. When such knowledge emerges, a researcher using a semi-structured design is likely to allow the conversation to develop, exploring new topics that are relevant to the interviewee. (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 102)

Semi-structured interviews are often characterised by open-ended questions and in-depth conversation. Burns (1997) writes that open and in-depth interviews are advantageous because in such interviews, the interviewee's perspective becomes the important point of conversation. He also argues that such approaches to interview promote equal relationships between the researcher and participants, which in turn encourages participants to relax and use language which is more natural to them (Burns, 1997). In-depth interviews are considered to be "issue orientated", where researchers have particular topics they want to explore and gather information from participants (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 95). In-depth interviewing involves active questioning and listening so that "meaning-making" occurs in a partnership between the researcher and the interviewee (Hesse-Biber & Levy, 2011, p. 94).

The interview methodology I used in this study adopted characteristics of in-depth interviewing. These included: explicitly focussing on a few key issues (for example: the rationale and vision for the Year 9 campus); incorporating open-ended questions; and maintaining a semi-structured design to allow for more flexibility, active listening and constructivist meaning-making. The interview schedules used in the study (see Appendices C & D) were devised to actively guide the conversation and maintain focus on the key issues of interest

determined by the research sub-questions (see Section 1.6). At the same time, the semi-structured approach allowed for more fluid and natural conversation where respondents could share information and opinions with me without constraint.

Using the pre-planned interview schedules (see Appendices C & D), I interviewed a total of 11 people for this study all of whom were: (a) part of the Year 9 Team which worked on the reform project; and (b) planning to teach at the Year 9 Campus when it opened in 2012. The 11 interview participants included: all four Year 9 leaders and seven Year 9 teachers. Participation in the interviews was sought by invitation and remained voluntary for all members. Inviting colleagues to take part in the interviews involved sending out an informal memo as well as an official Information Sheet (Appendix A) and Consent Form (Appendix B). In the memo, I briefly outlined the topics of conversation for the interview so that participants had sufficient time to consider some of the issues to be discussed prior to the interviews commencing. I conducted all interviews individually in a private room at St. John's College. I digitally recorded and then later transcribed all interviews (verbatim) for data collection. The duration of each interview was approximately 30 minutes. Once interviews were transcribed, electronic copies of the interview transcripts were forwarded by private Email to teachers and leaders to review and make alterations or additions if they wished. In most cases, changes made to the transcripts were minimal.

3.5.3 Email dialogues.

Email dialogues were used as a data collection tool once St. John's College's Year 9 Campus had opened in 2012. Email dialogues form part of what Anderson and Kanuka (2003, p. 4) term "eResearch", where technology is used in the collection of qualitative data. As James (2007) writes, the growth of technology has provided opportunities for qualitative researchers to adapt previous research methods and take advantage of emerging online methodologies. This study used Email as an electronic tool to adapt and combine the traditional methods of open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The

result was the eResearch method of Email dialogues where I formed exchanges with participants in order to discuss their experiences of Year 9 reform.

Email dialogues were chosen for the final part of this study because of their practicality and ability to elicit reflective and interactive responses. A positive feature of traditional open-ended questionnaires is their ability to give participants time to think and respond to questions at their own pace (Burns, 1997). The same benefits are applied in Email dialogues where participants can respond to Emailed questions at a time and pace that suits them. Further, Emails provide participants with time and space to construct, reflect upon, and learn from, shared responses and experiences (James, 2007). The interactive characteristic of Email dialogues makes them similar to semi-structured interviews. For example, a researcher can exercise flexibility within Email dialogues and alter questions in order to probe into aspects of findings, just as one can do when engaging in semi-structured interviews (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

The Email dialogue method held several practical advantages in this study. Firstly, e-Research methods such as Email dialogues give researchers the ability to deal with large quantities of data in a swift and easily accessible way (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003). Such methods also allow researchers to access, sort and organise data effectively (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003). With Email dialogues as a data collection tool, I was able to gather a large amount of data from participants in a convenient and timely manner. The participants and I were able to engage in the dialogue at practical times, which suited both of our schedules. Communication via Email was fast and the Email program used, (Apple Mail Version 4.5) automatically generated exact transcripts of what the participants and I had exchanged.

Email dialogues began approximately three months after the opening of St. John's College's Year 9 Campus. I initially sent out an Email inviting teachers and leaders of the Year 9 Campus to take part in the study (see Table 3.1 for participation rates). Taking part simply involved replying to the Email

addressing the questions I had put forward to the group. These questions included:

- 1) How have you found your first term at the Year 9 Campus? What have been some of the positives/negatives of your experience so far?
- 2) Is the campus what you expected it to be like?

Once participants responded, I then passed on the formal Information Sheet (see Appendix A) and Consent Form (see Appendix B) for new participants to sign before I could continue the Email dialogue or use the data I obtained. People who had already participated in the semi-structured interviews of this study were not required to sign a second consent form. All Emails collected during this period were saved using the file system on the Apple Mail 4.5 program. This program allowed me to keep an accurate record of the dialogue and protect the data with the use of a computer password. Transcripts of the Emails were later imported into Microsoft Word documents, which were then used for analysis.

The initial participation rate for the Email dialogues was slow. This was probably due to the busy nature of the new campus and a lack of time on the teachers' part. A second Email request, followed by a verbal request I made in a staff meeting encouraged more participation (see Table 3.1 for participation summary). Participants generally wrote lengthy responses to the first round of questions presented to them, but often did not respond to subsequent questioning in the Email exchange. Again, I believe this was due to the busy nature of the new campus and extra demands on teachers' work at the Year 9 Campus.

In Term Three of the 2012 school year (October/November 2012), I sent out a second set of questions for participants to respond to. These questions were directed at both teachers and the Year 9 Leadership Group which included: the College Principal, Head of Year 9, Head of Year 9 Curriculum and Head of Year 9 Pastoral Care. The teachers were given the following three questions for consideration:

1. Looking back over the past year, what things have helped you in becoming a [Year 9 campus] teacher?
2. What advice would you give to teachers of other schools who were looking at establishing a separate Year 9 campus like St. John's College?
3. Do you wish you had more professional learning or preparation in any areas to help your teaching this year? If so explain.

The Leadership Group questions, whilst similar, consisted of the following:

1. What things do you think have helped teachers make the transition to St. John's College's Year 9 campus?
2. What advice would you give other schools in establishing a separate campus Year 9 programme like St. John's College?
3. In hindsight, would you do anything differently?

The questions listed were devised in order to generate data in relation to Research Sub-questions 2, 3 and 4 (see Section 1.6). At this point in the study, I was particularly interested in collecting data on factors that appeared to assist St. John's College in building their capacity to sustain the Year 9 reform (Sub-question 4). As mentioned previously, transcripts of the Email dialogues were copied into Microsoft Word documents and saved for analysis (see Section 3.6 for Data Analysis).

3.5.4 School document analysis.

School document analysis was a minor method used in data collection for this study. The documents that were analysed included: St. John's College's 2012 Year 9 Handbook that was published by the Year 9 Leadership Group for students commencing at the campus in its first year of operation; and the school's Strategic Plan 2010-2015. The 2012 Year 9 Handbook included information on the purpose of the campus, campus programmes, procedures and offerings, whilst the school's Strategic Plan featured school-wide goals and strategies for the period dating 2010-2015. As a researcher, I was particularly interested in obtaining information about the rationale and vision for the campus from these sources (see Table 3.1).

3.6 Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman's (1994) *Interactive Model for Qualitative Data Analysis* was selected to guide the data analysis process for this study. This section explains how Miles and Huberman's (1994) model was employed to facilitate data analysis throughout the entire research period.

Data analysis is not designed to be an activity simply at the conclusion of research. Instead it is something that occurs throughout all phases of data collection and the entire research period (Merriam, 1998, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data analysis therefore becomes cyclic rather than linear in nature (Merriam, 1998) and formative rather than summative, meaning that preliminary analysis can be used to inform and influence the research process. Merriam (1998) states that without adopting a formative, ongoing approach to data analysis, data can become unfocussed, repetitious and overwhelming for a researcher. Conducting formative analysis throughout data collection on the other hand, can be thorough, effective and ultimately more revealing for researchers (Merriam, 1998).

Formative data analysis, conducted throughout the entire research project, is a deliberate design feature of this study. Initial analysis took part directly after data was collected from participant observations and later the semi-structured interviews. This analysis was used to inform and shape the semi-structured interviews and Email dialogues. Ongoing analysis of the Email dialogues also helped frame subsequent questions and probes for the participants when needed. This led to much deeper understandings of the participants' experiences as they engaged in Year 9 reform.

As Merriam (2009) explains, data analysis is essentially about making sense and extracting meaning from data through a process of data consolidation, reduction and interpretation. For this study, Miles and Huberman's (1994) *Interactive Model for Qualitative Data Analysis* was used to guide the process of

making sense and extracting meaning from the data. The model comprises four key activities including: (1) Data Collection, (2) Data Reduction, (3) Data Display, and (4) Conclusion Drawing and Verification (Miles and Huberman, 1994). As explained previously, data analysis for this study was cyclic in nature meaning that the four key activities worked in an interactive and overlapping manner. A diagram of Miles and Huberman's (1994, p.12) model is presented in Figure 3.1.

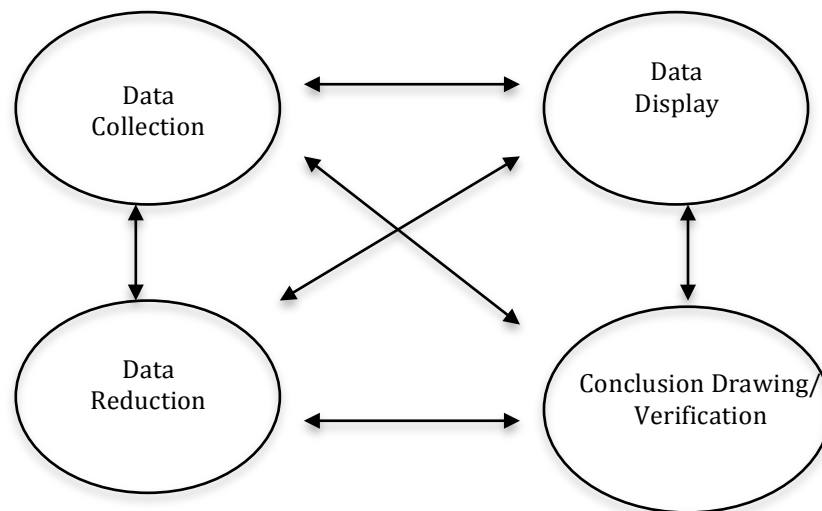


Figure 3.1. Interactive Model for Qualitative Data Analysis. Adapted from *Qualitative Data Analysis – An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd Edition (p.12), by M. B. Miles and A. M. Huberman, 1994, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Miles and Huberman's (1994) first activity, data collection, has already been discussed in relation to this study in Section 3.5. The second activity, data reduction, is the process of "selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions" (p. 10). For this study, data reduction involved taking data from interview transcripts, my participant observations journal, Email transcripts and school documents then condensing it into categories associated with the research sub-questions. The reduction process involved reviewing data and highlighting areas of significance or relevance to the study. The significant and relevant data was then synthesised in the third activity within Miles and Huberman's (1994) model – data display.

The process of data display is essentially “an organised, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). On the advice of Miles and Huberman (1994), this study eschewed the use of extended text for data display and established tables of data instead. These tables were firstly aligned to each of the research sub-questions and then the sub-themes that emerged from the data in relation to each question. For example, data from interview transcripts and elements of my participant observations journal were reduced and displayed in tables regarding the vision for the campus; teachers’ experiences in the reform process; perceived professional learning needs of teachers; and factors that appeared to assist the school’s capacity to sustain improvements. The tables were made up of three columns including: (1) the participant’s code, (2) the reduced data, and (3) short comments for theme analysis. During this process, I was able to highlight important sections of data and make notes on these in the comments/theme analysis column. An example of one of the data display tables can be seen in Table 3.3. This table shows data relating to the vision for the Year 9 campus.

It is important to note that after the reduction of data took place and data display tables were formed, raw data sets (including full interview/Email transcripts and participant observations journal) were kept and archived. This allowed me to return to the raw data and re-analyse aspects when needed. The tables remained a working document in that they could always be changed or added to when needed so that data analysis remained cyclic and ongoing.

Table 3.3

Example of Data Display Table

Participant Code	Data	Comments/Theme Analysis
TD	<p>“Because they are the in between ‘Where do we go, why are we here?’ Year. They are the really... there is a beautiful play called Year 9 Animals and it is like 30 years old but it is this idea of you know, when you are in the Junior part of the school you get a little bit, you know you are a little bit special and you have special days and you are looked after because it is all very new. When you are in the Senior part of the school you get lots of responsibilities with that you get lots of rewards. And then there is this Grade 9’s in the middle. And it is that traditional year, physiologically boys are very up and down and very volatile. Emotionally, girls question everything. They question why. Why are you making me do this? Why do I have to do that? Why is she my friend? Why do I have to do what my mum says? It is also the year that they think they should be allowed to go to MS Fest but they are only 15. Do you know what I mean?</p> <p>So they have this... I think they’re...the bottom line is their bodies betray them. They look like adults and they sound like adults and they are babies inside. So they have this amazing sort of...” (p.1)</p>	<p>Insignificant year</p> <p>In-between, nothing special for Year 9</p> <p>Developmental stage Questioning, behavioural changes</p> <p>Physical maturity vs. cognitive maturity</p>

Miles and Huberman’s (1994) final activity, conclusion drawing and verification, is essentially about finding meaning within data. Establishing conclusions takes place by identifying and noting patterns, regularities, irregularities, causal flows, possible configurations and explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is in this stage that verification of conclusions also takes place through meta-analysis. For this study, conclusion drawing and verification began in the data display tables as discussed earlier. Once preliminary data reduction and data display was complete, I then read through the tabled data and summarised key themes, examples, regularities and irregularities. Synthesising this information and displaying it in separate theme analysis documents, then allowed me the opportunity to verify results by returning to the raw data and reanalysing it in conjunction with the conclusions drawn. This verification process involved what Miles and Huberman (1994) describe as testing for plausibility, sturdiness and confirmability. The plausibility of conclusions was considered alongside the

initial raw data as well as theoretical knowledge gained as part of the literature review for this study.

In summary, the data analysis process for this research remained cyclic and ongoing throughout the entire period of study. Miles and Huberman's *Interactive Model for Qualitative Data Analysis* with its four activities of data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification was used to guide the analysis process. Raw data was kept and referred back to at various stages, particularly when drawing conclusions and verifying findings.

3.7 Limitations and Issues of Trustworthiness

Qualitative case studies have limitations and critics when it comes to issues of validity. It is therefore important that qualitative case study researchers employ measures to elicit reflexivity and enhance trustworthiness within their work. This section explores some of the criticism of case study research and explains how trustworthiness was augmented in this study through continuous reflexivity.

One of the major criticisms of case study research is the inability of single site research to generalise findings. Stake (1995), a leading expert in case study methodology states quite clearly that single case studies do not often provide a strong basis for generalisability. Instead, he argues, "case studies are undertaken to make the case understandable" (Stake, 1995, p. 85). Eisenhardt (2002) adds that case studies contribute evidence-based, empirically valid and relevant theory to various fields of research. The uniqueness of single case research cannot be denied nor replicated. However, as Stake (1995) argues, there is still a lot to learn that is general from single case research. When readers begin to compare case study findings with their own experiences or other cases, findings become transferable (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Stake, 1995). Also, as Flyvbjerg (2011) argues, case studies have the capacity to add to the collective process of knowledge accumulation in various fields of research. Collectively, case studies begin to generalise knowledge and build theory.

As Eisenhardt (2002) writes, case study critics have argued that the volumes of rich data generated by this form of research make it difficult for researchers to extract findings and maintain focus. As mentioned in the previous section, Miles and Huberman's (1994) *Interactive Model for Qualitative Data Analysis* was used to help manage the large volumes of data generated in this case study. The research sub-questions and data reduction tables employed in data analysis narrowed the foci of the investigation and assisted in identifying data of relevance and importance.

The concept of reflexivity is used in qualitative research to assist researchers in maintaining quality and monitoring the impact of researcher biases, beliefs and personal experiences within studies (Berger, 2015). Reflexivity represents the "continuous process of self-reflection that researchers engage in to generate awareness about their actions, feelings and perceptions" (Darawsheh, 2014, p. 561). In constructivist inquiry, the scientific or positivist constructs of validity are replaced by the notion of trustworthiness or authenticity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It is through reflexive processes that constructivist researchers build trustworthiness within their studies. Reflexivity needs to be a continuous and comprehensive process throughout all phases of research from the design phase to data collection, data analysis and the dissemination of findings (Darawsheh, 2014).

This study continually incorporated a range of reflexive strategies and processes in order to build trustworthiness. Firstly, reflexivity begins at the ontological and epistemological level, where researchers need to consider their worldview, background and "... the way in which he or she constructs the world, uses language, poses questions and chooses the lens for filtering the information gathered from [research]" (Berger, 2015, p. 220). I engaged in reflexivity in the design phase of this study by carefully considering my own ontology and beliefs about knowledge construction, and openly acknowledging these in my methodology (see Section 3.2).

Still at the design phase of the study, I engaged in reflexivity by considering ethical issues and the impact of data collection on participants. As Merriam (1998, p. 198) suggests, working in an ethical manner is crucial to ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research. Efforts were made in the design of this study to ensure that data collection was ethical and adhered to the principles and guidelines of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of Tasmania. Permission to conduct this study was sought and gained from the HREC in November 2010 before any data collection involving participants (interviews and Email dialogues) took place. The research was deemed minimal risk and satisfied all of the requirements of the HREC. Permission to conduct the research was also sought from St. John's College's Principal and from individual participants (see Appendix B). The University of Southern Queensland's Human Research Ethics Committee also gave permission to continue this research once I transferred this doctoral study to the University of Southern Queensland in February 2012. Data collection processes were carefully chosen with ethical considerations made regarding participants and their privacy (see Section 3.5).

I chose four key strategies from Mertens (2010) to guide reflexivity and build trustworthiness throughout the data collection and analysis phases of this research. The four strategies from Mertens (2010) included:

- Prolonged and substantial engagement with the research;
- Persistent observation;
- Member checks; and
- Triangulation of data.

This study achieved prolonged and substantial engagement with the research due to its 2½-year data collection time frame. Persistent observations were also achieved with the use of participant observations over the duration of the study. According to Cohen et al. (2000), triangulation is defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in a qualitative study. By collecting data from different sources and by using different data collection tools, researchers gain greater capacity for demonstrating validity (Cohen et al., 2000) or, in

constructivist terms, trustworthiness. In this study, triangulation was achieved with the use of multiple data collection tools and multiple data sources.

Member checking involves taking data and initial interpretations back to the participants from where they were derived and asking them to review it in order to rule out possible misinterpretations and to identify any biases or misunderstandings (Merriam, 1998, 2009). The member checking process in this study helped to confirm initial findings and to test the trustworthiness of the data collected. Practically, it involved asking interview participants to review their interview transcripts and make notes and changes where they thought necessary. In the Email dialogues, member checking involved the use of clarification statements/questions such as “I gathered from your last Email that...” or “Is this correct?” Through this method, I was able to clarify and elucidate data and preliminary findings.

As Berger (2015) writes, it is important that reflexivity resonates in the writing style used to report research findings. Some deliberate choices were made in the presentation of findings for this research to facilitate reflexivity and increase trustworthiness. Firstly, the first-person perspective is used throughout the findings sections of this thesis to highlight my dual position as teacher/researcher and also the inquiry processes I engaged in. I showcase participants’ voices throughout the presentation of findings by including raw-data from interview transcripts and Email dialogues. By including raw-data, I am able to share aspects of the data-analysis process I engaged in and show readers how I came to the conclusions that I reached. The sharing of raw-data also encourages readers to engage in constructivist inquiry themselves and to consider their own interpretations and conclusions from the data.

Reflexivity remained a consistent element of this constructivist, qualitative case study. The reflexive processes and strategies used through all phases of this research assisted in achieving higher levels of trustworthiness and authenticity of findings.

3.8 Presentation of Findings

The findings of this research are presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. The findings chapters are deliberately written from my first-person perspective as the key researcher and full participant in this study. The findings chapters also incorporate raw data from interviews, Email dialogues and school documents (recorded in textboxes and in italics) so that, in keeping with constructivist theory, readers can participate in data interpretation and knowledge construction.

As Merriam (2009) explains, a key characteristic of qualitative research is the use of the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection. It therefore becomes important that the researcher spends time highlighting who they are, how they entered the field, how they conducted the research and what influence they may have had on the case under investigation (Yates, 2004). As mentioned, the findings chapters of this study utilise first-person accounts and explanations from myself as the researcher. I chose to present findings from this perspective because first-person writing has the ability to engage audiences, draw readers into narrative and fully acknowledge the role the researcher plays in the inquiry process (Lichtman, 2013). First-person perspectives are also considered vital in qualitative research for the reasons Yates (2004) explains:

The way to demonstrate methodological quality is usually by including some first person account in which incidents of the fieldwork are discussed, so that some picture is offered of both what the researcher was doing (what steps they were taking), and what were their thinking processes (what types of awareness preceded and accompanied the steps). In [qualitative studies], first-person accounts would usually be seen as essential, because a passive voice would indicate that the researcher was not thinking enough about their own impact on the object of study and was not scrutinising sufficiently critically what happened in the field. (p. 79)

The findings chapters in this study do not just recount the events of St. John's College's reform, they also tell my story as a researcher and the inquiry and thinking processes I engaged in during the research. This was a deliberate decision made in order to promote reflexivity within the research. The findings chapters display raw data from interviews, Emails and school documents. The

choice to display raw data was another deliberate design feature of the findings chapters in this study. As Lichtman (2013) explains and in constructivist study in particular, readers want to hear the voices of others. Participants in qualitative research are real people with real stories, thoughts, opinions, feelings and experiences (Litchman, 2013). Sharing these stories through participants' own voices is a powerful means of capturing an audience's attention and co-constructing knowledge (Litchman, 2013).

3.9 Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 has presented a detailed overview of the methodological design, context and data collection tools used in this research. It explained the constructivist paradigm, which framed this study and the case study design of the research. The chapter also explained the data collection tools employed in the research including participant observations, semi-structured interviews, Email dialogues and school document analysis. Section 3.6 outlined the use of Miles and Huberman's (1994) *Interactive Model for Qualitative Data Analysis*, which was used to manage, evaluate and analyse data for this study. Section 3.7 outlined the strategies employed to facilitate reflexivity and increase trustworthiness of the findings, whilst Section 3.8 gave an overview of the presentation of findings. The next chapter, Chapter 4 will begin the presentation of findings.

Chapter 4 - Findings: The Beginnings of Reform

4.1 Personal Reflection

I recall attending a staff meeting at St. John's College in 2009 where the Deputy Principals and Principal spoke to teachers about their recent trip to Victoria. The purpose of the trip was to visit schools that had alternative Year 9 programmes and to gather information and ideas for our own school's Year 9 initiative. This meeting was a critical point in time in determining the vision for St. John's own Year 9 campus. I remember seeing photographs of school gardens, camps and students working in teams. I remember hearing about how schools were trying to inspire leadership within their students by giving them extra responsibilities in taking care of their own campus. There was a lot to take in and teachers had mixed emotions about it all.

The Principal and Deputy Principals appeared very positive, enthusiastic and excited at the prospect of developing a new campus for Year 9. Some of the teachers, like me, were curious and interested in what they had to say. Others were somewhat critical and made a mockery of the chicken coops and vegetable gardens that featured in some of the Victorian schools the group visited. I really feel that it was this point in time though; that teachers, as opposed to the school leaders, at St. John's College began to envision what our own Year 9 campus might be like.

Rebecca, Researcher & Year 9 Teacher

4.2 Introduction

Chapter 4 is the first of three chapters in which I present the data and findings of this research. Section 4.3 provides an exploration of the case school, St. John's College, and begins to tell the narrative of the Year 9 teachers' experiences of reform. Section 4.3 also outlines key events in the reform process and explains

my own personal journey as a Year 9 teacher in the beginning of St. John's College's Year 9 reform. In Section 4.4, I present information on the participants who contributed to this study and the pseudonyms used in the presentation of data. The participation rates in relation to each of the data collection tools were presented in Table 3.1 in the previous chapter.

Sections 4.5 and 4.6 present findings in relation to the first research sub-question, which asked:

“What is the Year 9 Team's rationale and vision for the reform?”

For clarification, the Year 9 Team represents the group of approximately 15 teachers and 4 leaders (School Principal, Head of Year 9, Head of Year 9 Curriculum and Head of Year 9 Pastoral Care) who were responsible for initiating, implementing and, in the case of the leaders, managing the Year 9 reform. I remained a teacher member of this team throughout the entire data collection period. The bulk of data used to inform this section of the findings was taken from the semi-structured interviews I conducted with Year 9 teachers and leaders from April to October 2011. Some data was also taken from my participant observations journal and from the school document analysis I completed (see Section 3.5). I conclude this chapter with a chapter summary in Section 4.7.

4.3 The Case School – St. John's College

The context for this study, St. John's College, was a co-educational, independent Tasmanian secondary school catering for students of Years 7 to 12. I began working at the school as a fresh university graduate in 2005. On commencement of this study, St. John's College had a student population of around 1400 people (approximately 260 students in Year 9), with over 100 teachers and additional staff. The college boasted a good reputation in the community and was well known for its students' sporting prowess and community work with local parishes. The college had a long, almost 90-year history in the local community, spanning several generations of students. The school originally only catered for

boys and was situated on an inner-city block. In the 1950s however, the school moved to its present location in the suburbs where it had room to expand. In the 1980s, St. John's Boys' Secondary School amalgamated with two similar girls' schools to create a co-educational college (Years 7-12). Apart from the addition of some new facilities and extra buildings, the 1980s amalgamation was the last major structural development of the college until the present Year 9 reform, which is described in this study.

I first heard of St. John's College's plans to reform Year 9 in 2009. Prior to this, enrolments at the college were rising, placing strain on resources and spaces within the school. Further growth was predicted for the future but not at a level that would warrant an entirely new school. Taking these predictions into consideration, St. John's College, in conjunction with its founding church, made the decision to increase capacity for student intake. There was an obvious need for new buildings to cater for a larger student and teacher population. The need for new physical spaces however, opened opportunities for the school to explore different organisational structures and to look at the needs of each grade within the college. In the end, the college leaders decided to build a separate campus for Year 9 students. The reasons as to why Year 9 was chosen for reform are presented in Section 4.5. By creating a separate campus for Year 9 students, the college was also able to create extra space for students of other grades on the Main Campus and divide the school into three distinct sub-schools: a Junior School catering for Years 7 and 8; a Year 9 School catering for Year 9 students only; and a Senior School catering for Years 10, 11 and 12. The Year 9 reform was the first step in the college's broader strategic plan to re-develop all three sub-schools.

My status during the research period was that of a full-time teacher at St. John's College. As a specialist language teacher, I had taught students across all grades at the college and had also assumed pastoral care and some part-time leadership responsibilities. In 2010, the Principal asked all teachers to complete an intentions form to indicate which sub-school they would prefer to join in the future. This was the first step in creating smaller teams of teachers to work in

each of the three integrated sub-schools. After much consideration, I made the decision to join the Year 9 Team and become one of the teachers who would help implement reform. My reasons for this choice are explore in the following self-reflection:

Before joining the Year 9 Team, I had worked across all grades at the college and had enjoyed each year level for different reasons. There were several factors in the end that drew me to make the decision to join the Year 9 Team. Firstly, the prospect of creating a new campus and new learning programme for Year 9 was exciting. I was attracted to the development because I enjoy educational research and presumed that such work would be a major part of the reform. Like some other teachers within the Year 9 Team, I was also quite inspired by the Year 9 Leadership Group. The Year 9 leaders were respected members of our school staff and their positive enthusiasm for the project was infectious.

I think the final reason I was attracted to the Year 9 campus was the opportunity to work somewhere smaller and more manageable. Before the reform, St. John's College was a large school with a busy, fast-paced, sometimes impersonal environment. The corridors, locker areas and parts of the playground were particularly crowded and difficult places to effectively manage students' behaviour. Disrespect for teachers was not uncommon in these areas, as students in large crowds failed to follow instructions. It was difficult to follow up on inappropriate behaviour in these spaces as well, because if teachers did not know a student's name (as was often the case), they could not deal with the matter appropriately. The crowded, almost anonymous environment opened the door for much complacency amongst students and teachers alike. For me, working in a smaller environment where it could be possible to know students on a more personal level seemed far more attractive than dealing with the crowded, anonymous and somewhat difficult environment of St. John's College before the reform.

Rebecca, Researcher & Year 9 Teacher

At the end of the 2010 school year, the sub-school teams were announced and I became part of the Year 9 Team. To begin this team relationship, a group of approximately 24 teachers boarded a mini-bus and set off to a beachside camp where we had the opportunity to share some of our initial thoughts, hopes and concerns for the new campus. It was also a time where we could consolidate our reasoning for joining the Year 9 Team and make a permanent decision as to whether or not we wanted to remain part of the team and continue on to the planning stage for the campus in 2011. Thankfully, the large majority of the initial camp group made the decision to stay on the Year 9 Team. As fate would have it, the group consisted of a wide range of subject teachers, almost the perfect number and variety that was needed to set up the new Year 9 campus at St. John's College. Later on, a few extra teachers were recruited to make up positions in certain subject areas. To my understanding, all of these teachers came voluntarily, and no one joined the team unwillingly.

The establishment of the Year 9 Team saw the Year 9 reform begin to move from the initiation phase of school improvement to that of implementation. In 2011, members of the Year 9 Team began to take on various responsibilities in preparing and planning for the new campus. For teachers like myself this meant planning the curriculum for new courses and re-developing old courses in light of the then new Australian Curriculum; assessing teaching programmes and resources; being consulted on some aspects of the physical environment (campus building); and assisting with planning for pastoral care arrangements at the new campus. Year 9 Team teachers also attended team meetings on a regular basis and were in constant contact with the Year 9 Leadership Group which consisted of Lincoln (the College Principal), Lewis (Head of Year 9), Lesley (Head of Year 9 Curriculum) and Leyton (Head of Year 9 Pastoral Care).

Teachers of English, history, geography and science, like myself, were asked to work as a team to plan units of work for a multi-disciplinary subject named 'Connections'. The Connections course aimed to merge the disciplines of English, history, geography and science. The course would take up one block of teaching and learning time per day within the Year 9 timetable and would be facilitated

by two teachers – one having experience in teaching English/history, the other having experience in teaching science/geography. Some of the advantages of merging the four subjects and creating Connections were discussed as a team. They included: reducing the amount of teachers students worked with in order to encourage positive teacher-student relationships; facilitating team-teaching situations; and creating more space in the Year 9 timetable. There were several elements of this course however, that were left undecided during the period of research. They included: the degree and form of integration that would occur within the course; and the benefits and disadvantages of multi-disciplinary curriculum from a teaching and learning perspective, as opposed to an organisational one. More discussion on vision for curriculum and teaching approaches at the new campus is found in Sections 4.6.4 and 4.6.5.

I began collecting data for this research in March 2010. For the first year of this study, data collection only took place in the form of my participant observations, which were recorded in a journal. By 2011, the Year 9 Team was established and operational. From April to October 2011, I interviewed all four Year 9 leaders and 7 of the 15 Year 9 Team teachers. As Section 4.2 explained, the bulk of the data to inform this section of the research findings was taken from these semi-structured interviews. I wanted to find out why members of the Year 9 Team at St. John's College thought Year 9 was worthy of reform and what their vision for the reform was.

4.4 Participants in the Study

Table 4.1 presents the full list of participants and the pseudonyms used in the presentation of findings across Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Table 3.1 in Section 3.5 gave details on participation rates in relation to the various data collection tools used in this study. As a reminder, all leaders are distinguished in Chapters 4 to 6 with pseudonyms that begin with the letter 'L'.

Table 4.1

Participants' Pseudonyms

Participants	Pseudonyms
Case school	St. John's College
Principal	Lincoln
Head of Year 9	Lewis
Head of Year 9 Curriculum	Lesley
Head of Year 9 Pastoral Care	Leyton
Year 9 teachers	Arlene, Bruce, Catherine, Dana, Emily, Felix, Gabrielle, Hannah, Indigo, John
Researcher	I, myself (referred to in the first person), Rebecca

The bulk of the data to inform this chapter of findings was taken from the semi-structured interviews in which 10 out of approximately 20 Year 9 Team members took part, including: Lincoln, Lewis, Lesley, Leyton, Arlene, Bruce, Catherine, Dana, Felix and Gabrielle.

4.5 A Rationale for Year 9 Reform

As Section 1.5 explained, one of the aims of this study was to uncover the rationale behind St. John's College's Year 9 reform. I wanted to find out why the teachers and leaders thought Year 9 was worthy of reform and why this grade, as opposed to any other, was selected for the separate campus development. I began this part of my inquiry with semi-structured interviews where I asked participants individually why they believed Year 9 was worthy of reform. The responses I received were varied in both content and the way that they were articulated. Eventually, through the data analysis process, I was able to discern five key themes in the team's rationale for Year 9 reform. The five themes are summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Summary of St. John's College's Rationale for Year 9 Reform

Themes	Contributing Data Sources
1. Year 9 being a challenging year for students and teachers	<i>Teachers:</i> Arlene, Bruce, Catherine, Emily, Gabrielle & myself (researcher) <i>Leaders:</i> Lesley, Leyton, Lewis & Lincoln
2. Year 9 marking a pivotal stage of development for students	<i>Teachers:</i> Arlene, Bruce, Catherine, Dana, Emily, Felix & Gabrielle <i>Leaders:</i> Lesley, Leyton, Lewis & Lincoln
3. High levels of disengagement from learning at Year 9	<i>Teachers:</i> Arlene, Emily, Felix, Gabrielle & myself (researcher) <i>Leaders:</i> Leyton, Lewis & Lincoln
4. Year 9 is perceived as an insignificant year of secondary school	<i>Teachers:</i> Arlene, Dana, Emily & myself (researcher) <i>Leaders:</i> Lesley & Lincoln
5. Opportunities for further school restructuring	<i>Teachers:</i> myself (researcher) <i>Leaders:</i> Lewis <i>School Documents:</i> School's Strategic Plan

The sub-sections that follow provide more detail and data in relation to each of the five themes presented in Table 4.2.

4.5.1 Theme 1 – Year 9 being a challenging year for teachers and students.

The first theme I uncovered during data analysis for this study was the idea that Year 9 presents a challenging time for teachers and students. Initially the challenges that teachers described appeared to relate directly to adolescent developmental characteristics, particularly in relation to identity formation and increased desires for peer group socialisation. Catherine explained that Year 9 students “*start to question*” various aspects of their lives in search of identity. My colleague Arlene explained that, “*for Year 9s finding out who they are, what*

they want, is more pressing for that age group than actually learning anything.” For Lincoln, the common adolescent search for identity seemed to move to a heightened level in Year 9: “[At] Year 9 they go into that greater self-awareness phase of their lives where they are starting to get a sense of their own identity and starting to be able to plan ahead a little bit as well.” Teachers also explained that students wanted to spend more time socialising and that peers tended to outweigh any other influence. Emily expressed that for Year 9 students “*school is important more for socialising than learning*”. It was interesting that several of the teachers associated these developmental characteristics with difficulties in working with the grade rather than viewing them as indicators of typical adolescent development. This suggested that the teachers’ understandings in regard to adolescent development and adolescent needs were somewhat lacking.

The teachers and leaders in this study also felt that Year 9 was a difficult time for teachers in terms of managing and dealing with poor student behaviour. Lesley’s reflection on her first experiences as a Year 9 teacher at St. John’s College begins to illustrate this:

“The class was just horrendous! There were six greasy haired youths with their feet up on desks. They would scowl at me every time I said ‘work’ in a sentence or even on its own. There were about eight, if I was lucky, kids that were actually interested in learning something and then there was a bunch of hysterical girls on the side who would periodically rush from the room, one crying, the others going ‘she is upset we have to help her!’ and disappear off into the yonder regions of the College. And there was another girl who came to the first lesson and then proceeded to stand in the doorway of the classroom for the subsequent lessons going ‘I’m not coming in! You can’t make me!’ And for somebody who was never challenged in that respect, it was horrible.”

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

Other teachers described similar difficulties with student behaviour management where students seemed to “*lose their way*” (Bruce) or “*deviate from the path*” (Catherine) that teachers would like them to follow.

Arlene and Leyton began to reflect on why they felt teachers experienced difficulties in terms of managing student behaviour at Year 9. They felt that not all teachers dealt with Year 9 behaviour appropriately and that mismanagement of students' behaviour sometimes led to further difficulties. Arlene believed that *"there is a lack of understanding often between Year 9 teachers and Year 9 kids and that is where you often get the bad behaviour and the anger."* The following quotation from Leyton also begins to explore the difficulties that teachers faced when behaviour management was not successful:

"[Year 9 students] are starting to find things out for themselves, they are starting to question things through an inquiry and sometimes that can be expressed poorly. And I just feel that sometimes, some staff, not all staff, some staff can feel that that is a direct insult to the individual and feel that perhaps punishment is going to work but sometimes that works and other times it doesn't. You know, to go down the hard punishment line is not always successful."

Leyton, Year 9 Leader

Leyton explained in his interview that behavioural issues were common among students in Years 8 and 9, not just at St. John's College but also at other schools where he had worked. According to Leyton, Years 8 and 9 saw the highest rates of detentions and suspensions.

Teacher difficulties with Year 9 students were not just confined to behavioural issues alone. Gabrielle made comment on the diversity that exists in terms of Year 9 students' maturation, particularly cognitive maturation, and the impact this had on her teaching:

"I think from my experience, and I guess this is why I love them so much and find them so frustrating, is that [Year 9s] tend to... be the year group where there is the most difference. The range of kids' maturity, cognitive development just all of those things it tends to be the most diverse."

Gabrielle, Year 9 Teacher

Coping with this heightened diversity added further complexity to teachers' work with Year 9 students.

It is important to note that whilst my colleagues Arlene, Bruce, Catherine, Emily and Gabrielle all believed Year 9 presented challenges for teachers, there were also reports of Year 9 being a highly rewarding year level for teachers. The following quotations give evidence for this:

"[Year 9s] are my favourite year group"

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

"...My experiences have also been that if things go right, it is the most rewarding class to teach because you are seeing them really going from sort of children to young adults."

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

"...I love them so much and find them so frustrating..."

Gabrielle, Year 9 Teacher

"I have actually come to find although the Grade 9s are the most challenging, they are also the most enjoyable because they have such personality..."

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

Some of the challenges teachers associated with Year 9 students were directly related to typical developmental characteristics of adolescents. The fact that teachers found these characteristics difficult was worrying and suggested a need for more professional learning on adolescents' developmental needs and characteristics, and the implications this has for designing effective curriculum and pedagogy for the Year 9 classroom. Further challenges faced by Year 9 teachers appeared to relate to managing student behaviour and coping with high levels of cognitive diversity in Year 9 classrooms. Interestingly, Year 9 was also considered a professionally rewarding grade to teach by some of the teachers in this study because of the challenges the grade presented.

4.5.2 Theme 2 – Year 9 marks a pivotal stage of development for students.

Whilst some of the teachers described adolescent developmental characteristics as 'difficulties' for students (see previous section), they also identified Year 9 as

a pivotal stage of development for students. This was the second major theme I uncovered in the data on the Year 9 Team's rationale for Year 9 reform. The characteristics described in this section are again typical of adolescent development and are not particularly unique to Year 9 students. The teachers mentioned students' increased desires for peer-group socialisation and independence. They also described Year 9 as a key decision-making time and a time for consolidating identity. Broadly speaking, Year 9 was referred to as a "*transitional time*" (Lewis) or "*transition year*" (Felix) for students. These points are discussed further in this section.

Like all middle years' adolescents, the Year 9 students of St. John's College were thought to be increasingly interested in socialising with peers:

"...there is far more going on for Year 9 students, particularly in terms of their socialisation. That is far more important to them at this point than academic stuff."

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

"...they are going through major structural changes in the brain and you know, school is important more for socialising than learning."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

In regards to identity formation, Arlene explained that Year 9 students are "*making changes and developing their personality*" as well as "*finding out who they are*". Catherine and Dana also commented on identity formation at Year 9:

"[Year 9s] are really starting to realise that they are individuals and they are starting to question everything. They are starting to question mum and dad and you know, mum and dad might say something about you know, even politics or something like that and they start thinking to themselves, 'Oh, I don't agree with that'. You know, like whereas before, everything mum and dad said they believed was set in stone and all of those sorts of things. So I like it because it is an age where they start to question and become more independent."

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

"It is that traditional year, physiologically boys are very up and down and very volatile. Emotionally, girls question everything. They question why. Why are you making me do this? Why do I have to do that? Why is she my friend? Why do I have to do what my mum says?"

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

Both the increased desire for peer group socialisation and identity exploration and formation are typical characteristics of all middle years' learners and not unique to Year 9. What was noteworthy was the idea that Year 9 started to mark a transition to a more mature period of identity formation. Lincoln believed that Year 9 presented a time of heightened self-awareness for young adolescents as well as a key decision making time:

"... regardless of what parents and teachers think, [Year 9] students really start to consider whether they are going to complete school or not. And they even begin to make some decisions then in terms of looking forward or looking down the pathway a bit and saying, 'Well yes I am going to complete Year 12' or not."

"Year 9 they go into that greater self-awareness phase of their lives where they are starting to get a sense of their own identity and starting to be able to plan ahead a little bit as well."

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

Lincoln's comments are supported in the literature with Khoo and Ainley (2005) finding a high correlation between the intentions and attitudes of Year 9 students and their participation in Year 12 education. My colleague Bruce, also thought of Year 9 as a key decision making time for adolescents, although he explained it can "*be a point where they go down a path that they will probably make some poor decisions.*"

The teachers in this study described Year 9 students as wanting more independence and responsibility, but not always getting it:

"It is also the year that they think they should be allowed to go to [a music festival] but they are only 15."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

"They're not really very responsible but they're not going to get that responsibility, you know... they don't have any responsibilities then they are not going to be able to develop those skills."

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

"...they are being told all the time by various people: 'You've got to do this, you've got to do that, you've got to do this' but at the same time they are becoming, or they are sensing they are becoming these independent sort of young adults and they want their own ability to court certain things..."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

Again, the characteristics described by the teachers are typical for middle years' adolescents and are not unique to Year 9 students alone. My colleague Dana sensed disparity between students' physical and cognitive maturation. She said that Year 9s *"look like adults and they sound like adults and they are babies inside."* Whilst this is an exaggeration, it shows Dana's awareness of the lack of congruence between students' physical as opposed to cognitive maturation.

The Year 9 students described by the teachers in this study are typical of middle years' adolescents in general. Their searches for identity; desires for more peer group socialisation; and want for more independence are typical adolescent developmental characteristics. The teachers and leaders in this study believed that at Year 9, students entered a more mature phase of identity formation and made defining decisions regarding their future education.

4.5.3 Theme 3 – High levels of student disengagement from learning in Year 9.

The third theme that emerged in the data was the high prevalence of student disengagement from learning in Year 9. My colleagues Emily, Felix, Gabrielle, Lewis and Lincoln all used the term *"disengaged"* at some point in their interviews to describe some of the Year 9 students they had worked with. I had also personally witnessed several cases of student disengagement as a Year 9 teacher. The following is a personal reflection on one of my early experiences of teaching Year 9:

In my first year of teaching, I remember taking a career education class with Year 9 students. This class was most definitely the worst of my experiences with Year 9 students. In fact, after more than 10 years in the classroom, I would say that this class was my worst experience of teaching altogether. The class was a compulsory course for all students in Year 9 and we met only once per fortnight. When I met with the other teachers who were assigned to this course, I immediately sensed that the subject was more about 'ticking a box' in terms of providing career education rather than something that was particularly valued by teachers or students. Neither the teachers nor students seemed convinced of the course's relevance or usefulness.

Having the career class only once per fortnight made it nearly impossible to get to know the students well. There was a definite lack of respect towards me as the teacher and my lessons were plagued with poor student behaviour as a result. On several occasions, I had to gain support from middle leadership to help deal with behavioural issues in the class. Seeking support was not always easy though. As a new teacher I felt compelled to prove myself and did not want to appear incompetent by constantly asking for assistance. As a result, I only went to middle leadership when absolutely needed. Looking back, I felt that if I had more opportunities to get to know my students better and they me, then the situation could have been better. Also if the relevance of the class was communicated more effectively and it had more teacher buy-in, the perceptions surrounding career education would have improved. Finally, if teachers could have worked more collaboratively and supportively, I may have sought more assistance.

Thankfully, not all of my Year 9 classes resembled the one I just described. Like some of my colleagues, I also have great memories of teaching Year 9. Particularly when teaching Japanese, an optional subject for students. For me, Year 9 classes felt successful when the students had some control over what they studied (such as in an optional subject); when they had the opportunity to get to know me and vice versa; and when they had the opportunity to learn in a social environment with friends.

Rebecca, Researcher & Year 9 Teacher

My reflection shows a clear example of student disengagement from learning and the behavioural issues, under achievement and teacher stress that can result from this. The unsympathetic timetabling of the career education class meant that I was unable to form positive teacher-student relationships with my students. This had a significant impact on the teaching and learning conditions the students and I faced. My personal reflection also identified students not seeing the relevance of their learning and a lack of teacher-teacher support as reasons for student disengagement at Year 9. The following comments are from my colleagues who also identified high levels of disengagement from learning at Year 9:

"I think that [Year 9] is where we start to see a lot of manifestations of frustrations with inability to cope with the work or relevance – 'What is this going to...' [and] 'What is the point of this?' Year 12 is that far off that they are not really thinking of the stepping stones that are required both in terms of subject selection and development of their skills to get into that level, so I think for lots of reasons Year 9 is the best target area [for reform]."

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

"A lot of research had been done on students as they emerge into those adolescent years and beyond the initial time when they settle in through a transition process, there is this period of time... where some students become disengaged with their education."

"Grade 9 can be, if we are not careful, can just be a repetition. And they can't see the end for a long time so it can be a bit of a no man's land."

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

"Grade 9 - they are between those senior years where they have to care and they know they have to care, because they want either an apprenticeship or they want to go to university whatever it is and in Grade 9 they just lose it. They just go 'Who cares?' It is a wasted year and the attitude has been there... it is not just at [St. John's], I have been at a few schools and it is just there in all the schools. So if I had to target a year, I would have targeted Grade 9."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

As I identified in my own personal reflection, both Lewis and Lincoln felt that Year 9 students sometimes struggled to identify the relevance and future implications of their learning. Emily's comment on Year 9 being a "wasted year" leads on to Theme 4 – Year 9 being an insignificant period of secondary schooling, discussed in Section 4.5.4.

Lesley felt that student disengagement was the result of Year 9 students being betrayed by traditional school systems. She felt that schools do not always celebrate the various talents and skills of students and instead focus incessantly on literacy and numeracy:

*"... school puts [Year 9 students] down, I think, because school is designed for conformity. You conform or you get punished... I think Grade 9s have a lot of that potential in them but I think for some of them it just gets killed."
"I know that English and maths is important but I really feel strongly that the kids that don't get English and maths, don't get that validation of their intelligence."*

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

According to Lesley, students who are less skilled in English and mathematics were at risk of not experiencing success at school and not feeling validated or intelligent. She felt strongly that Year 9 education should be more holistic and have less emphasis on performance in English and mathematics.

Increased disengagement from learning at the Year 9 level remained a key impetus for St. John's College's Year 9 reform. Disengagement appeared to result when students were denied opportunities to get to know and form good relationships with their teachers. It also appeared to result when students could not see the relevance of their studies or experience success within their learning. There was also some evidence that a lack of teacher-teacher support and teacher commitment to learning programmes contributed to student disengagement from learning.

4.5.4 Theme 4 – The perception that Year 9 is insignificant.

The fourth theme in regards to the rationale for Year 9 reform centered on the perception that Year 9 is an insignificant year of secondary schooling. In the previous section I reflected on how the teachers' attitudes and perceptions appeared to influence student engagement in a career education course at St. John's College. In this section I explore teachers' general perceptions of Year 9 and consider the impact this had on Year 9 education.

The position of Year 9 in the middle of a Grades 7-12 secondary school like St. John's College seemed problematic. From the teachers I interviewed, there were perceptions that Year 9 did not receive the extra assistance and special programmes that were often seen in the first, transitional years of high school. It was also noted that Year 9 students were still at least two years away from entering the senior years (Years 11 and 12), which focus more intently on achieving the Tasmanian Certificate of Education, career education and leadership within the school. As Dana explained in her interview:

"When you are in the Junior part of the school, you get a little bit, you know, you are a little bit special and you have special days and you are looked after because it is all very new. When you are in the Senior part of the school, you get lots of responsibilities with that you get lots of rewards. And then there is this Grade 9 in the middle."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

The lack of Year 9 specific programmes seemed to add to the perception that Year 9 was a "wasted year" (Emily), a "no-man's land" (Arlene) or a "nothing year" (Dana). For Lincoln, the danger lay in Year 9 being a repetition of previous years. As I quoted in the previous section, Lincoln said: "Grade 9 can be, if we are not careful, can just be a repetition." The key rationale point here is that without a more distinctive identity and more grade specific programmes, perceptions surrounding Year 9 would not improve. Negative perceptions amongst teachers are also likely to influence the attitudes and motivations of students who would also start to perceive Year 9 as being insignificant and unimportant.

The perceived insignificance of Year 9 appeared to result from the fact that it is literally situated in the middle of 7-12 secondary schooling and is book-ended by the transitional junior years of high school and the more career focussed senior secondary years. The lack of any Year 9 specific programmes meant that Year 9 was left to feel like a wasted year or just a repetition of the previous year of schooling. Dealing with the perceived insignificance of Year 9 and establishing a more positive identity for Year 9 was a key rationale point in reforming the grade.

4.5.5 Theme 5 – Opportunities for further school restructuring.

The last theme found in St. John’s College’s rationale for Year 9 reform was associated with the re-structuring of the entire school. As mentioned in Section 4.3, by reforming Year 9 and providing a separate campus for this year group, St. John’s College established a new secondary school structure which involved three integrated sub-schools: the Junior School for Years 7 and 8; the Year 9 School for Year 9 students; and the Senior School for Years 10, 11 and 12 students. Lincoln explained how discussion and decisions occurred on how to best restructure the school and which year level should be considered for the new campus:

“Part of [the Year 9 reform] was driven by just the increased size of the school and looking at how we could best cater educationally for the school as it was developing.

[The separate campus] could have been Grade 7, it could have been Grade 12... but it wasn’t really going to be appropriate for a new model. Particularly with our pastoral care structure as it had been experienced.”

“I remember the meeting that we had up in the Boardroom, we really starting looking a little bit at the Year 9 concept but really looking at Year 9 was looking at the whole school. And the whole thing is connected so it is impossible to look at one part of the school without looking at the other parts of the school because they are all interconnected.”

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

As Lincoln explained, in terms of re-structuring the school, and providing new buildings to cater for the extra intake of students, various options were available including a separate space for Year 7 students or senior students in Year 12. Taking the Year 7 students away from the Main Campus to their own separate campus would essentially create two major transitions for these students: that of leaving primary school to commence secondary schooling; and then that of leaving the Year 7 Campus to commence at the Main Campus. This was felt to be unfair on Year 7 students but also problematic to the college's vertical pastoral care system where students from Years 7 to 12 were placed in various home groups and houses to work with and care for one another in buddy systems.

St. John's College's vertical pastoral care system had been a successful organisational feature of the school, which inspired leadership amongst the older students and student-to-student support for the younger students. Vertical pastoral care was also a long-standing tradition of St. John's College. Lewis felt strongly about maintaining this system in the future:

"I have always been very anti taking the 11s and 12s and putting them somewhere else. That was always a push- 'Let's do that. Why don't we do that?' Well I have always been very anti that because how [the older students] can [assist] the younger students and teach them, well this is what it is all about. [Older students] hav[ing] opportunities for leadership I think is so crucial."

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

By targeting Year 9 for reform as opposed to Year 7 or Year 12, the school could maintain the essence of their vertical pastoral care system. Dividing the school into the three integrated sub-schools also meant that the college could aim to provide more targeted, developmentally appropriate programmes for all students. As Lewis said: *"Importantly [by establishing a separate campus for Year 9] we could really start to address the learning needs of those different groups and both 9 and 10, which can be stuck in the middle in a 7-12 College, could become more purposeful years."*

Overall, the rationale for St. John's College's Year 9 reform followed five key themes including: Year 9 being a challenging year for students and teachers; Year 9 marking a pivotal stage of development; high levels of disengagement from learning at Year 9; Year 9 being perceived as an insignificant year; and opportunities for further school restructuring through Year 9 reform. The first four rationale points all identify challenges or areas for improvement regarding Year 9 education. The final point however, considers separate campus Year 9 reform as a stepping-stone in restructuring and reforming the whole school.

4.6 Vision for St. John's College's Year 9 Reform

The second aim of this study was to uncover the vision Year 9 teachers and leaders of St. John's College held for the Year 9 reform. I wanted to uncover what the Year 9 Team hoped to see at the new campus. Again, the majority of data used to inform this section of the findings was obtained in the semi-structured interviews I conducted from April to October 2011. Subsequent data was collected and used from school documents and my participant observations journal.

Interestingly, St. John's College did not produce a vision statement for the Year 9 Campus reform. As a Year 9 teacher, I found this frustrating. The following extract is taken from my participant observations journal:

Date: 3rd March 2010

"Now that we are heading towards the first year of operation, I would really like to see some decisions made. I would like to see a vision or purpose statement written with some specifics included. For example, if the campus is going to adopt integrated curriculum, then we should outline this in our vision or purpose statement. If we are going to adopt smaller teams of teachers and more individualised instruction then we should make that explicit. This, I believe, will really help ordinary teachers begin to visualise the campus and individual classroom programmes. It will also give them time to consider the implications of such decisions."

Rebecca, Researcher & Year 9 Teacher

It was never made clear as to why a separate vision statement for the Year 9 reform was not established. The lack of a vision statement however, appeared to have both positive and negative consequences for the Year 9 development. Firstly, on the positive side, the lack of an explicit purpose statement meant that the vision for the new campus could continually evolve and remain organic in nature. The vision could be altered or changed when new learnings occurred or new situations arose. On the negative side, not having an explicit vision statement meant that the Year 9 Team were unable to develop a collective vision for the reform and that individual teachers were unable to adequately articulate the vision for reform. The campus vision was also left open to varying interpretations and possibly even misinterpretations.

Through the data analysis process, eight themes were identified in the Year 9 Team's vision for Year 9 reform. These eight themes and the contributing data sources are summarised in Table 4.3. The sub-sections that follow discuss each of the eight themes in more detail.

Table 4.3

Summary of St. John's College's Vision for Year 9 Reform

Themes	Data Sources
1. Positive relationships within the campus	<p>Teachers: Catherine, Emily, Gabrielle & myself (researcher) Leaders: Lesley, Leyton, Lewis & Lincoln School Documents: 2012 Year 9 Handbook</p>
2. A community environment	<p>Teachers: Arlene, Catherine, Dana, Gabrielle & myself (researcher) Leaders: Leyton, Lewis & Lincoln School Documents: 2012 Year 9 Handbook</p>
3. Engaged and enthusiastic learners	<p>Teachers: Emily, Catherine, Gabrielle & myself (researcher) Leaders: Lesley, Leyton & Lincoln School Documents: 2012 Year 9 Handbook</p>
4. More relevant curriculum	<p>Teachers: Arlene, Bruce, Catherine, Dana, Emily, Felix & myself (researcher) Leaders: Lesley</p>

5. More innovative teaching approaches	Teachers: Catherine, Dana, Emily, Felix & myself (researcher) Leaders: Leyton & Lincoln
6. Support for students' social, emotional and moral development	Teachers: Arlene, Bruce, Gabrielle & myself (researcher) Leaders: Lesley, Leyton & Lewis School Documents: 2012 Year 9 Handbook
7. Greater parental involvement	Leaders: Lewis School Documents: 2012 Year 9 Handbook
8. A break from mainstream schooling and time to reflect	Leaders: Lewis School Documents: 2012 Year 9 Handbook

4.6.1 Theme 1 – Positive relationships within the campus.

By far the strongest theme on vision for St. John's College's Year 9 campus was a desire for positive relationships, particularly but not limited to, teacher-student relationships:

"I feel a little bit disillusioned at the moment because I can walk down our [Main Campus] corridors and there will be faces that I have never seen... My girls were talking about someone the other day and so I looked at them on [the file system] and I thought, 'I honestly have not ever seen that person'. I haven't even seen them! And I just think I don't like that. And so that, I hope, is a big goal. That I might know everybody's name... and it will be nice because I like to walk down the corridor at lunch time and say 'Hi', 'Hi' and know their names and have a discussion with them and all of those sorts of things... I think it is really important."

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

"You know, not to go through school in this huge population and so all of [the Year 9 students] get a chance to be noticed and be known, I guess. I think that is a really important thing."

"It is an incredibly powerful thing to actually know them [the students], know their name, for them to know you... just so that they feel like they have a place and feel like they are known."

Gabrielle, Year 9 Teacher

"Another thing I would like to see at the campus – a focus on relationships and a behaviour management policy that reflects this."

"I think [Year 9 students] are engaged when they feel that what they are doing

is achievable, that they can do it. I also think they are engaged when they have a good rapport with and trust their teachers. This makes such a big difference.”

Rebecca, Researcher & Year 9 Teacher

“You learn from them as well as teaching them. And I think that it is important to have a two way kind of connection between students and teachers.”

“[Year 9 students] don’t like teachers that are completely unavailable to them. Teachers that they know nothing about. Whether or not they are a decent person. You can have a teacher that is strict but if they know a little bit about them and they know their boundaries and they know all of that -that is fine. Whereas if a teacher is inconsistent. If they are not interested in the student at all that is when they seem to really take a grudge.”

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

Catherine’s comment identifies the difficulties teachers experienced in forming positive relationships with students on the populous Main Campus. It was hoped that the smaller environment of the Year 9 Campus would provide more opportunities for teachers and students to know one another. Gabrielle sensed the importance of students feeling as though they were known and that they belonged. For me, students who felt they had good relationships with their teachers were more engaged in their education. Finally, Emily explained that building relationships was twofold. It involved not only teachers taking an interest and getting to know students, but also teachers sharing aspects of themselves and letting students get to know them. Gabrielle also mentioned in her interview that by knowing students better, teachers are placed in a far better position to address any welfare or well-being issues that could arise.

Like the teachers, all four Year 9 leaders held vision for strong and positive relationships at the new campus. Firstly, they too hoped to see positive teacher-student relationships. Lewis felt that it was important for students *“[to] actually have a group of staff that they believe care for them and are interested in them.”* The leaders also held vision for positive student-student relationships, where students had the opportunity to really know one another and form a strong bond with the peers in their year level:

"I am really looking for a strong bonding and networking of relationships across Grade 9 with students so that they can really get to know each other in ways... because our school is vertical pastoral care, sometimes students don't get to know each other as well across the year group. I'm really looking for that strong, getting-to-know-each-other bond across the year level to develop."

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

"Relationships as well relates to [the student] group because I think them coming together as a group... by being together for a year, sort of sorts out the relationships side of things. So that [students are] a little bit more comfortable in who they were and what their niche is within the group and felt that they belonged."

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

The leaders' vision for relationships also extended to staff-staff relationships. Leyton explained having vision for a *"team of staff"* that would not be part of a hierarchy of leadership and would instead work together:

"We will have a team of staff up there that we will have some people in leadership positions but they will be facilitating a team rather than a hierarchy level of student management."

"I guess it is an empowering community. You know our staff have skills that we need to tap into and you know, all of our staff are competent. So having a team approach."

Leyton, Year 9 Leader

Leyton hoped for a system where teachers could take more responsibility for managing student behaviour. Instead of referring student problems to a leader in a hierarchy, Leyton hoped to work together with teachers on solving issues and facilitate more teacher leadership. Lincoln also described his vision for teachers working together in teams in order to propel their professional development:

"I think it is going to be really interesting to see how a group of teachers are working together and I can see some real possibilities in terms of the staff and how those staff will work with each other and assist each other in order to develop professionally and give each other feedback on their teaching and curriculum and methodology. And really build that really positive learning community amongst the Year 9 staff. That is what I am really looking forward to."

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

What Lincoln is describing is a PLC culture where teachers could work collaboratively to improve teacher feedback, curriculum and pedagogy. Such cultures are also devoid of hierarchy and promote models of distributed leadership as Leyton described earlier.

In summary, the Year 9 Team's vision for positive relationships across the campus included teacher-student, student-student and teacher-teacher relationships. It was hoped that teachers and student could work more closely with one another at the smaller campus and have more of an opportunity to really know one another. It was also hoped that students could form a bond as a year level that they could take into their senior years at the college. Finally, the Year 9 leaders held vision for strong teacher-teacher relationships where colleagues could work closely in a PLC type of environment. They hoped staff would work together on issues relating to student behaviour management, curriculum, teaching and also teacher professional development.

4.6.2 Theme 2 – A community environment.

Related closely to the theme of strong relationships was the second theme calling for a community environment for staff and students at the new campus. The opening pages of the 2012 Year 9 Handbook sends a welcoming message to students and parents, with clear vision for a community of learners:

"Welcome to [St. John's Year 9 Campus]. This is a statement that we want to see regularly proclaimed and lived."

"The notion of living and learning in a community is central to our philosophy at

[St. John's Year 9 Campus]. Hence having staff dedicated to our campus is paramount to this... Our staff are opting to teach at [the Year 9 Campus] because they really want to be there."

2012 Year 9 Handbook

Several of my colleagues used the words "team" and "community" to describe the environment and interpersonal relationships they wanted to see at the new campus. The community type feel would encompass both staff and students in the separate campus:

"I would like to see... and I think I already see it – that it is a team. I think that is the really big thing and I think it is going to be a real community type feel. I think the staff have already got that in such a big way that it can't help but just ooze into the student population."

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

"I hope getting to know the students in their classes a little bit better, more thoroughly, will help [the Year 9 teachers] understand how the students in their classes learn a little bit more. That knowledge will lead to more designing of curriculum to meet individual student needs or groups of students and their needs. So I think it will be more like a cottage industry rather than a factory. Not that I want to use that kind of terminology but I think that the cottage industry have the image of people who really know their craft well, people who are working in that close communication, in this case getting to know their students really well."

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

Lincoln's analogy of a "cottage industry" recognises the smaller scale of the new campus, and the abilities of teachers to work more collaboratively to improve their craft. Like some of my colleagues I was attracted to the prospect of working in a smaller environment where relationships were considered important and, as Gabrielle simply said, where we "could get to know the kids really well."

Vision for a community of students and staff meant a change in the roles of the Year 9 leaders. Arlene articulated that she did not want to see the same hierarchal level of management that existed on the Main Campus, and instead wanted to see distributed leadership:

“When I visualise [the Year 9 Campus] I see all of us as...um, I see all of us in charge of everything. You know, that it is not going to be just one person’s role to do this or to do that or the other; that we are all going to be as important as each other on that campus. It is not going to be big hierarchies and things like that.”

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

As I have quoted earlier, Leyton too wanted to see the distribution of leadership and the facilitation of more teacher leadership. He stated: *“We will have a team of staff up there that we will have some people in leadership positions but they will be facilitating a team rather than a hierarchy level of student management.”*

Lincoln identified the extra responsibilities the Year 9 model would create for teachers and the implications for this on their workloads:

“I see it as being a really full on experience for Year 9 teachers. There are no passengers... A Year 9 teacher won’t be able to be an observer.”

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

Vision for a community environment included establishing a smaller, welcoming and inclusive campus. A move towards a more distributed model of leadership rather than a hierarchical system of management also formed part of the team’s vision for a community environment.

4.6.3 Theme 3 – Engaged and enthusiastic learners.

Vision for more engaged and enthusiastic learners was a theme strongly asserted by Lincoln as the school principal. He wanted to see:

“Really engaged learners, really enthusiastic learners. Perhaps even students looking at learning in a different way, almost as if they are coming into it for the first time. So rather than losing enthusiasm, losing a sense of wonder, losing a sense of thirst for understanding, [engagement] will either actually continue for those that have got that or it will be switched on more for those who are just meandering through secondary school or potentially even losing that interest. So, really engaged learners.”

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

Leyton too, explicitly said he wanted to see more student engagement in learning. When asked what he thought the broad goals for the new campus were, he said:

“Well the first [goal] is getting a community of Year 9 students that are engaged in their learning.”

Leyton, Year 9 Leader

Interestingly, whilst several of my Year 9 teacher colleagues identified student disengagement as a reason for Year 9 reform (see Section 4.5.3) only Emily explicitly stated in her interview that she wanted to see more engaged learners in her vision for the Year 9 reform. I noticed that some other teachers used phrases such as: having students be *“involved”* (Catherine) and seeing the campus have *“an impact on [the students]”* (Gabrielle) which, in some ways, alludes to the notion of student engagement. Furthermore, data from my participant observations journal indicates that teachers did want to see more engaged students at the new campus, despite not articulating this clearly in their interviews. The following excerpt is a reflection on the staff camp, which was held in December 2010 for teachers who were thinking of joining the Year 9 team:

“One interesting activity [completed on camp] was a Y-chart with the categories of what the new campus will look like, feel like and sound like. I was quite surprised by how similar the responses were. Many teachers said that they would see happy more engaged students. This might mean that one of their goals for the campus will be to engage students in their learning more fully. There was also consensus on seeing more respect and better relationships at the new campus. This might mean that teachers are wanting to see a focus on relationships at the new campus and see the opportunity to really improve relationships in the new setting.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

When I reflected on my own personal vision for the campus, engaging students in their learning was high on my list of priorities. The following excerpt from my participant observations journal shows my personal vision for more engaged

learners at the new Year 9 campus. It also begins to unpack what might be needed to achieve such engagement:

“So what do I want to actually see in Year 9? Well, I guess like the other teachers I have spoken to, I want to see more engaged learners. I have seen Year 9s engaged in their learning on several occasions so I know that it is achievable. I think they are engaged when they feel that what they are doing is achievable, that they can do it. I also think they are engaged when they have a good rapport with and trust their teachers. This makes such a big difference.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

Lesley felt that providing a relevant curriculum was a key factor in engaging students in their learning (see next section). Other visible strategies to help achieve better engagement in learning were found in the 2012 Year 9 Handbook and included: providing a greater range of optional subjects for students to study and making the curriculum more relevant. The next two themes on vision for a more relevant curriculum and innovating teaching strategies are related closely to engaging students in their learning.

4.6.4 Theme 4 – A more relevant curriculum.

Vision for a more relevant curriculum was the next theme found within the data. Several of my colleagues made comments on the type of curriculum they wanted to see at the new campus. Whilst there was a clear theme for a more relevant curriculum, other ideas surrounding curriculum at the new campus were unclear. There was some mention of creating a more holistic curriculum that encompassed more of the students’ own interests. There was also mention of meta-learning which aimed to develop students’ thinking and learning skills.

The next textbox encompasses some of the broad comments my colleagues made regarding curriculum at the new Year 9 campus:

“Making [student] learning meet the world that they are living in and sometimes traditional educational methods don’t allow that. So we are hoping that we are going to have a dynamic new curriculum that will reach out to some of those students that slip through the gaps. And part of that is some of that

needs to be hands-on, some of that needs to be creative and how do we bring that into traditional curriculum? I think that while our curriculum isn't 100% developed yet, I think that we are moving towards having something that will engage students in their learning in some aspect."

Leyton, Year 9 Leader

"We are still educating our kids as if we live in the Industrial Revolution, in the Industrial Age, which we don't. We have got to stop thinking that way. We have got to prepare them for the future that they are going to have to address."

"It is important to validate the whole person...I really feel strongly that the kids that don't get English and maths, don't get that validation of their intelligence... So for me a very strong focus is to make sure that all kids feel that there is some validation of their ability and their talents... So the broad goal for Grade 9 is really to spend a year with them showing them how they can be good people and how they can be intelligent people even when they suck at maths and English."

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

"The goal is about educating the whole person."

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

"I see it as a perfect opportunity to make the process more important than the product."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

"Get them back to actually learning and develop their skills but in a way that they can actually enjoy it and see meaning... I mean one of the most important things that so many pedagogues tell us is trying to actually make learning meaningful to real life."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

"[I want to see] innovation and revamping of the curriculum under the Australian national curriculum. I see the national curriculum as, well really what we need to make sure they know, but how we get there is up to us."

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

Leyton, Lesley and Emily all shared vision for a curriculum that was more relevant to adolescents; A curriculum that would make *"their learning meet the world they are living in"* (Leyton) and *"prepare them for the future that they are going to have to address"* (Lesley). The 2012 Year 9 Handbook offered some insight into how a more relevant curriculum might be achieved:

“Some students may think about this rather unpredictable future picture and wonder if everything they learn at school is going to be a waste of time. Well, it could be, if we keep focusing on the marks achieved for the end product: the assignment, piece of homework, test, etc. While this is important, we need to place equal – if not more – emphasis on how the student arrived at the end product and what was learnt in the process.”

“We need to teach our students how to acquire knowledge effectively, to develop an understanding of the ‘big picture’ ideas, and give them a wide and varied set of skills that they can apply to new and unfamiliar situations. Our students must be given every opportunity to take responsibility for their learning and be challenged often, so that they can develop qualities such as persistence; flexible thinking skills; the ability to take risks; apply past knowledge to new situations; aiming for accuracy; creating, imagining and innovating; and thinking interdependently.”

2012 Year 9 Handbook

The second comment in the textbox presents the idea of students taking more responsibility for their learning. Lesley also spoke of this idea in her interview:

“We are actually going to challenge the students more, give them more responsibility not only for their own behaviour but also for their own learning. We are going to hand the reins back to them and make them be responsible for what goes on in their learning.”

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

The 2012 Year 9 Handbook also gave some insight into strategies that could be used to increase students’ responsibility for their learning. Firstly, the wide range of optional subjects open for students to study was thought to encourage students’ individual interests and career planning. Students were also encouraged to proactively seek help from teachers when needed; set learning goals for themselves; and self-assess their learning by writing semester reports:

“Students are strongly encouraged to seek teacher assistance if they do not understand any of the course requirements.”

“Be proactive! If you don’t understand why you are not doing as well as you think you should be doing, ask questions! Your teachers are willing to help you clear up any issues.”

“Students will write their own reports at the end of the two semesters, which will reflect on the goals they set for themselves at the start of the year. These will be sent out in conjunction with the normal reports written by the teachers.”

2012 Year 9 Handbook

Some teachers felt that the new Year 9 curriculum needed to be holistic in nature. Arlene said that the Year 9 Campus curriculum would be about educating “*the whole person*”. I think what she meant by this was that the Year 9 curriculum should not only support students’ intellectual development, but also their social and emotional development:

“The goal is to probably assist Year 9s to get through this difficult year in a space that is their own with people who understand that they are different and people who understand that they have different needs to other groups and who are prepared to help them with that.”

“... Not just school subjects...[but] the goal of helping [students] to understand themselves. Help them to explore and see that the world outside is much bigger than just them.”

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

The idea of assisting students through the process of social, emotional and moral maturation is discussed in Section 4.6.6.

Whilst vision for curriculum at the new campus was never made explicit, an informal vision for curriculum with common themes did exist. The common themes included vision for a relevant and holistic curriculum; a curriculum that encouraged students to take responsibility for their own learning; and meta-learning through explicit teaching of thinking and learning skills.

4.6.5 Theme 5 - More innovative teaching approaches.

Several teachers and leaders expressed a desire for different, innovative or new teaching approaches at the new campus. Two broad themes for more teacher collaboration and flexibility in teaching emerged within the data.

Regarding the desire to see more innovative teaching approaches, Lincoln vaguely mentioned wanting to see “*different teaching approaches*” in order to re-engage students in their learning. Felix expressed a strong desire for something “*new*”:

“I am not saying to re-invent the wheel, but I want the chance to try new things and to see this succeed in the best way that it possibly can, if you know what I mean. I don’t want it to go: ‘And we have got Year 9 classes out here exactly the same as if they were back here at [the Main Campus].’ I want something new. You know, and I would be very disappointed if that was, yeah, not the case.”

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

In comments such as these it is clear to see that the Year 9 Team teachers wanted to develop their teaching approaches but they seemed unsure as to what this might actually entail.

One broad theme that emerged was a desire for more collaboration amongst teachers. As mentioned already when discussing vision for a community environment, several of my colleagues expressed the desire to work in a “*team*” (Catherine, Dana, Gabrielle, Lesley, Leyton and Lewis). I observed and reflected on this in my participant observations journal:

“As I see it, we want to work as a team and to be able to team teach and work with each other in a way more intimate than we have ever done before. I think the majority of teachers are looking forward to this and are really embracing it.”

Rebecca, Researcher & Year 9 Teacher

Lincoln also described his vision for a team-like atmosphere where teachers worked in a “*really positive learning community*”. Lincoln’s vision also involved teachers giving feedback on each other’s practice as part of their professional learning and in order to improve teaching. His vision strongly resembles a PLC environment where teachers can engage in high-risk exchanges in order to develop their pedagogy:

“Professional learning doesn’t have to be going off the campus to learn about this and that. It can be an observer coming in for a few days, looking at the pedagogy of a few people and then feeding back to them immediately about their teaching in that classroom context, how they approach different students and the subject, you know it is in order to build better teaching pedagogy... Our teachers would be able to do that in some extent for each other because they will be working in pairs, they will be able to see learning that occurs in different contexts so hopefully it will be really powerful for feedback to staff. And in some ways it means staff will need to drop some of those traditional boundaries which is a positive thing too. Hopefully people will be open enough to doing that.”

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

The second broad theme that emerged in the data was vision for more flexible teaching. Catherine, Dana and Felix all described wanting more flexibility when it came to teaching at the new campus:

“I am hoping, and I think that there will be, flexibility. Being over there is going to allow us to do a lot more things. So I think that is important... Hopefully we will be able to have lots of student-initiated type of things as well... At the moment we sort of say to them, ‘Oh you can’t really do that because we can’t find a room’ or ‘We can’t’ or those sorts of things.”

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

“I want it to be really um... flexible and opened up rather than closed in.”

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

“I would really like to see some of the reins taken off of what we can and can’t do sort of thing. Like I am not talking, I don’t want to see kids running around with hand-grenades or anything like that. I am just talking about, you know, let us have fun with it. Let us, rather than just like ‘This is a textbook, today we are doing page one, tomorrow page two’, give us the freedom and support to go ‘Right we are doing this. What is the most interesting way we can get this across and do it that way.’ Change the paradigm because these kids have been through 7 and 8 and they have done the textbook thing.”

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

“Because of the flexibility of the timetable we can offer something different... We can offer things that don’t have to fit into 60 periods a cycle. So we can actually therefore be a little bit more creative.”

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

The 2012 Year 9 Handbook also describes situations where teachers can work more flexibly. Regarding the layout of the classrooms, the Handbook explains that the use of glass and removable walls “*maximises the building of relationships and it allows for flexibility in that on occasions the Home Groups can join together with both teachers.*” It also allows for “*team teaching sessions and for students in two classes to work together at appropriate times*” (2012 Year 9 Handbook). Being able to change the mode or style of curriculum delivery appeared to be important to the Year 9 Team. Also being able to work with others and have student-initiated programmes was named as means of teaching more flexibly.

Overall, the findings showed that the Year 9 Team held desires for more collaboration and flexible teaching practices, involving different uses of classroom spaces; incorporating student initiatives; and working more closely with colleagues. Apart from this, the Year 9 Team’s vision for more innovative teaching approaches appeared underdeveloped and in need of further discussion and refinement.

4.6.6 Theme 6 – Support for students’ social, emotional and moral development.

The next major theme I found in the data on vision for the new campus was centred on a desire to support students in the often-turbulent life stage of adolescence. In particular, the Year 9 Team wanted to be able to support students in their social, emotional and moral development. The 2012 Year 9 Handbook recognised the following characteristics or challenges of adolescence for Year 9 students:

“We need to be aware that students at [the Year 9 Campus] will be:

- *Searching for their own identity;*
- *Questioning concepts, structures, adults and themselves;*
- *Desiring acceptance from their peers;*
- *Interacting with significant adult mentors that help them to form their sense of self;*
- *More likely to be taking risks;*
- *Looking for positive outlets for their energy; and*

- *Wanting to be trusted and treated as the young adults that they are.”*

2012 Year 9 Handbook

Leyton explained that part of the vision for the campus was to guide students in their “*journey*” through adolescence and to assist them in moving through a somewhat difficult time in regards to behaviour and social maturation. He believed that with guidance students would make better, more mature decisions about their behaviour. The following quote is taken from Leyton’s interview:

“It is about understanding and helping [Year 9 students] through that journey, not saying, ‘Oh well, they are Year 9 now and that is the sort of behaviour we expect from Year 9s but they will grow up one day.’ It is about helping them get that maturity and reaching that end point a lot quicker.”

Leyton, Year 9 Leader

My colleague Bruce also described his vision for an environment where teachers could guide students through the journey of adolescence and support their social, emotional and moral development:

“To me we are going to be bringing a student out of here that is going to be more worldly – looking at bigger issues rather than facts and figures of how well they can add up or read or write or in my case, how well they can cut and join wood or weld or anything like that. The opportunity to go above that and look at bigger issues in society and bring out a more rounded person.”

“To bring out a group of kids that might think a bit more deeply about the directions and the decisions they are going to make and the relationships that they form with others. And also, what they feel about themselves a bit more. That would be the goal. I just think we have a got group of lost youth. You know, they are not a positive bunch. Not many of them are positive. Kids aren’t positive as there are so many unknowns these days – of where they are going and where they want to go...”

Bruce, Year 9 Teacher

Bruce further explained that he believed Year 9 students were in desperate need of what he termed “*humanity training*” where students have the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate their own beliefs, decision-making and

actions. His vision appeared to stem from a desire to assist students in their emotional, moral and perhaps even spiritual development.

In his interview, Lewis explained how the Rite Journey programme to be implemented at the Year 9 Campus would be an active strategy in supporting students' development across different domains. The Rite Journey (see The Rite Journey, 2012) is a non-religious Australian programme designed to support and celebrate adolescents in their development from childhood to adulthood. The programme aims to foster in adolescents, self-awareness, strength, honesty, responsibility, resilience and respectful relationships amongst adolescents their peers, parents, family and teachers (The Rite Journey, 2012). Lewis felt that such support was missing from traditional curriculum:

“Within the Rite Journey, for example, it is a programme that I am excited about where [students] are going to be able to learn, what a lot of researchers would say is missing from the curriculum, that is how to be a responsible young [adult]... not just by example or by the culture within the school but actually quite specifically discuss some of those things and work through some rituals there.”

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

Whilst expressed in different ways, other teachers also spoke of vision to support students' social, emotional and moral development. When I asked Gabrielle what she wanted to see at the new campus, she explained her vision for confident students and students that could engage in leadership opportunities:

“I hope at the end of Grade 9 when they come back to Grade 10 that they can actually transfer and bring what they have learnt and the confidence that hopefully they have gained into Year 10. And I hope that the group back here embraces that and carries on from that. So I guess confident individuals.”

Gabrielle, Year 9 Teacher

Arlene explained that “*educating the whole person*” would include helping students “*understand themselves*” and “*explore and see that the world outside is*

much bigger than just them.” This shows a desire to support students through the adolescent task of identity formation. The 2012 Year 9 Handbook writes of how the Rite Journey programme is designed to “*support the development of self-aware, vital, responsible and resilient adults.*” It also describes support for students’ moral and spiritual development by suggesting that the campus will give students opportunities “*to participate in activities that help develop their inner spirituality*” and to “*become better citizens, develop empathy and understanding*” and “*achieve personal growth*” (2012 Year 9 Handbook).

In summary, the Year 9 Team understood that adolescence presents many challenges for students, particularly in regards to decision-making and identity formation. Their vision was to support students in this turbulent stage of life and assist in their social, emotional moral and even spiritual development.

4.6.7 Theme 7 – Greater parental involvement.

A minor theme in St. John’s College’s vision for Year 9 reform was greater parental involvement in Year 9 students’ education. I call this a minor theme as it was only mentioned twice in the data, firstly by Lewis in his interview and secondly in the 2012 Year 9 Handbook. Lewis expressed wanting to “*raise the bar*” for parents. He acknowledged that, for various reasons, in secondary schooling parents do not always directly involve themselves in their children’s education. Lewis held vision to address this issue:

“I think the parents who, for lots of reasons, including their own children, don’t want or don’t feel they can link to their [child’s] secondary schooling. I really hope that we can bring that back to a large extent and have them more involved in the schooling of their sons and daughters.”

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

Lewis also mentioned The Rite Journey programme as a strategy aimed to involve parents more in their children’s education. He explained that the programme would involve parents being invited into the campus to participate in various ceremonies and rituals.

It was interesting that, apart from Lewis, none of the other ten participants in the semi-structured interviews mentioned parental involvement in learning as part of their vision for Year 9 reform. The 2012 Year 9 Handbook however, did provide another source for vision on more parental involvement:

“We want parents to feel very much a part of [the Year 9 Campus]. Parents, we are supporting you as the most significant influences on your son’s and daughter’s lives as they transition to adulthood.”

2012 Year 9 Handbook

The handbook also included invitations for parents to visit and make contact with staff at the new campus:

“Parents are encouraged to approach the [Year 9 Campus] staff to find out how their child is progressing and to discuss successes and concerns... We encourage parents to visit the [Year 9 Campus] at any time and share this experience with their child.”

2012 Year 9 Handbook

Vision for more parental involvement was articulated by Lewis but also featured in the 2012 Year 9 Handbook. This vision vaguely called for parents to be more involved in their child’s education, particularly through the Rite Journey Programme and the associated ceremonies and rituals. Interestingly, none of the other participants in this study mentioned vision for increased parental involvement in Year 9 education. This suggests that teachers were still unsure of how relationships and their work with parents would change at the new campus, if at all.

4.6.8 Theme 8 – A break from mainstream schooling and time to reflect.

Another minor theme that was again only mentioned by Lewis in his interview and the 2012 Year 9 Handbook was the notion of Year 9 providing a break from mainstream schooling and giving students opportunities for reflection. When talking about the vision for the Year 9 campus in his interview, Lewis said:

"I think there can also be just that little bit of breathing space. I think a goal of this, as well is that immersion-feel, that [students] can immerse themselves within [the campus] and think, 'You know, this is our campus and this is something special for us.' And maybe not feel the rush-rush-rush-rush about life. You know, double-periods pretty much dominate right through the whole thing. Ownership of their space rather than having to go from one edge of the school to the other in what could be 4 or 5 times during the day. And yeah, so I think that being able to, almost catch your breath a little bit in the race of secondary schooling."

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

The 2012 Year 9 Handbook also gives some insight into vision for a break from mainstream schooling and time for reflection. The handbook describes the Year 9 experience as a "journey" and likens it to pilgrimages of saints who spend time away for inner reflection and spiritual growth. Similarly to a religious pilgrimage, the Year 9 students of St. John's College would spend "*time away...[for] reflection, immersion, nature, [their] own space and time away from Years 7-12*" (2012 Year 9 Handbook). The religious education programme offered at the new campus also followed on this theme, explicitly stating that students would have opportunities to develop their spirituality:

"There will be opportunities for students to participate in activities that help them to develop their inner spirituality, as well as to learn about the outward manifestations of religion."

2012 Year 9 Handbook

Like Lewis, and the Year 9 Handbook, my colleague Bruce also hoped the Year 9 experience would be like a "journey" for students. He hoped that the Year 9 Campus development at St. John's College would: "*Start a lifelong journey, foster an environment that starts that journey*" for students.

The college's vision for Year 9 to be a break from regular schooling and a time for reflection was essentially about supporting students' spiritual development and guiding them in their own search for identity. It was thought that by spending time away from the rest of the school, Year 9 students would have

more opportunities to focus on themselves and the relationships they formed within their own year level. It was also hoped that this break from the Main Campus would bring about more self-reflection amongst students in order to develop their own "*inner spirituality*" (2012 Year 9 Handbook).

4.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented findings in relation to the rationale and vision the Year 9 teachers and leaders at St. John's College held for the planned Year 9 reform. This was in response to Research Sub-question 1, which asked: "What is the Year 9 Team's rationale and vision for the reform?" This chapter also allowed me to explain the context and share the narrative of St. John's College's Year 9 reform. In Section 4.3, I explained the beginnings of the Year 9 reform and how the Year 9 Team of teachers and leaders were established in its initiation. Section 4.4 outlined the participants who took part in this study and the pseudonyms used in the presentation of findings.

In Section 4.5, I presented findings in relation to the rationale the Year 9 Team teachers and leaders held for the Year 9 reform. There were five key themes that emerged from the data including: (1) Year 9 being a challenging year for students and teachers; (2) Year 9 marking a pivotal stage of development for adolescents; (3) high levels of disengagement from learning at the Year 9 level; (4) the perceived insignificance of Year 9; and (5) opportunities for further school restructuring. The findings in this section were not surprising and indicated that the Year 9 teachers of St. John's College were experiencing similar issues to Year 9 teachers in other states. The first three themes were not unique to Year 9 and resembled concerns held by researchers who have called for wider reform of the middle years. Theme 4 discussed the perceived insignificance of Year 9 and recognised the need for a more positive identity for this particular year level. Theme 5 discussed how separate campus Year 9 reform opened opportunities for further secondary school restructuring.

In Section 4.6, I presented findings pertaining to the Year 9 Team's vision for the proposed campus. Despite St. John's College not making this vision explicit in a vision statement, eight key themes were discernible in the data including: positive relationships within the campus; a community environment for students and staff; engaged and enthusiastic learners; a more relevant curriculum; more innovative teaching approaches; guidance for students' social, emotional and moral maturation; greater parental involvement; and finally, a break from mainstream schooling and the opportunity for reflection. The vision themes presented in this chapter were again not surprising and well supported in middle years' literature. Theme 8 was particularly pertinent to separate campus Year 9 reform because of the ways in which such reform changes the organisational structures of secondary schools. This theme also appeared particularly relevant to the case school because of its Christian foundation and focus on developing students' spirituality.

Chapter 5 continues to present the data and findings of this study. In particular it explores the experiences of teachers during the Year 9 reform process and the various roles that they played within it.

Chapter 5 - Findings: Teachers' Experiences of Reform

5.1 Introduction

Teachers play many different roles in their daily professional lives and in their careers. These roles are constantly developing, changing and adapting to new contexts and circumstances. Teachers' roles evolve even more with school change and reform. In this chapter, I present findings in relation to Research Sub-questions 2 and 3, which asked:

Research Sub-Question 2: *"What roles do teachers play in the reform process?"*

Research Sub-Question 3: *"What do teachers engaged in Year 9 reform perceive their professional learning needs to be?"*

This chapter presents eight key roles that teachers played during their experiences of Year 9 reform. The roles described in this section are not intended to represent the full spectrum of teachers' work in reform. They are instead, a way of organising the various facets of the Year 9 teachers' experience of reform at St. John's College. Findings in response to Research Sub-Question 3 are presented in Section 5.9, which explores the role of teachers as learners within the reform. Table 5.1 presents the list of eight roles and the sub-sections where they are discussed in this chapter.

The role titles were derived during the data analysis process, which involved reducing then grouping data on teachers' experience into various theme based data tables (see Section 3.6). I collected data for this section of the findings through semi-structured interviews, participant observations and Email dialogues. The following sections, 5.2 through to 5.9, present findings on St. John's College's Year 9 teachers' experiences, including my own, in relation to each of the roles presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Teachers' Roles in Year 9 Reform

Roles of Teachers during Year 9 Reform	Sub-sections	Elaborations
Risk-Takers	Section 5.2	5.2.1 Forgoing the Known and Familiar for Something Unknown and Unfamiliar 5.2.2 Working in a New Team 5.2.3 Taking on Extra Planning and having this Subject to Criticism
Vision-Makers	Section 5.3	
Advocates	Section 5.4	5.4.1 Adopting a Pro-change Attitude 5.4.2 Defending the Reform 5.4.3 Sharing Plans and Information
Planners	Section 5.5	5.5.1 Planning Task 5.5.2 Planning Conditions
Evaluators	Section 5.6	
Pragmatists	Section 5.7	5.7.1 Pragmatic Knowledge of Teachers 5.7.2 Practical Realities of Year 9 Reform
Team Member	Section 5.8	
Learner	Section 5.9	5.9.1 Self-Perceived Professional Learning Needs of the Year 9 Team 5.9.2 Perceived Individual Professional Learning Needs 5.9.3 Perceived Campus-Wide Professional Learning and Development needs 5.9.4 Preferred Modes of Professional Development

5.2 Teachers as Risk-Takers

The first role I identified within the teachers' experiences was that of a risk-taker. Lewis in this study frequently used the phrase "*leap of faith*" to describe the risk that teachers took in joining the Year 9 Team and contributing to the reform. For the teachers in this study, being a member of the Year 9 Team and implementing the Year 9 reform involved the following risks:

1. Forgoing the known and familiar for something unknown and unfamiliar;
2. Working in a new team with different people; and
3. Taking on extra work and planning and having this subject to criticism.

I describe these aspects of risk-taking in the sub-sections that follow.

5.2.1 Forgoing the known and familiar for something unknown and unfamiliar.

For the majority of teachers, joining the Year 9 Team meant solely focussing on Year 9 students and giving up teaching duties and home group supervision on the Main Campus. There were only three teachers (Gabrielle, Indigo & myself) who continued to teach some classes at the Main Campus due to the specialist subjects we taught. Whilst it was always intended that the Year 9 Campus retain a strong connection to the whole school community, joining the Year 9 Team meant physically relocating offices for teachers and forgoing Main Campus responsibilities such as home group supervision and teaching students of other grades.

Forgoing Main Campus responsibilities, including senior classes and home groups, appeared to be a difficult task for some of the Year 9 teachers, myself included:

"It is a risk – to give up things that you are familiar with. Because I could stay here [at the Main Campus] and know that my job would be easy. I know what I am doing, but to me that gets boring."

"I teach a couple of senior classes as well... So that is my big thing that I am giving up because I love that."

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

"I love my [Main Campus Home Group] at the moment. It is a great group. And it will be kind of sad to miss that morning start, you know that, just the conversations that I have."

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

"It is getting close to the end of the year and I knew that I had to tell my [Main Campus Home Group] about my leaving to go to the Year 9 Campus. I told them during our pastoral care lesson. We were all sitting on the floor in a circle doing an activity and I told them about my decision to leave. I told them how much I would miss them and that leaving them would be one of the hardest things about going to Year 9. They stared at me in silence, in disbelief perhaps. I think they felt a little betrayed by it all. Then Eric, who usually barely says a word, said 'I'm really going to miss you, Mrs. Seward'. I felt terrible, but relieved that I had finally told them."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

As Catherine explained, she was comfortable as a teacher on the Main Campus and could have gone on for many more years teaching in what she considered an “easy” position. Leaving our Main Campus Home Groups was difficult for both Felix and myself. The pastoral care system at the Main Campus was vertically aligned meaning that approximately four students from each grade were joined to form one unified Home Group. Students had the same Home Group and Home Group teacher from year to year, despite ascending grades. My journal entry in the previous textbox begins to show the bond that developed between Main Campus Home Group teachers and their students.

Giving up the familiar also meant working with a new group of people. On the Main Campus, staff shared offices with groups of approximately four to twelve teachers. Giving up the familiarity of staff offices and subject based learning teams was another aspect of risk, which is discussed in the next sub-section.

5.2.2 Working in a new team.

Working in a new team represented another risk and challenge for Year 9 teachers. The Year 9 Team teachers had to physically relocate offices to the new campus building and in many cases work with an entirely different team of staff. Arlene explained to me in her interview that she received a large amount of support from her friends and colleagues on the Main Campus, particularly those she shared an office with. For her, relocating to the new campus was worrying:

“Really, all of [the Year 9 Team] are people that I don’t know very well, I haven’t really worked with before and I am a bit worried about that because I do get my support from the people around me. And like I said, my [Main Campus office colleagues], you know, just look after me and have been wonderful and I am thinking, ‘Gee I hope that those same relationships will form over there’ because when someone says ‘Who are you?’ I identify as a teacher and my workplace is really important to me.”

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

Both Bruce and myself observed high levels of diversity within the Year 9 Team and expressed concerns over how this diversity may affect relationships and the ability to work cohesively. The following excerpts are taken from Bruce's semi-structured interview and my participant observations journal:

"We seem to have some teachers that are poles apart. Some that are quite extrovert and out-going and then some that are quite rigid and structured on discipline and stuff like that. I can foresee some problems maybe happening with that."

"You have some teachers over there that are a bit 'looser' than others. And then you have got others that will engage in conflict and will pursue and won't back off. 'I am the teacher – you must do!' and I think there is going to be maybe a bit of sorting out to do there."

Bruce, Year 9 Teacher

"We must realise that we are a highly diverse staff. There are laid-back, extremely casual teachers. There are out-going, extroverted teachers. There are the sporty, masculine teachers and then there are the planners like me. We truly are a diverse group..."

"The man that I am paired to work with as a core teacher is very different to me. I know that I shouldn't be judgemental about this but [it does worry me]... What would happen if we had an incident in class that I wanted to deal with one way and he wanted to deal with in another?"

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

Both Dana and Arlene recalled incidents in their semi-structured interviews where interactions with members of the Year 9 Team were not ideal. These incidences, whilst later resolved, made Dana and Arlene anxious over the prospects of working in this new team:

"It is scaring me, Rebecca. Because, this is a very personal thing, but I was trying to talk to [Lesley] about texts in my [Connections unit] and all of that kind of thing and she wouldn't talk to me. And she just kept going, 'No, stop, I am not speaking to you about that. Stop. I am not talking to you, that is not going to happen.' And I backed off and thought, oh I am so nervous that people are becoming so, I don't know, invested and emotional about it."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

“There has been an aspect where I have been under a bit of pressure, in that there have been some people that have been disagreeing with things and I have kind of been in the middle of that trying to mediate between them. Trying to please this person and that person and that sort of thing and that has been difficult.”

“I was quite concerned at the beginning of the year because I had been asked to put some stuff together and I had, and then [Lesley] came down to my classroom one day and said, ‘Oh we are not doing that now. I have dropped this, this and this and we are going to do this, this and this.’ And that was at the time I just went, ‘Oh, now I don’t know if I want to be involved.’ If this is what it is going to be like, if it is in fact, you know, and I thought, well is it all just fake? Is it this idea that all you staff, you are collaborating but ultimately it is not like that. We can collaborate until the cows come home but certain people are going to go, ‘No, well this is what you are going to do.’ I was concerned about that... I think [Lesley] realised that the way it was done was not brilliant.”

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

Dealing with incidences like the ones mentioned appeared to be more disconcerting for teachers when working in the smaller team, perhaps because they felt more pressure to work collaboratively. The smaller team also left teachers feeling more exposed and perhaps even more pressured to conform to the group or leaders’ demands when needed. The incident between Arlene and Lesley shows how Lesley’s decision to drop certain aspects of Arlene’s course had a damaging effect on Arlene. I write more on team dynamics, including dealing with conflict within the team, in Chapter 6 (see Section 6.4).

In summary, the risks teachers took in working in a new team involved leaving existing support networks and having to establish new ones; navigating and coping with high levels of diversity within the smaller team; and dealing with incidences where interactions were not ideal. The anxiety teachers expressed was a direct result of the risk they took in joining the new team.

5.2.3 Taking on extra planning and having this subject to criticism.

The fourth element of risk taking behaviour I found in the data was teachers taking on extra planning and having this scrutinised or criticised by others. The bulk of criticism regarding planning for the Year 9 Campus appeared to stem

from Main Campus teachers that were not members of the Year 9 Team (see also Section 5.5.2). Both Bruce and Arlene explained having to deal with overtly negative criticism regarding the Year 9 reform from Main Campus teachers within their departments. Bruce in particular felt a large amount of pressure to “*get it right*” in terms of planning new curriculum and courses for the new campus:

“In my area in the MDT, no one has come and asked me at all. However when the curriculum I wish to teach has been presented at meetings they have also said that I haven’t presented that to them. [Laughs] Double-edged sword I suppose. I have found current MDT staff to be pessimistic and resentful.”

“I have just about got all the units of work and everything. I have just got to have it right because I will have a group of people ready to assassinate me if it isn’t.”

Bruce, Year 9 Teacher

“There was another teacher who picked up the Year 9 English programme that I was putting together and just went ‘Oh that is awful! Why are you doing that? Why are you doing that?’ and I thought that is very rude to be so critical without really understanding the background of it either and how it was integrating with the science and the SOSE and wasn’t reading this whole thing anyway, we were using bits of it. You know, I was getting them to look at it. It was an old text! It was sort of one that everyone had to read years ago, we were looking at a part of it. But when she just saw it she went ‘Oh! Why on earth would they be doing that?’ You know.”

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

Catherine felt very supported by her colleagues within her department. She did however report seeing negativity and criticism directed at another teacher within her department who was part of the Year 9 Team. The following quotations are taken from Catherine’s interview:

“People in my department have been... they have been great. I was a bit worried to start with because I sort of thought, ‘Oh I hope I haven’t put anyone’s nose out of joint’ type of thing and at one stage one of them came up and said to me ‘I hear that you are going to the Grade 9 campus’ and I am thinking oh, are you saying this in a good way or a bad way?! Oh my goodness and I said, ‘Yeah, yeah I am.’

And she said, ‘Oh that is good because none of us really wanted to commit full-time. We all said that we would do a little bit or something like that.’ So they are all really excited and I think they have... They can see, I think, the work that has

been put into it.”

“A couple of staff from one of our departments said that they are very concerned because the person that is going to the Year 9 campus has limited teaching experience so why would they be going over anyway? And he is having to write the Year 9 syllabus and hasn’t asked us for any input and bits and pieces. And I sort of, I didn’t bite back but I said, ‘Well look it is difficult.’”

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

Interestingly, Catherine’s efforts to involve her non-Year 9 Team colleagues in the Year 9 reform by sharing ideas with them, ultimately made her feel supported by the people within her department. Catherine also made a point of not disregarding the old courses, curriculum and practical lessons that her departmental team had developed in the past:

“They know that I am not just going: ‘What you have been doing in the past is just useless material, it is going to be taught differently’ so yeah. I think they are excited and stuff, definitely.”

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

By engaging non-Year 9 Team departmental colleagues the way that she did, the feedback Catherine gained from her department was much more constructive and supportive as opposed to the negative criticism that Bruce faced. This showed teacher leadership on Catherine’s part and contributed to better cross-campus relationships. Regardless of the support or non-support of Main Campus colleagues, writing new curriculum and having it critiqued by others did represent risk for the Year 9 Team members. As I wrote in my participant’s observations journal:

“When you invest so much time and emotion into what you do, you just want to be appreciated.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

In summary, forgoing the familiar relationships and work at the Main Campus presented significant risk for teachers involved in the reform. Joining the new,

diverse Year 9 Team and taking on the extra planning work involved in the Year 9 reform also presented risks for teachers, especially knowing that their work was likely to be critiqued by others.

5.3 Teachers as Vision-Makers

Contemplating the vision or broad goals for the Year 9 campus was something that all of the teachers I interviewed for this study had engaged in. As I explained in Chapter 4, this contemplation was not a formal process and an official vision statement for the reform was never published. Instead, exploring and thinking about the vision for the Year 9 campus appeared to result from informal conversations between teachers and discussions and activities in team meetings. The actual content of the Year 9 teachers' vision for the Year 9 reform was examined in detail in Chapter 4 (Section 4.6) with eight major themes emerging. Whilst the data from this study suggests that a shared vision for reform existed within the Year 9 Team, the vision appeared to be ambiguous at times and underdeveloped. This is most likely due to the fact that the Year 9 Team never produced a vision statement for reform.

Although their contributions were informal in nature, the fact that teachers were able to add to the vision for Year 9 reform was significant. The Year 9 leaders appeared to value teacher input in the reform with teachers having the opportunity to voice their opinions in team meetings. This in turn appeared to evoke a greater sense of ownership of the Year 9 reform project on the teachers' part.

5.4 Teachers as Advocates

The third role within the Year 9 teachers' experience of reform was that of advocate. Advocating for the new campus was not something explicitly asked of teachers like myself. Instead, it was a task that we teachers encountered almost by accident when discussing and sharing aspects of the reform with non-Year 9

Team colleagues. For Year 9 teachers and leaders, being an advocate for the campus involved:

1. Having a pro-change attitude;
2. Defending the reform from negativity and jealousy; and
3. Sharing plans and information about the reform with non-Year 9 Team staff.

I discuss each of these points in more detail in the sub-sections that follow.

5.4.1 Adopting a pro-change attitude.

Being pro-change appeared to be a common attribute of all teachers and leaders within the Year 9 Team. Several of my colleagues reflected on how teachers, both themselves and non-Year 9 Team staff at St. John's College dealt with change. The following is a selection of quotations from the semi-structured interviews and my participant observations journal:

"There are a lot of the staff too that are really anti-change, like in Year 10, 11, 12... Teaching, is notorious for people, which is bizarre, people who find change difficult. And yet the irony is that there is so much."

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

"I knew that the majority of staff in the school don't like change and that there wouldn't be a lot that would go for it... I have taught in this kind of situation before and it doesn't scare me. Change doesn't scare me."

"Hopefully staff take on the challenges and um, you know, embrace the change, not become scared by it. And I also think it would be really nice if the staff moved in and out of the Senior and Junior and Grade 9. That it didn't become this reclusive little cliquy group over here."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

"I had a really good [university] education in that way and it really encouraged change in schools and talked about how you can make learning meaningful and [St. John's College's Year 9 reform] is an opportunity for us teachers to be able to teach different subjects but be able to teach different subjects in different ways... I like difference and change, so I am excited about that."

"There is genuine concern when there is any form of change in this school. I have noticed that. This school is very afraid of change. And when they do change

things, it often doesn't last long. Like, just little things. They will say, 'We are going to do this' and then it lasts a week or two and then it is dropped... So I think they're scared of change and I can understand that. If you have been here, and there are a lot of teachers who have been here 20 plus years, and they are used to [St. John's] as it is now."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

"I can sympathise with [teachers] being scared of change. For a large number of them, [St. John's College] will be all they know of schooling. To change that would be to change a large part of who they are and where they come from. That could be terrifying. At the same time though, I think that running away from change just because it is scary is cowardice. Change is inevitable. Therefore, we can either embrace it, work with it and even mould it, or we fight with it. The Year 9 Team of teachers are those who want to work with it, whereas some of the other staff in the school, they are the ones that want to fight it. I'm starting to think that learning about change is really important for teachers who will inevitably have to deal with it throughout their whole careers."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

From these quotations, it seems that change was difficult to accept for several teachers at St. John's College, particularly those who held a long affiliation with the college. At the same time it was evident that members of the Year 9 Team were pro-change or at least unafraid of change. This characteristic was important in developing a team that was willing and able to implement the reform. The following reflection is taken from an Email sent to me by Emily. I asked her to reflect on what helped her to become a Year 9 Team teacher and ultimately, what helped the reform to progress. Her response gave a clear argument for adopting a pro-change attitude and began to explore what this might mean in practice:

"I think being patient and open-minded about the changes being made, and the potential direction that the school and its students will go in has been really important. If you expect and only anticipate one particular model or direction, then you will inevitably be disappointed. Such a significant level of school change occurs partly through planning, but it is also dynamic, and continues to change and develop depending on the staff and students there, and the circumstances and needs that both parties bring and require of a school."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

Adopting a pro-change attitude was an important characteristic of Year 9 Team members as it helped them to be more open-minded and accepting of change and the different progressions throughout the reform. This was sometimes in contrast to non-Year 9 Team teachers, some of whom were reportedly anti-change and pessimistic towards the development. Dealing with such attitudes, particularly pessimism is discussed in the next section:

5.4.2 Defending the reform.

Being an advocate for the Year 9 reform involved defending the project against negativity, scepticism and sometimes jealousy. Several teachers reported incidences where negativity towards the reform could be seen:

“There were a number of staff that thought we were going to take the Grade 9s over there and have a ‘happy time’. We are going to dumb-down the curriculum, make it all happy, we are going to all feel good about ourselves, touchy-feely, love each other you know, build-relationships, go camping every 5 minutes and, you know, they will come back and be unskilled for Grade 10 or not have the necessary skills for Grade 10, which irritated me greatly... I don’t know where they come up with this idea, but you know, when somebody says to you, ‘I am not coming over to that chicken coop over there!’ ...You feel like smacking them and saying, ‘Where the hell did you get that idea from?’”

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

“So I think there is some jealousy out there. People have apparently made up a song. You know, ‘[St. John’s] Jail.’ Sorry they are calling it ‘[Johnny’s] Jail’ and they obviously sing it to the tune of [the school song].”

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

“[Speaking to non-Year 9 Team staff] is a double-edged sword. The one side where they go, ‘Ha ha, you have to go over there and it is a prison and you have to deal with Grade 9. They are a crap year’ and then you have the other side where they go, ‘Oh but what are we left with because you get to get all these great resources to help them and then they come back here to us with just... and there is no money to fix up our schools and things like that.’ You can’t win.”

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

“I have heard [The Year 9 Campus] referred to as what, The Chook Shed, [St. John’s] Jail, all sorts of things. But I am going to say, I don’t know, and I would hate to speak negatively of my colleagues, but they are probably the more jaded

people who are too set in their ways to actually want to take that risk and that chance."

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

The quotations all show examples of negativity towards the reform from non-Year 9 Team teachers. Dealing with this negativity often involved publicly defending the Year 9 Campus project. The following excerpt from my participant observations journal is a personal example of a time where I found myself defending the Year 9 reform in a department meeting:

"I just wanted to write about our SOSE meeting this week. When discussing curriculum direction for 2012, one of the teachers made a remark about Year 9 - something on the lines that he was worried about what kind of education they would get over there and what the senior teachers would have to do to pick up the pieces. I felt immediately angered by this and compelled to say something back... I said that I thought that the curriculum planning in Year 9 that we are currently completing is the most rigorous of any curriculum documents our school has at the moment... I also said to him that people might feel worried or scared about the change in Year 9 because they simply don't know much about it. I invited him and anyone else to come and speak to me or anyone else in the Year 9 Team about what we are doing. There were three Year 9 Team teachers there at the meeting and all three of us joined in this debate."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

This recollection shows some of the negative perceptions from non-Year 9 Team staff as well as how Year 9 teachers like myself had to publicly advocate and defend the reform work we were involved in.

Dealing with non-Year 9 Team teachers' concerns or scepticism regarding the newly proposed Year 9 curriculum was a recurring theme in the data. As Lesley's quotation from the previous textbox explains, there were concerns from Main Campus staff that the Year 9 plans would "*dumb-down the curriculum*". Felix recounted the following regarding his experiences in dealing with non-Year 9 Team teachers and their concerns about curriculum:

"It is more concerns that they think that um, we are going out there to do, for lack of a better phrase, tree-hugging, hippie sort of, 'Oh come on kids let's dance

*around the maypole. We are all free-spirit types.’
It is just like, what? No we are still going to get the content across! We are just not going to do it in the traditional sense if you know what I mean.”*

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

Lincoln was aware of tension that existed amongst Department Heads and the Year 9 Team, where Lesley led the curriculum development. He said:

*“I think the reaction amongst some [Department Heads] has been a bit uncertain. Particularly in terms of they are dealing with an Australian curriculum coming in at the same time as this and probably having looked at life for a long time as being languages, or maths, or science or whatever, have tended to see knowledge compartmentalised a bit. And I know it has been a challenge for some teachers and for some [Department Heads] to see how their subject links to other areas. So the [Connections] units have certainly thrown a few challenges to [Lesley] and to the [Department Heads] in terms of seeing that their own subject is not going to be lost in all of this and their students are still going to be using the skills and are still going to be encountering the literature and the science and the SOSE. I think that natural questioning is good.”
“There were some tension points there for a period of time.”*

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

At St. John’s College, the implementation of the Australian Curriculum coincided with the implementation of their Year 9 reform. As Lincoln alludes, strategies on how to cover and implement the Australian Curriculum were a point of tension between the Department Heads and the Year 9 Team. The different views on multi-disciplinary curriculum, curriculum integration, and the traditional compartmentalisation of key subject areas in secondary school curriculum was also a tension point for the teachers of St. John’s College. In summary, some Department Heads were reportedly concerned that amalgamating some subjects and planning multi-disciplinary units would detract from the rigour and integrity of individual subjects.

In her interview, Emily explained feeling a sense of jealousy between non-Year 9 Team and Year 9 Team staff. She believed this was due to the fact that so much money and time was being invested into the Year 9 development. Emily explained:

"It is jealousy over the resources definitely...Some of it is just jealousy over resources or just concern over what is going to be left."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

Catherine also sensed jealousy amongst non-Year 9 Team staff when it came to the Year 9 development:

"I think there is a bit of jealousy out there... Yeah, yeah a bit of jealousy in that they, [the non-Year 9 Team staff] are not prepared or weren't prepared to put their hand up to come over or they weren't prepared to take the risk because it is a risk - to give up things that you are familiar with."

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

For Catherine, the jealousy she saw was almost a by-product of regret on some non-Year 9 teachers' parts for not joining the Year 9 Team in the first place. There were also concerns that the Year 9 Team was privy to secret information regarding the reform, and that Main Campus staff were being left out of decision-making. Catherine explained in her interview:

"I think there is a perception out there that it is some secret squirrel project and that nobody's sharing and all of those sorts of things."

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

In contrast to this though, when information about the Year 9 development was freely offered, Catherine, Felix and myself all thought that our Main Campus colleagues were receptive and grateful for the chance to learn something about the project. Sharing information and plans about the Year 9 reform is discussed in the next section.

5.4.3 Sharing plans and information.

Finally, being an advocate for the reform involved the Year 9 teachers sharing and reporting on plans to non-Year 9 Team teachers. All of the Year 9 teachers that took part in the interviews reported that they had experienced some attention from non-Year 9 staff about the reform. As mentioned in the previous section, occasionally this attention took the form of negative slurring. The attention also however, appeared to emerge from genuine curiosity or concern regarding the Year 9 development. In his interview, Felix recalled the following incident where he was able to calm a colleague's concerns about the Year 9 curriculum:

"[A Main Campus teacher] came and asked me about [the Year 9 reform] and we had a good half hour discussion and things like that. And he went away much more assured because he was one of the people who was worried about whether [subjects] would be taught effectively or not. And um, I said 'Well look, trust me. We are going to make it effective. The amount of work that we have done individually and as part of a team, particularly in science. We are making sure we are covering all the areas.'"

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

By simply sharing information and answering questions, Felix was able to leave his colleague feeling more "assured" about the reform.

As mentioned in Section 5.2.3, Catherine also made a conscious decision to share plans and seek advice from her colleagues within her department. In her interview, she said:

"People in my department have... been great... So they are all really excited and I think they have, they can see, I think, the work that has been put into it and all of those sorts of things. So I think that makes a difference and I am running past with them, so like I have bought knives for the kitchen and bowls for the kitchen so I show them all what we have got and stuff like that...I show the bits and pieces. And look, you know, I have made changes to the Year 9 Curriculum most definitely, I have added lots of new, but the topic sort of areas stay the same and a few of the pracs and things like that."

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

By collaborating with her colleagues and seeking their feedback and advice, Catherine was not only able to maintain good working relationships with the people in her department, but was also able to foster some enthusiasm for the Year 9 project. This is in contrast to other teachers, including myself, who reported debating or arguing with departmental colleagues who questioned aspects of the campus. Bruce for example said that his colleagues were “*pessimistic and resentful*” towards any plans that he tried to share. In my observations journal, I write about an ongoing saga between Year 9 Team and non-Year 9 Team colleagues over whether or not Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* should form part of the Year 9 curriculum at the new campus:

Entry dated: 26th June 2011

“I know that there are arguments boiling at the moment over whether or not Romeo and Juliet should be part of our Year 9 curriculum. It really doesn’t seem to fit into any of our integrated units and attempts to try to make it fit seem really trite.”

Entry dated: 29th July 2011

“I listened to some of the other English teachers’ concerns. I also listened to some of Dana’s ideas. She is planning the [Connections unit] on World War One. Dana wanted to start the unit by examining conflict and looking at the gradation of conflict from inner conflict and inner questioning, to conflict with another person, conflict within communities and then conflict between nations. She explained that Romeo and Juliet would be a great text in exploring this idea. Juliet struggles with an inner conflict as to whether she should follow her father or whether she should follow her own heart. The two families are in conflict with each other and this leads to the ultimate tragedy. I started to see how the text could lead to great pedagogy and really deep understandings about conflict and war. It would also be nice to include it to just stop the bitterness between English and Year 9. One of the older teachers in the group, [Arlene], said that she is sick of being the meat in the sandwich when it comes to the Romeo and Juliet debate. She just wants to be listened to and for her professionalism to stand for something, after all she is the one that will teach the units not the Heads of English or Curriculum.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

The entries show the tension that existed within the English Department at St. John’s College regarding Year 9 curriculum. Whether or not to include the text *Romeo and Juliet* in the Year 9 curriculum was debated several times throughout the planning year. Dana and Arlene were particularly caught in this debate and, as my journal entry explained, often felt frustrated that people were not

agreeing with one another and that they were “*the meat in the sandwich*”. Tensions were likely exacerbated because teachers were unsure of the nature and purpose of curriculum integration they were expected to incorporate in the multi-disciplinary subject of Connections.

In summary, the Year 9 Team teachers took on the role of advocates for the campus, firstly and perhaps simply by adopting a positive, pro-change attitude. Being pro-change meant that Year 9 Team teachers were more willing to discuss, explore and accept the changes within the Year 9 reform. Their collective positive attitude also formed the face of the reform project. Defending the reform from scepticism and negativity was another task teachers took on under the role of advocate. The teachers in this study reported incidences where non-Year 9 Team staff were negative, sceptical, genuinely concerned and even jealous when it came to the Year 9 reform. The approaches to which teachers dealt with such sentiments from non-Year 9 Team staff varied, however all approaches in some way involved defending the reform. Finally, sharing plans and information appeared to be another means where teachers inadvertently became advocates for the campus.

5.5 Teachers as Planners

It is perhaps predictable that I include the role ‘teachers as planners’ in this chapter of findings because planning is a natural part of teachers’ work. However, the planning the Year 9 Team teachers completed for the new campus during 2011 was significant and did differ from their ordinary planning for teaching and learning. In Section 5.5.1, I discuss the planning tasks that Year 9 Team teachers completed that directly contributed to the reform. Section 5.5.2, then presents findings on the planning conditions that allowed the Year 9 Team teachers to undertake such activities.

5.5.1 Planning tasks.

For the Year 9 Team teachers, planning for the new Year 9 campus was threefold. It involved firstly planning and negotiating their own teaching loads;

planning new courses and curriculum; and finally contributing to plans for the physical environment of the new campus. The three planning tasks are explored further in this section.

An interesting planning task for the Year 9 Team teachers at St. John's College was the drafting their own teaching loads for the first year at the campus. Planning their own teaching loads involved teachers choosing which subjects they wanted to teach at the new campus; deciding what pastoral care responsibilities they would take on; and for some specialist teachers like myself, working out how much time they would spend on the Main Campus. I wrote about this activity in my participant observations journal:

"Another interesting session on the second day of the camp involved teachers planning their own work loads for their first year at the new campus. We were given a rough outline of what the different subjects might be and how much time they might take up. It was nice to see that most teachers were wanting to work at the new campus full time."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

Lewis explained in an Email to me the importance of Year 9 Team staff having input into their teaching loads, and knowing what their teaching loads at the new campus would be very early in 2011. He believed that this process *"empowered staff to take ownership in planning their designated part of the curriculum"*.

The bulk of the planning completed by Year 9 teachers such as myself centred on curriculum and the writing of new courses. Arlene and Gabrielle spoke to me about the early planning they had engaged in during 2010:

"[My planning] has pretty much just, I suppose, been with the English at this point... I've sort of come up with some of the ideas and the resources and things like that that would fit in with the four units. So it is almost like I have planned a year's work. Or a year's ideas on my own, which is fine, you know, I love doing that. And it keeps changing, obviously. We keep changing it when something else happens or we find something else... so it is not really static, I am happy to do the changes like that."

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

"I have had to plan new things. You know, plan the courses and have an input into that and actually challenge myself again in terms of becoming up to date with pedagogy and language."

Gabrielle, Year 9 Teacher

At the time of the interviews, the planning work Arlene and Gabrielle engaged in was mostly individual. This work did however involve consultation with their respective Department Heads and Lesley, the Head of Year 9 Curriculum. More collaborative planning emerged with curriculum planning and course writing for compulsory subjects and multi-disciplinary courses. I discuss collaborative planning further in the next section. As Lincoln explained in his interview, one of the biggest challenges for the Year 9 teachers and Department Heads was the fact that they were "...dealing with an Australian curriculum coming in at the same time" as the Year 9 reform. This therefore meant that Year 9 teachers had to familiarise themselves with the new Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016) and plan curriculum within its constraints.

Throughout the research, I made various observations of Year 9 Team members being consulted about different aspects of the physical design of the Year 9 campus. Both Felix and Dana shared some short stories of how they were involved in the design of the science and arts areas of the new building:

"Myself, [John] and [Anthony] were over there looking at the Science Centre and they have given us a cupboard for oodles and oodles of gear. Sort of like, only when we talked to the architect and said we have got all of this stuff that we need to bring with us, he said, 'Oh, oh well we can put some cupboards in.'

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

"I am having a red feature wall. It is not... like [my Department Head] wanted that boring bloody blue colour that is on all of the carpets and stuff and someone else wanted cream because they didn't want it to go out there. And I just said to [Lewis], 'It is going to be a dark blood red feature wall because I am going to do amazing performances against it.' And luckily the painter went, 'That is a great idea!'"

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

There were times throughout 2010 and 2011 where I personally felt that more emphasis was being placed on the physical design of the campus than on curriculum, pedagogy and pastoral matters. As a teacher, I found this emphasis slightly frustrating, as my participant observations journal begins to explain:

Entry dated: 3rd March 2010

“The main purpose of tonight’s meeting was to discuss the campus design with the architects. These plans were put together at the end of 2009 and are beginning to take definite shape now. The overall campus design looks good and incorporates both specialist and flexible teaching/learning areas. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this planning/designing has been not knowing exactly what is going to be taught at the campus and how it will be delivered. Due to some obvious time constraints as far as building permits and the actual time it takes to build such a campus, the building design has had to precede most of the curriculum planning which is not ideal.”

Entry dated: 3rd May 2011

“We have another team meeting tomorrow night. It will be a longer night, as the plan is to go and visit the building site and to meet with the architects about the interior classroom designs. After this there is some time for teachers to work on curriculum planning. How we use this time though was a difficult thing to decide upon, as there is so much to do.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

Referring to the 3rd May 2011 journal entry, I remember the visit to the building site of the new campus well. We met briefly as a group at the Main Campus then walked to the building site together. Whilst the visit to the building site did evoke a sense of excitement around the development, I remembered feeling frustrated that the physical environment again took precedence over planning for curriculum and pedagogy.

In summary of this section, the Year 9 Team teachers were involved in three key planning tasks for the new campus: planning teaching loads; planning curriculum and planning aspects of the physical environment. The most significant of these was the planning of new courses and curriculum. Apart from this, teachers were also involved in the planning of some physical aspects of the campus. As a participant teacher, I sensed a large emphasis on the planning of

the physical space, particularly during the middle of 2011 when key building works were being carried out.

5.5.2 Planning conditions.

This section discusses the conditions under which the Year 9 Team teachers completed planning for the reform. Key organisational supports for teachers included: a one-year time frame for curriculum plans to be organised; the early distribution of teacher loads for Year 9 Team teachers in 2012; and the use of a backwards-design model of planning adapted from Wiggins and McTighe (2005). Further to this, the heightened agency teachers were afforded during curriculum planning and the collaborative planning they completed seemed to create desirable conditions when planning for the reform.

One of the most significant organisational structures in relation to planning for the reform was the one-year planning period that teachers were afforded in 2011. Lewis wrote about this in an Email to me:

“Having leadership staff already in place in 2010 allowed staff to see who they would be working with and I think engendered some confidence in the process.”

“Because of this the unprecedented step was taken for the [Year 9 Team] staff to get draft loads by Easter 2011. This then empowered staff to take ownership in planning their designated part of the curriculum as 'all things being equal' they were going to teach this in 2012.”

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

As Lewis states, the Year 9 Team teachers were given their teaching loads, including which subjects they would teach and which pastoral care duties they would assume, in April 2011. This meant that they could take on planning tasks knowing that they would relate directly to the subjects they would be teaching when the campus opened in 2012. As Lewis explained, this strategy was designed to increase staff ownership of the curriculum planning.

The introduction and use of backwards-design planning adapted from Wiggins and McTighe (2005) was an important strategy in the reform. Backwards

design planning simply involved teachers starting from the learning outcomes of either the state or national curriculum (depending on whether or not the Australian Curriculum course had been published); planning key performance or assessment tasks; and then planning learning activities and a learning sequence. For teachers like Emily and myself, backwards planning was very familiar and something we had substantial experience in. In her interview, Emily commented:

“So when I get told about this as teachers and some teachers are freaking out, I go ‘Isn’t that the way we are supposed to do it?’ You know, what? Like backwards design. I sort of went, ‘Yeah of course you design it that way!’ I have had teachers go, ‘No, no we weren’t trained like that.’ And I go, ‘Oh, ok, right.’ But I had a really good education in that way and it really encouraged change in schools.”

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

Not all teachers were experienced or comfortable planning in the backwards design fashion as Emily’s quotation alludes. For some the process was very new and more in-depth than planning they had completed previously. Gabrielle commented on her experiences of this planning, describing the process as *“incredibly rewarding”*:

“It just struck me last night that yeah I think it was incredibly rewarding to have done that. Yeah it is. And I think now having got that plan and having done that backwards planning, it basically has taken a lot to actually get it together...”

Gabrielle, Year 9 Teacher

The agency that teachers were afforded when planning and writing new courses was noteworthy. Optional subject teachers in particular were afforded a significant amount of agency when it came to planning courses. Lesley’s philosophy of leadership seemed to encourage teacher agency and leadership, especially in regards to curriculum planning. The following quotations are taken from Lesley’s semi-structured interview:

"I tend to be the sort of leader, because I would like to be treated that way, I tend to treat other people that way. So if somebody comes to me and says, 'I am thinking about doing this in Art, and we are going to do this and I'm thinking papier mache...' and I would say, 'Go for it! Talk to your [Department Head] and go and dream your dreams and do what you need to do and come back and tell me how it fits in.'"

"So really what we are doing now is handing over to them [the Year 9 Team teachers], a lot of the planning... So they have had a lot of leeway there to actually go and have a look at what they want to put in."

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

Lesley saw it as her job to provide a framework for teachers to work from, and to encourage their professionalism in making choices about their subject areas and specialities. For me personally as a Year 9 Team teacher, I found Lesley's approach refreshing and empowering. I wrote about this in my participant observations journal:

"I remember [Lesley] saying in her interview that she tries to empower teachers and let them run with their own ideas because that is how she would like to be treated. I think this is a great style of leadership. Making the teachers feel equal and valued."

"It was really empowering being given the time and resources to work on these new units. Of course the thought of our Year 9 team having to do this task for 30+ courses is daunting but also extremely exciting."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

I particularly enjoyed being able to make key decisions about resources, learning activities and curriculum when it came to preparing courses.

Finally, collaborative planning was a significant aspect of the Year 9 Team's planning conditions. From the middle of 2011, Year 9 Team teachers were given blocks of class-release time to work on curriculum planning tasks in teams. I recorded two entries in my participant observations journal describing these collaborative planning sessions:

Entry dated: 15th July 2011

"Today I had my first planning afternoon with the Year 9 [Connections] teachers (English/SOSE side). [Connections] is going to be team-taught so an English/SOSE expert with a Science expert in paired cores. All of the Home Group/[Connections] teachers (10 in total) are going to work together on the planning of units and in pairs we will take responsibility for one unit. We have to try to integrate the key topics we have been given by [Lesley] as best as we can."

Entry dated: 29th July 2011

"Today I spent 4 periods with the other [Connections] teachers working on curriculum planning for next year...Today's agenda included a quick review of where people were at, some time to choose the Habit of Mind focus for our units and then basically just time to work on it. I was pleased to announce that the majority of our work would be on actually writing the units today. Everything went really well. People paired up into their [Connections] groups and started filling in our planning documents. Assessment tasks or end points were established and some groups even got up to putting in activities. It was really productive."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

Collaborative planning was mostly centred on the planning of compulsory subjects such as Connections (English, science, geography and history), physical education and mathematics. Collaborative planning, particularly when it involved consultation with numerous parties was sometimes difficult for teachers. As mentioned in Section 5.4.3, the English teachers within the Year 9 Team often found themselves at crossroads between what the Head of English and Lesley, the Head of Year 9 Curriculum, wanted to see in the courses. As I recorded in my participant observations journal, this left teachers such as Arlene feeling like the *"meat in the sandwich"*. Bruce explained experiencing several difficulties in sharing and attempting to plan for new courses at the Year 9 Campus. He believed this was due to the *"pessimistic"* and *"resentful"* attitudes adopted by non-Year 9 Team colleagues within his department:

"In my area, in the MDT, no one has come and asked me at all. However when the curriculum I wish to teach has been presented at meetings they have also said that I haven't presented that to them. [Laughs] Double-edged sword I suppose. I have found current MDT staff to be pessimistic and resentful."

"I'm nervous about it. The things that I want to implement, it is going to take some teamwork and I guess they are new, it is a style, or not a style, the

curriculum that I want to pursue over there is what I have recently been taught coming out of uni. Whereas I am from a faculty that is pretty well embedded into a traditional sort of style of things and I know this can work but I am worried that I will need support and I don't want it to fall over."

Bruce, Year 9 Teacher

Bruce clearly wanted to gain support of his colleagues but found their unwillingness to look beyond traditions within the department to be a barrier. Dana also expressed concerns that collaborative planning had become too prescriptive:

"I feel that when you plan units of work, you look at the outcomes, and you pose questions and you give resources but you can't plan lesson by lesson, because if I did that for you, you would throw it away anyway... I can't see myself being really prescriptive to other staff and I think that if you give me an outcome and you give me resources, trust my professionalism and trust that I have taught for 20 years and that I can find a way to do it."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

Dana worried that planning prescriptive units for groups of teachers would not allow others to exercise flexibility or creativity in their work and individual planning.

In summary, key planning conditions that assisted Year 9 teachers in their work included the one-year planning time dedicated to the project; the backwards design model of curriculum planning; and the facilitation of teacher agency in curriculum planning. The collaborative planning that teachers completed was also a significant aspect of the teachers-as-planners role. Whilst collaborative planning was something teachers desired within the reform, the practical realities of collaborative planning meant that some hurdles were faced. The most significant hurdle was managing input and criticism from Main Campus colleagues.

5.6 Teachers as Evaluators

Teachers' engagement in evaluation is another predictable element of teachers' work, and one that is linked closely to teacher planning (see previous section). When I conducted this research, the teachers' evaluation was individual and informal. It did not differ from the regular practice of evaluation that teachers complete as part of their everyday work. The reform process however, did bring about several new items for evaluation, including evaluations of: the physical environment; the progress the reform had made towards achieving its vision; the impact the campus had on students; and finally, teachers' own pedagogy. I explore what teachers had to say on such topics in this section. It is important to note that St. John's College did have plans to conduct formal surveys with parents, students and teachers as a means of evaluating the Year 9 Campus. The time period for these surveys was unfortunately beyond the data collection period of this study however.

The first item that teachers wanted to evaluate was the actual physical space of the new Year 9 campus. Several teachers had informally begun to evaluate practicalities and aspects of the physical environment. The following comments are taken from Email dialogues:

"The facilities are amazing! Lovely, clean, warm, modern rooms to teach in."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

"I have never experienced my own space before and it has been quite liberating being able to organise it although at times setting up initially a bit scary working out what I needed to do. I am loving the closeness of the environment..."

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

"The practical building side of the campus - WHAT a pity when they are spending that much money they didn't get the functionality right by consulting with many teachers and people who use the building. Having multiple air-conditioning unit controllers that are linked together in a very annoying way - I'm in the office freezing but to fix this I need to walk through two other

classrooms that are being taught in - ridiculous. And the sound proofing issues as well..."

Hannah, Year 9 Teacher

Perhaps more importantly, the Year 9 teachers also reflected on and started to evaluate how well the campus was working to achieve its goals. The following comments show how teachers began to reflect on the campus' vision for teamwork and a community environment:

"A close knit community has formed as both teachers/students have gotten to know each other personally with more constant contact. Many of the students have taken a positive attitude to the new campus and have made a concerted effort to become part of the school community and Home Group as opposed to last year where many of them sought anonymity in the larger school population."

John, Year 9 Teacher

"Teachers seem to be more comfortable with having others looking on and helping out with behaviour issues where necessary - teachers seem less protective/defensive of their space and control over classroom management. Probably also as a result of the bond that the teaching team has developed and that we are of a mindset where we generally help each other."

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

"There are so many positives to this campus. Firstly, the staff work together closely and share resources, ideas and stories (both professional and personal) in a way that was not possible back on the Main Campus. This has already made me a more reflective and reflexive teacher, as it encourages me to constantly reflect on what I am doing, and why I am doing it. You also build up relationships and professional dialogue with these individuals in a way that didn't occur prior to this experience."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

"The relationships amongst staff are certainly a strong point at the campus."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

These teacher comments all reflect on how well the Year 9 staff collaborated and worked as a team. As John said in his Email, *"a close knit community has formed as both teachers/students have gotten to know each other personally with more constant contact."* Dana and Lesley were extremely impressed at the way

teachers seemed to be supportive of one another and helped each other when needed. I also reflected on how I had started to feel optimistic about team-teaching in paired classrooms despite being worried about how this scenario when planning for it in 2011:

“Working in a paired classroom has been good so far. My partner [omitted] and I have run quite a successful programme. It will no doubt get harder as the marking comes in but so far it has worked well.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

Another aspect of the campus the Year 9 teachers reflected on was how well it impacted on their students and, particularly, whether or not it had improved their level of engagement with learning and school. This was a major goal of the campus as uncovered in Chapter 4 (Section 4.6.3). The following comments are taken from teachers’ Email dialogues:

“The students are an enormous positive. They are, hands down, my favourite thing about this campus. On the whole, despite their reputation, they have been fantastic. When I compare this group of notorious students, in the classroom and in general, with last year’s very well-received group, it is quite drastic. I had nightmare visions of students hanging from the ceiling, screaming matches, etc. Many of the staff back on the Main Campus taunted us with such ideas too. However, none of these things have happened. There are exceptions, but these students are great – they’re talented, caring, interested and engaged.”

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

“It has been wonderful to get feedback from various sources that students are enjoying the different set up and, in some cases, have reported that they really like coming to school.”

Lesley, Year 9 Teacher

“To come over and see so much improvement in the kids is really heartening. After all it is all about them and I think this style of education is really working with this age group. We seem to be providing them with what they need.”

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

Emily recalled an inspiring story about a young lady who started to enjoy coming to school again, after attending the new campus:

"I have personally already witnessed the success of this campus. I have a student that hated coming to school last year, and every year of her life. She's had literacy issues, which have affected her confidence enormously. Yet, when a very close member of her family died, she was back at school earlier than expected, because she wanted to be here. We supported her, but she was interacting, learning and laughing that day. Her mother observed that this is the first year in her life that she has actually said, "I love school." She has even directly approached me about offering her some private help with schoolwork – which demonstrates enormous courage on her part. And that is just one of many stories we have already witnessed."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

I also wrote about how the new campus had impacted on the students in my Home Group. In class, I had my students complete a persuasive writing task on whether or not they thought other schools should adopt a separate campus Year 9 model. The following is a reflection on this task from my participant observations journal:

"Someone came up with the idea of having a NAPLAN practice afternoon, which we soon organised. I offered to make a common task for the persuasive writing. The topic for the persuasive text read as follows: "All Australian high schools should establish a separate Year 9 campus. What is your opinion?"

I thought this would be a good topic for students to write about as firstly, it was something they were very familiar with and also it would give us an interesting insight into their experiences so far. Their responses were varied and split approximately 50/50 as to whether or not schools should build separate campuses for Year 9s. Of the students who argued against Year 9 campuses, many of them adopted a broad picture response. For example, many argued that it would be too expensive for the Australian government to build so many new campuses and that there were far too many other important projects that would require government funding...

The affirmative persuasive texts were really interesting and generally much more personal. These students argued that separate campus Year 9 facilities were important and desirable and used several examples of how they had positive experiences of such education. Here are two quotes I have lifted from students who argued for Year 9 campuses:

"[Our Year 9 Campus] is actually making me enjoy school this year, because everything is so new and it's just exciting. Also being away from the other grades makes me feel a lot more comfortable walking around and things like that. The people here are coming together and building up strong relationships with our friends, peers and teachers as well."

And this one...

"In my opinion, the new campus is a good break from the normal system. It's like a breath of fresh air."

I thought that it was really affirming that we are achieving some of the goals we set out to achieve. Especially the one about making Year 9 a different, special experience for students and also wanting to establish deeper relationships with students and a sense of community amongst the campus. They were really nice to see."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

As I commented, it was pleasing as a teacher to see students embracing the new campus and to see instances where the campus had had a positive impact on students' engagement and learning.

Relating closely to students' engagement was the goal of forming positive relationships with students across the campus (see Section 4.6.1). Several teachers began to reflect on this aspect of vision and began to evaluate aspects of the campus in terms of teacher-student relationships:

"It has been very good to get to know students on more of a one-to-one basis and to know their names. It has been wonderful to get feedback from various sources that students are enjoying the different set up and, in some cases, have reported that they really like coming to school."

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

"It's not always the noisiest students that this campus has had an impact on – it's often the quite underachievers, or the students that felt that they lacked challenges, or were never noticed. Here, every student is noticed, because they are constantly encountered by the same group of teachers."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

"Spending so much time with one class of students (homegroup) is so great! Enables you get to get to know them well, quickly. This helps on a wellbeing level - you know if they're not themselves, have special things going on in their lives etc. and with learning as you know their personal strengths and weaknesses and can differentiate more easily."

Hannah, Year 9 Teacher

Both Lesley and Hannah felt that the smaller environment where students had more regular contact with the same group of teachers had impacted positively on student-teacher relationships. Importantly, Hannah realised how regular contact with the same groups of students assisted teachers in being more aware of student wellbeing issues and placed them in a better position to help. Emily felt that the new environment helped teachers to ensure that all students were noticed and catered for.

By observing students, speaking with them, and analysing their thoughts, impressions and experiences at the campus, the Year 9 teachers were able to evaluate some of their personal teaching practices. This evaluation was a powerful motivator for us teachers, especially when feedback from students and parents was positive as it largely was. On the other hand, when goals were not obtained or students were not receptive to the reform, I observed teachers feeling disheartened and disappointed:

“Each time a student has a big set back, in terms of their behaviour or choices in their learning, it’s disappointing. You invest so much time and energy on this campus, and when that happens, it is disheartening. But you have to remind yourself, that they are young adults and they have been presented with this challenge. You can walk with them on this journey, but only if they choose to walk with you. You cannot drag them along. In the end, you also hope that they are one step closer to making the choices that would benefit them in more positive and productive ways.”

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

“After being on maternity leave for a few months, I went in to visit my former class and some of the teachers at [the Year 9 Campus] today. I must admit I left feeling a little disappointed. I have been writing up my chapter on vision for the campus and looking at all the things we hoped to achieve at Year 9. One of the biggest themes I found was that of relationships. Today I saw some pretty poor behaviour from students and some very frustrated teachers that just resorted back to their old disciplinarian ways...I know it is the end of the term and that people are very tired, and I know that it is silly to expect things to be smooth all of the time. It was just a little sad...”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

These quotations show the level of investment teachers made in the campus and

how negative observations and evaluations impacted on our work. Fortunately, when assessing the impact of the campus on students, the data suggested several more positive evaluations than negative ones.

Finally, some of the teachers in this study engaged in personal reflections and evaluations of their own teaching. Hannah for example said in an Email:

"I did think that teaching would be a little more 'outside the square' but personally I am finding that the time it takes to plan such things isn't there so I can't do as much as I really wanted to. I feel next year (when the basics are down pat) will be a good chance to focus on that."

Hannah, Year 9 Teacher

Part of her personal evaluation saw her set goals to enhance her teaching in the future. I also spent time reflecting and evaluating my own individual practice in light of the new Year 9 teaching and learning arrangements. The following comment is taken from my participant observations journal:

"For me, I feel like I am quite skilled in issues relating to pastoral care and the relationship-side of teaching. I know of its importance in middle schooling. What I think I need to learn more about is the pedagogical side of middle schooling."

"I guess what I would like to learn are different teaching strategies that will still promote the values of middle schooling and yet allow me to cover what I am prescribed to teach. Ways that I can cater for different needs whilst covering the national curriculum. That is where I would like to up-skill."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

I felt that learning more about middle schooling practices and most importantly, middle school appropriate pedagogy was important.

This section was able to provide rich data surrounding the informal evaluations the Year 9 Team teachers completed as part of the Year 9 reform process at St. John's College. This section was also able to show the powerful insights teachers' voices have when examining, assessing and most importantly

evaluating reform. The practical knowledge and access teachers provide to the everyday realities of implementing reform are vital in understanding capacity building in more depth. The next section explores teachers' practical knowledge and its impact on reform in further detail.

5.7 Teachers as Pragmatists

The pragmatic knowledge and experience of teachers was a visible and poignant element in the reform process. The practical knowledge that teachers were able to draw from when planning both the physical and programmatic elements of the new Year 9 campus was valuable to the development. Findings in relation to the day-to-day practicalities and realities of implementing change were also significant and helped to create a vivid picture of teachers' work during Year 9 reform. Section 5.7.1 presents findings on the pragmatic knowledge of Year 9 teachers and how this contributed to the planning and eventual implementation of Year 9 reform. Following this, Section 5.7.2 explores how teachers coped with the practical realities of planning for and implementing the reform.

5.7.1 Pragmatic knowledge of teachers.

The pragmatic knowledge of teachers regarding their subjects, learning environment functionality, resources and equipment was a significant element in the planning and then implementation of the Year 9 reform. This section explores how teachers' practical knowledge was used to help design and evaluate aspects of the physical campus as well as curriculum within the reform.

As mentioned in Section 5.5.1, some teachers revealed having some input into either the physical design of the campus or the equipment for the new campus. Teachers' pragmatic knowledge also proved valuable when evaluating the functionality of the physical spaces within the new campus:

"The practical building side of the campus - WHAT a pity when they are spending that much money they didn't get the functionality right by consulting with many teachers and people who use the building. Having multiple air-conditioning unit controllers that are linked together in a very annoying way -

I'm in the office freezing but to fix this I need to walk through two other classrooms that are being taught in - ridiculous. And the sound proofing issues as well..."

Hannah, Year 9 Teacher

"Negatives: Only 1 science room."

John, Year 9 Teacher

"I still don't have a workable teaching area and I don't see that ever happening unless they build and add on section."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

The kind of pragmatic knowledge as reported came about due to the teachers' actual use and engagement with facilities at the new campus. Prior to this, architects and designers could only theorise the practical use of campus space.

The pragmatic knowledge of teachers also helped inform curriculum and course writing for the new campus. As explained in Section 5.5, teachers, particularly teachers of optional subjects, were afforded substantial teacher agency when it came to planning curriculum. As the Head of Year 9 Curriculum, Lesley was open in saying that she was not an expert in all areas of curriculum, and therefore needed to rely on the professional and practical knowledge of members in the Year 9 Team in order to make curriculum decisions. Lesley shared an example of how she relied on Hannah's practical knowledge of horticulture when planning some optional subjects:

"Well it is like [Hannah] with the gardens. Now I mean I don't, I know nothing about gardens! The garden just looks at me and it dies. All I do in our garden is mow it! Anyway, [Hannah] came to me and I went to her and said, 'Look there is a PD do you want to go' thinking it is 4 hours after school on a Thursday afternoon, it was free. I said 'Look there is a PD it would be great if you could go'. She was so excited! She went to the PD, she networked, she got phone numbers. She went over and she has got some ideas and she is having an absolute ball..."

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

In this instance, Lesley enabled and empowered Hannah to design and take over the course writing and planning for the campus gardens and an optional subject on horticulture.

In summary, the pragmatic and practical knowledge of teachers was drawn upon during the reform to inform decision-making and planning for curriculum, the physical environment of the new campus and some resources. Teachers' practical knowledge and experience also revealed important findings when they engaged in informal evaluations of the Year 9 reform.

5.7.2 Practical realities of Year 9 reform.

Being part of the Year 9 Team did increase teachers' workloads both in 2011, the year of planning for the campus, and in 2012, the first year of the campus opening. This section explores the practical realities of Year 9 reform, and the impact this had on teachers' workloads.

In 2011, Year 9 Team teachers were required to teach in their regular capacity but were also required to attend meetings and complete planning for the new Year 9 curriculum and campus of 2012. Some class release time was given to teachers, especially those who were involved in planning compulsory subjects and who worked in subject teams. Whilst this time was helpful, teachers still gave substantial amounts of their own time to plan for the reform. These extra demands on teachers' time were highly evident throughout 2011, however it did not appear to dampen enthusiasm for the project.

When I interviewed Lewis in 2011, he acknowledged that teachers had not only their 2011 classes and workloads to consider, but also planning for 2012. On this he said:

"There would be a lot of staff who would think 'I want to know more and I want to be involved a bit more' but at the same time for a lot of them, they have got 2011 to worry about. You know, they have got their own classes, reports, marking, whatever to be involved in."

"The trouble, I think, with all occupations, but teaching is probably at the pointy end of this, is that you sometimes don't get big blocks of time to really tackle, you tend to have a lot of balls that you are juggling and therefore [don't] have a lot of time to sit down and plan. So I reckon some [teachers] are probably feeling a little anxious, a little scared about that planning side of things and [are thinking] 'What do I do with this?' But I think that once they actually get to sit down and sink their teeth into it they will see that it is not that scary and it is not that different."

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

For Lewis, teachers' involvement in the reform was hampered slightly because of the fact they were still teaching full class loads in 2011. He felt that the increased workloads for teachers may have caused some initial anxiety but also felt that this would pass as teachers became more familiar with the planning work they were being asked to complete.

Some of my colleagues also commented on their increased workloads in 2011. Emily said:

"I'm excited but it is hard having your head in two years. Like you have it in 2011 and then in 2012 when we actually go over..."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

When I asked Felix how he was coping dealing with his regular 2011 teaching load and the 2012 reform simultaneously, he replied:

"It hasn't fazed me in the slightest. Um, yeah if anything it has actually been good in the way that it has given me perspective. Like this is what we do now and I have been able to go through and go, 'Well this is crap. We need to rebuild that.' I have been able to highlight areas that need major improvement and some that need minor improvement and some that we can leave the same. It has given me a perspective on equipment and resources that I will need to actually teach effectively over there. Because I have actually started with each unit that we have been running this year with a quick list of what I need to run that unit over there."

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

In general it seemed that the extra planning work teachers engaged in did place demands on teachers' time but did not seem to detract from their motivation to be involved in the reform. On the contrary, teachers reported feeling "excited" (Emily & myself), "fantastic" and "quite scholarly" (Gabrielle) when taking on extra planning work.

The opening of the new campus in 2012 similarly placed extra demands on teachers' time and workloads. In 2012, several teachers reported feeling exhausted or constantly busy during the first school term of the new campus. The following Email quotations show the increased workload and sense of busyness that teachers experienced:

"The first month at [The Year 9 Campus] was very hectic and I felt like I was continually being run off my feet... Simply not enough hours in the day!"

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

"In the first months I found there was a buzz around all the new opportunities from both the staff and most of the students."

John, Year 9 Teacher

"I've found that it has been a very overwhelming experience in many ways...Teaching new subjects, or teaching old subjects in new ways, has presented a challenge for every teacher at [The Year 9 Campus]. In the first month it was quite common for staff to observe how they had not been this tired in years. However, I think it's also energizing – we are not just going along, as we have for the years before and after."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

"As a teacher I'm feeling much more exhausted than the previous two years – I wonder if that's because we are dealing with similar behaviours and issues all day without the variety of teaching a range of student ages – i.e, having seniors for a while etc."

Hannah, Year 9 Teacher

I also made observations of teachers' tiredness in the first term at the new Year 9 Campus in my participant observations journal:

“Several times in the staff room over the past two weeks I have noticed teachers saying things like: “I have never felt so tired before” and “I don’t know if I can keep going on like this”. The demands of setting up a new environment and the extra demands of all of the extra-curricular activities we have had so early on has been a lot to cope with. Already this year we have had camp for 4 days, camp week alternative programme, Rite Journey ceremonies, parent tours, [home group] tours, swimming carnival, cyber bully workshops, [school fair] and more.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

The combination of the extra-curricular activities listed, as well as the extra preparation required to set-up the new environment and curriculum proved to be tiresome for teachers. The new physical environment of the Year 9 campus also appeared to impact on teachers’ workloads and contribute to teacher tiredness.

“The tiredness comes from being ‘on’ all of the time. Physically the building has lots of glass. Even the staffroom is essentially a glass box. This means that even during break times, teachers are visible; they are there and available. On one hand this is a good thing as it adds to the sense of community and hopefully to students’ perceptions that the teachers at this campus really want to be there and work with them. I am sure that it helps in the relationships side of teaching. On the other hand, there is no down time for teachers, and with teaching being such a high energy, emotional job; that can be difficult.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

My colleagues Hannah and Indigo agreed that the new physical environment impacted on teachers’ work. Indigo thought that the glassed environment was initially distracting for students, making it difficult for teachers to engage their attention. In an Email to me, Hannah said that she felt like she was engaging in “*constant behaviour management*” due to the open, glassed areas and design of the building. She felt teachers lost a significant part of their lunch and preparation times encouraging students to behave appropriately:

“The other negative for me has been the glass between classrooms, as it is such a distraction, and although you try every attempt to keep the students from looking, tapping and writing notes to each other through the glass, it has proven a difficult task.”

Indigo, Year 9 Teacher

“[There is] constant behaviour management because of open areas – i.e. At lunch if you go to the toilet and students are inside – you can lose a significant part of your free time encouraging them to do the right thing.”

Hannah, Year 9 Teacher

As a note to Hannah’s quotation, students at the new campus were not allowed to eat lunch indoors. Being informally on-duty all of the time, as Hannah mentioned, appeared to contribute to teachers’ tiredness. The open, glassed environment within the Year 9 campus had some obvious positive connotations as well. The following comments from Hannah and Lesley show how the environment also had a positive impact on teachers’ work:

“Open classrooms – are great for overall behaviour and I love the feeling that any teacher can walk into anyone’s classroom at anytime and it’s welcomed.”

Hannah, Year 9 Teacher

“Teaching with all the glass around has had some unexpected outcomes, like being able to see what other teachers are doing. Also, teachers seem to be more comfortable with having others looking on and helping out with behaviour issues where necessary - teachers seem less protective/defensive of their space and control over classroom management.”

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

“I think that the new surroundings, the high-tech equipment and new resources are definitely encouraging students to re-engage in their learning.”

Rebecca, Researcher & Year 9 Teacher

From these comments, it seemed the physical environment encouraged more sharing and collegiality amongst teachers and motivated students in their learning. The practical realities of reform meant that teachers’ workloads were increased both in 2011, the year of planning for the campus, and 2012, the year

the new campus opened. The increased planning in 2011 did not appear to impact negatively on the teachers' work. On the contrary it seemed to motivate them in preparing for the implementation of reform. In 2012 however, the busyness of the first term at the new campus and the new open environment appeared to increase teacher tiredness.

The experiences of the teachers in this study provided valuable insights into the practical realities of Year 9 reform and how it impacts on teachers' workloads. The teachers in this study were also able to share practical specialist subject area knowledge that was used to plan different aspects of the Year 9 curriculum and physical learning spaces.

5.8 Teachers as Team Members

In Chapter 4, Section 4.3, I explained how the Year 9 Team at St. John's College was first established. This section examines teachers' roles as team members in the reform. It inspects both the teachers' personal desires to work as part of a team and the type of teamwork they were involved in during the reform process. I write more about the formation and concept of the Year 9 Team in Chapter 6 where I present findings relating to capacity building.

As Chapter 4 (see Section 4.6.2) identified, creating a community environment for staff and students was part of the vision for the new Year 9 campus at St. John's College. I was able to see evidence of the teachers' desire to work in a team during the interviews I conducted for this study in 2011. During the interviews, several of my colleagues described their own vision for teamwork and collaboration:

"I would like to see, and I think I already see it, that it is a team. I think that is the really big thing and I think it is going to be a real community type feel. I think the staff have already got that in such a big way that it can't help but just ooze into the student population."

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

"[It] is going to take some teamwork..."

Bruce, Year 9 Teacher

“Hopefully for staff we will become much more of an open team that is not delineated by subject.”

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

“I have never worked with such an intimate team of people I guess, and so that was something that I also found really attractive.”

“I suppose it is a relationships thing as well in one sense, like a small team and even just having just been out to dinner [laughs] ... but in meetings where you can actually just sit around the [meeting room] or you could potentially just sit around a social area and actually have formal and informal meetings and communication with a small group. I am really interested in that - just that relationship.”

Gabrielle, Year 9 Teacher

As Catherine’s quotation alludes, the team concept was already under formation at the time I interviewed teachers. It was also something that teachers sought to develop as part of their vision for the new campus (see Section 4.6.2).

In 2011, working as a member of the Year 9 Team mostly involved collaborative planning and attending collegial team meetings. All seven of the teachers I interviewed in 2011 explained working alongside colleagues in this planning process. I have written about this planning work in Section 5.5. Teamwork also involved team meetings for the new campus. The Year 9 leaders facilitated these meetings, with discussion centred on topics such as the architectural design of the campus, curriculum, student management and resources. For me, the Year 9 Team meetings were something I looked forward to as a teacher:

“I actually look forward to going to Year 9 meetings. Any other meeting I would be happy to miss, but I look forward to Year 9 meetings. I love the energy that I get from them and the anticipation for next year that is aroused.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

Year 9 Team teachers also had the opportunity to work together in professional learning. I particularly recall the Rite Journey programme training that the Year 9 Team took part in at the end of 2011. The whole team came together as one group and participated in the training together. The training almost seemed to serve two purposes; firstly to learn about the Rite Journey programme we were implementing, and secondly to allow for team building amongst the Year 9 Team members before the 2012 opening on the campus.

After the opening of the new campus in 2012, the teamwork that teachers engaged in changed somewhat. Teachers still worked collaboratively, but the focus had changed from planning for the campus to the actual running of the campus. I collected some data on teamwork during 2012 in either Emails or in reflections in my participant observations journal:

Entry dated: 7th March 2012

"I love the collegial way we all help each other out and share resources...Working in a paired classroom has been good so far. My partner [omitted] and I have run quite a successful programme so far."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

"Teaching with all the glass around has had some unexpected outcomes, like being able to see what other teachers are doing. Also, teachers seem to be more comfortable with having others looking on and helping out with behaviour issues where necessary - teachers seem less protective/defensive of their space and control over classroom management. Probably also as a result of the bond that the teaching team has developed and that we are of a mindset where we generally help each other."

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

"A close knit community has formed as both teachers/students have gotten to know each other personally with more constant contact."

John, Year 9 Teacher

"There are so many positives to this campus. Firstly, the staff work together closely and share resources, ideas and stories (both professional and personal) in a way that was not possible back on the Main Campus. This has already made me a more reflective and reflexive teacher, as it encourages me to constantly reflect on what I am doing, and why I am doing it. You also build up

relationships and professional dialogue with these individuals in a way that didn't occur prior to this experience."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

As my quotation alludes, some teachers were involved in paired or team-teaching. As Emily explained, teacher teamwork at the new campus also involved sharing resources, ideas and information. Lesley's quotation implies that incidental teamwork also took place. The physical environment of large spans of glass appeared to encourage more teamwork and sharing.

Working as members of a team was part of the original vision for the Year 9 Campus. Teachers held a vision for the Year 9 Team that adopted characteristics of a PLC. They wanted to see collaboration and sharing amongst teachers, but also a caring social environment. The teamwork that teachers engaged in during 2011 mostly took the form of team planning and team meetings or discussion. In 2012, this teamwork shifted from planning the Year 9 Campus to the actual running of the Year 9 Campus. Teachers took part in formal teamwork such as attending team meetings or teaching in pairs or teams. They also took part in other forms of collaborative work such as sharing stories or observing or assisting one another through the glassed walls. The topic of teamwork is further explored in Chapter 6 on building capacity for sustainable reform.

5.9 Teachers as Learners

Predictably, I observed teachers adopting the role of learners throughout the Year 9 reform. Year 9 Team teachers took on the role of learners at various points within the reform. For some of the time, this professional learning was just a part of the teachers' regular work and was not directly related to the Year 9 reform. In 2011 however, the Year 9 teachers' professional development activities did adapt to include experiences more relevant to the Year 9 reform. Section 5.9.1 explores the Year 9 Team's self-perceived professional learning needs, including the perceived individual learning needs of teachers (Section 5.9.2) and the perceived collective professional learning needs of the Year 9

Team (Section 5.9.3). Section 5.9.4 examines the preferred modes of professional development the team wanted to engage in. For clarification, the teachers at St. John's College used the terms 'professional learning' and 'professional development' interchangeably to refer to all types of professional activity that involves learning and is designed to improve teaching practice (see Section 2.7.1 for discriminate definitions of these terms). I use the term 'professional learning' in Sections 5.9.1 and 5.9.2 as these sections focus on topics of learning for teachers. The final two sub-sections, 5.9.3 and 5.9.4, then use the broader category of 'professional development' to encompass the full range of development activities the teachers described.

5.9.1 Self-perceived professional learning needs of the Year 9 team.

In this study, I was interested in determining what the Year 9 teachers and leaders felt their professional learning needs were, at both an individual and campus level. I also wanted to assess whether or not teachers felt their professional learning needs were being met, and in hindsight, whether they would have liked to engage in more professional development before the opening of the campus.

I began enquiring about teachers' professional learning needs in the semi-structured interviews I conducted in 2011. When I asked teachers what they felt their professional learning needs were, their initial responses were highly varied. Here are some examples of initial responses from teachers:

"I think that we should probably get some more curriculum stuff so like we did last night. I would be really interested to have people from ACARA come out and talk about the curriculum and what they see and how they see it being implemented."

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

"I think for me and I don't know if it is just me, but I certainly still have not got my head around [the online content management system]. You know and when we got that Email the other week about the parent portal and I know that [Lesley] has mentioned that as being a key thing."

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

“As it would be the electronics course – I haven’t soldered a board in years. So me just sitting down with a book – Electronics for Dummies will just bring it all flooding back and I’ll go, ‘Oh that is that and that is that.’ Um, on a broader Year 9 sense, I am going to say this is the first time I’ve ever been exposed to a separated Year 9 and I am not sure what to expect. Like what sort of dynamics to expect in let’s face it, a separate school based on an entire age group of people. So you know something along those lines of what to expect. Even if we just get some people across from the mainland who do this and they can go, ‘Look you can expect this. This is going to be different’, you know. I want to hear not so much from the theorists but the people who have gone through it who can actually say, ‘That is a fantastic theory, here is how it works.’”

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

After analysing the full transcripts of interview data, I compiled a list of professional learning topics that were mentioned by participants. I was quite surprised by the length and variety that existed within this list. The full list of professional learning topics the participant teachers thought might be beneficial are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

Self-Perceived Professional Learning Needs of Year 9 Team

Range of Topics for Professional Learning	Mentioned by:
Arts Pedagogy	Gabrielle
Behaviour management	Lewis, Catherine & myself
Computing	Emily
Educational change	Dana & Myself
Electronics	Felix
Differentiation	Lewis
Habits of Mind (thinking dispositions)	Lewis & Arlene
Integrated curriculum	Lesley & Lewis
Middle Schooling	Lincoln & myself
More innovative pedagogy	Gabrielle & Hannah
New Australian Curriculum	Arlene
Online content management systems	Catherine
Religious education	Emily & Gabrielle
Separate campus Year 9 education	Felix
The Rite Journey Programme (Gender-based adolescent development programme)	Lewis & Catherine
Teacher evaluation & feedback	Lincoln
Teacher-student relationships	Lewis & Bruce
Unit planning	Arlene, Emily & myself
Working with adolescents	Bruce

The list shows perceived professional learning needs of both individuals and also the Year 9 Team as a whole. I examine both of these areas in Section 5.9.2 and 5.9.3 respectively.

5.9.2 Perceived individual professional learning needs.

Referring back at Table 5.2 it appears that several of the listed topics for professional learning were directly related to individual teachers' teaching loads. Several teachers at the new campus were asked to take on new subjects that they had not taught previously due to the smaller number of teachers allocated to Year 9. This appeared to create a need for subject-based professional learning and development. For example, Gabrielle felt that she wanted to engage in professional development in order to teach religion, a

subject she had not taught previously. For Gabrielle though, professional learning would simply involve learning from colleagues with more experience:

"I know that I am teaching [religion], but in terms of professional learning, I don't think it would be anything beyond actually having a chance to sit down with those teachers and go through the programme. Familiarise myself with the programme."

Gabrielle, Year 9 Teacher

Emily was also asked to teach a subject which she had no previous teaching experience. For Emily, the subject was computing:

"The one I am most concerned about is I am teaching computing and I don't know how to teach computers. I have some help in that my brother is a computing genius. So I am hoping he can help me..."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

Felix, whilst having some experience in electronics felt he needed to smarten his skills before teaching the subject:

"As it would be the electronics course – I haven't soldered a board in years. So me just sitting down with a book – Electronics for Dummies will just bring it all flooding back..."

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

Other areas where individual learning needs existed, included: Catherine wanting to learn more about the school's online content management system; Arlene wanting to learn more about the implementation of the Australian Curriculum; Dana wanting to study the texts she would be asked to teach at the new campus; and Gabrielle wanting to pursue her interest in arts pedagogy:

"I think for me and I don't know if it is just me, but I certainly still have not got my head around [the online content management system]. You know and when we got that Email the other week about the parent portal and I know that [Lesley] has mentioned that as being a key thing."

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

"I think that we should probably get some more curriculum stuff so like we did last night. I would be really interested to have people from ACARA come out and talk about the curriculum and what they see and how they see it being implemented."

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

"I need to look at the units I am teaching. So I need to look at what they have planned for me because if they have put in a text or something that I am not familiar with, then I am going to need the professional time to read that and start to plan for that."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

"Maybe something about the educational pedagogies. So when [my Department Head] flagged this Art teacher's conference that was to do with that, I guess that came more to the front. You know, discussing Arts curriculum and the way forward with Art and education and those kind of things interest me. So professionally that would be an area that I would really like to develop..."

Gabrielle, Year 9 Teacher

Individual professional learning needs appeared to result from teachers being asked to teach new or unfamiliar subjects, as well as teachers' own personal interests.

5.9.3 Perceived campus-wide professional learning and development needs.

The perceived professional learning needs discussed in this section are relative to the whole Year 9 Team. Topics for campus-wide professional learning and development included: The Habits of Mind thinking dispositions (see Anderson, 2010); integrated curriculum; the Rite Journey programme (see The Rite Journey, 2012); unit planning; educational change; teacher professional feedback and evaluation; student behaviour management; working with adolescents; and middle schooling. A brief discussion on each of these topics follows.

The Habits of Mind

The Habits of Mind was chosen as a system for teaching thinking skills at the new campus. Lewis and Arlene both mentioned that this would be beneficial for teachers to learn about:

“Clearly within the whole curriculum area, you know, the ability to be able to incorporate the Habits of Mind sort of focus within it is going to be part of what we all need to be aware of and the use of the language and the importance of consistency along that.”

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

“I know that there are thoughts about more Habits of Mind stuff and I have done a lot of Habits of Mind in my last school that I was at. So I am really on track with it but I think it would be good for the staff to find out more about it because it keeps getting mentioned.”

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

It was intended that the Habits of Mind would provide a framework to help teachers develop students' thinking skills across all subject areas. To facilitate this, Lesley asked all teachers to include a Habits of Mind focus in all curriculum planning.

Integrated Curriculum

Both Lesley and Lewis named integrated curriculum as an area requiring professional development for teachers within the Year 9 Team. As mentioned in Section 4.3, there were plans for a multi-disciplinary course within the new Year 9 curriculum called 'Connections' which merged the traditional subjects of English, history, geography and science. Lesley said the following:

“I know for some [teachers] it has been a bit of an evolving process especially the ones that are involved in the integrated units – integrating Science, History and English because while our vision is there to take those subjects out of the boxes and make them a big-idea learning within those different areas and we have models of how it has been done in other places, it's still not clear how it is actually going to happen. And I think for those staff while they are enthusiastic and happy to put in there is still the big question mark.”

Lesley, Year 9 Teacher

As Lesley explained, the nature and purpose of curriculum integration within the 'Connections' course was still undecided at the time of interviews. These issues persisted during the planning phase of reform and unfortunately were not resolved. What was positive was the fact that the Year 9 leaders recognised the fact that teachers needed more professional learning and development in regards to curriculum integration and teaching in a multi-disciplinary setting.

The Rite Journey Programme

Professional learning on the Rite Journey programme was mentioned by Lewis and Catherine in their interviews, although neither elaborated on what this might involve. At the end of 2011, the Year 9 Team did in fact gather for an intensive two-day workshop on the Rite Journey programme, meaning that Lewis and Catherine's desire for this professional learning was fulfilled.

Curriculum Planning

The need to continue to work on unit planning was something that Arlene, Emily and myself all thought necessary for Year 9 Team teachers:

"We need to be looking at how that, like the Habits of Mind, should influence our unit planning and things like that."

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

"Well, obviously there needs to be a certain amount [of professional learning] in terms of the way we are planning our curriculum at the moment and stuff, which I fully support. But how much extra stuff we need? So maybe we need some in terms of the Religion, like I understand that they are doing a different Religion programme over there, so maybe we might want to be briefed on that, but I imagine that is going to happen soon."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

Entry dated: 3rd May 2011

"I said to [Lesley], "let's just start doing it. Let's use the pro-forma that you have set up, our old curriculum documents, any other resources we made need and let's just start writing these course." I told her that my practical side would feel so much better knowing that I had at the very least started writing some of the courses that we would need to write. Obviously it would take more than one session, but just

starting would be a big milestone. And doing it together in the same room means that even though we would be working on different course, we would be able to talk with one another and give advice and support to one another."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

As my journal entry reveals, for me just starting the process of curriculum writing, and being able to do this in small teams, was important. Lesley spent much time organising a unit planning pro-forma and learning about the backwards design process of planning before any curriculum writing took place. This gave all planning a defined structure from which teachers could work. Looking back, the backward design process of planning and the unit pro-forma Lesley made, I felt, increased consistency and efficiency when engaging in the full overhaul of Year 9 curriculum planning that we did.

Educational Change

The idea of learning about educational change surfaced briefly in the data. Dana mentioned the idea of learning about change and how to cope with change in her interview. She said:

"As long as we learn how to cope with change and you know, in my teaching, personal teaching, I never do the same thing twice. I teach the same skills but when I look in my classroom and what my classroom is made up of, it is so different every year."

"Knowing how we cope with change and what we are excited about and what we are scared about. I really don't think there is much more we can do."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

I too mentioned the idea of learning about change when engaging in reform. This is perhaps predictable considering my involvement in this study. In my participant observations journal I wrote the following reflection:

"Change is inevitable. We have the choice of embracing it, working with it, even moulding it or fighting with it. The Year 9 Team of teachers are those who want

to work with it, whereas some of the other staff in the school, they are the ones that want to fight it. I really think that learning about change is important for teachers who will inevitably have to deal with it throughout their whole careers.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

I write of the inevitability of change in the reflection which poses the argument that learning about change will always be relevant for teachers. The reflection also shows the power of attitude when it comes to managing change. The pro-change attitude adopted by the Year 9 Team teachers appeared to place them in a much better position for coping with and managing change. Interestingly, none of the Year 9 leaders mentioned the need for teachers to learn about change in their interviews or Emails.

Teacher Professional Feedback and Evaluation

Lincoln wanted to enhance the feedback and evaluations teachers received on their work. He hoped that at the new campus, teachers would feel comfortable enough to work with each other and assist one another in developing professionally. In his interview he said:

“So I think that teachers need some really good professional feedback so that they can actually develop professionally.”

“I think it is going to be really interesting to see how a group of teachers are working together and I can see some real possibilities in terms of the staff and how those staff will work with each other and assist each other in order to develop professionally and give each other feedback on their teaching and curriculum and methodology. And really build that really positive learning community amongst the Year 9 staff. That is what I am really looking forward to. So that is probably what I am most looking forward to.”

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

In his quotation, Lincoln is also advocating for a positive PLC.

Student Behaviour Management

Lewis, Bruce, Catherine and myself felt that professional learning on student behaviour management and teacher-student relationships was an area of need for the Year 9 Team. The following excerpts from Lewis and Bruce are taken from the semi-structured interviews I conducted and my participant observations reflection journal:

"If you just take the different structure with the pastoral care, for starters, I think we are going to be wanting [some professional learning for teachers]. It is going to be losing credibility for the teacher and losing relationships with the student if the first time something goes wrong, that teacher calls on support straight away or 'handballs', whatever you want to call it. And I think in a big institution... sometimes that happens."

"I think that [teachers need] some support in handling conflict; in handling students, because we, more so than ever, we are dealing with students that have had some sort of trauma in their lives or have had some dislocation in their families and mental health issues etc. So we have got all manner of things there that are going to present challenges. And I think we continually need to be aware of working with our staff so that they feel more and more confident and comfortable and consistent in how we want to go about that."

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

"We seem to have are some teachers that are poles apart. Some that are quite extrovert and out-going and then some that are quite rigid and structured on discipline and stuff like that and that is going to be, the environment is going to be created over there I guess, I can foresee some problems maybe happening with that."

"You have some teachers over there [in the Year 9 Team] that are a bit 'looser' than others. And then you have got others that will engage in conflict and will pursue and won't back off. 'I am the teacher – you must do!' and I think there is going to be maybe a bit of sorting out to do there."

Bruce, Year 9 Teacher

"Another thing I would like to see at the campus – a focus on relationships and a behaviour management policy that reflects this. It is so important at this middle school level. I don't think we should assume that good relationships and positive behaviour would just happen though. Whilst I remember learning a lot about this subject and positive-reinforcement style behaviour management etc. at uni, I know there are a lot of other teachers that don't have a lot of knowledge in this

area. We need some practical steps and professional learning to see that this will happen. Some examples of good practice and a campus wide behaviour management programme and rewards scheme would be good.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

Lewis acknowledged that teachers at the new campus would need to adapt to a new structure of behaviour management where a greater emphasis was placed on building relationships and trust between teachers and their students. He felt that because teachers would take on more responsibility for student behaviour management under the new structure, they would need more professional learning and support in handling conflict and helping students with difficult issues such as trauma or family changes. Bruce was somewhat worried about the staff dynamics within the Year 9 Team. He was particularly concerned that some teachers would not have the right attitude needed to form strong relationships with students, or maintain a consistent behaviour management policy. Dealing with student behaviour in a consistent way that still focussed on maintaining positive relationships seemed more pressing at the Year 9 Campus where staff members and their teaching styles were more visible.

Both Catherine and myself wanted to see a more thorough student behaviour management strategy. My participant observations journal reveals some troubles when planning a student behaviour management strategy for the new campus. I was personally asked to work on this for a short time during 2011 when Leyton went on leave and I filled his place. By the end of my time in Leyton's position, a detailed draft of a student behaviour management strategy was achieved. I was somewhat disappointed though when this strategy was abandoned in light of the school wanting to pursue a school wide positive behaviour support model. The following is an entry from my participant observations journal:

“I feel really nervous and frustrated today. When I filled in [for Leyton], I did a lot of work on the behaviour management plan for the campus. We set up a list of expectations and a table of behaviours and consequences for teachers. A lot of

time in meetings was spent discussing this...Now it seems that the whole thing has been superseded by a school wide positive behaviour support model. Don't get me wrong, I have read about positive behaviour support and the principles within it are great, I just don't feel like people have actually understood it properly. We cannot just rely on a five-word slogan to deal with day-to-day classroom issues or even more serious incidences of misbehaviour. We need something to go by."

"Positive behaviour support does not mean that we don't have expectations or rules for students. I am so worried that without explicit expectations and consequences for poor behaviour, the campus will develop the same non-compliant, inconsistent culture of behaviour management that exists at the school already. I was so attracted to being able to work in a smaller area with a better chance of being able to follow up on things and whole staff consistency and compliance when it comes to behaviour management. I was really looking forward to that. I am worried now though that everything will be ambiguous and confusing for teachers."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

When I Emailed teachers about their first experiences working at the new Year 9 Campus in 2012, Catherine made the following comment regarding behaviour management:

"I think the one area that would be valuable to have some more work in as a staff is in the area of discipline and the expectations and goals and understanding of our direction at [the Year 9 Campus]. I think that this area is still a work in progress and I feel at times the staff are a little unsure of some issues in this area."

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

Whilst my own worries were somewhat calmed after beginning at the new campus, Catherine seemed to feel that student behaviour management was still an area for professional development. As she said, at the time of this study, the behaviour management strategy still felt as though it was "*work in progress*" (Catherine).

Working with Today's Adolescents

On a topic related to student behaviour management, Bruce expressed that he wanted more professional learning for teachers on understanding and working with adolescents. Bruce felt that teenagers of today's society lacked optimism and were more exposed to adult issues and experiences:

"I think they need some help at that age to understand this world. They are exposed to so much technology and so many other things in society that are quite disturbing what they are doing at that age. It is sad in a way... They are being de-sensitised to a lot of things now. What you and I might have seen as being a fairly big deal at 18 or 19, these kids are seeing at 14."

"I just think we have got a group of lost youth. You know, they are not a positive bunch. Not many of them are positive. Kids aren't positive as there are so many unknowns these days – of where they are going and where they want to go."

Bruce, Year 9 Teacher

He acknowledged the changed context in which teenagers of today's society live in compared to when he grew up and felt that teachers needed to be more in touch with modern-day adolescent needs. Bruce mentioned the popular work of Franklin Covey and Steve Biddulph as some possible reference points for teachers to learn more about today's adolescents.

Middle Schooling

Whilst Bruce's call for more professional learning on working with adolescents is clearly related to middle schooling, it is interesting that of all 14 participants in this study, only one (Lincoln, the College Principal) explicitly stated that middle schooling should be an area of professional learning for the Year 9 Team. Lincoln explicitly identified a need for professional learning on the middle years of schooling:

"I think there is the whole area of middle schooling, which is an area of professional learning."

"So I am really investigating with [Lewis] at the moment how the teachers in Year 9 can become better teachers in their own craft."

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

Unfortunately Lincoln did not offer any details on what he specifically thought needed to be addressed within the area of middle schooling, however he felt that professional learning in this area was necessary for the Year 9 development.

Whilst other teachers did not mention middle schooling explicitly, some middle schooling related topics were uncovered. For example and as already stated, Bruce thought that Year 9 teachers needed professional learning on working with adolescents, particularly taking into regard the changing contexts of modern society. Felix perceived a need for professional learning on separate campus Year 9 programmes and hearing from schools that had already engaged in separate campus Year 9 reform.

In summary of this section, the participants in this study identified not just individual professional learning needs but also professional learning needs of the whole Year 9 Team. Whole team learning topics included: the Habits of Mind thinking dispositions; integrated curriculum; the Rite Journey programme; unit planning; educational change; teacher professional feedback and evaluation; behaviour management and working with adolescents and middle schooling. As per individual professional learning needs, the list of team professional learning needs was somewhat varied, making it difficult to ascertain which needs were considered the most important. It seemed that at the time of this research, particularly at the time when interviews were conducted, professional learning to assist the reform process was not clearly determined. This would therefore account for the long list of professional learning topics identified by the Year 9 Team teachers.

5.9.4 Preferred modes of professional development.

As part of this study, I also questioned teachers and leaders about the modes of professional development that they would like to engage in as part of the reform. I use the term 'professional development' here as it refers to the wide range of activities teachers engage in in order to improve skills, knowledge and characteristics (Mayer & Lloyd, 2011). Several of the participants that I interviewed expressed the desire for what they called 'in-house' professional development; in other words, professional development that occurs on campus and is facilitated by teachers and leaders of St. John's College.

My colleagues Catherine, Dana and Gabrielle all made references to in-house professional development in their interviews:

“I think if you have got someone here that knows the information, all of us here are teachers so you would think we should be able to disseminate information. So I don’t see that as an issue. We should be able to do that. I don’t... to me I don’t have an issue with that. Of course if that person has time to prepare and puts a proper presentation together... but I don’t think that we need to, and often outside stuff is really expensive and those sorts of things and perhaps not necessary.”

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

“I think in terms of professional needs, we need time. And we don’t need time where we are sitting at a round table and [Lesley] is at one end and [Leyton] is at another and they say, ‘This is our agenda’, we need to sit down with the people we are working with at our own pace and sort out where the gaps are. Because really I don’t know where they are yet because I need to look at the units I am teaching.”

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

“In terms of professional learning, I don’t think it would be anything beyond actually having a chance to sit down with those teachers and go through the programme. Familiarise myself with the programme.”

Gabrielle, Year 9 Teacher

For me, working in a team towards common goals, particularly with relation to curriculum planning was important:

“Anyway, as I said I came away from the meeting feeling quite inspired. Inspired to work with interested and passionate people, inspired to learn more and to do more for Year 9 students...It is great to see the beginnings of a team of teachers working together towards a common goal.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

All four of the Year 9 leaders also felt that in-house professional development where teachers could work with and learn from one another was valuable. The following comments are taken from their interviews:

“And I don’t necessarily think, I don’t mean that means we are going to be calling in a whole lot of experts either. I think it is us sharing our skills and our ways that we want to work together and modeling to one another in the actual moments of when this happens of how we handle these things. So I think that will be important.”

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

“Well, I guess there is going to be a need for a lot of PD [professional development] but maybe more so in-house PD; working with other staff in their teams. We all bring special gifts; we all have experience in different fields and being able to learn things off each other – that is going to be important.”

Leyton, Year 9 Leader

“Professional learning doesn’t have to be going off the campus to learn about this and that. It can be an observer coming in for a few days, looking at the pedagogy of a few people and then feeding back to them immediately about their teaching in that classroom context, how they approach different students and the subject, you know it is in order to build better teaching pedagogy.”

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

“I think it would probably be more effective if they go ahead and actually start planning rather than sitting in a professional development session...”

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

Whilst not in explicit reference to professional development, my colleagues Arlene and Bruce also spoke of teamwork and team planning in their interviews. This too could be seen as a form of in-house professional development for teachers.

The idea of externally provided professional development, was not abandoned by the Year 9 Team. It did however appear to be less important than in-house professional development, when I conducted interviews. Arlene and Felix both thought that externally provided professional development involving teachers going off campus or having external experts come into the school to work with staff, was necessary. Arlene mentioned wanting to work with experts from ACARA to gain assistance with the implementation of the national curriculum.

As mentioned previously, Felix wanted the opportunity to work with people from other schools who had implemented similar separate campus Year 9 reform:

“Even if we just get some people across from the mainland who [have engaged in separate campus Year 9 reform] and they can go, ‘Look you can expect this. This is going to be different’ you know. I want to hear not so much from the theorists but the people who have gone through it...”

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

While both Arlene and Felix perceived a need for externally provided professional development, they also had a desire to work with colleagues internally. Arlene explained that choosing appropriate and useful externally provided professional development was critical because time for such was limited:

“I just think we have to be really careful and just say ‘right our time is limited’, so whatever [professional learning] we do, we need to say that it is really specific to what we are going to do. It has got to be really helpful.”

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

Finally, two of my colleagues felt that time to bond and socialise as a group was important. Whilst on the surface this may not seem like professional development, such activity has been associated with building trust and team capacity (Kochanek, 2005). Dana and Catherine said:

“I would really like to see a dinner party or a cocktail party. I would really like to see us starting to get to know each other. And instead of being in meetings where there is a very definitive timeline, I would like to be able to sit down with someone and go ‘So what do you reckon? What do you think about this? I never thought of that’ and start actually bonding and talking to each other and knowing each other as people. And knowing how we cope with change and what we are excited about and what we are scared about.”

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

“I would like to see us have some more, like what we, like the camp that we had at [the beach] was just fabulous. It was just such a great [experience]. So more

time not necessarily a camp, but just some more time like our extended meeting that we had the other week, I thought that was great as well."

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

This desire for social interaction within the Year 9 Team is linked closely to the group's vision for a community environment where teachers were welcoming of one another and worked as team members (see Section 4.6.2).

Overall, the Year 9 Team showed a strong desire for in-house professional development where teachers could work with and learn alongside one another. Team planning and socialising was also considered part of this in-house professional development. Externally provided professional development was considered valid, however at the time of the semi-structured interviews, there appeared to be a preference for in-house development and planning.

5.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented findings on the roles of St. John's College's Year 9 teachers and their experiences of Year 9 reform. This study found that teachers played several roles throughout the initiation, planning and implementation of reform including that of risk taker, vision-makers, advocate, planner, evaluator, pragmatist, team member and learner. I explained in the introduction (Section 5.1) that, teachers' roles in reform and in general practice, are constantly changing and evolving. This means that the roles that I have presented in this chapter are not definitive. They do however begin to contribute new knowledge on the roles teachers play in middle years' reform. The over-arching research question for this study asked what could be learnt from the teachers' perspective about the process of Year 9 reform. Understanding the roles that teachers play during the reform process is a significant element of the findings, which begins to answer this question.

Chapter 6 - Findings: Building Capacity

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 presents findings in relation to the final research sub-question for this study, which asked:

“What factors appear to assist St. John’s College in building capacity for sustainable change?”

Overall St. John’s College showed key strategies and emphasis in building both organisational and interpersonal capacity. The notion of personal capacity appeared neglected in the reform strategy and did not receive the same amount of attention as the other two elements of capacity. It was interesting to note that the Year 9 Team teachers in this study did hold vision for improving pedagogy (see Section 4.6.5). There appeared to be no strategy in the reform however, designed to assist teachers to engage in the required reflection and introspection in order to develop their personal pedagogies and build personal capacity.

Support for developing both organisational capacity and interpersonal capacity was much more visible and successful within St. John’s College’s Year 9 reform. This chapter explores the key strategies employed by St. John’s College in building organisational and interpersonal capacity. Section 6.2 examines leadership within the reform and explores how the Year 9 leaders helped build interpersonal and organisational capacity. Section 6.3 explores organisational supports regarding timeframes within the reform. Section 6.4 looks at how interpersonal capacity was built throughout the reform with attention paid to the formation and dynamics of the Year 9 Team.

Data for this chapter of findings was obtained through all four data collection tools, but particularly from my participant observations and Email questionnaires with teachers and leaders (see Chapter 3, Table 3.1 for participation details). The Year 9 Leadership Group including the Principal

(Lincoln), Head of Year 9 (Lewis), Head of Year 9 Curriculum (Lesley) and Head of Year 9 Pastoral Care (Leyton) were the key people who oversaw the Year 9 reform process at St. John's College. Their input for this section of the findings was valuable as they had a wider vantage point to discuss various elements of the reform process. The Year 9 teachers too, however, were able to give information about their experiences within the reform process, commenting on both positive and negative elements. I found that this data was useful in coming to understand successful change strategies employed at St. John's to help build the school's capacity to manage and sustain change. One of the key questions I asked participants in the Email questionnaires was having been through the change process, what advice would they give to other schools wanting to reform Year 9? This question provided some valuable insights into what the Year 9 leaders and teachers considered important when building capacity for sustaining change.

6.2 Leadership for Reform

Leadership was a positive feature of St. John's College's Year 9 reform that contributed to capacity building for sustainable change. When examining leadership, the beliefs and attitudes of the Year 9 leaders, as well as the actions they undertook within their leadership roles were important factors to consider. Section 6.2.1 explores the beliefs and attitudes of the Year 9 leaders and discusses how they adopted a distributed leadership mindset throughout the reform. Following this, Section 6.2.2, explores the actions of the Year 9 leaders and presents findings on how the Year 9 leaders took steps to enable and empower teacher agency. This section also examines trust in leadership and discusses why this was an important element in empowering teacher agency. Finally, Section 6.2.3 examines teachers' perceptions of the Year 9 Leadership Group and identifies three key factors that appeared to propel the group's success. This section also summarises how leadership contributed to building both organisational and interpersonal capacity for sustainable change.

6.2.1 Distributed leadership mindset.

The Year 9 leaders' attitudes and beliefs about leadership were significant influences when examining leadership during St. John's College's Year 9 reform. It seemed that both the Year 9 teachers and Year 9 leaders were seeking a style of leadership that relied less on hierarchy and more on the distribution of leadership within the team. This meant that the Year 9 leaders would work as enablers of teacher agency and facilitators of teacher leadership, rather than dictating courses of action and making top-down decisions. Both Lesley and Leyton commented on this attitude towards leadership and how it might look at the new campus:

"And even in so far as our traditional leadership model. I don't see that as being relevant in our Year 9 Campus. We will have a team of staff up there that we will have some people in leadership positions but they will be facilitating a team rather than a hierarchy level of student management."

"I think that sometimes hierarchical levels of leadership can sort of dictate where people's standing is, regardless of their years of teaching experience which is a shame. It is great to walk into a first year teacher's classroom and say, 'Oh that's a great idea – thanks, I'd love you to share that with everyone else.'"

Leyton, Year 9 Leader

"I took on the job because I wanted to do the curriculum, not because I wanted to be a Level 4 leader, you know, 'Everybody I am much higher than you. Aren't I special?' because that part is actually a pain in the bum for me, because that in itself created all sorts of interesting reactions from people. You know. So, oh yes. So what I was going to say was, I tend to be the sort of leader, because I would like to be treated that way, I tend to treat other people that way."

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

Both Leyton and Lesley's quotations show the distributed leadership mindset that was beginning to emerge within the Year 9 Leadership Group. Both leaders did not see themselves as managers at the top of a hierarchy, instead they saw themselves as facilitators who shared leadership tasks and decision-making with others. For Lesley, this meant enabling and empowering teacher agency in curriculum and course writing. For Leyton, this meant involving teachers in

decision-making and enabling and empowering teacher agency in relation to student behaviour management.

The Year 9 Team teachers appreciated the Year 9 leaders' movement towards a distributed leadership mindset. During interviews at the beginning of this research, some teachers spoke of the type of leadership they wanted to see as part of the reform:

"When I visualise [the Year 9 Campus] I see all of us as, um. I see all of us in charge of everything. You know, that it is not going to be just one person's role to do this or to do that or the other; that we are all going to be as important as each other on that campus. It is not going to be big hierarchies and things like that."

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

"Because I think once we are over there, there will be an immense amount of ownership. And I think that [Lesley] and [Leyton] and [Lewis] will have real issues if they become dictatorial. And I think that the method of learning and teaching that is going to be over there, lends itself to a real democracy in the way the place is run as well. So I am assuming that that will happen. I mean I for one would stand up to be counted if I was starting to get dictated to."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

Both Arlene and Dana expressed desires for more distributed models of leadership. They sought both teacher agency and ownership when it came to various plans for the new campus. In 2012, there was evidence that a distributed model of leadership was emerging. The following reflection is from my participant observations journal dated 26th March 2012:

"The Leadership Group at the campus have kept their word and advocated a shared-leadership model. Yes, they are the ones with individual offices, bigger pay cheques and time to deal with larger issues, but they are involving us in the decision making and I certainly do feel like I have a strong voice at the campus and am important. I think this has been a real strength so far. That the leaders are not removed from the people and that we work together in equality has been one of the most successful elements of the reform so far. The team works and I think one of the main reasons it works is this philosophy on school leadership."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

The Year 9 leaders showed a new mindset towards leadership that moved away from a hierarchical system and towards a model for distributed leadership. The leaders' attitudes regarding leadership were valued by teachers and paved the way for teacher agency. The leaders' attitudes also encouraged and challenged teachers to take on teacher leadership during the reform.

6.2.2 Enabling and empowering teacher agency.

The actions of the Year 9 leaders showed visible steps to enable and empower teacher agency throughout the reform. The leaders enabled teacher agency by setting up processes where teachers' voices could be heard and teachers could give input into the planning and implementation of reform. They empowered teacher agency by relinquishing some of their own power as leaders and by allowing teachers' ideas to be put into action. This section explores these two actions.

During the interviews I conducted, Lesley and Leyton both spoke of enabling teacher agency:

"Now I think what is exciting for the staff is that they are in fact having the opportunity to be autonomous so they can make some of their own choices in terms of what they want to do in electives. They have an opportunity for mastery because they are the person in charge of it and they can see the purpose of it because it is making a better situation for the Grade 9s."

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

"We will have a team of staff up there that we will have some people in leadership positions but they will be facilitating a team rather than a hierarchy level of student management. Examples of that may be that we see the role of the home group teacher being the person that deals with the student. So if that means that someone in leadership needs to take a lesson while they deal with that issue that is very much the model that we are going to put in place. Rather than sending them to someone else to deal with the issue."

"We have had staff have input into the very finer details of the design of the campus and what they would like to see in their specialty areas, what are their requirements? So the staff have ownership."

Leyton, Year 9 Leader

Lesley's quotation in regards to curriculum planning explains that she wanted to make sure teachers had opportunities to be autonomous; to be in charge of aspects of course writing; and to see the overall purpose of their work in reforming Year 9. For Leyton, empowering teacher agency meant that his role as a leader would change. He wanted to see home group teachers deal more directly with student behavioural incidents rather than having teachers simply pass student issues on to someone in a hierarchy. He believed that this model would help create more ownership and facilitate more leadership amongst teachers whilst also contributing to positive teacher-student relationships.

Building and maintaining trust was an important factor in enabling and empowering teacher agency. There were several instances in the data where teachers felt valued and trusted by the Year 9 leaders. This boosted teacher agency and teacher confidence in the Year 9 Leadership Group. Lincoln, the Principal, acknowledged the importance of 'letting go' and having trust in his colleagues to make appropriate decisions regarding the reform. In an Email to me, he said:

"Trust in the leadership of the campus is essential and as Principal I had to let go - not everything about [The Year 9 Campus] is the way I would do it myself."

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

In this Email, Lincoln realises that empowering teacher agency means relinquishing some of his own decision-making power. Empowering the other three Year 9 leaders meant taking a back step and allowing them to explore, develop and enact their own ideas. This was an important revelation that emerged from the data analysis and one that shows how Lincoln consciously empowered teacher agency.

There were other instances in the data where Year 9 Team teachers were valued and trusted to take on tasks and contribute ideas in discussions about the reform. These instances were well received by teachers who felt a sense of empowerment by the process. The following quotations are taken from

interviews with Felix and Gabrielle as well as my participant observations journal:

"It is good that we have been given the chance to put our input in. I mean last year when we got to design our loading and things like that, it was really interesting."

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

"[The curriculum] is not quite linear necessarily and also because the ACARA documentation is still in draft so it is sort of in essay/paragraph type form so there aren't any outcomes to pull across or any direction. I sort of had to make them up myself and I thought: that was kind of exciting! I actually felt like I was back at University again and it was so nice! [Laughs] I felt quite scholarly!"

Gabrielle, Year 9 Teacher

Entry Dated: 20th April 2011

"Some teachers have been a little surprised that they have such an open, blank canvas when it comes to writing new optional subjects. For some it is exciting. One teacher is planning a robotics short course, which will teach students how to make small robots. He seems so enthusiastic and excited about what he can include in his course. Others though seem at a loss as to where to start... For me the idea of being able to develop new courses based on our practical knowledge of Year 9 students is really liberating."

Entry Dated: 30th June 2011

"There were several times in the meeting today where the Head of Campus stopped and asked teachers for comments and questions. This prompted a lot of interesting discussion. I personally felt included and that the leadership group were genuinely interested in what I had to say. By the openness of conversation that flowed from the other teachers, I would guess that they probably felt the same."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

These quotations show how teachers appreciated the agency they were afforded and the positive impact this had on their work in the reform. My quotation revealed however, that some teachers felt more comfortable with the increased levels of teacher agency than others. This showed differing levels of readiness and perhaps even willingness to take on teacher leadership amongst the Year 9 Team teachers.

Whilst this study found mostly high levels of trust amongst Year 9 Team members, there were some instances where teachers did not always feel valued and sought more teacher agency than what was afforded. My colleagues Arlene, Dana and Felix reported instances where they hoped that they could have been more trusted and more involved in decision-making. I present some of these in the textboxes that follow:

"[Lesley] came down to my classroom one day and said, 'Oh we are not doing that now. I have dropped this, this and this and we are going to do this, this and this.' And that was at the time I just went, 'Oh, now I don't know if I want to be involved, if this is what it is going to be like!'"

Arlene, Year 9 Teacher

"I have felt involved in most of it but there have been a couple of things that have been: 'Oh well, you know, it would have been nice to have been asked.'"

Felix, Year 9 Teacher

"You see yesterday I went to a conference with Penguin Books and I found some fantastic novels for Grade 9. But who makes that decision? Is it, I am writing the unit so shouldn't I make the decision for that unit what the texts are going to be? It can't be [the Department Head] or [Lesley], you know. They can say what they like but if you have given me [this unit] then I should surely make that choice? Within budget confinements and that etcetera etcetera... Yeah so, that sort of thing is scaring me at the moment. I don't know how we are going to go. I don't want to be negative about it though."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

Arlene and Felix's quotations show a lack of consultation with them regarding decisions about curriculum and learning spaces. Dana's quotation shows that she was unsure of the degree of agency she was afforded. The instances reveal that whilst the Year 9 Leadership Group took active steps to enable and empower teacher agency, there were still times where teachers sought more involvement. It also highlights the need for transparent communication so that teachers are fully aware of the breadth and constraints upon their own teacher agency.

The Year 9 leaders took active steps to enable and empower teacher agency throughout the reform. This involved giving teachers a voice in reform plans

and valuing their ideas and contributions. It also involved the leaders relinquishing some of their own decision-making power and allowing teachers to make important decisions, especially in regard to curriculum planning and student behaviour management. Whilst the Year 9 Team teachers generally appeared to feel positive about their levels of teacher agency within the reform, there were some instances where teachers sought more involvement or better clarification surrounding what they could and could not do.

6.2.3 Teachers' perceptions of leadership and the impact of leadership on building capacity.

Throughout this research, the teachers made several positive comments regarding the Year 9 leaders. Their positive perceptions suggested that leadership was a successful element of St. John's College's Year 9 reform and assisted in building capacity both at an organisational and interpersonal level. The following textbox highlights some of the positive perceptions teachers held of the Year 9 leaders. These perceptions were collected at various stages in the reform including in interviews, Email dialogues and my own participant observations journal.

Email:

"[Lewis], as a Campus head is wonderful. The leadership team are accessible and have really pulled the place together."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

Email:

"Open classrooms are great for overall behaviour and I love the feeling that any teacher can walk into anyone's classroom at anytime and its welcomed, i.e. [Lewis], [Lincoln] walking through – I think this should be encouraged to continue."

Hannah, Year 9 Teacher

Participant Observations Journal:

"The Year 9 leaders can be inspiring. Their enthusiasm rubs off on the rest of the staff. They listen and seem to care."

"[Lesley] is someone that I really admire. She is such an intelligent woman who works hard... I know that the staff respond to her well. I remember her saying in her interview that she tries to empower teachers and let them run with their own ideas because that is how she would like to be treated. I think this is a great

style of leadership, which makes the teachers feel equal and valued.”

“[Lewis] has a good vision of what he wants to see. His manner when working with staff is also interesting. He is always very calm and has excellent people skills... [He] makes people feel valued by the way that he listens to them.”

“[Leyton] mirrors [Lewis] in many ways... [He] is very calm and supportive of staff. I remember talking to him about a teacher who had basically been bullied by some male students in her class. He immediately organised to go down to the classroom and confront those at fault. She felt so supported and gained so much confidence by having him do that.”

Rebecca, Researcher & Year 9 Teacher

Interview:

“I have found [Lewis to be] a really sincere and consistent and considerate sort of person. And I didn't really know [Leyton] at all, but having seen him in the role with the Grade 9 Team now with the Grade 9s last year and the Grade 9s this year, just, I don't know, the manner they conduct assemblies in and they just both, particularly [Leyton], just have this really nice, they get the attention of everybody and quiet and calm without, with just some presence... [Lesley] is this nice antithesis, I mean she is really warm and friendly but she is really driven, clever. I think she articulates or communicates things the most effectively. She is so economical with what she has to say and she has good language and everything so I always find her very, I suppose, a bit inspirational in the sense that she commands her sort of leadership from that far. And she is very funny and so I think [the Year 9 leaders] complement each other really well.”

Gabrielle, Year 9 Teacher

The success of the Year 9 Leadership Group and the positive perceptions of leadership that ensued from the Year 9 teachers appeared to result from three key factors. The Year 9 leaders:

1. Adopted a distributed leadership mindset;
2. Took action to enable and empower teacher agency; and
3. Valued and trusted their colleagues.

These three factors helped to build organisational and interpersonal capacity within the reform. At an organisational level, the Year 9 leaders were able to drive and direct collaborative sharing, planning and discussion to implement the reform. They were also able to implement processes, which aimed to increase teacher agency and distribute leadership to teachers within the Year 9

Team. At an interpersonal level, the Year 9 Leadership Group grew capacity by helping to facilitate a strong affective culture where people felt valued, trusted and affirmed. These supportive conditions and the high levels of trust that emerged facilitated shared vision and collaboration within the Year 9 Team. They also paved the way for the Year 9 Team to develop its cognitive culture where the potential to conduct meaningful, collective discussion on teaching and learning could evolve.

Whilst there were no concrete plans within St. John's College's Year 9 reform to build the personal capacity of teachers, it is important to acknowledge that the Year 9 Leadership Group was well placed to facilitate the personal growth of teachers. By enabling and empowering teacher agency, the Year 9 leaders encouraged leadership amongst teachers. These conditions provided the necessary support structures for teachers to grow their own personal capacities. What was missing was a process for teachers to explore and critically reflect on their own teacher identities including the beliefs, assumptions, values, practical knowledge and experiences they hold (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). There was also no link between the personal professional learning goals of teachers and the goals or aims of the Year 9 reform.

Overall, the leadership within St. John's College's Year 9 reform was successful due to the leaders' attitudes towards leadership; the steps the leaders took in enabling and empowering teacher agency; and the trusting and valuing of colleagues that took place. The leaders' attitudes and actions showed movement towards a distributed model of leadership and a collaborative PLC culture. Organisational and interpersonal capacities were lifted by the success of the Year 9 leadership. Whilst support structures were in place for leadership to facilitate growth in personal capacity, a process was needed for teachers to explore their personal identities and to see how their personal development aligned with and influenced the Year 9 reform.

6.3 Timeframes to Support Organisational Capacity

One of the most significant and successful strategies in building organisational capacity was the timeframe employed for St. John's College's Year 9 reform. The timeframe for the Year 9 reform project was developed by the College Principal, Head of Year 9 and the college's Board of Directors. This was something that teachers like myself had little input into. As a Year 9 teacher however, I was continually informed of the progress of the development, particularly the actual building of the campus. Table 6.1 gives a brief overview of the timeline for the Year 9 reform as I experienced it.

Table 6.1

Timeline for St. John's College's Year 9 Reform

Dates	Key Tasks within the Reform
2009 November/ December	Head of Year 9 Curriculum and Head of Year 9 Pastoral Care are selected to commence work in 2010.
2010 Mid-year	Teachers volunteer to join the Year 9 Team.
2010 December	Staff camp for interested teachers and consolidation of Year 9 Team membership.
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning of curriculum and other programmes for Year 9 campus. • Teachers planning together in teams overseen by the Head of Year 9 Curriculum. • Building of the Year 9 campus commences.
2011 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 9 teachers given their teaching allocation for 2012. • Planning for the new campus continues.
2011 November	Building works completed for the new campus.
2011 December	Teachers & leaders move into the new campus and set up for 2012.
2012 February	Opening of the new campus and classes for the first cohort of Year 9 students.

As Table 6.1 explains, the Year 9 Leadership Group was established at the end of 2009, giving the leaders two full school years to work with one another before the campus opened in 2012. The Year 9 Team of teachers was established by the

end of 2010, and was inaugurated with a staff camp at the end of the 2010 teaching year. Following this camp, teachers were asked to make a commitment to the Year 9 development and formally join the Year 9 Team. I was one of more than a dozen teachers who attended this camp and signed up for the Year 9 Team. Teachers therefore had effectively one full school year (2011) to begin to plan and prepare for the Year 9 campus before the official opening.

Both Lincoln and Lewis felt that the long lead in time for the Year 9 leaders and teaching team was immensely helpful in managing the change process. The following quotations are taken from Emails Lincoln and Lewis had sent to me:

"[It is] far more important to thoroughly prepare all aspects (facility, program, staffing, parents, students) than rush in and blindly negotiate a new venture. I know of a school who have done this from top down without strong teacher collaboration and have tried to open within 6-12 months. This was a disaster and the campus has closed down."

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

"Having leadership staff already in place in 2010 allowed staff to see who they would be working with and I think engendered some confidence in the process. It allowed the three of us to do a power of work behind the scenes (including the important trips to visit other schools). Because of this the unprecedented step was taken for the [Year 9 Team] staff to get draft loads by Easter 2011. This then empowered staff to take ownership in planning their designated part of the curriculum as 'all things being equal' they were going to teach this in 2012."

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

Whilst the majority of the teachers I Emailed did not reflect on the overall timeline of the Year 9 reform, Catherine did write the following:

"One of the things that have helped me becoming a [Year 9 Campus] teacher has been the preparation we put in before we actually opened the campus. I think writing the courses (although we have made changes) has helped because I have had more time to spend on getting to know the students and new staff and new environments."

Catherine, Year 9

Catherine's Email reveals that she felt that the year of preparation the Year 9 Team completed in the lead up to the 2012 opening of the campus made her a better Year 9 teacher. Indeed the time teachers were given to plan new courses and programmes for the Year 9 campus was significant. As already explained, the Year 9 teachers were given their 2012 teaching allocation, including a list of the 2012 classes that they would be responsible for, in April 2011. This gave them approximately eight months to begin planning courses and their own individual programmes before the campus opened in 2012. Teachers like myself were also afforded out-of-class time release to work in groups to plan units for compulsory Year 9 subjects. Like Catherine, I was very appreciative of this planning time. The following is an excerpt from my participant observations journal:

"I know that I am a much better teacher when I have a really clear, well thought out plan to work from. Often though, like everyone else, I get caught up in the day-to-day busyness of school life and good planning takes a back step. "Quick and easy" plans are usually what gets made up rather than "thorough and thoughtful". The fact that the Year 9 Leadership Team are prepared to train teachers like myself and release them from class in order to facilitate good planning is so important and I am really grateful for it."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

The opportunity to be released from class in order to work with a team of teachers was a rare occurrence at St. John's College due to its large size and busy nature. Lewis acknowledged in an Email to me the teacher desire for more planning time, but also acknowledged that at some point, teachers in reform need to implement the changes they plan for:

"You can never have enough time for teaching staff to really prepare as you/they would like. It would have been great to have more opportunity for staff [professional learning] on themes like differentiation, pastoral care of students in your care etcetera, but at some point you just have to start - realising that such learning is ongoing, and often the best lessons are from your peers as you work together at the coalface."

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

The long time-line for the Year 9 reform and the extra time allowances given to teachers to establish teaching loads and plan courses and units together were successful strategies in building organisational capacity for reform.

Organisational capacity was also increased through the Year 9 Leadership Group and their approach to leading the Year 9 teaching team. I write more about this in the next section.

6.4 Building Interpersonal Capacity – The Year 9 Team

The Year 9 Team appeared to be a successful and vital element in building interpersonal capacity throughout St. John’s College’s Year 9 reform. All of the leaders and several teachers that I Emailed commented on the importance of the Year 9 Team in propelling and sustaining change. When I asked my colleague Catherine what advice she would give to another school planning to set up a Year 9 campus she said, quite simply:

“You need staff who can work together as a team.”

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

The following sub-sections examine the concept of the Year 9 Team including the establishment of the team (Section 6.4.1); team dynamics - diversity (Section 6.4.2); team dynamics – the community concept (Section 6.4.3) and cross-campus dynamics (Section 6.4.4).

6.4.1 Establishing the Year 9 team.

As I outlined in Table 6.1, the Year 9 Team of teachers and leaders was first established in 2010. One of the key characteristics of this team was the fact that all members joined voluntarily. Dana and Lincoln commented on the voluntary nature of the group in their Emails:

"I love the fact that we weren't made to come here - it was a choice. This means the staff we have are positive and willing to put in the time and effort it has taken to make it work."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

"Teachers were involved early and made a conscious decision to belong to the campus-this increased personal commitment and enthusiasm to make this work."

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

Dana's quotation reveals that the voluntary nature of the Year 9 Team appeared to have a positive impact on the morale and motivation of the teachers within the group. As Lincoln suggests, the voluntary nature of the Year 9 Team also appeared to increase the teachers' sense of commitment and enthusiasm towards the reform. Interestingly, St. John's College made the decision not to deny any interested teacher the opportunity to join the Year 9 Team. As Lincoln explained in his interview, allowing some specialist teachers to join the Year 9 Team, such as myself, presented some logistical difficulties:

"[Forming the Year 9 Team] caused a few tensions in its own way too because taking some key people out of their area and being Year 9 only or mainly Year 9 in most cases, it does create a bit of shuffling of the deck chairs in other areas in terms of key people coming out of Japanese say for example, has an impact on other people's teaching loads. And that has been across the board in many cases. You know, [Tristan] coming out of teaching senior maths, focussing on maths at Year 9. Well that creates opportunities for others but you are taking a very good teacher out of the senior classes into Year 9. Obviously very good teachers are required everywhere but those tensions have been there a little bit. But on the whole, I think the getting people together and working like that has been really good."

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

From my observations, all of the teachers who expressed interest in joining the group in 2010 were allowed to do so. The situation may have been different if more than the required amount of teachers expressed interest in joining the Year 9 Team. Luckily for St. John's College, around 15 teachers (which was approximately the required amount) from a range of subject specialisations expressed interest in the Year 9 Team. The complete team was made up by recruiting some extra people to run specialised subjects. Catherine was one of

the extra people recruited to the team. In her interview, she explained how Lesley asked her to consider joining the group but left the decision as to whether to join or not entirely up to her. The following is taken from Catherine's interview:

"[Lesley] came and said that, 'ah can I speak to you?' and of course when someone says that you think, "Oh God what have I done now?" ... And she said, 'I was just wondering have you thought about coming to the Year 9 campus?' And I went 'Oh? Hmm?' and so anyway she introduced it all to me and talked to me about it and I said to her my concerns about... you know I am not the sort of person who wants to put my hand up and say, 'Yeah I will do it' and then go back and say, 'Oh but I can't do that and I won't do that' you know, all of those sorts of things. So anyway, so she presented it all to me and said, 'Look have a think about it over the weekend' (it was a Friday) 'and get back to me' and anyway. So I was thinking about it and thinking about it, sent a message to my husband and was talking to him about it and by Friday afternoon I was that excited and was thinking, 'Oh my God, I really want to do this. This is going to be so cool.'"

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

Building the Year 9 Team did not cease after its initial establishment. Rather, I witnessed team-building strategies being employed at different times during the reform process. The first major strategy I witnessed and took part in was the staff camp at the end of the 2010 school year. Other strategies included: the organisation of staff social events; holding team-based curriculum planning meetings with out-of-class release time (see Section 5.5); and the physical layout of the new campus.

The physical environment at the new campus was such that teachers shared only one lunchroom and two office spaces allowing for greater teacher-teacher connection. As already mentioned, the new campus featured a large quantity of glass, meaning that teachers could easily view what was happening in one another's classrooms. A positive consequence of this was the strengthening of the Year 9 Team. As Hannah and Lesley commented in their Emails to me:

“Open classrooms – are great for overall behaviour and I love the feeling that any teacher can walk into anyone’s classroom at any time and it’s welcomed.”

Hannah, Year 9 Teacher

“Teaching with all the glass around has had some unexpected outcomes, like being able to see what other teachers are doing. Also, teachers seem to be more comfortable with having others looking on and helping out with behaviour issues where necessary - teachers seem less protective/defensive of their space and control over classroom management.”

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

The physical environment therefore helped to build interpersonal capacity and team support.

In summary, the voluntary membership of the Year 9 Team was the first successful strategy in establishing a strong group that was capable of implementing change and building capacity to sustain such change. On-going team building strategies such as staff social events, team meetings and group planning sessions appeared to further strengthen the group and build interpersonal capacity. The physical layout of the new campus with large expanses of glass also appeared to strengthen the sense of community amongst the Year 9 Team, as it promoted greater collaboration and less isolation amongst teachers.

6.4.2 Team dynamics – Diversity.

Diversity within the Year 9 Team presented both rewards and challenges for the group and the building of interpersonal capacity. This section discusses the diversity that existed within the Year 9 Team and the implications this had in building capacity.

In 2011, before the opening of the campus, some teachers voiced concerns about group dynamics within the Year 9 Team. As mentioned in Section 5.2.2, joining the Year 9 Team presented some risks for teachers, particularly as they were asked to work with new people. The diversity that existed within the Year

9 Team was perhaps the primary concern. The following comments from Bruce and myself were presented in Section 5.2.2 and show our concerns regarding the diversity within the Year 9 Team:

“We seem to have are some teachers that are poles apart. Some that are quite extrovert and out-going and then some that are quite rigid and structured on discipline and stuff like that and that is going to be, the environment is going to be created over there I guess. I can foresee some problems maybe happening with that... You have some teachers over there that are a bit ‘looser’ than others. And then you have got others that will engage in conflict and will pursue and won’t back off. ‘I am the teacher – you must do!’ and I think there is going to be maybe a bit of sorting out to do there.”

Bruce, Year 9 Teacher

“As I see it, we [the teachers] want to work as a team and to be able to team teach and work with each other in a way more intimate than we have ever done before. I think the majority of teachers are looking forward to this and are really embracing it. At the same time, we must realise that we are a highly diverse staff. There are laid-back, extremely casual teachers. There are out-going, extroverted teachers. There are the sporty masculine teachers and then there are the planners like me. We truly are a diverse group and no doubt we deal with students in diverse ways that suit our teaching methods and philosophies.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

Both Bruce and myself describe the diversity that existed within the Year 9 Team. Bruce was particularly concerned with the way in which staff dealt with student issues in different ways. Whilst my comment seems more optimistic, I also felt that teachers would deal with students in different ways depending on their own style and teaching philosophy. There were instances where I felt that this diversity could be counter-productive to the group. The following reflection from my participant observations journal shows my personal concerns about working with a teacher who had a very different approach to student behaviour management than myself:

“The man that I am paired to work with as a core teacher is very different to me. I know that I shouldn’t be judgemental about this but I have heard so many comments about how hard he is on students and how much they dislike him. I have heard from our leaders that he finds building relationships with students difficult. I have heard from students that he is ‘mean’ and unfair. So where does that leave me when we are working together? What would happen if we had an

incident in class that I wanted to deal with one way and he wanted to deal with in another? If we have no explicit policy then I don't know what would happen in that situation. What I fear could happen is that he would dominate over me and change the tone of my classroom and relationships with my students. I fear that we will disagree because our teaching philosophies are different and that there has not been any agreed upon standards or policy when dealing with students. That is what I am worried about."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

As my journal excerpt alludes, my situation seemed exacerbated by the fact that a campus-wide behaviour management strategy was not formed. Without an explicit policy on student behaviour management, the potential for clashes between differing teaching styles existed.

On a different note, staff diversity within the Year 9 Team also presented some positive outcomes. Leyton felt that diversity was a constructive characteristic of the team. In particular he noted that all teaching areas were accounted for at the new campus due to the mixture of different teaching expertise:

"We were lucky in that the staff we got. When we actually sat down and started looking at timetabling we had everything covered... We were very lucky that we had a dynamic staff. Everything slotted into place. Some would say that was a fluke, others would say maybe it was fate, I don't know... I think we have got a good mix of staff so that has been good."

Leyton, Year 9 Leader

Leyton also felt that this diverse group could benefit from learning from one another:

"You know our staff have skills that we need to tap into and you know, all of our staff are competent."

Leyton, Year 9 Leader

Leyton was an advocate for in-house professional learning where the Year 9 Team could draw on the talents of its own teachers and learn from one another.

The composition of the Year 9 Team was such that teachers came from a range of different teaching areas and levels of experience. Differences also existed in terms of teachers' own philosophies of teaching and student behaviour management. All of these factors contributed to the diversity of the Year 9 Team. Diversity within the team was a source of anxiety for both Bruce and myself, however others saw it as a positive characteristic. Whilst diversity meant that clashes could potentially occur when teachers held differing views, it also allowed for a wider skill set across the Year 9 Team and meant that the campus could offer a wide range of subjects. Leyton in particular felt that the diversity within the Year 9 Team could be used to an advantage where teachers of different skills could work to facilitate professional learning for others.

6.4.3 Team dynamics – The community concept.

As Section 4.6.2 revealed, the desire to create a community environment was a key element in the vision for St. John's College's Year 9 Campus. The community environment began with the formation of the Year 9 Team and remained a key strategy in managing and enhancing team dynamics. This section explores the idea of community within the Year 9 Team and discusses the implications this had on teachers' work and the school's ability to build capacity for sustainable reform.

The Year 9 leaders consciously employed strategies to build interpersonal capacity, strengthen staff dynamics and instil a sense of community within the Year 9 Team. This was central in achieving the Year 9 Team's vision for a community environment at the new campus. It seemed that forming a community environment for students needed to start with staff. The following dialogue is taken from interviews with the Year 9 leaders:

"It was really important to develop that early so those people could get to know each other a little bit, have that shared commitment. Do some group strategic work and bonding together. Be able to plan a bit for the future, dip their toes into more Year 9 work this year in preparation for next year."

“The last thing we wanted was for people to get to this stage of the year and you could imagine panic around the school as to who was teaching where. What it has meant is a very smooth transition across the year in terms of being able to prepare people for their teaching in 2012. It has been a deliberate strategy.”

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

“I pushed really hard to go away for those two [staff camp] days as I just felt that that was going to be the catalyst, that was going to you know, really allow what was a group that some of them wouldn’t have interacted much before at all because of the nature of drawing from all different departments, allow them to really feel an opportunity to connect and a bit of fun, just relax and I couldn’t have been happier. Honestly, just coming away from those two days, I felt that is exactly what we wanted to achieve.”

Lewis, Year 9 Leader

As Lincoln’s comment identifies, the leaders formed the Year 9 Team of teachers early as a deliberate strategy to build interpersonal capacity and to develop a “*shared commitment*” and bond amongst teachers. Lewis also describes the staff camp as another mechanism for building interpersonal capacity where teachers had the opportunity to get to know each other better; begin to work with one another; and perhaps most importantly, begin to develop their collective vision for the reform.

Further strategies used to build interpersonal capacity and a community culture can also be seen in the language of the 2012 Year 9 Handbook. The opening pages of the handbook have distinctly welcoming and inclusive messages:

“Welcome to [St. John’s College’s Year 9 Campus]. This is a statement that we want to see regularly proclaimed and lived.”

“The notion of living and learning in a community is central to our philosophy at [St. John’s Year 9 Campus].”

2012 Year 9 Handbook

The second quotation explicitly uses the term “*community*” to describe the campus. By including such descriptions in the handbook, the Year 9 leaders were actively mapping the environment and team dynamics they wished to see.

For the most part, the strong, community-like characteristics of the Year 9 Team meant that staff dynamics were positive and conflict was minimal. The following excerpt from my participant observations journal shows just how strong the group became by the beginning of 2012, the year the campus opened:

Entry Dated: 1st February 2012

"Our first day back at work was one huge big meeting. It lasted pretty much all day! As you could imagine everyone was exhausted. The meeting was a full school meeting involving staff from both campuses. At about 2.30PM, we finally got the chance to get up, move around and break off into teams for some discussion on pastoral care. The Year 9 Team was asked to meet in a classroom upstairs. As soon as the group got together, I could see the smiles and look of excitement in the room. We had been waiting for this moment- to finally get together as a team, a strong team that had worked so hard together last year. The room was suddenly alive and full of anticipation for our new campus. It was the highlight of my day and really illustrated to me just how much we had grown as a group."

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

This entry shows that the Year 9 Team had grown to such an extent that they really enjoyed working with one another. I described the team as being "*strong*" and "*alive*" in the excerpt. I would also have described it as being highly functional; a team where members knew and respected each other; had a common purpose; and could work together effectively. This makes me feel that the strategies the Year 9 leaders employed to shape team dynamics, create a community environment and essentially build interpersonal capacity were successful.

The only negative elements in having developed a strong community of staff seemed to be when individual teachers disagreed with decisions made within or for the group. My colleague Dana wrote the following in an Email to me:

"Another negative for me is that if you have a problem or issue - you are seen to be being negative instead of trying to talk through an issue... When you try to discuss a problem it is always reflected back on to you personally as if you are the only one finding something hard. So I just pull my head in and cope..."

Dana, Year 9 Teacher

Dana felt that voicing a concern or issue was difficult for teachers because she feared being viewed as “*negative*” within the overtly positive Year 9 Team community. This shows that whilst group dynamics were strengthened through the creation of a Year 9 Team community, the process of dealing with genuine teacher concerns and grievances was perhaps compromised.

The community concept within the Year 9 Team was such that the team grew to know each other on a personal and social level. The Year 9 leaders were active in employing strategies to promote the Year 9 Team as a staff community where all were welcomed and included. Whilst the community emphasis allowed the Year 9 Team to work together effectively, it also meant that some teachers felt afraid of voicing concerns for fear of being perceived as negative and counter-productive within the group.

6.4.4 Cross campus relationships.

Managing dynamics and sustaining relationships between Year 9 Campus and Main Campus staff was an important consideration in maintaining St. John’s College’s whole school community. The college’s Strategic Plan 2010-2015 outlined its intentions to establish three distinct yet integrated sub-schools within the college. It was always the intention that each sub-school, including the separate Year 9 Campus, would still work and function as a successful whole school community. This section examines cross-campus dynamics between the Year 9 Team and Main Campus and the challenge of maintaining interpersonal capacity from a whole school perspective.

Throughout the data collection period, I witnessed school leaders, particularly the Year 9 leaders, employ several organisational strategies with the purpose of maintaining connections across the whole school community. Strategies such as: maintaining full-staff and full department meetings; holding full school assemblies monthly; inviting groups of Main Campus students and staff to visit the Year 9 campus; having Year 9 students and teachers occasionally return the Main Campus for special events; and retaining Department Heads who

supported curriculum work across all year levels in their respective departments.

Despite the leaders' efforts to maintain the whole school community sentiment, several episodes of tension between Year 9 Team and Main Campus teachers were witnessed. Firstly, tension appeared to rise between Department Heads, Lesley and the Year 9 teachers who were asked to plan certain course or units of work. Quotations from Lincoln and Arlene's interviews show examples of this:

"I think the reaction amongst some [Department Heads to the reform] has been a bit uncertain. Particularly in terms of they are dealing with an Australian Curriculum coming in at the same time as this and probably having looked at life for a long time as being languages, or maths, or science or whatever, have tended to see knowledge compartmentalised a bit. And I know it has been a challenge for some teachers and for some [Department Heads] to see how their subject links to other areas. So the [Connections] units has certainly thrown a few challenges to [Lesley] and to the [Department Heads] in terms of seeing that their own subject is not going to be lost in all of this and their students are still going to be using the skills and are still going to be encountering the literature and the science and the SOSE. I think that natural questioning is good... There were some tension points there for a period of time."

Lincoln, Year 9 Leader

"There has been an aspect where I have been under a bit of pressure because... there have been some people that have been disagreeing with things and I have kind of been in the middle of that trying to mediate between them. Trying to please this person and that person and that sort of thing and that has been difficult. Well it has been a challenge..."

Arlene, Year 9 Leader

The multi-disciplinary Connections course was a major source of tension between Lesley and the associated Department Heads. As Lincoln explained, the Department Heads were somewhat sceptical of integrated or multi-disciplinary curriculum and were often concerned about how their discipline would fare within Connections. Arlene explained feeling pressure from people within her department and the Year 9 Team who had opposing views on curriculum. Both of these show examples of tension in relation to curriculum planning between the traditional Department Heads, Lesley as the Head of Year 9 Curriculum and the Year 9 Team teachers.

Tension also flared between Year 9 Team members and the wider staff community at St. John's College. As Section 5.4 explained, several of the Year 9 Team teachers felt that they had to be an advocate for the reform or defend the Year 9 reform on different occasions. As Section 5.4.2 revealed, Year 9 Team teachers and leaders reported having to deal with scepticism, criticism and even jealousy in regards to the Year 9 reform:

"The wider community? I think that some people don't really give a shit either way. I think some people, or I know that some people, just think that we have gone off and organised things and they weren't consulted."

"I know that there is a bit of discontent in one area where other staff feel that the staff member who has taken on that subject area in terms of development hasn't consulted with them enough, but being the end of term and feeling tired and everything, I feel like just telling them to build a bridge really and get over it, because at how many levels can you actually consult at? If you want to get something done you need to actually get it done and we have consulted at the levels that are appropriate with teachers who are actually going to be there teaching the stuff and with [Department Heads] in terms of ensuring that there is scope and sequence involved. And the people, I'm afraid, on the ground level who are neither teaching at [the Year 9 Campus] nor involved in any other way with developing courses just need to understand that. They need to trust that we are going to look after the interests of the subject area. And I think there are just a couple of people that are being a bit unreasonable in that respect."

Lesley, Year 9 Leader

"[Speaking to non-Year 9 Team staff] is a double-edged sword. The one side where they go, 'Ha ha, you have to go over there and it is a prison and you have to deal with Grade 9. They are a crap year' and then you have the other side where they go 'Oh but what are we left with because you get to get all these great resources to help them and then they come back here to us with just... and there is no money to fix up our schools and things like that.' You can't win."

Emily, Year 9 Teacher

"I just wanted to write about our SOSE meeting this week. When discussing curriculum direction for 2012, one of the teachers made a remark about Year 9 - something on the lines that he was worried about what kind of education they

would get over there and what the senior teachers would have to do to pick up the pieces. I felt immediately angered by this and compelled to say something.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

Dealing with such sentiments was often difficult for Year 9 Team members and whilst it may have boosted the Year 9 Team’s resolve, it created cross-campus tension between the people directly engaged in the reform and those who were not. The following excerpt from my participant observations journal shows the divide cross-campus tension was beginning to cause:

“The sad thing is that I feel like both sides are starting to develop a kind of ‘us versus them’ attitude when it comes to Year 9 and teachers that aren’t part of the team. Whilst it kind of boosts our team morale to a point, in the long term, I don’t think that having an attitude like that will be helpful to the whole school.”

Rebecca, Researcher and Year 9 Teacher

As Section 5.4.3 explained however, there were also instances of positive cross-campus dynamics and interactions. Catherine was pro-active in sharing plans and her work within the reform with members of her department, which appeared to strengthen her relationships with her non-Year 9 Team colleagues and increase their interest in the reform:

“People in my department have been, because I teach food so the ladies in the Food Department they have been great.”

“So they are all really excited and I think they have, they can see, I think, the work that has been put into it and all of those sorts of things. So I think that makes a difference.”

Catherine, Year 9 Teacher

Section 5.4.3 also shared an example where Felix was able to calm a Main Campus teacher’s concerns after simply sharing information about the reform. Reflecting back on my own experiences, I felt that whilst a degree of negativity and scepticism certainly existed amongst non-Year 9 Team staff, there was also a degree of admiration and respect from this broader group. In my opinion, the

majority of Main Campus staff were willing to save their judgements of the reform until the reform was fully implemented.

Cross-campus dynamics, relationship and whole school interpersonal capacity were important factors to consider in relation to St. John's College's Year 9 reform. Cross-campus tension, particularly in terms of curriculum planning was visible at various points within the reform adding to the work and roles of the Year 9 Team teachers and leaders. As Section 5.4 argued, dealing with such tension meant that Year 9 Team teachers adopted the role of advocates during the reform. Positive examples of cross-campus interactions in relation to the reform were also witnessed however. These positive interactions appeared to result when Year 9 Team teachers were open with Main Campus colleagues and shared plans for the reform.

6.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented findings in relation to St. John's College's attempts to build both organisational and interpersonal capacity for sustainable reform. In particular, this study found that the Year 9 leadership and the timeframes within the reform contributed to successful building of organisational capacity. The Year 9 Team concept and strategies to build this team contributed to interpersonal capacity.

In regards to leadership within the Year 9 reform, three positive characteristics were evident amongst the Year 9 leaders. The Year 9 leaders: (1) adopted a distributed leadership mindset; (2) took action to enable and empower teacher agency; and (3) valued and trusted their colleagues. Section 6.3 of this chapter examined the timeframe for St. John's College's Year 9 reform. Of particular note was the overall length of the timeframe and the one-year lead in time teachers were given to plan for the new campus. This extended planning time was a positive strategy in building organisational capacity. It also appeared to assist in building interpersonal capacity and the strengthened the Year 9 Team concept.

Section 6.4 inspected St. John's College's strategies to build interpersonal capacity through the Year 9 Team. This section explored the Year 9 Team's formation; dynamics and diversity; sense of community; and implications for cross-campus relationships. The voluntary nature of the team, and the team-building strategies to strengthen relationships within the Year 9 Team were considered positive influences in increasing interpersonal capacity. Diversity and cross-campus dynamics created some challenges for teachers and the school in maintaining interpersonal relationships both within the Year 9 Team and across the whole school.

Chapter 6 concludes the presentation of findings for this thesis. The following chapter, Chapter 7, will provide an analytical discussion of the major findings and present the conclusions drawn from this research.

Chapter 7 - Discussion & Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This chapter returns to the over-arching research question as a means of identifying and discussing the significant findings and conclusions resulting from this study. The over-arching research question asked:

“What can be learnt from the teachers’ perspective about the process of Year 9 reform?”

Two major conclusions are drawn from this research. Firstly, this study shows that, in order for change to be holistic and successful, middle years’ reform needs to adopt a strategic, research-guided approach that involves teachers at every stage. The case school, St. John’s College, neglected to consult relevant research on the middle years of schooling and Year 9 learners. This had a negative impact on their capacity to diagnose the needs and opportunities for reform and to create a vision and action plan for reform. The teachers’ level of involvement varied across the different phases of reform. When teacher involvement was high, this study showed that capacity, particularly interpersonal capacity, flourished. On the contrary, when teacher involvement was low, capacity building was impaired.

The second major conclusion of this study calls for a threefold approach to building capacity for holistic and sustainable reform. A theoretical model is proposed (see Section 7.3) where the three facets of capacity (personal, interpersonal and organisational) are strategically developed across all phases of reform. Of particular importance is the development of personal capacity in reform. This case study showed the implications of neglecting personal capacity during reform and the impact this had on teachers’ understandings of pedagogical philosophy based on the middle years of schooling.

Subsequent important findings from this study include: emerging theory on the roles of middle years’ teachers during the reform process, and the identification

of the need for a whole school approach to determining the rationale and vision for Year 9 reform. This study revealed eight key roles that teachers play during Year 9 reform. In this chapter, suggestions are made to enhance each of the eight roles in order to facilitate further teacher leadership and growth in capacity. When examining the diagnosing and visioning phases of reform, this study highlighted the need for a whole school approach to Year 9 reform. This study argues that Year 9 reform should not be viewed in isolation from the whole school context.

A final significant contribution this study provides is the first Tasmanian perspective on Year 9 education and the need for reform. This is a previously unexplored context in the limited field of research on Year 9 education in Australia. Findings from this study were able to show that Tasmanian Year 9 students and teachers are facing similar issues and giving similar reasons for reform to their interstate counterparts.

The following sub-sections will facilitate deeper discussion on the major conclusions and significant findings of this research:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Section 7.2 | Incorporating Research and Teacher Involvement in all Phases of Reform |
| Section 7.3 | The Importance of Building Capacity on all Three Levels |
| Section 7.4 | Emerging Theory on the Roles of Teachers during Middle Years' Reform |
| Section 7.5 | A Whole School Approach to Determine Rationale and Vision for Year 9 Reform |
| Section 7.6 | Tasmanian Teachers' Perspectives on Rationale and Vision for Year 9 Reform |

This chapter also gives a summary of key recommendations for practice in Section 7.7; recommendations for future research in Section 7.8; and outlines

the limitations of this study in Section 7.9. The chapter concludes with a final personal reflection in Section 7.10.

7.2 Incorporating Research and Teacher Involvement in all Phases of Reform

This study concludes that middle years' reform needs to be guided by research and involve teachers in every phase in order to be holistic and successful. St. John's College in this study initiated and carried out their reform at an individual school or grassroots level. Whilst this type of reform has been typical of the middle years' reform movement in Australia (Bahr & Crosswell, 2011; Chadbourne, 2001), the ramifications of such approaches to reform have not been well examined. This study was able to present a much-needed investigation into the processes of a grassroots, middle years' reform project. By analysing and evaluating the processes of reform at the case school, this research was able to show the ramifications of neglecting literature when planning and implementing Year 9 reform. This research also argues that capacity is strengthened with greater teacher involvement in the processes and different phases of reform. The remainder of this section explores what was learnt in examining the shortcomings, tensions and successes of St. John's College's Year 9 reform. Specifically, Section 7.2.1 discusses St. John's College's reform processes and the need for a more strategic approach to reform involving teachers, particularly in the early stages. Section 7.2.2 then discusses the need to consult research when engaging in reform.

7.2.1 The need for a strategic approach to reform that involves teachers.

When analysing St. John's College's reform process, the school's lack of formality and strategy, particularly at the beginning of their reform became apparent. The school's Year 9 reform followed a typical pattern, which involved five phases. The five phases included: Diagnosing, Visioning, Planning, Implementing and Evaluating. Teacher involvement in each of these phases varied. Table 7.1

describes the key activities and levels of teacher involvement in each of the five phases.

Table 7.1

St. John's College's Phases of Year 9 Reform

Phase of reform	Key activities	Level of teacher involvement
Diagnosing	Needs and opportunities were contemplated. Informal consideration of the rationale for reform.	No formal teacher involvement.
Visioning	Vision established but not formalised or documented.	No formal teacher involvement.
Planning	New leadership and team structures were put in place. Curriculum and programmes were planned.	Teacher involvement in planning new curriculum and programmes.
Implementing	New plans, programmes and structures were implemented at the new campus.	High-level teacher involvement in implementing new curriculum and programmes at the campus.
Evaluating	New campus evaluated.	Informal involvement. Formal process was planned outside of the research period.

As Table 7.1 explains, the first two stages of St. John's College's reform were informal in nature and lacked teacher involvement. Whilst there was some evidence of the Year 9 Team members considering the needs, opportunities and vision for the new campus, the process was never formalised and a vision statement was never established. This section describes the ramifications of St. John's College's informal approach to diagnosing and visioning and makes suggestions for improved practice. This section also discusses how St. John's College's reform strategy appeared to strengthen in the planning and implementing phases when specific organisational structures for reform were set in place and teachers became more involved.

St. John's College's diagnosing stage of reform was not strategically planned and remained informal in nature. The diagnosing stage also appeared to focus primarily on organisational or structural elements of the school and neglected to examine the personal capacities of teachers working within Year 9. Whilst this research was able to collect information from Year 9 teachers on why they believed Year 9 was worthy of reform (rationale), St. John's College's reform strategy did not consult teachers during the diagnosing phase. This meant teachers' perspectives, and their valuable insights into the state of Year 9 education, were lost. Making use of the teachers' perspective in the diagnosing phase would likely have resulted in the formation of a more informed and targeted vision for Year 9 reform. St. John's College's diagnosing phase could also have been enhanced with various research-based tools that are designed to help schools diagnose their needs and determine their vision for improvement (for example: Crowther, Andrews, & Conway, 2013; Gore, Griffiths, & Ladwig, 2001, 2004).

As per the diagnosing phase, the visioning phase of St. John's College's Year 9 reform similarly lacked sufficient formality, strategy and teacher involvement. As a result of this, the school's vision for Year 9 reform remained vague and open to different interpretations and emphases. Likewise, the school's vision for the three-integrated sub-schools model and the interactions between each of the three sub-schools remained unclear. The process for creating the vision for Year 9 reform and vision for the three-integrated sub-schools needed to be formalised. Establishing a vision statement, as recommended by several middle years' reform advocates (Jackson & Davies, 2000; Mannings & Bucher, 2012; MYSA, 2008), would have given the school, particularly the Year 9 Team, a common language and understanding of their objectives. Producing action statements, which give direction as to how to carry out vision (Sergiovanni, 2005), would also have enhanced the school's visioning phase for their Year 9 reform and progression towards the three-integrated sub-schools structure. Importantly, St. John's College also needed to explore and formalise their vision for pedagogy both within the Year 9 Campus and across the whole school. Again, tools such as Crowther et al.'s (2013) *Schoolwide Pedagogy* and Gore et al.'s

(2001, 2004) *Productive Pedagogies* could have assisted the school's visioning process.

The planning, implementing and evaluating phases of St. John's College's Year 9 reform did appear to take on a clearer, more structured approach.

Organisational strategies such as: forming the Year 9 teaching and leadership teams; establishing the one-year planning timeframe; structured time for team meetings and planning; and the backward design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) approach to unit planning all strengthened the overall reform strategy and assisted in building organisational and interpersonal capacity at St. John's College. More teacher involvement was also noted during the latter three phases of reform. It was at this point that the teachers' perspectives were utilised to shape and influence aspects of the reform, particularly curriculum planning. The teachers' perspectives and experiences were also predictably drawn on throughout the implementation of the reform and, in particular, during the opening of the new campus.

Whilst the timeline of this study did not allow for an examination of the Year 9 Campus evaluation surveys the school planned to conduct, it did allow time to examine some of the informal evaluations teachers engaged in. These informal evaluations again showed the valuable insights that can be gained from teachers' perspectives during reform. The practical knowledge of teachers and their pivotal role as the key agents of change (Fullan, 2007; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2000) create a strong argument for teacher involvement in the evaluation of any school reform.

In conclusion, this study gave empirical insights into a typical, grassroots Year 9 reform project. The study presents the argument that such reform, which has typified the middle years' movement in Australia, needs to adopt a more strategic approach and involve teachers from the onset. The teachers' perspectives in reform are able to provide insightful and practicable information across all phases. This information is valuable to schools in planning and enacting a more holistic and successful reform strategy.

7.2.2 The need to engage with research.

The lack of engagement with contemporary literature was a notable shortcoming within St. John's College's approach to Year 9 reform. This lack of engagement with research meant that the school's understandings of the needs within Year 9 education and their vision for Year 9 reform were inadequately informed. Engagement with research and literature on school improvement and capacity building could also have enhanced St. John's College's overall approach to reform by informing a more strategic process for reform (see previous section). The remainder of this section provides examples of how St. John's College's reform could have been enhanced by contemporary research. It also discusses how this study contributes to recent discussion on the need for a research-informed approach to middle years' reform.

There were several cases in St. John's College's vision for reform, which lacked detail and specificity. These instances could have been avoided with greater consultation of relevant literature. For example, the teachers in this study admirably placed the subject of pedagogy, particularly teaching approaches, on the visionary agenda despite this often being an uncomfortable topic for educators to discuss (Prosser, Lucas, & Reid, 2010). Their vision to improve teaching approaches however, only involved vague statements calling for more flexibility, collaboration and innovation. Apart from these vague statements, the teachers appeared unsure of the pedagogical direction of the new campus and had no common strategy to develop their thinking further. As mentioned previously, research-based tools such as the *Productive Pedagogies* framework (Gore et al., 2001, 2004) or *Schoolwide Pedagogy* (Crowther et al., 2013) could have been used to develop a pedagogical vision for the Year 9 Campus.

A similar example of the lack of engagement in research is seen in the Year 9 Team's vision for parental involvement in education. Whilst involving caregivers in the education of their children is an admirable and well-supported element of vision (ACER, 2012; AMLE, 2010; Cole, 2006; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Dinham & Rowe, 2008b; MCEETYA, 2008; MYSA, 2008; Pendergast et al.,

2007), the Year 9 Team did not explore the concept of parental involvement fully. Emerson, Fear, Fox, and Sander's (2012) paper explains the important distinction between involving parents in *schooling* including social and community events, as opposed to student *learning*. They explain that involving parents in student *learning* has the greater impact on student development and achievement (Emerson et al., 2012). Whilst St. John's College's vision for parental involvement did include aspects of involvement in schooling, they did not explore the more poignant issue of involvement in learning. This is another example of where literature, such as Emerson et al. (2012), could have helped the Year 9 Team determine a more holistic and meaningful vision for their reform.

St. John's College also neglected to consult research in designing and implementing reform processes. Whilst there were some obvious strategies employed to build capacity at the interpersonal and organisational level, capacity building could have been enhanced with a more strategic approach that was guided by research. Publications such as: Andrews et al. (2011); Cosner (2009); Crowther (2011); Dimmock (2012); Harris (2011b); Hargreaves and Fullan (2012); and Mitchell and Sackney (2000, 2011) have theorised and discussed capacity building within schools and offer advice to schools engaging in reform. Whilst empirical research on capacity building is still emerging (Crowther, 2011), theoretical and conceptual discussions such as the publications listed are useful in helping schools gain a better understanding of capacity and plan for more holistic improvements.

St. John's College may not be alone in neglecting to consult literature when planning for Year 9 reform. There have been concerns regarding the lack of explicit direction for middle years' programmes (Bahr & Crosswell, 2011) and middle years' curriculum (Dowden, 2007, 2014) in Australia. This study has presented an example of a typical, grassroots middle years' reform project and discussed the ramifications of reform that did not sufficiently engage in research. It presents a strong argument for schools to engage more fully in literature on: Year 9 education (for Year 9 reform); the developmental stage of

adolescence; the middle years' of schooling; and capacity building for sustainable change. It also strengthens the argument for more school-friendly direction from research and governments on best practice in Year 9, and more widely, middle years' education.

In conclusion, this study was able to show some of the ramifications for grassroots reform when it neglects contemporary research. It shows that not consulting research can lead to ill-informed, ambiguous vision that is open to different interpretations. Neglecting research can also result in an inadequate, non-holistic reform strategy, which fails to develop capacity at all three levels (personal, interpersonal and organisational). This study argues that schools engaging in Year 9 or middle years' reform need to consult literature to guide and inform both rationale and vision for reform, as well as reform processes. It also shows a need for more school-friendly guidance from governments and research communities to help schools that are engaging in grassroots, independent reform of the middle years.

7.3 The Importance of Building Capacity on all Three Levels

The second major conclusion and key argument of this study is the need for a strategic, three-fold approach to capacity building. Capacity building for sustainable change needs to be planned for and strategically developed on the following three levels: personal, interpersonal and organisational. The case school in this study invested time, energy and resources into building both organisational and interpersonal capacity. This was an admirable effort, which brought about various successes within the reform. Unfortunately, building the personal capacity of teachers was neglected, which impacted negatively on the reform. This section discusses what was learnt from the example of St. John's College in relation to capacity building for sustainable change. It also highlights the importance of building all three areas of capacity with reference to the example provided by this case study.

7.3.1 Building organisational capacity – Learning from the case school.

Building organisational capacity at St. John's College was relatively successful. The school was able to establish a new leadership structure (the Year 9 Leadership Group) to head the reform and a group of teachers (the Year 9 Team) to enact it. Organisational structures such as the overall timeline of the reform, planning sessions for teachers and the physical establishment of the Year 9 Campus were all successful strategies for building capacity in this area. The leadership style of the Year 9 Leadership Group was also successful, showing elements of distributed leadership, which is considered important in building capacity for sustainable improvement (Crowther, 2011; Dimmock, 2012; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000; Timperley, 2005). Trust also appeared high with regard to the Year 9 leaders, with the characteristics of *reliability* and *competence* from Hoy and Tchannen-Moran's (1999) Five Facets of Trust (see Table 2.5) apparent in the data. The only areas lacking in terms of organisational capacity at the college were the abilities to facilitate: (1) personal capacity and growth for teachers (see Section 7.3.3), and (2) a greater cognitive culture where more high-risk exchanges designed to improve the work of teachers could take place (see Section 7.3.2).

7.3.2 Building interpersonal capacity – Learning from the case school.

St. John's College's Year 9 Team, and the interpersonal capacity that emerged within this team, remained a successful element of their Year 9 reform. Findings for Research Sub-Question 4 showed strong evidence of the school building what Mitchell and Sackney (2011) term *affective culture* where members' contributions were invited, valued and affirmed. There was also strong evidence of trust building, which is an element of affective culture that has been considered essential for sustainable reform by several researchers (Bryk, 2010; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Cosner, 2009; Crowther et al., 2009; Handford & Leithwood, 2012; Kochanek, 2005; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011).

Cognitive culture is associated with a school's ability to engage teachers in meaningful collective and collaborative discussion on their work (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). There was some evidence of a workable cognitive culture beginning to emerge within St. John's College's Year 9 Team, with teachers beginning to engage in some high-risk exchanges (Kochanek, 2005) including collaborative planning and sharing of practice. More work to establish a stronger cognitive culture was needed however, in order to facilitate more meaningful shared learning and to build the personal capacity of teachers. Better processes were also needed to facilitate high-risk exchanges and to assist teachers in dealing with tensions and disagreements, particularly when dealing with cross-campus relationships.

7.3.3 Building personal capacity – Learning from the case school.

The notion of building personal capacity was neglected within St. John's College's Year 9 reform strategy. Chapter 2 explained that personal capacity is linked to teachers' identities and the values, beliefs, assumptions and practices they comprise (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). Building personal capacity involves teachers critically reflecting on, exploring and confronting aspects of their own teacher identities (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). Whilst there was evidence of teachers engaging in informal reflection in this case study, such processes were never formalised and did not seem to have direct links to the reform.

Findings for Research Sub-Question 3, which inquired about the perceived professional learning needs of teachers, showed large inconsistencies across the Year 9 Team. These findings also revealed a lack of regard for professional learning on teaching and learning in the middle years, despite middle years' advocates calling for teachers who are specialists in adolescence (AMLE, 2010; Main et al., 2015; MYSA, 2008; Rumble & Aspland, 2009; Shanks & Dowden, 2013). This study did find that teachers wanted to engage in personal capacity building in order to develop their teaching approaches, however they had no real vision or strategy to be able to do this. These inconsistencies in the data probably occurred because the teachers did not have access to a vision statement outlining the key purpose of the campus and reform, and also

because of the school's lack of strategy in regard to building the personal capacity of teachers. At the heart of developing teachers' personal capacity is professional learning and development. It is here again that turning to research and tools such as Main et al.'s (2015) instrument for *Continuing Professional Development* could have assisted the case school in building personal capacity.

The importance of building personal capacity and teacher efficacy is considered pivotal in any form of school reform with the aim of improving student learning outcomes (Crowther et al., 2002; Hall & Simeral, 2008; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Kaniuka, 2012; Main et al., 2015; Marzano, 2003; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). This case study was able to show that in neglecting personal capacity, direction for teacher professional learning becomes unclear and will unlikely contribute to the overall aims of reform. If the teacher is considered the key agent in effecting change and bringing about positive learning outcomes for students (Fullan, 2007; Hall & Simeral, 2008; Hargreaves, 1991; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Kaniuka, 2012; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Main et al., 2015; Marzano, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2000), then developing their personal capacity is a vital process in any reform effort.

7.3.4 Three-fold approach to capacity building.

A key argument of this study is that all facets of capacity (personal, interpersonal and organisational) be strategically developed across all phases of reform in order for reform to be holistic and successful. It was not an intention of this study to add to the plethora of research, which name and describe the various phases of school reform (for example: Fullan, 2007; Hopkins et al., 1994; Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast et al., 2015; Stoll & Fink, 1994; Scagliarini, 2008). Further, it is possible that the three-fold model for building capacity that is presented in this section can be adapted and framed by different reform models such as those mentioned in the previous reference. The important conclusion that this study makes is that capacity building needs to be strategically developed on all three levels (personal, interpersonal and organisation) and that each facet of capacity move through the various processes of reform in order to achieve such development. The remainder of

this section explores how a three-fold approach to capacity building could have been employed to enhance St. John's College's Year 9 reform efforts.

St. John's College's reform process was cyclic in nature and involved five key phases including: Diagnosing, Visioning, Planning, Implementing and Evaluating. The five phases were identified during data analysis and are an adaptation of Stoll and Fink's (1994) *Model for School Growth Plans*. A diagram of St. John's College's five phases of reform and their cyclic nature is presented in Figure 7.1.

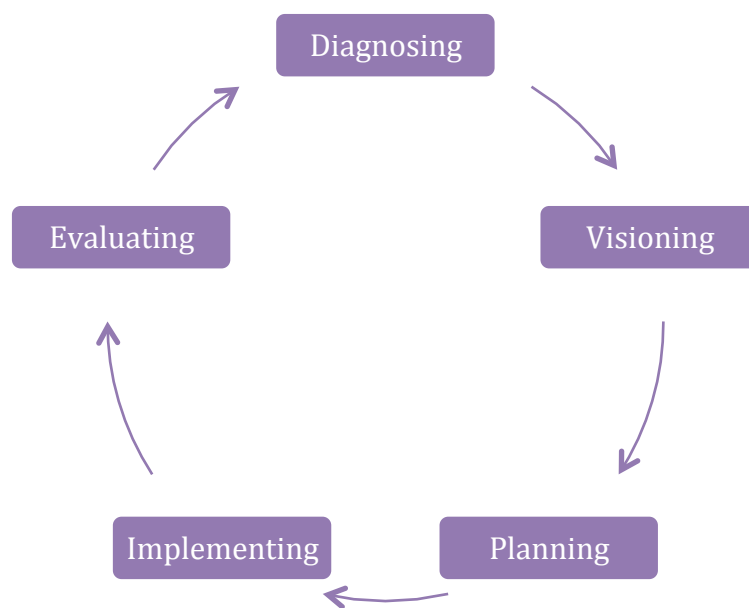


Figure 7.1. Five-phase cycle of St. John's College's Year 9 reform.

This study argues that each facet of capacity needs to be strategically developed by engaging in the five-phases of reform. In other words, personal, interpersonal and organisational capacity all need to undergo a process of:

- 1) *Diagnosing* – where needs and opportunities are assessed using real data.
- 2) *Visioning* – where vision for improvement is established in consultation with research.
- 3) *Planning* – where a plan for improvement is established and action goals are set.

- 4) *Implementing* – where plans and programmes aimed at improvement are put into action. Implementation and progress is monitored.
- 5) *Evaluating* – where the reform is evaluated by collecting and analysing real data.

Figure 7.2 illustrates the three-fold model for capacity building that resulted from the findings of this study.

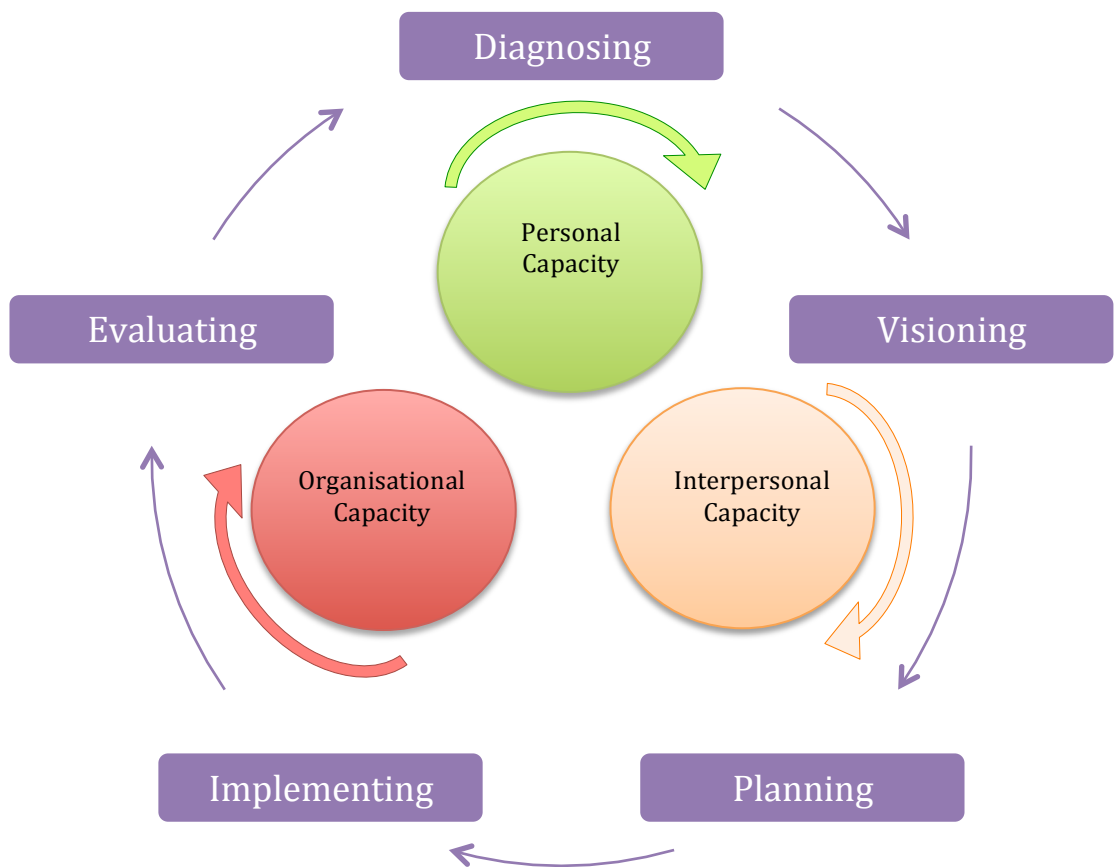


Figure 7.2. Three-fold approach to capacity building.

This model uses the five-phases of reform adapted from Stoll and Fink (1994) and identified in St. John’s College’s Year 9 reform. The five-phase cycle of reform is indicated in the purple outer wheel. The three coloured circles in the centre of the diagram represent the three facets of capacity – personal, interpersonal and organisational. Working together, each facet of capacity moves through the five-phase reform process of diagnosing, visioning, planning,

implementing and evaluating. This happens concurrently so that reform is holistic and builds all aspects of capacity. As school reform is organic and highly variable, it is unlikely that each facet of capacity will progress to the next phase of reform simultaneously. Particularly with regards to the personal capacity of teachers, different teachers will be at different levels of readiness to implement reform and develop professionally. The important factor in this model is that all levels of capacity have the chance to develop through the five-phases of reform. It is less important and unrealistic that they arrive at the different stages at the same time.

This study, with its deliberate focus on the teachers' perspective has uncovered the importance of considering and developing capacity at all three levels across all phases of reform. It is particularly important that the personal capacity of teachers is not neglected in reform so that school improvements have a direct and positive impact on teachers themselves.

7.4 Emerging Theory on the Roles of Teachers during Middle Years' Reform

The teachers' perspectives in this study were able to provide a significant first step in the generation of theory on the roles teachers play during middle years' reform. This study found that teachers adopted eight roles during their experiences of Year 9 reform, including that of: *Risk-Taker*, *Vision-Maker*, *Advocate*, *Planner*, *Evaluator*, *Pragmatist*, *Team-Member* and *Learner*. The first three roles (Risk-taker, Vision-Maker and Advocate) appeared to result from the teachers' direct participation in the reform. The remaining roles are common to the work of middle years' teachers but were influenced to different degrees by the teachers' participation in the reform.

When analysing each of the eight roles, the notion of teacher leadership is ever-present. By contributing to the reform and taking on the eight roles mentioned, the teachers in this study were unconsciously engaging in elements of teacher leadership. This was an important and positive finding within this study because teacher leadership is increasingly being acknowledged as a vital tool in

building capacity and sustaining meaningful and successful change in schools (Crowther et al., 2009; Derrington & Angelle, 2013; Harris, 2012; Mullens & Jones, 2008; Murphy, 2005; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). Using Crowther et al.'s (2009) *Teachers as Leaders Framework*, Sub-section 7.4.1 discusses examples of how teachers engaged in leadership when adopting the eight teacher roles during reform. 7.4.2 then discusses how the eight roles could have been enhanced to elicit further teacher leadership and to build greater capacity across all three areas: personal, interpersonal and organisational.

7.4.1 Elements of teacher leadership.

The eight roles teachers played during reform as identified in this study showed various examples of teacher leadership. There are several links that can be made between the eight roles of teachers during reform in this study and Crowther et al.'s (2009) *Teachers as Leaders Framework*. Table 7.2 shows where these links can be made. It is important to acknowledge that not all teachers in this study showed aspects of teacher leadership and that teacher leadership varied greatly amongst participants. What this section aims to do is highlight the potential the eight roles hold in facilitating and developing teacher leadership alongside Crowther et al.'s (2009) *Teachers as Leaders Framework*.

The teachers as *Team-Member* role is seen multiple times in Table 7.2. When working in the Year 9 Team, the teachers in this study showed leadership by developing a PLC culture where they could encourage “collective responsibility” for aspects of the reform and work together to bring their vision into action (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 3). As *Pragmatists*, the teachers in this study held insightful, practical knowledge that was used in planning and implementing the reform. The leadership the teachers showed as *Pragmatists* was in “working with the principal, administrators, and other teachers to manage projects” and implementing the reform (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 3).

Table 7.2

Examples of Teacher Leadership in the Eight Roles

Element of teacher leadership*	Elaborations*	Links to the roles adopted by St. John's College's teachers during Year 9 reform
<i>Conveying convictions about a better world</i>	• Articulating a positive future for all students.	Vision-maker
	• Contributing to an image of teaching as a profession that makes a difference.	Risk-taker Vision-maker
<i>Facilitating communities of learning</i>	• Encouraging a shared, school-wide approach to core pedagogical processes.	Team-member Vision-maker Planner
	• Synthesizing new ideas out of colleagues' professional discourse and reflective activities.	Team-member Vision-maker Planner
<i>Striving for pedagogical excellence</i>	• Showing genuine interest in students' needs and wellbeing.	Advocate
	• Continuously developing and refining personal teaching gifts and talents.	Learner
	• Seeking deep understanding of significant pedagogical practices.	Learner Vision-Maker
<i>Confronting barriers in the school's culture and structures</i>	• Standing up for children, especially disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and groups.	Advocate Vision-Maker
	• Working with administrators to find solutions to issues of equity, fairness and justice.	Planner
<i>Translating ideas into sustainable systems</i>	• Working with the principal, administrators, and other teachers to manage projects that heighten alignment between the school's vision, values, pedagogical practices, and professional learning activities.	Pragmatist Team-Member
	• Building alliances and nurturing external networks of support.	Team-Member Advocate
<i>Nurturing a culture of success</i>	• Acting on opportunities to emphasise accomplishments and high expectations.	Evaluator
	• Encouraging collective responsibility in addressing school-wide challenges.	Team-Member

*Adapted from *Developing Teacher Leaders, 2nd Edition* (p.3), by F. Crowther, M. Ferguson, & L. Hann, 2009, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

As *Vision-Makers* the teachers in this study “convey[ed] convictions about a better world” for their students by “articulating a positive future” for Year 9 education and bringing together new ideas for the Year 9 campus (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 3). Whilst evaluation was informal at the time of this research, there was evidence of teachers engaging in leadership through their *Evaluator* role by recognising and acknowledging their accomplishments and the impact the campus was having on students. Finally, the teachers’ “genuine interest in students’ needs and wellbeing” and their view of “teaching as a profession that makes a difference” meant that they could become *Risk-Takers* and reform *Advocates*, which again presents evidence of teacher leadership (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 3).

Interestingly, the teachers in this study did not recognise teacher leadership within themselves. A possible reason for this is that the teachers’ conceptual understandings of leadership were underdeveloped and remained tied to the formal hierarchal system that previously shaped the school. With tools such as Crowther et al.’s (2009) *Teachers as Leaders Framework*, the teachers may have recognised more leadership within themselves. Also, if teachers had viewed leadership as a series of tasks or activities (Sergiovanni, 2005; Spillane et al., 2004) and leaders as people who “go the extra mile” and “break through barriers” to improve student outcomes (Derrington & Angelle, 2013, p. 6), their understandings of teacher leadership and their ability to recognise and develop their own teacher leadership could have been enhanced. This further emphasises the argument this study makes concerning the need to engage with research when enacting reform (see Section 7.2.2).

7.4.2 Further enhancement of the eight roles.

Learning from St. John’s College’s example, this study was able to discuss ways in which reform and capacity building for sustainable change could be improved (see Sections 7.2 and 7.3). This section discusses how each of the eight roles of teachers’ work in reform could have been further enhanced by: more engagement with research; adopting a three-fold approach to capacity building;

and by facilitating more teacher agency and leadership. Table 7.3 shows the eight roles adopted by teachers in reform in this study and describes the teachers' experiences in relation to each role. The third column then gives suggestions to school leaders on how each role could be enhanced. The suggestions for enhancement are designed to facilitate: a smoother change process; more teacher agency; and more opportunities for teacher leadership, in order to build capacity.

Table 7.3
Suggestions for Further Enhancement of the Eight Roles

Role title	Experiences of St. John's College's Year 9 teachers	Suggestions for further enhancement
<i>Risk-taker</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgoing the known and familiar for something unknown and unfamiliar. • Working with different people in a new team. • Taking on extra work and planning and having this opened to criticism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge and celebrate risk-taking as an element of teacher leadership.
<i>Vision-Maker</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informally considering the vision for the new campus and reform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally involve teachers in the diagnosing and visioning processes. • Document the reform's vision by creating a vision statement and action plan. • Create a shared understanding of teacher leadership.
<i>Advocate</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopting a pro-change attitude. • Defending the reform from negativity and jealousy within the school. • Sharing plans and information about the reform in the wider school community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use teachers to gain access to student voices in reform. • Create more formal opportunities for teachers to share their work with the wider school community.
<i>Planner</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning curriculum and programmes for the new campus. • Collaborative planning. • Attending planning meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have all planning guided by a shared vision statement for reform. • Adopt a transparent process for planning that enables teacher agency and provides clear expectations and boundaries.
<i>Pragmatist</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking on extra responsibilities particularly in the planning year prior to the opening of the new campus. • Implementing the reform by putting plans into action. • Setting up the physical space. • Sharing pragmatic knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge teacher leadership in the planning and implementing of reform. • Continually provide organisational supports to assist the pragmatic work of teachers in reform. • Value and facilitate teacher agency.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> during planning. Increased workloads. 	
<i>Evaluator</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal evaluation of physical environment, programmes, curriculum and student outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalise the evaluation process. Ensure that all voices are heard and accurate data is collected when evaluating the reform. Assess the effectiveness of the reform against the vision statement. Respect teacher agency.
<i>Team-Member</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in a team environment. Collaborative planning. New physical space meaning more open teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value and facilitating teacher agency. Build cognitive culture to create a stronger PLC where important issues surrounding pedagogy can be discussed and developed.
<i>Learner</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal consideration of individual learning goals. No consideration of how professional learning might be linked with Year 9 reform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for and facilitate the development of personal capacity in conjunction with other areas of capacity during reform. Ensure that individual teacher learning goals are in alignment with vision for reform. Put action research and plans in place to help teachers achieve learning goals and to build personal capacity. Make teacher learning a central focus when planning for reform. Put organisational supports in place to support teacher agency and assist teachers in achieving personal learning goals. Put organisational supports in place to facilitate a PLC culture and more site-based professional development where meaningful discussion and learning on pedagogy can occur.

In order to develop teacher leadership, it is important that teachers have a clear and collective understanding of what teacher leadership actually is. Developing a common understanding of teacher leadership and incorporating this into vision for reform is therefore an important step for schools. This study recommends that schools acknowledge teacher leadership when it is seen in action. For example, by taking on the role of risk-takers and embarking on a new vision for a better Year 9 education, the Year 9 Team teachers in this study showed teacher leadership. It is at this very early stage of reform that St. John's College had the opportunity to build the profile of teacher leadership in their school and to acknowledge and celebrate the leadership of the teachers who formed the Year 9 Team.

Developing personal capacity in the various elements of teachers' work is also suggested in Table 7.3. The *Teacher as Learner* role is vital in the development of personal capacity. It is important that teacher learning is valued and that developing personal capacity is seen as an essential element in reform (see Section 7.3). This study suggests that teachers' individual professional learning goals need to be aligned to a school's collective vision for reform. This process was neglected at St. John's College, which meant that the Year 9 Team teachers' perceived professional learning needs were widely varied and did not always align with the aims of the reform. A further suggestion is for action plans to be formed in order to assist teachers in reaching their personal goals. Establishing a PLC culture that respects and encourages teacher agency is important. A PLC culture can also facilitate site-based professional development, including meaningful discussions and learning on matters regarding pedagogy, in order to build the *Teacher as Learner* role and facilitate growth in personal capacity. Site-based professional development has been shown to increase teacher efficacy and have positive impacts on classroom learning (Yost, Vogel, & Liang, 2009).

Engaging teachers in teacher research or action research is another strategy that could enhance the *Teacher-as-Learner* role. Gould (2008) argues that facilitating teacher action research is a highly effective professional development strategy as it places the teacher at the very centre of the professional development process. By engaging in action research, teachers can critically evaluate their own practice; become more aware of their personal theory; work with others to establish shared values and vision; and make records of their work (Gould, 2008). Arranging organisational structures and supports to facilitate teacher research can therefore lead to increased personal capacity.

This study has shown the power of teachers' voices in understanding and facilitating successful reform. There are various suggestions in Table 7.3 and in Section 7.2, which call for more teacher agency and involvement in reform. At St. John's College, the *Teacher as Vision-Maker* and *Evaluator* roles could be

enhanced with greater respect for teacher agency and more formal involvement of teachers in reform processes.

As stated in Chapter 5, the eight roles identified in the teachers' experience of Year 9 reform from this study are not designed to be definitive or complete. Rather, they act as a scaffold for emerging theory on the work of teachers in reform. The notion of teacher leadership is encompassing of all eight roles identified and discussed in this study. With the right support, there are opportunities within each of the eight roles to develop teacher leadership. These opportunities have the potential to grow capacity, particularly personal capacity, within schools.

7.5 A Whole School Approach to Determine Rationale and Vision for Year 9 Reform

The teachers' and leaders' voices within this study explained that a key reason for Year 9 reform was to open opportunities for whole school restructuring. Previous literature on Year 9 reform has neglected to examine the implications separate campus reform has on whole school contexts. This study therefore presents a new argument that Year 9 reform needs to be considered from within a whole school context. In other words, Year 9 reform cannot just be about improving Year 9, it is about providing a new secondary school structure and improving whole schools.

Separate campus Year 9 reform is not a new concept and St. John's College is not alone in pursuing separate campus alternatives for students in Year 9. In fact, several examples of separate campus Year 9 programmes can be seen across the state of Victoria (for example: Alpine School Campus, 2016; Christian Brothers' College, 2016; Geelong Grammar School, 2016; Mackillop College Werribee, 2016; St. Kevin's College's, 2016; Strathcona, 2016; Star of the Sea College Melbourne, 2016; Yarra Valley Grammar, 2016). There have been advocates in academic literature as well for separate campus Year 9 reform (Cole, 2006). What is now needed is further research on how separate campus Year 9 reform

impacts on the whole school. The case school, St. John's College, in this study gives just one example of how separate campus Year 9 reform can provide a new whole school organisational structure. The three-integrated sub-schools model adopted by St. John's College re-organises the traditional Years 7 to 12 college into smaller sub-groups of students and teachers in an attempt to enhance learning and pastoral care across all grades. Assessing whether or not St. John's College's three-integrated sub-schools model is an effective organisational structure for secondary schools was not an objective of this research. It is a recommendation for future research however, that the effectiveness and implications of separate campus Year 9 programmes be examined from both Year 9 and whole school perspectives.

In conclusion, this study puts forward a new argument that calls for Year 9 reform to be considered as part of a whole school improvement strategy. It also makes the recommendation that further research be channeled into assessing different organisational structures for secondary school reform (such as the three-integrated sub-schools model) and the effectiveness and implications of such structures.

7.6 Tasmanian Teachers' Perspectives on Rationale and Vision for Year 9 Reform

A significant feature of this study is that it provides the first Tasmanian perspective on Year 9 education and the rationale and vision for Year 9 reform. This is a previously unexplored perspective, which adds to the limited field of research on Year 9 education. The teachers in this study described their work as being dynamic with both professional challenges and rewards. They gave several reasons for Year 9 reform, which were both predictable and complementary of previous research on Year 9 learners (see Section 4.5). The fact that their rationale was so predictable shows that Year 9 teachers and students in Tasmania are experiencing similar issues and challenges to those in other states where Year 9 research has been conducted previously. The

remainder of this section further explores how the Tasmanian teacher perspective in this study complements extant research pertaining to the rationale and vision for Year 9 reform.

One of the core reasons for Year 9 reform that the participants in this study gave was to tackle the issue of student disengagement from learning. The empirical data from this study shows that Tasmanian Year 9 students are following trends in other states where worrying levels of student disengagement and dissatisfaction with learning have been found (Cole et al., 2006a; DEECDV, 2009; Yates & Holt, 2009). The reasons the teachers in this study gave for high levels of student disengagement (including students not seeing the relevance of their learning; not being able to form positive relationships with teachers; and not experiencing success in their learning) were predictable and have been discussed previously in various publications on middle years' adolescents (AMLE, 2010; Barratt, 1998; Chadbourne, 2001; Cox & Kennedy, 2010; Dowson et al., 2005; Jackson & Davies, 2000; Jensen, 2005; O'Sullivan, 2005; Pendergast et al., 2005) and Year 9 learners (Cole, 2006; DEECDV, 2009).

The perceived insignificance of Year 9 that the teachers in this study spoke of is also complementary of previous research on Year 9 learners with Year 9 being described as a grade lost within the middle of secondary schooling (Cole, 2006; DEECDV, 2009). The final significant rationale point in this study was the argument that Year 9 students are at a critical stage of development involving exploration of identity and increased needs for independence and peer socialisation. Again these findings are unsurprising and have been well documented in literature, which outlines the characteristics of not only Year 9 learners, but adolescents in general (for example: Bahr, 2007; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Braggett, 1997; Caskey & Anfara, 2014; Chadbourne, 2001; Groundwater-Smith et al., 2009; Pendergast et al., 2005).

The teachers' vision for Year 9 reform in this study was also predictable and complementary of previous research pertaining to vision for both Year 9 and middle years' reform. Table 7.4 shows how some elements of the teachers' vision in this study gain support from previous publications on middle years'

and Year 9 education. Whilst not explicitly stated by the participants themselves, analysis of the Year 9 Team’s vision for reform uncovered aspects of student-centeredness, lifelong learner attributes and developmentally appropriate curriculum. These themes have also been included in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4
Vision Themes which Complement Extant Research

Elements of Vision	Themes echoed in the following publications
Re-engaging learners	Chadbourne, 2001; Cumming, 1998; Dowson, 2005; MCEETYA, 2008; Pendergast et al., 2005
Strong teacher-student relationships	Chadbourne, 2001; Chhuon & Wallace, 2014; Cole, 2006; Cox & Kennedy, 2010; Cummings, 1998; DETEV, 2002; Gibbs & Poskitt, 2010; Hill & Russell, 1999; Keddie & Churchill, 2010; Main & Bryer, 2004; Martin & Dowson, 2009; MYSA, 2008
Community environment with collaborative learning and teaching	Chadbourne, 2004; Cole, 2006; Cole et al., 2006a; DECDV, 2009; Gibbs & Poskitt, 2010; Luke et al., 2003; Main & Bryer, 2004; Murdoch & Wilson, 2002
Relevant curriculum	Bishop & Pflaum, 2005; Cole, 2006; Cox & Kennedy, 2010; Dowson, 2005
Student-centeredness	Barratt, 1998; Chadbourne, 2001; Cumming, 1998; DETEV, 2002; Pendergast et al., 2005; Rubin, 2012
Developmentally appropriate curriculum and programmes	AMLE, 2010; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Barratt, 1998; Caskey & Anfara, 2014; Dinham & Rowe, 2008b; Jackson & Davies, 2000; Kellough & Kellough, 2008; Main & Bryer, 2004; Manning & Bucher, 2012; NMSA, 1995, 2001, 2003; Pendergast et al., 2007; Shanks & Dowden, 2013
Lifelong learner attributes including thinking and learning skills	Lawson, Askill-Williams, & Murray-Harvey, 2006; Pendergast et al., 2005
Parental involvement in education	ACER, 2012; AMLE, 2010; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Cole, 2006; Dinham & Rowe, 2008b; MCEETYA, 2008; MYSA, 2008; Pendergast et al., 2007

Overall, the Tasmanian teachers’ perspectives in this study have complemented extant research calling for Year 9, or more broadly, middle years’ reform. In particular, this study has shown that Tasmanian Year 9 teachers and students

are facing similar issues and hold similar vision for improving the Year 9 learning experience. This new perspective, complete with rich empirical evidence, gives further strength to rationale and advocacy for Year 9 reform in Australia.

7.7 Recommendations for Educational Practice

Through the teachers' perspectives of Year 9 reform, this study has painted a vivid picture of the practical realities of reform, and what it means to develop personal, interpersonal and organisational capacity. This section provides a summary of the recommendations for practice made in this study.

Recommendations for future research are made in Section 7.8. Table 7.5 outlines the three key recommendations for practice that resulted from this study with elaborations to follow.

Table 7.5

Recommendations for Practice

-
1. Schools need a strategic, research-guided approach to manage and shape all phases of middle years' reform.
 2. School reform should focus on building all three facets of capacity.
 3. Schools need to develop collective understandings of both teacher leadership and distributed leadership. Developing teacher leadership becomes a key tool in building capacity.
-

Recommendation 1: Schools need a strategic, research-guided approach to manage and shape all phases of middle years' reform.

One of the key arguments and key learnings from this study is the importance of schools adopting a strategic and research-guided approach to managing middle years' reform. A strategic approach would include formally engaging teachers and other stakeholders in a diagnostic process, which examines schools' needs, strengths and opportunities. After this process is complete, schools can then

move to the next phase – visioning with a more complete and informed picture of their circumstances. As other researchers have argued (Jackson & Davies, 2000; Mannings & Bucher, 2012; MYSA, 2008), vision for middle years’ reform needs to be consolidated into a published vision statement. Establishing a published vision statement gives teachers a common language to discuss reform and allows for common understandings to be formed. This case study was able to show that without a published vision statement, vision for reform can be ambiguous and subject to various interpretations and emphases. This study also recommends that visioning for middle years’ reform involve consultation of contemporary literature on middle years’ practices so that schools can draw on the growing field of knowledge that the middle school movement has provided thus far.

The planning, implementing and evaluating phases of reform need a strategic and research-guided approach. Various tools and models currently exist which aim to assist schools in assessing their needs and planning action strategies for building capacity and enhancing practice (see for example: Crowther, 2011; Crowther et al., 2013; Gore et al., 2004; Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast et al., 2015). Engaging with such research and using the tools that have resulted from such work would be useful in helping schools to adopt a more strategic and research-guided approach to reform.

Recommendation 2: School reform should focus on building all three facets of capacity.

This study has argued the importance of employing a three-fold approach to capacity building for sustainable change (see Section 7.6). This involves co-developing capacity at organisational, interpersonal and personal levels. Without a three-fold approach, reform is at risk of being superficial in nature and having a limited impact on classrooms. Of particular importance is the development of the personal capacity of teachers. Teachers are considered the central figures in enacting meaningful change within schools (Fullan, 2007; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Katzenmeyer & Moller,

2001; Sergiovanni, 2000). It is therefore vital that schools plan for and facilitate personal capacity building as a fundamental element of reform.

Recommendation 3: Schools need to develop collective understandings of both teacher leadership and distributed leadership. Developing teacher leadership becomes a key tool in building capacity.

This study showed that without a contemporary and collective understanding of teacher leadership, teachers were unable to recognise their own leadership capacity. Teacher leadership is increasingly being recognised as a key tool in developing capacity within schools (Crowther et al., 2009; Derrington & Angelle, 2013; Harris, 2012; Mullens & Jones, 2008; Murphy, 2005; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). This study therefore recommends that schools invest time exploring the concept of teacher leadership so that a collective understanding of what teacher leadership would look like in individual school contexts can be achieved. It is also recommended that vision and strategies for reform include plans for empowering teacher agency and building teacher leadership.

7.8 Recommendations for Future Research

This study makes four key recommendations for future research. The four key recommendations are presented in Table 7.6 and are then discussed accordingly.

Table 7.6

Recommendations for Future Research

-
1. Further studies into Year 9 education and Year 9 learners.
 2. Research, which examines the effects of the three integrated schools model.
 3. Further theory generating studies on the roles of middle years' teachers in reform.
 4. Empirical studies which examine capacity building at personal, interpersonal and organisational levels.
-

Recommendation 1: Further studies into Year 9 education and Year 9 learners.

This research provided the first Tasmanian perspective on the rationale and vision for Year 9 reform. Prior to this, the bulk of research into Year 9 education stemmed from the state of Victoria, which has the highest concentration of Year 9 separate campus models within schools. To gain an even greater insight into the state of Year 9 education, research and data is needed from all states. Whilst this study was able to explore rationale and vision for Year 9 reform from the teacher's perspective, it did not examine the students' points of view. Investigating students' perspectives would help reveal more holistic understandings of Year 9 education in Australia, Year 9 students' educational needs and the impact of separate campus Year 9 reform on students.

Recommendation 2: Research, which examines the effects of the three integrated schools model.

The findings of this research showed that separate campus Year 9 reform is not only a structure for improving the educational outcomes of Year 9, but also a means for whole school restructuring in the secondary sector. The three-integrated sub-schools model that was adopted by St. John's College, as part of their Year 9 reform, is a new secondary school structure that has not been investigated. It is therefore recommended that research is conducted that examines the ramifications of separate campus Year 9 reform on whole school communities; and the effectiveness of the three integrated schools model on student learning in all three sub-schools.

Recommendation 3: Further theory generating studies on the roles of middle years' teachers in reform.

This research took the form of an instrumental case study. Such studies are designed to describe phenomena in order to be compared to similar cases and develop more general understandings on topics being explored (Stake, 2000). To gain a greater understanding of the work and experiences of teachers in reform, it is therefore important that further empirical studies such as this one

are conducted. In particular, theory-generating studies, which further examine and test the roles uncovered and discussed in this study, would greatly contribute to the limited literature on the work of Australian middle years' teachers during reform.

Recommendation 4: Empirical studies which examine capacity building at personal, interpersonal and organisational levels.

As Crowther (2011) writes, empirical studies, which examine capacity building in action, are only just emerging. This study examined capacity building from the teachers' perspectives and was able to share findings on all three areas of capacity building: personal, interpersonal and organisational (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). Similar studies, which examine change over long time periods from different stakeholder perspectives, are recommended to further current understandings of capacity building in schools.

7.9 Limitations of the Research

Case study research has long been criticised for lacking the ability to generalise findings and generate theory (Yin, 2012). More recent thought however has acknowledged the importance of empirical case study research in building new theory (Eisenhardt, 2002; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) and hypotheses (Yin, 2012). As Cronbach cited in Yin (2012) explains, seeking generalisations in case study research is more about finding a "working hypothesis" rather than conclusions (p. 19). As a single-site, instrumental case study situated within the constructivist research paradigm, the findings of this research were not intended to be generalisable. Similarly, the unique context and case of this study can never be replicated. Instead it is intended that the findings of this study add to the limited research on Year 9 education and provide initial foundations or hypotheses for building theory on the experiences of middle years' teachers in reform. It is also intended that findings may be transferred and compared to other settings where contextually appropriate.

Finally, the sole focus on the teachers' perspectives as opposed to students' perspectives or those of other stakeholders, limits the scope of this study. As stated in the recommendations of further research (Section 7.8), subsequent studies are needed which explore the students' perspectives of Year 9 education and separate campus reform in order to provide a more holistic view of these phenomena.

7.10 Final Personal Reflection

I recently telephoned one of my student's mothers to discuss a subject change request. When the mother answered the phone and I introduced myself, she sounded a little nervous. After I explained that I was calling regarding her son's request to change one of his optional subjects, I heard a deep sigh of relief. "Oh you had me worried there!" the mother exclaimed. "Charlie has had such a good term at the Year 9 Campus, he is really loving school for the first time in years! He is a different boy! He is coming home happy and excited. My husband and I are just so pleased. I was worried that you were ringing to tell me he had gotten into trouble and that we were returning to the same problems of last year!" Charlie's mother explained (note: pseudonyms used).

I have had many similar experiences to the one above throughout my work at St. John's College's Year 9 Campus. I realise that not every student has the same transformational experiences as Charlie above, but I am confident that for the bulk of the adolescents I have worked with in this setting, the separate campus model is a vast improvement on the former educational experience of Year 9. In this final chapter, I presented key arguments on how Year 9 reform could be enhanced with more engagement in research; a more strategic approach to reform; and a three-fold approach to building capacity. I am optimistic to think of the successes that schools, and most importantly, teachers and students may experience with a more refined vision and strategy for managing change and facilitating capacity building for sustainable reform in the middle years. I look forward to future research on Year 9 and middle years' reform and seeing more and more "Charlies" emerge from middle years' education across Australia.

Rebecca, Researcher & Year 9 Teacher

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Appendix A

Information Sheet

Title of Investigation: Teachers' Roles in the Implementation of Year 9 Reform

Invitation:

You are invited to participate in a research study into the implementation of Year 9 reform. The study is being conducted by the following people from the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania:

Chief Investigators/Supervisors:	Dr. Tony Dowden Dr. Megan Short
Person Conducting the Research:	Mrs. Rebecca Seward-Linger

Permission to conduct this research project has been obtained from Mr. Lincoln Heath, Principal of St. John's College.

1. What is the purpose of this study?

This study will be undertaken as part of the requirements for the Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) degree. The purpose of this study is to investigate the grounds for and characteristics of Year 9 reform, as well as the roles and professional learning needs of teachers implementing such reform. The study will investigate factors that contribute to successful reform in Year 9 and beyond.

2. Why have I been invited to participate?

You are invited to participate in this study as a teacher or member of the Year 9 Leadership Group because your school is currently undergoing separate campus Year 9 reform. Your views and opinions are of great value to us in the conduct of this research.

3. What does this study involve?

Phase one of the research project will be conducted by the student researcher and will not directly involve participants. In **Phase Two** of the research however, participants will be asked to take part in a short interview (about 30 minutes in duration). The interviews will examine the motivation and vision behind the proposed Year 9 reform at your school and the benefits that the reform is considered to deliver to students.

In **Phase Three** of the research, participants will be asked to complete an email dialogue with the researcher or series of paper surveys. The emails/surveys will be about teachers' experiences, their roles and their professional learning needs associated with the proposed Year 9 reform. Participants will be able to choose which method they would like to use (email or paper surveys) and no discrimination will be made between the two. The researcher will use approximately 3 paper surveys or 3-6 (depending on data) emails in a dialogue with participants over a period of approximately 12 months. The length of responses will be entirely up to the participants themselves.

It is very important that you understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary. While we would be pleased to have you participate, we respect your right to decline. There will be no consequences to you if you decide not to participate, and this will not affect your position in any way. If you decide to discontinue your participation at any time, you may do

so without providing an explanation. All information will be treated in a confidential manner and your name will not be used in any publication arising from the research. During data collection, interview and focus group transcripts as well as copies of surveys/email dialogues will be kept on file on the student researcher's computer. This computer will be protected by the use of a computer password. On the completion of the researcher's thesis, CD data files will be stored by the Chief Investigator in a locked cabinet at the University of Tasmania's Newnham campus for a period of 5 years after which they will be destroyed.

4. Are there any possible benefits from participating in this study?

The findings of this study may be beneficial to participants by providing them with a better understanding of the processes involved in Year 9 reform and factors that assist successful school change. Participants may also benefit from the self-reflection, which will form part of the dialogue with the researcher. This may assist participants in clarifying their roles and needs when engaged in Year 9 reform.

5. Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?

No known risks.

6. What if I have questions about this research?

If you have any queries about this study please feel free to contact either

Rebecca Seward-Linger on 0428049641

Dr. Tony Dowden on 63243352 or

Dr. Megan Short on 63243188

We would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you. Once we have analysed the information we will be able to mail or email you a summary of the findings should you wish us to do so. You are again welcome to contact us to discuss any issue relating to the research after reading the findings.

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Science and Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, you should contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on (03) 62267479 or email human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote (HREC Project Number H11522).

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.

If you wish to take part in it, please sign the attached consent form.

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Appendix B

Consent Form

Title of Project: Teachers' Roles in the Implementation of Year 9 Reform

1. I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this project.
2. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
3. I understand that the study involves being interviewed in small groups with colleagues and the completion of paper or email surveys over a period of approximately 12 months.
4. I understand that there are no specific anticipated risks with my participation in this study.
5. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for five years and will then be destroyed.
6. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
7. I agree that research data gathered from me for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a participant.
8. I understand that the researchers will keep my identity confidential and that any information I supply to the researchers will be used only for the purpose of the research.
9. I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without effect, and if I so wish, may request that any data I have supplied to date be withdrawn from the research.
10. I agree to keep confidential the views and opinions expressed by others in the group interviews and the identities of those taking part.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature _____ **Date** / /20____

Statement by Investigator

I have explained the project & the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked.

The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

Name of Investigator: _____

Signature of Investigator:

_____ **Date** / /20____

Appendix C

Interview Schedule Year 9 Leadership Group

Introduction

- Tell me about your experiences in working with Year 9 students and staff.

Early Initiation

- *How/where did the idea of establishing a separate Year 9 campus originate?*
- *Why was Year 9 chosen as the year group worthy of reform?*
- *Do you think that special needs exist among Year 9 students? If so, what are they?*
- *How and in what way do you believe the Year 9 campus will address these needs?*

Year 9 Campus Vision

- *What in your opinion are some of the broad goals for this campus?*
- *How do you believe these goals have been established?*
- *In your view, are these goals widely shared?*
- *In your opinion, what will students and staff experience at the Year 9 campus that is new?*

Role of Teachers

- *How have teachers reacted to the initiation of this Year 9 reform?*
- *How involved have regular teachers been in the planning for the Year 9 Campus?*
- *Do you see their level of involvement in planning for the reform changing? Why/Why not?*
- *What will you be expecting of Year 9 teachers in the future?*
- *Do you think that Year 9 teachers will need to change/adapt their practice to fit the new campus?*
- *Do you see the opening of the new campus as a transitional process for teachers?*
- *How do you feel teachers will cope with this transition/change?*

Implementation

- *What do you believe are the next steps in implementing the Year 9 reform?*
- *How do you intend to manage this process?*
- *What role do you believe teachers will play in the implementation?*
- *Do you foresee any professional learning needs for teachers at this stage?*

Close

Questions/clarification.

Thank participants again for their involvement.

Appendix D

Interview Schedule Year 9 Teachers

Introduction

- How did you come to be involved in the Year 9 project?
- Tell me about your experiences as a present Year 9 teacher.

Early Initiation

- *When did you learn about the idea of establishing a separate campus Year 9 programme at the College?*
- *How do you think the idea initiated?*
- *Why do you believe Year 9 was chosen as a year group worthy of reform?*
- *Do you think that special needs exist among Year 9 students? If so, what are they?*
- *How and in what way do you believe the Year 9 campus will address these needs?*

Year 9 Campus Vision

- *What in your opinion are some of the broad goals for this campus?*
- *In your view, are these goals widely shared?*
- *In your opinion, what will students experience at the Year 9 campus that is new?*

Role of Teachers

- *In this early stage, how do you feel about the Year 9 reform?*
- *Can you describe your involvement in the planning of the campus?*
- *Do you believe your level of involvement will change throughout the reform process? If so, how?*
- *How have you started preparing yourself for the Year 9 reform?*

Implementation

- *What do you believe are the next steps in implementing the Year 9 reform?*
- *What role do you think you will play in the implementation of the reform?*
- *Do you foresee any professional learning needs for teachers, including yourself, at this stage?*

Close

Questions/clarification.

Thank participants again for their involvement.