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# Perspectives of Year 12 Students From Five Catholic Secondary Schools in Western Australia Towards Teaching as a Career

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# PERSPECTIVES OF YEAR 12 STUDENTS FROM FIVE CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA TOWARDS TEACHING AS A CAREER.

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*Master of Education*

*Graduate Diploma of Secondary Education*

*Bachelor of Commerce*

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School of Education

Fremantle Campus

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**Statement of Sources**

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution.


Signed…………………………… Date……………………………

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to review the ways in which Year 12 Catholic school students perceive teaching as a career and to explore the people, contexts and factors that have influenced these perspectives. Schools are being increasingly challenged to revisit the role of the educator in today's rapidly changing educational landscape. Best practice teaching and learning is at the forefront of this consideration. Attracting talented and committed students to the teaching profession is crucial if schools are going to play a part in adequately teaching and preparing future generations for society (Weldon, 2015). It follows therefore that both the profession itself and the status of the profession must be appealing to passionate, committed and high-calibre students (Laming, 2019; Masters 2014; 2015; Parliament of Australia, 2019). Underpinning the purpose of this study are the beliefs that student perspectives surrounding careers lead to decisions that manifest in university course preferences and that those perspectives can be influenced.

The study was qualitative in nature with a constructivist epistemology. Interpretivism was employed as a theoretical perspective using the lens of symbolic interactionism. An instrumental case study was chosen as the research methodology. Qualitative methods of data collection were predominately employed. The methods of research included semi-structured interviews with five career counsellors, 470 Year 12 student online surveys, five Year 12 student focus group interviews, with a total of 109 students and researcher field notes. The data was analysed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model of data management and analysis (2014).

The results of the study provided responses to three specific research questions, which emanated from the literature review. The student perspectives of teaching as a career covered four themes that included the purpose of teaching, positive perspectives of teaching, negative perspectives of teaching and perspectives of the status of teaching as a career. Both the students and the career counsellors identified influences upon these perspectives. The students clearly identified experiences with teachers and students as the most significant influencers on their perspectives towards teaching as a career. The specific experiences are identified and presented

as either positive or negative influences upon the student perspectives of teaching as a career.

   As a result of the research, a conceptual design was proposed to explain the domains of influence on student perspectives of teaching as a career. The study presents the implications for the teaching profession alongside recommendations. The research proposes highly contextualised topics for further research and possible additions to the body of published literature relating to student perspectives of teaching as a career.

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# Chapter One: Research Defined

## 1.1 Introduction to the research

Schools increasingly are being challenged to adapt to the changing role of the educator and learner, as well as to parental expectations in today's rapidly changing educational landscape. Best practice teaching and learning is at the forefront of this consideration. Teachers are being called upon to respond with agility to new and complex classroom situations, which can create a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty for even the most experienced educators. Technology and in particular student access to technology, has changed the way students learn and communicate (All Schools Education, 2018; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) 2020; Australian Learning Lecture, 2019; Purcell, 2012). Therefore, schools, policies and the educational environment must adapt in order to meet the needs of the next generation of students. The capacity to respond to these changed imperatives is largely reliant upon the quality and performance of teachers (AITSL, 2015; 2018; 2019; 2020). Attracting talented and committed students to the teaching profession is crucial if schools are to continue to be at the forefront in teaching and preparing future generations for effective participation in a changing society (Weldon, 2015). It follows, therefore, that both the profession itself and the status of the profession must be appealing to passionate, committed and high-calibre students (Laming, 2019; Masters 2015; Parliament of Australia, 2019).

## 1.2 Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to review the ways in which Year 12 Catholic school students perceive teaching as a career, why they perceive teaching in these ways, and, ultimately, why they might or might not select teaching as a career. Underpinning the purpose of this study are the beliefs that student perspectives surrounding careers lead to decisions that manifest in university course preferences and that those perspectives can be influenced. Career choice is considered an area of great interest for students, particularly nearing the end of their secondary schooling. The perspectives of students towards selecting various careers are formed both inside and

outside the school environment. From the research, it is expected that a range of factors contributing to student perspectives of teaching as a career will be revealed. The identification and consideration of significant factors that influence student perspectives of teaching as a career, will lead to a better understanding of how universities, education systems and schools can attract students to the teaching profession. Furthermore, the results may also lead to recommendations for addressing the projected shortage of secondary teachers within particular specialist subject areas (Weldon, 2015; Achterstraat, 2008). Finally, by examining different reflections of students about the role of teachers, the research should provide insights into how the teaching profession can promote the status of 'the teacher' in Australia and hence attract a greater number of high-achieving students.

### 1.3 Researcher motives

The original motivation for this research emerged in 2010 when I entered my first formal leadership position within a school. I felt that at the age of 30, I had finally found my vocation. In 2010 I realised that my initial perspectives of teaching as a career back in 1997 were influenced by others, and, over subsequent years, had I not questioned my own calling, those initial perspectives could have kept me from finding and following my vocation.

In 1997, during Year 12, I was discouraged from pursuing a career in teaching because of my high achievement in school. My parents, who are both teachers, friends and other teachers all encouraged me to use my high results in the Tertiary Entrance Examinations (T.E.E.) to study the likes of Law or to pursue a more prestigious career that would provide greater access to wealth and status. I took their advice, against my own yearnings, followed a university journey that started out as a double Degree in Law and Commerce and ended as a Bachelor of Commerce. After graduating and experiencing six years of success in the business world, I found myself feeling disheartened and craved to make a real contribution to the world, over and above materialistic pursuits. I felt drawn to teaching as I believed a career in the education profession would afford me the opportunity to give

back to the world and hence gain the fulfillment that I was seeking. I returned to university to study secondary school teaching.

I experienced a rapid rise to leadership within schools and was grateful for the support of colleagues. However, I initially struggled to find like-minded teachers who were keen to improve schools and student outcomes from the ground up. This experience prompted me to think about why governments or universities did not appear to promote teaching as a career that affords the opportunity to be a change agent, and to positively impact the world. Having studied the psychology of sales, consumer behaviour, perception management and marketing at university, coupled with six years of corporate experience, I understood the importance of painting a clear vision of something desirable, and making it easy for people to buy into this vision. The 'selling and marketing' of education and teaching as a profession seemed to be somewhat absent in schools and society at large. After completing a Master of Education degree, I still did not feel finished with studying. Additionally, I was concerned about the lack of positive media and perception-building around the opportunities of teaching as a career and, therefore, decided to try and glean a deeper insight into the issue. It seemed logical and appropriate to start that research process by investigating student perspectives, given that is the time people generally make their first career-related decisions. I wished to understand Year 12 perspectives of teaching as a career and the influences upon, and impact of those perspectives. The results from this study may assist those responsible for attracting, recruiting and retaining teachers to better target passionate, committed and high-achieving students.

## 1.4 Specific research questions

The overarching topic to be investigated focused on: the perspectives of Year 12 students from five Catholic secondary schools towards teaching as a career. The study was divided into three specific research questions, which guided the direction of the research. These questions are outlined below.

    1.  What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?

2. What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of choosing teaching as a career?
3. In what ways have school experiences of Year 12 students influenced their perspective of teaching as a career?

## 1.5 Data collection and analysis

This research was predominantly qualitative in nature. Quantitative questions that allowed for the creation of descriptive statistics were used to test and support qualitative results. The epistemological approach of this research was constructivist in nature and employed interpretivism, with a specific symbolic interactionism lens as its theoretical perspective. An instrumental case study was chosen as the research methodology and students and staff members from five Catholic secondary schools participated. Data collection tools included five semi-structured qualitative interviews with the career counsellors, five focus group interviews with Year 12 students, Year 12 student online surveys (containing both qualitative and quantitative questions) and researcher fields notes. Specifically, five career counsellors were interviewed, 110 Year 12 students participated across the five focus group interviews and 470 Year 12 students completed the online survey. All of the semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and online surveys were completed between the months of November 2017 and July 2018.

The process to analyse the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews, surveys and focus group interviews was based on the Interactive Cycle Process (Miles & Huberman, 2014). This interactive process by Miles and Huberman (2014) consists of three concurrent activities of data reduction, data display and verification and conclusion drawing. The process is iterative and occurs continually throughout the different phases of the research. Quantitative responses from the online survey were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, mode, median and rankings and were displayed using spreadsheets and graphical software. Chapter Four: The Research Plan, provides a descriptive account of the process used to collect and analyse the data.

**1.6 Significance of the research**

The significance of this study rests upon the belief that student perspectives surrounding careers lead to decisions that manifest in university course preferences and that those perspectives can be influenced. Several studies have already been undertaken that explore the image of teaching as a profession from the perspective of undergraduates, early career teachers and high school students (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Cook-Sather, 2002; Johnston, McKeown & McEwan, 1999; Kelly, 1989; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). The vast majority of the data gathered are from pre-service, early career and veteran teachers and generally those students who are interested in becoming teachers. These populations have already selected, or intend selecting teaching as a career. The results of the studies that included secondary school students were not categorised into groups and, as such, variances in the perspectives of particular target audiences could not be determined.

The significance of this research is four-fold. Firstly, the results will assist with the creation of marketing campaigns to attract and recruit high-performing students to the profession. Secondly, the results will help target particular groups to address teacher shortages within learning areas and/or with particular attributes (e.g. males). Thirdly, in order to elevate the status of teaching in Australia the perspectives of the next generation of adults need to be investigated, examined and influenced.

Finally, given the paucity of research and literature on the topic of Year 12 student perspectives towards teaching as a career, it is anticipated that this exploration will provide a valuable addition to existing understanding surrounding the topic. It is believed that this study will be of significant value in its own right; however, as a consequence of the results from this research, opportunities for further studies and inquiries have resulted. These suggested areas for further research may assist in ascertaining the extent to which these results can be postulated in other educational contexts and countries.

**1.7 Limitations of the research**

There are three factors that may limit the scope of this research study. First, the research is confined to five Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia. Whilst the study may well have credibility and utility within Catholic Education in Western Australia and possibly other sectors in Western Australia, generalising the results to other jurisdictions within Australia or internationally may be problematic. The second limiting factor is related to the fact that the study only takes into account student perspectives and career counsellors' opinions and not parents, teachers and other influencing people. Investigating the perspectives of parents, teachers and other influencing people towards teaching as a career may be an area for further research. The third limiting factor relates to the researcher being an employee of Catholic Education Western Australia. The researcher's experience in Catholic schools provided an insight into student perspectives and the culture of schools, both as a teacher and a former Year 12 student. However, the researcher also anticipated that this background could influence interpretations and accepted that without due reflection, personal bias may unconsciously appear. In response, the researcher examined and recorded her own interest and motivations towards the topic and purpose of the study, as a means of consciously avoiding this bias. Furthermore, a three-point triangulation method was employed to test the themes and results that were generated from the data, which also helped to mitigate the likelihood of researcher bias.

**1.8 Definition of terms**

*1.8.1 ATAR*

The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is the primary criterion for entry into most undergraduate-entry university programs in Australia. A student sits the ATAR examinations traditionally in the final year of high school. A student receives an ATAR after completing a minimum of four ATAR courses, based on formal assessments and an external examination, at Year 12 level. An ATAR score is between 0 and 99.95. An ATAR score of 90 means that the student's moderated, scaled and combined

results are placed as the top tenth percentile of results out of all students who completed courses that enabled them to achieve an ATAR.

### 1.8.2 ATAR student

For the purpose of this study, any Year 12 who is studying four or more courses at an ATAR level, and is therefore on a pathway destined for university, is considered an ATAR student.

### 1.8.3 High-achieving ATAR student

For the purpose of this study any student who is estimated to obtain an ATAR of 90 or above will be considered a high-achieving ATAR student.

### 1.8.4 ICSEA

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a numerical value that is derived from key factors in students' family backgrounds that have an impact on students' educational outcomes at school. Examples of these factors are parents' occupation, school education and non-school education. In addition to these student-level factors, research has shown that school-level factors (a school's geographical location and the proportion of Indigenous students a school caters for) need to be considered when summarising educational advantage or disadvantage at the school level. ICSEA provides a scale that numerically represents the relative magnitude of this influence and is constructed taking into account these factors. The higher the school ICSEA, the higher the educational advantage for students in the school.

### 1.8.5 Vocation

In this study a vocation refers to a calling from the divine, characterised by a strong feeling of being drawn to a career with the intent of using personal gifts for the benefit of others.

### 1.8.6 Year 12 student

A Year 12 student is an enrolled pupil at a secondary school who is usually aged between 17 and 18 years, and who is in his or her final year of

secondary school education. This term may also be used interchangeably with school leaver.

**1.9 Thesis outline and chapter summaries**

This thesis is comprised of seven chapters, an overview is provided below.

**Table 1.1**

*Overview of thesis chapters*

| Chapter One: | Research Defined |
|---|---|
| Chapter Two: | Context |
| Chapter Three: | Review of the Literature |
| Chapter Four: | Research Plan |
| Chapter Five: | Presentation of Results |
| Chapter Six: | Discussion |
| Chapter Seven: | Review and Conclusions |

The first chapter, Chapter One: Research Defined introduces the overarching topic and details the purpose of the research and the reasons for its undertaking. The researcher's motives for conducting the study are disclosed. The three specific research questions which guided and underpinned the study are presented. An explanation is provided regarding the choice of data collection and analysis methods. The areas of significance of the research are addressed and explained. The limitations of the research are investigated and mitigating measures to account for these limitations are offered. Definitions are provided for the key terms used in the research. Chapter One finishes with an outline of the contents of each chapter in the thesis.

The second chapter, Chapter Two: Context of Research introduces and explores the four contextual dimensions in which the research took place. Understanding the context of research assists readers to comprehend the conditions in which the researcher and the participants are placed. The first dimension of context explains the organisation, structure and funding channels of the Australian education system and Western Australia's place

within that system. The second dimension of context outlines a number of the current teaching improvement and reform issues in education in Australian and international politics. The third dimension of context discusses the structure and governance of Catholic Education Western Australia. The final dimension of context presents details of each of the five sites involved in the study.

The third chapter, Chapter Three: Review of the Literature introduces a conceptual framework, which presents the five areas of literature that underpin the research. The literature review of these five areas provided a foundation for, and insight into, the overall purpose of the study. The areas include: the role of schools within society; the status of the teaching profession in society; factors that encourage people to choose a teaching career; factors that discourage people from choosing a teaching career; and the forming of perceptions and career choice. The review of the literature culminated in the three specific research questions that underpinned the study. Furthermore, the literature review assisted with the creation of sub-questions for the online survey and semi-structured and focus group interviews.

The fourth chapter, Chapter Four: Research Plan outlines the research approach that was employed to manage the conduct of the study. This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the research, which was predominantly qualitative in nature. The epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and data collection methods that align with this theoretical framework are discussed. The chapter presents and explores a constructivist epistemology, using interpretivism as its theoretical perspective with a symbolic interactionism lens. The methodology employed in the research was an instrumental case study design. An explanation of this research methodology is provided alongside the limitations of an instrumental case study, and measures to address these limitations. The chosen aligned methods of data collection are presented and discussed. The chapter also considers the research participants, approaches chosen to maintain the trustworthiness of the study, methodological rigour of the data collection instruments, data analysis processes, ethical considerations and concludes with a design summary.

The fifth chapter, Chapter Five: Presentation of Results outlines the results of the research under each of the three specific research questions. The results are presented in subsections of themes that were generated from the data. The results from the first research question are exhibited under four sub-sections: purpose of teaching; positive perspectives of teaching as a career; negative perspectives of teaching as a career; perspectives of the status of teaching as a career. The results from the second research question are exhibited under two sub-sections, namely student identified influences and career counsellors identified influences. The results from the third research question are exhibited under two sub-sections, namely student experiences of teachers; student experiences with other students. Sub-headings are employed within some of the larger subsections to further organise and categorise the presentation of the results.

The sixth chapter, Chapter Six: Discussion, supplies an exploration and interpretation of the results under each of the specific research questions. A cross-analysis is provided that discusses the interplay between the specific research questions in terms of student perspectives, settings and influences under the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model for Human Development (1977; 1994; 1999). The analysis of the results of each specific research question occurs alongside the relevant literature. Comparisons on similarities and differences are drawn between the results and the literature reviewed in chapter three.

The seventh chapter, Chapter Seven: Review and Conclusions elucidates the research results in the form of interpretive responses that summarise the answers to the specific research questions of the study. A conceptual design that explains the domains of influence on student perspectives of teaching as a career is proposed for consideration by government bodies, education systems, universities and schools. The conceptual design intends to cover broad domains of influence as discovered in this study and as such, the potential for further research may determine that these domains can be generalised and applied to other educational systems and countries. Implications for the teaching profession is presented alongside nine recommendations. The chapter provides suggested topics for further research and possible additions to the body of published literature

relating to student perspectives of teaching as a career. The chapter closes with a conclusion, an addendum and a personal impact statement.

## 1.10 Conclusion

This chapter offers an introduction to the thesis pertaining to the research study on the perspectives of Year 12 students from five Catholic secondary schools towards teaching as a career. The subsequent chapters will present the entire study, as explained in the chapter reviews above. The next chapter addresses and explains the four contextual dimensions in which the research took place.

**Chapter Two: Context of the Research**

## 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to review the ways in which Year 12 Catholic school students perceive teaching as a career, why they perceive teaching in this way, and ultimately why they might or might not select teaching as a career. Underpinning the purpose of this study are the beliefs that student perspectives surrounding careers lead to decisions that manifest in university course preferences and that those perspectives can be influenced. Three specific research questions formed the focus of this research. These questions are outlined below.

1. What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?
2. What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of choosing teaching as a career?
3. In what ways have schooling experiences of Year 12 students influenced their perspective of teaching as a career?

The context of a research project refers to the circumstances, events and settings surrounding the people involved with the study. Understanding the context of research assists readers to comprehend the conditions in which the researcher and the participants are placed (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; 2011; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). There are four dimensions of context that require exploration in order to understand the holistic nature and place of this research. The first dimension of context explains the organisation, structure and funding channels of the Australian education system and Western Australia's place within that system. The second dimension of context outlines a number of recent aspects of particular attention in education. The third dimension of context discusses the structure and governance of Catholic Education Western Australia. The final dimension of context presents details of each of the five sites involved in the study. Table 2.1 provides an overview of Chapter 2 and the four contextual dimensions pertaining to this research.

**Table 2.1**

*Overview of chapter two: Context of the research*

| |
|---|
| 2.1 Introduction |
| 2.2 Australian education and Western Australia |
| 2.3 The focus on teaching in Australia |
| 2.4 Catholic Education Western Australia |
| 2.5 Context of school sites |
| 2.6 Conclusion |

## 2.2 Australian education and Western Australia

*2.2.1 Federal Government responsibilities*

In Australia, under the Commonwealth constitution, the State and Territory Governments are the bodies which are primarily responsible for education within their jurisdictions (Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017). The constitution does not provide the Commonwealth with the power to initiate education laws. The Australian Government works alongside non-government authorities and the State and Territory Governments to allocate funding, create and implement national policy priorities, assess results and support various education initiatives (Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017). Policy priorities and education initiatives are overseen through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The Education Council manages these priorities and initiatives within COAG.

The Territory and State Governments regulate the "public and private (including faith-based) schools within their States/ Territories, oversee course accreditation, student assessment and awards for both government and non-government schools and early childhood learning centres" (Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017, p. 8). In Australia, there are Catholic, Independent and faith-based schools within the partially self-funded, non-government sector and Department of Education schools within the public, wholly funded government sector. In 2019 there were 9 503 schools in Australia with 3 948 811 enrolled students, of which 65.7% of students were enrolled in government schools, 19.5% in Catholic schools and 14.8% in independent schools (Australia Bureau of Statistics

(ABS), 2019). The Department of Education, Skills and Employment is the main Australian Government agency responsible for education from early childhood to higher degrees and pathways. The Department of Education, Skills and Employment actions the goals and priorities of the Australian Government by devising and implementing relevant policies and programs. These goals are delivered in partnership with "State, Territory and regional networks" and through the engagement with "non-government groups such as the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership and National Partnership Agreements" (Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017, p. 7). Figure 2.1 depicts the Australian Government school funding pathway (Australian National Audit Office, 2017) and Figure 2.2 displays the overview of the Australian education participation responsibilities (Australian National Audit Office, 2017).
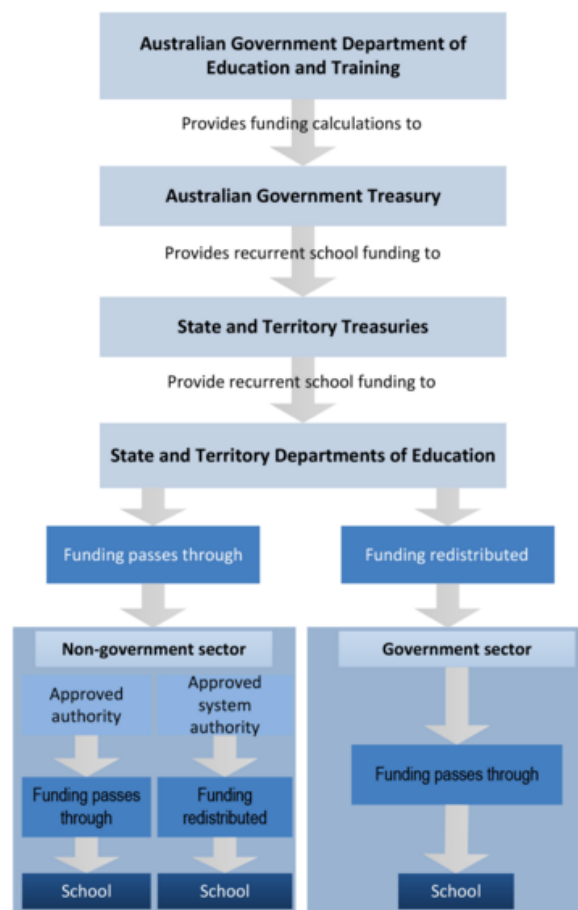


*Figure 2.1* Note. reprinted from *Australian Government school funding pathway* (Australian National Audit Office, 2017)

| | Commonwealth | Shared | State/Territory | Non-government |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Policy** | Australian Government Minister and Department for Education and Training | COAG Education Council | State Governments and Departments | |
| **System Design** | Australian Government Minister and Department for Education and Training | Australian Government Minister and Department for Education and Training; Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) | State Governments and Departments; State-based registration, accreditation and curriculum authorities | |
| **System Management** | | COAG Education Council; ACARA | State Government Ministers and Departments | Catholic Education Commissions; Associations of Independent Schools |
| **Delivery** | | | Government Schools | Catholic Schools; Independent Schools |
| **Funding** | Australian Government Minister and Department for Education and Training | | State Governments and Departments; Private Sources | Private Sources |

*Figure 2.2* Note. reprinted from *Australian education participation* (Australian National Audit Office, 2017)

### 2.2.2 Western Australian State Government responsibilities

Western Australia has the largest geographical area of all the Australian states and territories (2 529 875 km$^2$). The state's capital city is Perth and the vast majority of the state's terrain consists of broad plateaus with several mountain and desert ranges. Remote schools are necessary to cater for families living in geographically diverse and isolated regions of the state. Perth is the most geographically isolated large city in the world. As of December 2018, the population of Western Australia was 2 606 300 (ABS, 2018), which makes Western Australia the fourth largest populated state nationally. As with the rest of Australia, schooling commences in January and concludes in December. Kindergarten is generally the first year of schooling. Children who are four, or turn four, before June 30 of that school year commence in Kindergarten. High schooling formally concludes in Year 12, when students are 17.5-18.5 years of age at graduation. Schools are mainly Primary (Years K – 6), Secondary (Years 7 –12) or a composite (from Years K – 12). Schools are generally public, Catholic or Independent and either coeducational or single gender. The School Curriculum and Standards

Authority (SCSA) is a state government authority that oversees the Kindergarten to Year 12 curriculum, assessment, standards and reporting for all Western Australian schools (SCSA, 2014).

In the final year of secondary schooling, Year 12 students graduate by achieving the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE). Certification of WACE can be achieved by successfully completing an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) pathway, generally for university entrance, or a Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathway. A VET pathway generally prepares students for a trade, work, training College or alternate entry into university (SCSA, 2014). If a student completes an ATAR pathway he or she will obtain an ATAR score, which is derived from combining the student's achievement in his or her top four ATAR courses in Year 12. The achievement score in each course consists of moderated school assessment (50%) and the scaled state examination (50%) (SCSA, 2014). SCSA is responsible for approving WACE graduation, the distribution, creation and marking of state examinations, the moderation of school and examination results and publication of all the results and awards (SCSA, 2014). An external body named the Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC) scales the results across the state to reflect the level of difficulty of the course and examination, to make the different courses comparable and hence fit on one scale (TISC, 2020). TISC also processes the students' university preferences and university place offerings. A student who obtains an ATAR of 99 has achieved in the top 1% of Western Australia across his or her top four courses.

Most Western Australian universities set minimum requirements for their courses (TISC, 2020). These requirements stipulate a minimum ATAR score and, in certain circumstances, completion of pre-requisite courses (e.g. Year 12 Mathematics Specialist and Mathematics Methods are pre-requisites for Engineering). One university has alternative entry requirements. This university does not operate under TISC, but rather considers student character traits and strengths, work and volunteer experience, personal references, interviews and school results (The University of Notre Dame Australia, 2020).

**2.3 The focus on teaching in Australia**

In recent years the teaching profession has increasingly found itself scrutinised in the context of Australian and international politics (AITSL, 2014; 2015; 2018; 2019; 2020; Australian Government, 2017; 2019; Australian Learning Lecture; 2019; OECD, 2013; 2016; 2018; Parliament of Australia, 2013; 2019; Weldon, 2015). Scrutiny on the teaching profession has focused on a variety of areas. These areas include the performance standards for teachers and leaders, the status of the teaching profession, the growing population of students, gender imbalance in teaching, the aging population of certain specialist subjects teachers and the effectiveness of the education system in general (AITSL, 2014; 2015; 2018; 2019; 2020; Australian Government, 2017; 2019; Australian Learning Lecture; 2019; OECD, 2013; 2016; 2018; Parliament of Australia, 2013; 2019; Weldon, 2015).

*2.3.1 The focus on teaching and school leadership standards and performance*

In Australia, the partnership of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and the government, coupled with the initiation of nationally agreed standards for teaching (AITSL, 2014), has facilitated the examination of teaching practices and leadership standards within education (AITSL, 2018). AITSL's focus on teaching has largely been upon initial teacher education reform and research surrounding the professional development of school leadership. Additionally, in a bid to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the classroom, schools have been called upon to institute more thorough performance management, induction and mentoring processes, up-skilling staff on 21st Century education practices and monitoring teachers' mandatory professional development hours (AITSL, 2018). AITSL has offered a range of tools and resources to assist in these areas. Furthermore, AITSL created a voluntary certification process whereby teachers can be formally performance-measured and recognised on a continuum against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. There are six profiles on the continuum. A teacher's classroom practice repertoire generally begins at a

graduate level (level 1) and can progress up through the levels to lead teacher (level 6) (AITSL, 2018).   Teachers in Australia are required to be registered in order to practice teaching. This registration is managed on a state-by-state basis. Applications, transcripts, police checks and other evidence is lodged by the teacher to the relevant state authority. The state authority, for example the Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia (TRBWA), is responsible for collecting membership payment and the required documents. If these documents are approved by the state authority, ongoing registration is provided to teachers (AITSL, 2020).

The education system in Australia has been investigated to assess its effectiveness for preparing students for the future. A position paper was released by the Australian Learning Lecture in 2019, "Beyond ATAR: A proposal for change" and according to the paper, Australia is the only country in the world that ranks their graduating students. Most countries use some form of student achievement, but they do not rank (Australian Learning Lecture, 2019). It was proposed in the paper that a new developmental phase be created for 15 to 19-year-olds that takes into account knowledge, skills and capabilities and helps students to decipher their own 'line of sight' towards further study or work. The authors of the paper (O'Connell, Milligan & Bentley) suggested that a Learner Profile be designed to provide a common way of showcasing a full range of attainment. They also proposed that tertiary education providers adopt broader and more transparent entry requirements, and consider student interests, capabilities and aspirations (Australian Learning Lecture, 2019). These suggestions were similar to the proposals put forward by the Australian Government (2019), in the second Gonski report "Through Growth to Achievement". The report suggested schools put more focus on student growth as opposed to achievement and aim to develop creative, connected and engaged learners; all underpinned by an adaptive, innovative and continuously improving education system.

## 2.3.2 The focus on the status of the profession

The Australian Government has conducted two inquiries since 2014 into the status of the teaching profession in Australia (Commonwealth

Parliament and Parliament House, 2013; Parliament of Australia, 2019). Similarly, the OECD (2018) investigated the status of teaching internationally in a study named "Who wants to be a teacher and why?" At the conclusion of the inquiry in 2019, the Parliament of Australia concluded that the community, leaders and politicians should engage more positively in the promotion of teaching and education, particularly in the media. They also noted that the social status of teaching has greatly suffered over the past twenty years. Finally, the inquiry proposed that there is a need for higher levels of recognition and respect for the profession (Commonwealth Parliament and Parliament House, 2013; Laming, 2019; Parliament of Australia, 2019).

Conjecture over the minimum standards for entry into teaching was addressed in the two Government inquiries into teaching and in the media (Commonwealth Parliament and Parliament House, 2013; Parliament of Australia, 2019; Laming, 2019). In response to the growing concern over entry requirements into teaching, many universities increased the minimum ATAR requirement for enrolment in teaching from 60 to 65, then to 70 and in some cases up to 80 (TISC, 2019). Additionally, since 2017 all preservice teachers have been required to demonstrate a benchmark standard in the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) prior to university graduation (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2020).

*2.3.3 The focus on teacher shortages, gender imbalance and lack of subject specialists*

In Australia, there are concerns over teacher shortages due to growth in student numbers, the growing gender imbalance in the teaching profession and the aging population of specialist teachers in certain subjects (Sydney Morning Herald, 2019; Weldon, 2015). Projections by the ABS (2014; 2019) indicate that even the most conservative projection shows high levels of growth in the numbers of primary school age children in the next five years (Figure 2.3). Secondary schools began to see this increase from 2018. ACER (2015) revealed trends that impacted and will continue to impact the demand for teachers in addition to this population growth. Part-time employment of teachers is becoming more common, plus the proportion of

male teachers in secondary schools appears to be on the decline (Figure 2.4) and a high percentage of male dominated subject teachers (Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics) are aged over 50 (Figure 2.5) (ACER, 2015; Weldon, 2015). These trends, coupled with high levels of population growth, suggest that demand for teachers is on the rise (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority 2019; Sydney Morning Herald, 2019; Weldon, 2015). In order to cater for the increased demand for teachers, particularly in specialist areas, targeting for the recruitment of teachers occurs, for example the Teach for Australia Program (Teach for Australia 2020; Weldon, 2015).

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Legend:
— WA Primary FTE
— Projections A
— Projections B
— Projections C

**Figure 5** Number of children in primary schools in Western Australia, 1999-2013 and projected numbers, 2014-2025

Based on ABS Series B projections, the number of children in Western Australian primary schools is likely to increase by about 3.2% per year for the next decade (compared to a growth of 1.8% per year in the previous decade). In 2001, there were 191 647 children in primary school in WA. In 2010, that number had risen to 229 910. By 2020 there could be as many as 314 154 children in primary school in WA, an increase of about 37% on 2010 figures, or 351 additional classes each year for 10 years.

*Figure 2.3* Note. Reprinted from *Number and projected number of children in primary school 1999 - 2025* (Weldon, 2015).
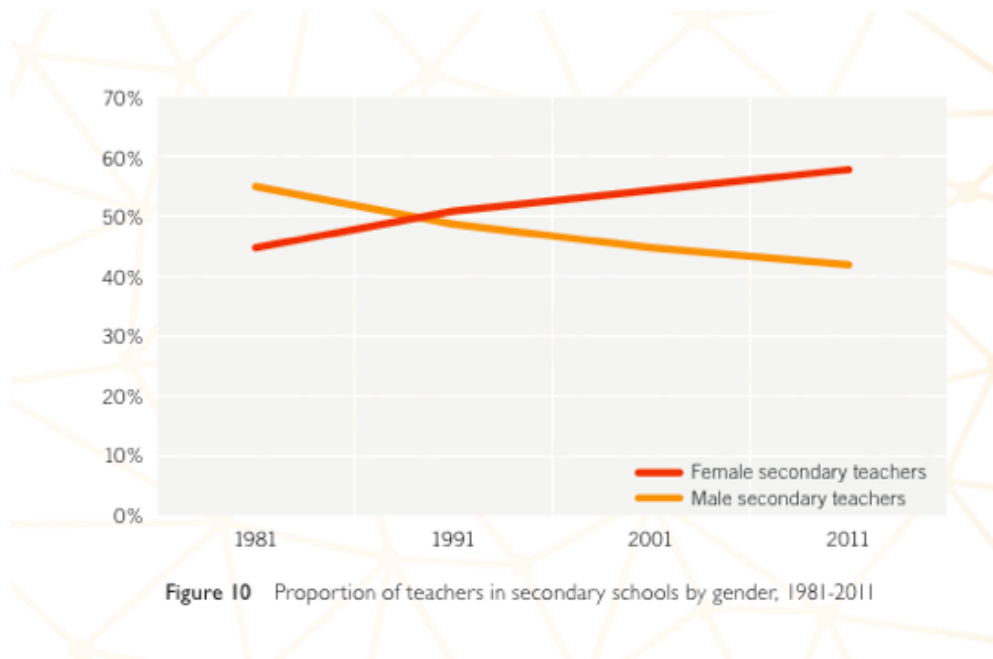
**Figure 10** Proportion of teachers in secondary schools by gender, 1981-2011

*Figure 2.4* Note. Reprinted from *Proportion of teachers in secondary schools by gender, 1981 – 2011* (Weldon, 2015)
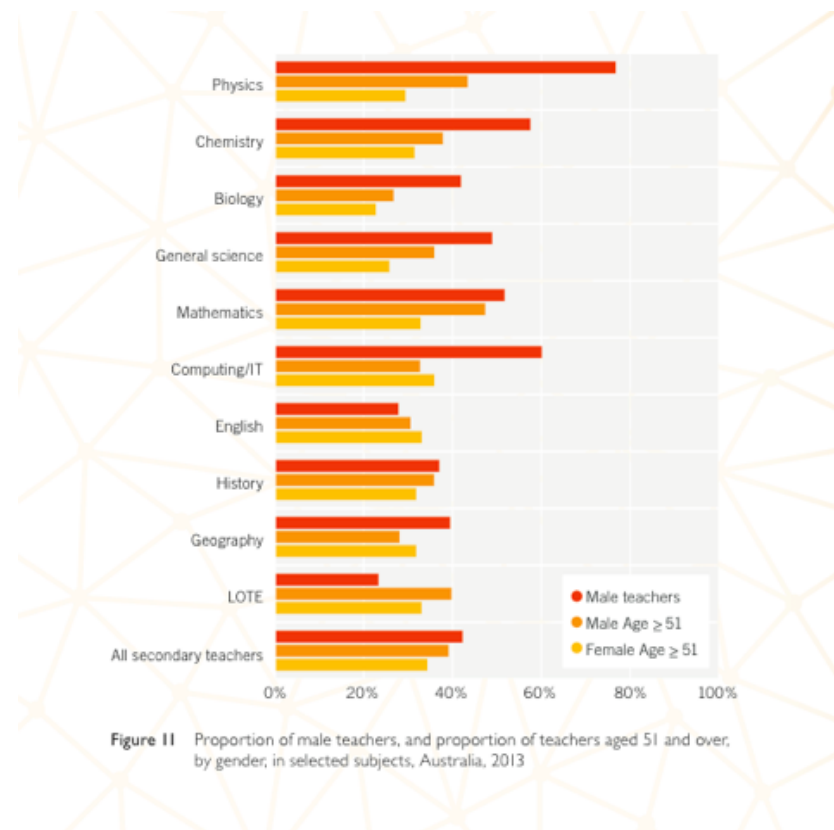


**Figure 11** Proportion of male teachers, and proportion of teachers aged 51 and over, by gender, in selected subjects, Australia, 2013

*Figure 2.5* Note. Reprinted from *Proportion of male teachers, and proportion of teachers aged 51 and over by gender in selected subjects, Australia 2013* (Weldon, 2015)

## 2.4 Catholic Education Western Australia

The research was undertaken within the context of Catholic schools in Western Australia. There are four Catholic dioceses in Western Australia (Perth, Bunbury, Geraldton and Broome (Kimberley)) and all Catholic schools in these dioceses are governed under one system, the Catholic Education system in Western Australia (CEWA). CEWA operates 162 schools and serves more than 76 000 students across the state (CEWA, 2020). As the second largest education sector, CEWA educates 18% of all school-aged children in Western Australia (Catholic Archdiocese of Perth, 2019). The system employs 6 200 teachers and 4 800 non-teaching staff (CEWA, 2020). Figure 2.6 shows the geographical region of each diocese and Figure 2.7 displays the number of schools in each of the four dioceses. The schools in all dioceses in Western Australia are called to work collaboratively to achieve the same 'Living the Vision' mission, which is recorded in the Bishops' Mandate Letter for all Catholic schools to follow (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA), 2009; 2019). This vision incorporates information on how Catholic schools must operate in order to fulfil their part in the Church's mission to bring peace and salvation to all believers.
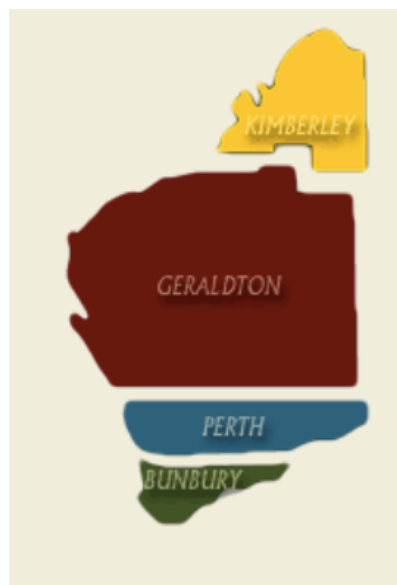


*Figure 2.6* Note. Reprinted from *Western Australian Dioceses* (Diocese of Geraldton, 2020)



*Figure 2.7* Note. Reprinted from *The Number of Catholic Schools in each Diocese in Western Australia* (CEWA, 2020)

*2.4.1 Governance*

Catholic Education of Western Australia became a Limited company in 2019. Catholic Education Western Australia Ltd (CEWA) was established by the Catholic Bishops within the state. Catholic Education provides education to families seeking education within the Catholic tradition. Catholic schools in the state of Western Australia are supported by CEWA to help families develop their children into people of Christian values and conscience. This support is in the form of delivering on strategy and vision (CEWA, 2019). Furthermore, CEWA is responsible for ensuring schools operate "in an effective manner, working within appropriate standards, regulations and Catholic Mission" (CEWA, 2019, p.1). The Catholic Education of Western Australia entrusts the Principals to oversee the running of each of their schools.

Governance of CEWA is through the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA). The Bishops established the CECWA as the Board of the Company (CECWA, 2009). The Commission's role is to instruct the Company to develop learning communities which fulfil the goals of the Catholic Schools as outlined in the Bishops' Mandate Letter (CECWA, 2009; 2019). The Commission is mandated to exercise its delegated powers in accordance with the Constitution (CEWA, 2019). The Commission fulfils its responsibilities in partnership with the "Catholic Education Office of Western Australia and under the leadership of the Executive Director of Catholic Education" (CEWA, 2019, p. 1). The Bishop of each diocese has oversight of the Catholic schools in his jurisdiction, in partnership with CEWA. The school Principal is entrusted by CEWA and the Bishop to manage, control and oversee the running of their Catholic school.

**2.5 The context of school sites**

Participants for this research were drawn from five Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia. What follows is a brief contextual background and outline of the five school sites. Given that this research is concerned with Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career, the context of the site's career education program and career counselling is also described. The information on the career education program in each of the sites was

gathered through a semi-structured interview with the site's career counsellors or equivalent.

### 2.5.1 Site A

Site A is a large coeducational school with an ICSEA of 1170. This site consistently enrols the majority of Year 12 students into an ATAR pathway. The site tailors a national framework for career education to suit its own context. This national framework is called the Australian Blueprint for Career Education for Year 10 students. This framework is used to design, implement and evaluate career development programs for young people. The Blueprint identifies the skills, attitudes and knowledge that individuals need to make sound choices and to effectively manage their careers. The structured Blueprint program is overseen by the career counsellors and runs in small groups in Year 10 for fifty minutes once a week for six months. The site is looking to expand the program by introducing material into Year 9 and additionally is planning to include student work experience opportunities into the process. As a part of the Year 10 program, students are asked to complete an online personality test through MyCareerMatch (2020). The career counsellors indicated that the school has no wish to influence student perspectives of careers, rather, the school endeavours to encourage self-reflection and exploration, career related research and goal setting. The aim of the career education program is to guide student thinking through questioning and student-led research. At the conclusion of the six-month program students are then asked to select a pathway and subjects for Year 11 and 12 and must attend a compulsory career counselling interview to discuss these selections with a senior member of staff.

### 2.5.2 Site B

Site B is a medium coeducational school with an ICSEA of 1062. This site enrols slightly more Year 12 students into an ATAR pathway than a VET pathway. The career education program at site B formally starts with students in Year 10 when they attend two 50-minute pastoral care classes in Term 2. These two classes enable students to self-reflect on the skills they possess and their personalities. Additionally, all Year 10 students spend two

full days engaging in career activities, which includes attending a career expo in the city, visiting universities, listening to guest speakers from various occupations and completing online personality and skill testing through Job Ideas and Information Generator – Computer Assisted Learning (JIIG-CAL, 2020) and Career Voyage (2020). The career education program runs prior to pathway and subject selection for Years 11 and 12. Students who select a VET pathway also complete work experience in the trade or area of interest. ATAR students do not engage in work experience. All students in Year 10 meet with the career counsellors to discuss their goals and career pathway prior to subject selection for Years 11 and 12. The students' career goals are then managed by the student throughout Years 11 and 12.

*2.5.3 Site C*

Site C is a medium to large girls' school with an ICSEA of 1117. This site consistently enrols the majority of Year 12 students into an ATAR pathway. The career education program at site C begins in Year 10 and runs through to Year 12. A parent information night followed by a 3-hour career expo marks the beginning of the program. Following these activities, there are two days of intensive Year 10 student workshops focussing on character strengths, with a number of guest speakers. Additionally, Year 10 students attend the career expo in the city. One month after the two-day program, students and their parents meet with a senior staff member for half an hour. As a part of this interview process each student, parent and the staff member follow a question proforma that encourages reflection and discussion. At the conclusion of the meeting, the students select likely career pathways and subjects for Years 11 and 12. The students and parents then undergo this compulsory interview process again in Year 11 and Year 12. These subsequent interviews help to monitor student progress against career goals and enable students to modify subjects or goals if necessary. The career counsellors indicated that through the counselling process the school encourages and/or discourages students from certain career options based on their skills and level of academic achievement. The site personnel believe that it would be irresponsible not to guide students appropriately, so that they are set up for academic success in subjects that match a career pathway that

suits their skill set and level of achievement. The school also informs the parents at the interviews on viable career options and subjects for their students.

### 2.5.4 Site D

Site D is a medium to large boys' school with an ICSEA of 1115. This site consistently enrols the majority of their Year 12 students into an ATAR pathway. The site provides a career education program that commences in Year 9 and runs through to Year 12. During the first Semester of Year 9, students undergo two hours of career education in the form of self-investigation and psychometric testing. These activities assist students to reflect upon their unique skills and possible career matches. During Year 10, students have a one-hour career class once a week for four weeks. These classes require students to research various careers, investigate post school pathways and start to consider subject selections for Years 11 and 12. After students have made their subject selections for Years 11 and 12, students and parents are encouraged to meet with the career counsellors. The career counsellors stipulated that staff at the school aims to encourage students to consider careers that match their personality and circumstances but avoids discouraging students from considering career interests that may not match their personality or circumstances.

### 2.5.5 Site E

Site E is a country coeducational school with an ICSEA of 1012. This site enrols slightly more Year 12 students into a VET pathway than an ATAR pathway.  The site's career education program is linked to student subject selection for Years 11 and 12. The school invites professionals from career planning organisations such as Joblink to the school to present to the Year 10 students about various career services and options. Students also undertake a reflection process during school time to examine their skills and interests prior to selecting subjects and a pathway for Years 11 and 12. Part of this process exposes students to information about possible career options. After the presentations and reflection process, students are then encouraged to make an appointment to discuss their results, interests and

goals with the career counsellors. Beyond these processes there are no formal career education classes or programs. Students are required to be self-driven in their career-related pursuits post Year 10. Students are invited and encouraged to speak about their career options and goals with the career counsellor. The career counsellor was very clear that "the school would never encourage or discourage students to select teaching or any other career and that the desire would have to come from the student and their family".

## 2.6 Conclusion

To assist the reader to understand the setting in which the research took place, this chapter provided four dimensions of context. The first contextual dimension examined the structure of Australian Education and the place of Western Australia within this structure. The second dimension discussed the current focuses on teachers, the teaching profession and education, predominantly within Australia. The third contextual dimension focused on Catholic Education in Western Australia and the fourth contextual dimension briefly outlined each of the sites involved in this research. The next chapter, the Review of Literature, presents literature across five areas pertinent to the research. These areas include: the role of schools within society; the status of the teaching profession in society; factors that encourage people to choose a teaching career; factors that discourage people from choosing a teaching career; and the forming of perceptions and career choice. The discussion on the literature gave rise to the creation of the three specific research questions that were used to guide the study.

# Chapter Three: Review of the Literature

## 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the perspectives of Year 12 students towards teaching as a career. The study aims to uncover the ways in which student perspectives have been influenced. As a foregrounding, it is therefore appropriate to examine the literature on five pertinent areas. These areas include: the role of schools within society; the status of the teaching profession in society; factors that encourage people to choose a teaching career; factors that discourage people from choosing a teaching career; and the forming of perceptions and career choice. Table 3.1 presents an outline of the review of literature.

**Table 3.1**

*Outline of review of the literature*

| | |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1  | Introduction                                             |
| 3.2  | Conceptual framework                                     |
| 3.3  | The role of schools within society                      |
| 3.4  | Summary                                                  |
| 3.5  | The status of the teaching profession in society        |
| 3.6  | Summary                                                  |
| 3.7  | Factors that encourage people to choose a teaching career |
| 3.8  | Summary                                                  |
| 3.9  | Factors that discourage people from choosing a teaching career |
| 3.10 | Summary                                                  |
| 3.11 | The forming of perceptions and career choice            |
| 3.12 | Summary                                                  |
| 3.13 | Conclusion                                               |

## 3.2 Conceptual framework

The five areas outlined in Table 3.1 come together to form the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1) that underpins the research. Each of the five areas of the literature review provides a foundation for, and insight into,

the overall purpose of the study. The five areas of literature directly influence the direction of the research.

The initial two areas of the literature review address the role of schools and the status of the teaching profession in society. These areas offer global views on the broad perspectives on education and the place of teachers. The first area covers the research on the role of schools within society and considers the overall purpose of schools and the corresponding role of teachers from two perspectives. A general perspective is studied first followed by a narrower perspective, specific to Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA), the context in which this study occurred. The second area examines the literature on the status of the teaching profession in society. This section of the literature review presents research on occupational prestige, the professionalisation of teaching and occupational esteem in relation to the status of teaching.

Areas three and four examine the factors that encourage people to, and discourage people from, choosing to enter the profession. This literature provides an insight into the positive and negative perspectives various people have about entering the teaching profession. The review of the literature on factors that encourage people to become teachers is presented in four categories. These categories are: vocation and social contribution; knowledge and love of learning; lifestyle choice; the influence of others. The literature on factors that discourage people from becoming teachers is also presented in four categories. These categories include: extrinsic factors; the nature of the role; perceived teacher attributes and active discouragement.

The final area in the review of literature, the forming of perceptions and career choice, aims to explain the very nature of perceptions, and how they are influenced. Literature on how perspectives are formed is presented using Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development as a framework. The research relating to his five dynamic systems within the model are discussed as key influencers of perspectives. This section closes with a specific review of the research on perceptions in relation to career choice, followed by a summary of the literature on the various processes that schools employ to help students form accurate career perspectives. The conceptual framework for this study is shown diagrammatically in Figure 3.1.

*Figure 3.1* Conceptual framework for the review of the literature

There appears to be a lack of Australian literature on Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career. Hence, a number of the sources used were taken from literature on adult perspectives, including established and pre-service teachers, and both local and international research. The combination of international and adult participant studies provides the reader with a broad understanding of the perspectives towards teaching as a career. Furthermore, results of those few studies that involved the perspectives of high school students had similar results to those studies taken from the adult perspective.

### 3.3 The role of schools within society

An understanding of the purpose of schooling will assist with appreciating the role of teachers within schools. Literature on the broad purposes of schooling will be examined, in particular the various views on the private, or individual and the public, or community and societal reasons for education. Teachers hold expansive roles within schools and their daily efforts contribute to turning the school's vision for student education into reality. A teacher's role covers a plethora of tasks, duties, behaviours and responsibilities. The research on the broad roles of the teacher will be presented in the following pages. This study occurs within the context of the Catholic Education system of Western Australia. It is therefore appropriate to present literature that focusses on the national views of education and the specific views of CEWA in relation to both the purpose of schooling and the role of Catholic school teachers. An outline of this section is provided in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2**

*Outline of the role of schools within society*

| | |
|---|---|
| 3.3.1 | The purpose of schooling |
| 3.3.2 | The role of teachers |
| 3.3.3 | Catholic Education Western Australia: The purpose of schooling |
| 3.3.4 | Catholic Education Western Australia: The role of teachers |
| 3.4 | Summary |

*3.3.1 The purpose of schooling*

There does not appear to be one articulated vision for schooling that endures over time. Any Government education policy document can be viewed as an articulation of an approach. However, settlement on one clear approach remains elusive. Instead there is a variety of opinions on the purpose of schools (Curren, 2014; Hoyle, 2008). Biesta (2008), for instance, considered that the purpose of education is dependent upon personal and therefore subjective values and beliefs. He suggested that the duality between "traditional versus liberal and conservative versus progressive" (p. 36) views on education, makes it challenging to engage in rational discussion

about the purpose of schooling. Biesta proposed that finding an agreed "educational purpose might be too difficult to resolve or even fundamentally irresolvable" (p. 36). Given the needs of society and the purpose of schooling changes over time, it is therefore difficult to clearly articulate one core vision for education (Centre for Future-Ready Graduates, 2017). In Australia, the Federal Government did articulate a contemporary approach for education in the "Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians" (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2008), and more recently through "The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration" (Education Council, 2019).

There are, however, various commonalities and themes across the literature on the purpose of schooling. The notion that schools are places of growth is common to a majority of views on the aim of education (Bajunid, 2000). The underlying mechanism to enable this growth lies in some form of actualisation of the human potential. Power (2003) saw schools as "the engine for development" (p. 5) and suggested that this purpose is reflected in the Delors Report (Elfert, 2015; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 1996), which proposed that schooling is about learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. Elfert suggested that schools and education are the indispensable means of global sustainable development and the primary sources to assist people to realise their capabilities (2015). Schooling is considered to be amongst the most important tools for human potential development (Stoll, 1999). Rogach, Frolova and Ryabova, (2018) assert that this human potential helps to determine the national wealth of a country and is the "most significant reserve for the economy efficiency improvement" (p. 805). They argued, therefore, that "education is rightfully viewed as the investment in human capital" (p. 805). Further to this notion, the authors suggested that the role of schooling "is in the formation, the consolidation and the translation of successful social practices that reflect the value orientations of leading social groups and the economic interests of state development" (p. 806). Such views emphasise the economic imperatives of formal schooling in preparing students for future employment.

The purpose of schooling can be broken down into two distinct yet overlapping categories. This division is defined by the end-recipient, or, in other words, who the purpose is intended to serve. It is suggested that some educational experiences are for personal, individual or private purposes and others are for social, community or public purposes. Cranston, Mulford, Keating and Reid (2010) state that "some purposes can be described as primarily public in that they advance the interests of society as a whole; others are primarily private in that they promote the interests of individuals" (p. 183). Levin (2003) asserted that schooling serves both public and private interests by preparing students in different ways. This sentiment is mirrored in Labaree's work (1997) who articulated that schooling has the private intentions of creating greater social efficiency and mobility and the public intention of promoting democratic equality.

Biesta (2008) described one of the private functions of schooling to be the "*qualification* of children and young people" (p. 39). He explained that providing the individual with skills, knowledge, understanding and forms of judgement allowed for the individual to contribute in the form of "economic competition and citizenship" (p. 39). Biesta, amongst others (Giroux 1981; Freire 1970; Winch 2005), presented another private or personal aim of schooling as "*subjectification"*, which promotes the individuality of the student and is geared towards creating citizens who can act autonomously and can be independent in their critical thinking. Levin (2003) argued that one of the private purposes of education is to encourage "individual development, understanding, and productivity that contributes to adult productivity and wellbeing" (p. 124). The, "What State Schools Value", document (Department of Education, Training and the Arts, 2008) outlined that it is an expectation that schools provide experiences that enable individuals to develop as creative, informed and healthy citizens with the skills to build fruitful human relationships. In addition to this expectation, the view stipulated that schools must prepare students to accept their individual parts in a shared responsibility for wellbeing of others, self and the broader living world. The "Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration" (Education Council, 2019), which follows the "Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians" (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development

and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA), 2008), stated that the education goals for Australia included, "education systems that promote excellence and equity, and schools which enable all young Australians to become confident and creative, successful lifelong learners who are active and informed members of the community" (p. 4).

Preparing students for their future employment can be described as social mobility (Labaree, 1997). Labaree proposed that since social mobility is about "providing individuals with credentials to compete for desirable social positions" (p. 184), it therefore serves as a private purpose of schooling. Additionally, improving the collective social mobility of citizens allows the country to become more economically competitive on a global scale. Therefore, social mobility also becomes a public function of education (Labaree, 1997). Historically and internationally, schooling has always been involved with the movement and transfer of knowledge from one individual to the next, with the intent of personal (and hence public) human growth (Collins & Allender, 2013).

As an institution, Barber (2004) described schooling as being inherently public. He suggested that the historical foundation of education and the continual focus on citizenship and community building make schooling a public venture. The "Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians" (MCEECDYA, 2008) recognised, "the central role of education in building a democratic, equitable and just society— a society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse, and that values Australia's Indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation's history, present and future" (p. 5). The "Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration" (Education Council, 2019), detailed the goals for young Australians from 2020 and built on the "Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians". The document outlined, "Education has the power to transform lives. It supports young people to realise their potential by providing skills they need to participate in the economy and in society, and contributing to every aspect of their wellbeing" (Education Council, 2019, p. 2). Societies use the mechanism of schooling to promote the public good (Cranston et al., 2010). The public good can be described as encouraging "democratic equality, citizenship, equity and social justice" (p. 183).

Part of belonging to a society is knowing how to participate as a member. Biesta (2008) stated that one of the public purposes and effects of schooling is "*socialization*", meaning that all who undertake schooling are moulded to become members of "particular social, cultural and political orders" (p. 39). The difficulty with the public purpose of schooling, as described by Rogach et al. (2018), is "the search for parity between the observance of social justice and the achievement of economic efficiency" (p. 806). This notion is reflected in the work of Levin (2003), who proposed that schooling addresses public interest by getting students ready to assume roles in society that promote civic responsibility whilst also embracing economic and political values. Society depends on the collective efforts of the whole citizenry, and therefore schooling aims to promote and balance the two public goods of democratic equality and social justice (Labarre, 1997).

The public and private purposes of schooling are not mutually exclusive. One cannot enable the growth of a group without addressing the growth of the individual (Reid, Mulford, Cranston & Keating, 2008;). Bajunid (2000) described this combined purpose as a "process of cultural self-evolution" (p. 172). The Department of Education, Science and Training Curriculum Corporation (2003) argued that in order to operate in society, the purpose of schooling must be as much about building character as it is about equipping students with knowledge and skills. To achieve their multiple and varied end goals, Riley (2013) suggested that schools must purposefully provide a sense of place and belonging for students. He noted that within this stable environment of belonging, students will be able to imagine possibilities and experience the agency necessary to fulfil the purposes of schooling.

### 3.3.2 The role of teachers

Having considered the myriad of visions for the role of schools within society, it is appropriate to turn attention towards the people who are tasked with the difficult job of turning these visions into reality – the teachers. Teachers have traditionally held complex roles in the classroom, broader school environment and local community. There are various layers within the role of the teacher. On one layer, teachers must select and organise content to deliver. On another layer, teachers must plan to use the pedagogical

strategies most appropriate to the learning. Teachers also tend to the emotional, motivational and relational needs of their students, whilst creating a safe learning space within the classroom environment (Mocanu & Sterian, 2013). Finally, teachers are expected to role model how to successfully function within the bounds of school and in the broader community. This role modelling includes such tasks as responding to life circumstances in an effective pro-social and emotional manner (Mocanu & Sterian, 2013).

Within the classroom, teachers are considered to be on "the front lines of the knowledge system" (Winchester, 2004, p. 219). This knowledge system requires an understanding of content, pedagogical skills and individual student needs. Teachers are expected to know their subjects well, know how to acquire new knowledge as it develops and know how to personally contribute to bodies of knowledge (Winchester, 2004). At a fundamental level, a teacher's role is to transfer content knowledge using pedagogical knowledge so that students learning expands in a meaningful way (Calderhead, 1996). Given the advancements in technology and the abundant access to information, this transfer of content knowledge may be less important in contemporary society (Centre for Future-Ready Graduates, 2017). Kale and Akcaoglu (2018) and Stosic (2015) suggested that current and future teachers need to learn how to leverage educational technology. They proposed that effective use of technology could lead to improved collaboration, greater efficiency with assessment, immediate feedback and the provision of self-paced and independent learner activities for students. However, instructional practice has traditionally formed one of the central roles of a teacher (Calderhead, 1996). Through their instructional practices, teachers place the learner in a developing zone between what the student can do alone, and what the student can only do with the help of others, either the teacher or peers (Beck, 2008). Vygotsky called this mental and social zone, between current ability and possible ability, the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978).

For learning to occur effectively, students must feel emotionally safe and connected and must have the intrinsic motivation to engage in cognitive activity. It is a teacher's role to ensure that these factors are considered in the learning process (Beck, 2008). Students require positive motivation to

fully engage in the acquisition of new knowledge. Beck suggested that, in the first instance, most students learn because they like the teacher. Students have to feel that the teacher "appeals to their inner feelings and knows how to arouse their interest, how to explain and systematise knowledge so that they can understand it, without finding things too difficult" (Mocanu & Sterian, 2013, p. 120). When students feel that their teacher is interested and capable of connecting in this way, they are drawn to the subject. Students then learn because they want to, they experience the intrinsic motivation necessary to expand their understanding (Mocanu & Sterian, 2013). Beck (2008) called the process of managing the emotional environment associated with the learning process, emotional containment or scaffolding. A teacher enacts emotional containment through timely and supportive conversations and relationships built on trust. Dewey (1993) proposed that the influence of the teacher's personality is intimately entangled with that of the content. The student does not separate or distinguish the subject from the teacher. Palmer also noted the importance of the relationship with students and subject and argued that "good teaching cannot be equated with technique. It comes from the integrity of the teacher, from his or her relation to subject and students, from the capricious chemistry of it all" (Palmer, 1990). Fullan and Langworthy and Hattie also highlighted this sentiment. The writers in both of these texts suggested that student learning is reliant upon the relationship between the teacher and the student (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014; Hattie, 2015).

A teacher must role model the behaviour and attitudes that they request of students. Bruner (2002) stated that teachers are an immediately personal symbol of the educational process. Students identify with teachers and compare themselves to them, as part of learning and growing. Therefore, the teacher's behaviour, actions and relationships both inside and outside of the classroom must reflect the moral and intellectual leadership required for high-calibre learning (Bajunid, 2000). Regardless of whether teachers are practising their craft, transmuting knowledge, applying rules, building relationships or performing as moral actors transforming lives, they are role modelling to students. A part of a teacher's role is to be a positive and significant role model to the learners and school community (Lumpkin, 2008). Lortie (1975) coined the phrase 'apprenticeship of observation' when

describing the phenomenon of new teachers enacting what they had experienced, observed and evaluated during their time as students in school. This term further supports the notion that students see teachers as role models. The behaviour and interactions of teachers directly influence and shape the direction of student lives (White, 1994).

As the above discussion attests, teachers have complex and multifaceted roles and it is difficult to articulate exactly all of the functions that makeup the job (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014). In an age of increasing change, the demands upon the role of the teacher seem to be never ending (Valli & Buese, 2007). Mocanu and Sterian (2013) likened the teacher's role to a 'chameleon' because the teacher needs to continually adapt. A chameleon "has the possibility to change his colour, to become undistinguishable from the environment, in the same way the teacher should be able to adjust to new situations" (p. 123). Some of the recent adaptations that teachers have had to respond to include technology-related change, the abundance of and access to information, increasing awareness of diagnosed learner difficulties and diversity, navigating the consequences of greater transparency of social and family issues and increasing accountability and compliance requirements (Hoyle, 2001; Valli & Buese, 2007). Furthermore, Winchester (2004) argued that teachers are at "the front line of these [cognitive health care and social welfare] systems for a significant part of our population, those between about three and 19 years of age" (p. 172). Bajunid (2000) proposed that because of the increasing change and demands on teachers, it is essential that teachers obtain and exercise spiritual maturity and enter "a journey against mindlessness and a search for the human awareness and consciousness where existence bespeaks a psychic wholeness" (p. 175). In doing so, he believed teachers will be able to avoid becoming isolated, disassociated and alienated from the reasons that they entered the profession.

### 3.3.3 Catholic Education Western Australia: The purpose of schooling

Schools within a religious system have a slightly different purpose from schools that are recognised as public or non-denominational. A religious school is normally a part of a worldwide system that espouses beliefs, traditions and a particular manner of life. The schools in this study are

Catholic. The purpose of Catholic schooling within the Catholic Education system of Western Australia cannot be separated from the purpose of the Catholic Church. The purpose of the Catholic Church is to serve as a Universal Sacrament of Salvation in the world. The Church aims to be an instrument and a sign of God's saving purposes throughout all societies, as presented in the "Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015" (CECWA, 2009). It is the Church's mission to reach out to individuals and communities and to offer salvation from worldly suffering through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Catholic schools are ecclesial communities that play an integral part in the Church's mission of salvation. Catholic schools are, therefore, called to serve as institutions that evangelise and educate students and their families, within a Catholic framework. The purpose of Catholic schooling is "to contribute to the development of our young through education, particularly to their formation in Christian conscience and virtue" (CECWA, 2009, p. 9). It is understood that, from a Catholic perspective, education is the development of students from within, "freeing them from that conditioning which would prevent them from becoming fully integrated human beings" (CECWA, 2009, p. 12). Schools must intentionally direct educational programs towards the growth of the whole person (CECWA, 2009). Catholic schools aim to "support all students to think independently and learn to know, love and respect themselves and others" (CEWA, n.d.). Catholic schools recognise the importance of community in education and actively promote and engage the partnership between teachers, parents, students and peers. Purposes of Catholic schooling also include providing a "nurturing and safe community" where children and their families experience a "sense of belonging and connectedness", and celebrating the "diversity and achievements of all" so that students can "discover their abilities and reach their full potential" (CEWA, n.d.). Catholic schools are different from non-Catholic schools in that they exist to form not just men and women, but Christian men and women. It is anticipated that through a Catholic education, students will be witnesses of their faith and will "show non-Christians something of the mystery of Christ, who surpasses all understanding" (CECWA, 2009, p. 12).

*3.3.4 Catholic Education Western Australia: The role of teachers*

In order to fulfil the purposes of Catholic schooling, as discussed above, teachers are called to be Christian witnesses by offering a "Christ-like presence to others" (CECWA, 2009, p. 21). Teachers are asked to act in a manner that allows students to feel loved. Teacher and student relationships should include a religious dimension and teachers are required to "pray for their students' problems, worries and challenges" (p. 22). Teachers in Catholic schools are called to ensure that a Gospel atmosphere permeates the classroom and school. Within their Learning Areas, Catholic school teachers should strive "to enlighten students' human knowledge with the data of faith" and "join in the human quest for truth, particularly by asking constantly 'how?' and 'why?' as well as 'what?'" (p. 34). It is expected that teachers within the Catholic system receive "up-to-date spiritual and religious formation" (p. 44), appreciate the vocational nature of teaching in a Catholic school and understand their role within the diocese (CECWA, 2009).

## 3.4 Summary

Various views on the role of schools within society appear in the literature (Curren, 2014; Hoyle, 2008; Labaree, 1997). The literature presents schools as places to transfer knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviours to children and adolescents (Bajunid, 2000; Biesta, 2008; Collins & Allender, 2013; Levin, 2003). This transfer helps to build and shape the individual, and through the individual, society at large (Power, 2003; Cranston et al., 2010; Rogach et al., 2018; Valli & Buese, 2007; White, 1994). Helping the individual to grow and develop and become an active, well-rounded citizen are key roles of schools (Education Council, 2019; Bajunid, 2000; Barber, 2004; Biesta, 2008; UNESCO, 1996; 2015; MECCDYA, 2008; Power, 2003; Winch, 2005). Teachers enact this purpose through role modelling, relationships and the application of informal, formal and systematic training, both inside and outside of the classroom (Beck, 2008; Biesta, 2008; Calderhead, 1996; Dewey, 1993; Fullan & Langworthy, 2014; Mocanu & Sterian, 2013; Palmer, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978; Winchester, 2004). In CEWA schools, education is delivered through a Catholic lens. A cornerstone of Catholic schools is developing the whole child, armed with a

Christian conscience and Gospel values (CECWA, 2009). Catholic school teachers have the added responsibility to be witnesses to the Catholic faith so that these Gospel values can permeate the school (CEWA, n.d.). There is little research to assess the degree to which students themselves understand the overarching purpose of schooling nor the intended roles of their teachers. It is also important to discern what Catholic school students believe the broader purpose of education to be, beyond their Catholicity. This insight may well provide greater depth when examining their perspectives of teaching as a career. The review of the literature on the role of schools within society led to two specific sub-questions relating to the perspectives of Year 12 Catholic school students towards the purpose of schooling. These sub-questions are addressed under Research Question One:

- What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?
    - What do you understand as the overall purpose of teaching as a career? Why do you think this way?
    - Why do you think teachers become teachers?

## 3.5 The status of the teaching profession in society

As discussed in the last section, teachers have long been recognised as influential people charged with the dual responsibility of ensuring the intellectual maturity of students and equipping each generation to meet the demands of the future (Hargreaves, 2009). It might be expected that such foundational, significant and far-reaching work would enjoy high status and respect within society (Hoyle, 2008). In some countries, teachers do enjoy relatively high salaries and desirable working conditions. However, overall, teaching is not considered to be as high status a profession, when compared to the likes of medicine, law and engineering (Hoyle, 2008). The OECD's (2005) paper detailing the survey on the recruitment and retention of teachers highlighted a concern that teaching as a career has fallen in social standing over the years. The *Who Wants to Become a Teacher and Why? s*tudy (OECD, 2018), found that "countries with higher teacher salaries (relative to GDP) and higher perceptions of the social value of the teaching profession have, on average, larger shares of students who expect to work as teachers" (p. 2). The improvement in the image and status of the

profession were named as priorities (OECD, 2005; 2018). The Global Teacher Index (Dolton, Marcenaro, De Vires & She, 2018) measured the status of teachers alongside the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results and stated that the results in their index prove "the link between the status of teachers in society and the performance of children in school. Now we can say beyond doubt that respecting teachers isn't only an important moral duty – it's essential for a country's educational outcomes" (p. 1). The literature on the notion of 'status' can be broken down into three distinct yet overlapping categories. The review of literature will examine the research on the teaching profession in terms of its occupational prestige, professionalisation and occupational esteem, as outlined below.

**Table 3.3**

*Outline of the status of the teaching profession in society*

| |
| --- |
| 3.5.1  Occupational prestige |
| 3.5.2  Professionalisation of teaching |
| 3.5.3  Occupational esteem |
| 3.6    Summary |

*3.5.1 Occupational prestige*

The perceived occupational prestige associated with a particular job is one element that helps to inform the societal image of the status of a profession. Hoyle (2008) defined occupational prestige as "the public perception of the relative position of an occupation in a hierarchy of occupations" (p. 139). According to Hoyle, there is an eighty-year history of research on occupational prestige. The most common method used for measuring prestige has been to ask samples of the population to place a list of occupation titles on a ranking scale using criteria such as 'higher' or 'lower'. The rank order of the various occupations shows a high consistency across cultures, societies, economies and political systems (Hoyle, 2001). When the hierarchies from 85 studies across 60 countries were transferred into a single metric, called the Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale (SIOPS), the correlation between the rankings across different countries was reported to be very high (Treiman, 1977). Hoyle argued that

whilst the underlying assumptions of participants may somewhat skew data, the correlation between the studies would suggest that occupational hierarchies are "stable over time and apparently amenable to little change" (2008, p. 140). There is only one title for teachers on the original SIOPS and that is 'schoolteacher'. Positionally, it appears at the bottom of the top quartile of listed occupations and is situated amongst "the semi-professionals of social work, nursing, police and librarianship and below the major professions" (p. 140) such as medicine, law and architecture. Hoyle (2001) and Hargreaves (2009) pointed out that within the category of schoolteachers, variation exists when titles include pre-primary, primary, and secondary. Pre-primary teaching is ranked 49 below primary at 57 and secondary at 64. Since 1977 the scale has been updated with new data, but no change was found in the occupational prestige associated with pre-primary and primary teaching and secondary teaching moved down the scale to 60 (Ganzeboom & Treiman, 1996).

Numerous factors contribute to the perceived prestige of teaching. These factors combine to produce an occupational image of the profession. Hoyle (2001) suggested one crucial factor that underpins the image of a teacher is the fact that teachers' cliental are children. He proposed that teachers are in a position whereby their cliental are "forced" to attend routinely on mass and this opens the potential for disorder. A teacher can lose control quickly with few sanctions available to address the disorder. This fact presents as "an intractable barrier to enhanced prestige" (p. 143). Professions that have a higher occupational prestige tend to see their cliental on an individual, controlled and needs basis. Students are exposed to and familiar with a career in teaching during their whole education. This apprenticeship removes any professional mystique about the role (Labaree, 1997). Hoyle (2001) argued the intermediate nature of the relationship between teachers and students gives rise to four common undesirable canards relating to teachers. Firstly, he advised that teachers are seen to prepare students for a future world, of which he or she is not fully a part. Secondly, teachers play an intermediate role between school and work and this highlights the canard of, 'those who can, do; those who can't, teach'. Thirdly, the notion that teachers should transmute school values, which are

not widely espoused in the adult world, adds to the pressure for teachers to be intermediate role models. Finally, teachers are seen to transmit knowledge rather than create it. Therefore, the canard that "teachers are paid to spread other people's butter" (Geer, 1966, p. 37) adversely impacts the image of the teaching profession. These four canards come together to form the image that teachers play an intermediate role in the world. Whilst their students achieve, accomplish and move on beyond the control of their school, teachers remain left behind in a dependent social role (Hoyle, 2001).

Other factors that may have a detrimental impact on the occupational prestige of teaching are the ambiguity of a teacher's role and the size of the profession. The sheer number of teachers required in society and the public funding of wages, beget the salary and characteristics of those entering the work force. Higher salaries and higher university entry requirements are features of professions with greater occupational prestige. These professions generally have fewer places available in the universities. Hoyle (2001) identified the large number of teachers as a limiting factor to salaries. He also proposed that the demand for teachers is connected to the lower university entry requirements for teaching, and the subsequent higher number of lower-achieving student enrolment. Hoyle asserted that the larger number of teachers in the past were more likely to come from a social class, white-collar background, which limited the perspective of the occupational prestige associated with the profession (Hoyle, 1995). The goals of education are diverse and not broadly agreed. This ambiguity has left the teacher's role open to intensification and expansion (Hoyle, 2001). Occupational prestige is normally aligned with a specialisation (such as cardiac surgeon in medicine) and therefore the varied and ever-expanding role of the teacher has a detrimental effect on the image of the profession.

The perspective that the teaching profession does not attract young people with high academic standards is one that is widely held in Australia and internationally (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Lai, Chan, Ko & So, 2005; Watt & Richardson, 2007). The "Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Data Report" (AITSL, 2014) disclosed that, in Australia, school leavers entering teaching courses as a first preference are in the minority of teaching enrolments. The report identified that the cohort entering teaching as school leavers has a

13% higher proportion of lower-achieving students and 19% lower proportion of higher-achieving students when compared to all other fields of study (Weldon, 2015). A rising percentage of school leavers entering initial teacher education (ITE) courses over the years 2005 – 2012 were in lower ATAR bands (AITSL, 2014). The 2014 "ITE Data Report" produced by AITSL, noted that school-leaver entrants to teacher education courses are a minority. Great numbers of entrants are mature age students.

University admissions into Science, Engineering and Business courses in Australia are predominantly offered to students with ATARs above 70 (Weldon, 2015). Fewer than half of the university admissions into Education are offered to students with ATARs above 70 (AITSL, 2014). The high minimum ATAR cut off for entry into university courses such as Dentistry (99), Medicine (99), Engineering (92) and Law (97), (University of Western Australia, 2016) suggests that high performing students are selecting careers in fields associated with prestigious recognition. In 2012, the applications for teaching courses from school leavers comprised 29% of the total enrolments. Of these enrolments, 36% of students had an ATAR between 51-70. The average percentage of students with an ATAR between 51-70 in all other courses totalled 23%. There were 8% of student enrolments into teaching with an ATAR between 91-100 in 2012, compared to the average of 27% across all other fields (Weldon, 2015). The report also noted that an increasing percentage of education course students were from lower ATAR bands over the period 2005-2012. It was noted that lower ATAR scores are associated with lower retention rates (Weldon, 2015). These factors suggest that initial offers and acceptances for teacher education courses by school leavers in Australia are comprised of students with lower academic achievement when compared across all fields. In high performing countries where teaching is considered to be a high prestige profession, such as Finland, university entrance for teaching is taken from the top performing 30% of students (Masters, 2015; McKinsey & Company, 2007).

### 3.5.2 Professionalisation of teaching

Traditionally, occupations that were considered to be 'professional' in nature were recognised by society as having a higher status. Therefore, the

'professional' features of teaching require examination to better understand the reasons behind the social status associated with a teaching career. Professionalisation of the teaching profession has provided many countries, schools and teachers with both hope and aggravation over the years (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). When an occupation is defined as a 'profession', certain characteristics and criteria can be identified within that occupation's work structures. Professionalism is closely linked to working within a profession, in that sociologists consider professionals to be experts in their field, committed to improvement and public service. Exhibiting professionalism encompasses acquiring and displaying certain attitudinal and psychological attributes (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008).

Professionalisation is the process by which an occupation can develop into a recognised profession (Hargreaves, 2009). Teaching is not necessarily considered a 'profession' by the public, regardless of it being legally recognised as such (Commonwealth Parliament & Parliament House, 2013). Various authors have argued (Hargreaves, 2009; Hoyle, 2001; Ingersoll & Perda 2008) that teaching does not meet the traditional 'profession model' and therefore is better categorised as a 'semi-profession'. This proposition translates to the public status of teaching being less than the status associated with the more formal professions. Ingersoll and Perda (2008) summarised common characteristics of a traditional 'professional model' that sociologists have used to differentiate professions from other occupations. Ingersoll and Perda (2008) utilised the indicators within the model to examine the professionalisation of teaching. These indicators are credentials and licensing requirements for entry; induction and mentoring programs; professional development opportunities and participation; authority over decision-making; compensation levels; and specialisation, prestige and occupational social standing (which have already been addressed under the section 'occupational prestige' above.) These indicators are not exhaustive but include the most common characteristics of a profession. There was significant variation in these indicators when schools, sectors (public vs. private) and socio-economic areas were compared in Washington D.C. against these characteristics (Ingersoll & Perda 2008).

An occupation recognised as a profession traditionally requires credentials and licensing for entry. These requirements are linked to the notion that people engaged in professions typically have a complex set of skills and high levels of intellectual functioning and knowledge (Hoyle, 2008). Teacher training in Australia began with an apprenticeship model. Teacher education occurred inside real and model schools. In Australia, and most Western countries, teacher training moved towards a formal structure in the 1800s, with the first Teaching College opening in Australia in 1850. By 1988, teacher education had taken a more scholarly approach, and a University credential was required (Aspland, 2006).

The societal interest in increasing the credentials and licensing requirements for teachers has continued over the last 30 years, particularly in the 1990s. Within Australia, many government inquiries and reviews led to changes in certification of teachers, such as: the "Teacher Education in Australia" report (National Board of Teacher Education and Training, 1990); "National competencies standards for the teaching profession" (Louden, 1992); the "New South Wales Review of Teacher Education - Quality Matters" (Ramsay, 2000); the "National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education" (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 2001); "Teacher Standards and Professionalism" report (Australian College of Education, 2001); "Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership" (MCEETYA, 2001); the "Teacher Education Accreditation" review (Ingvarson, Elliott, Kleinhenz, & McKenzie, 2006); and "National Teaching Workforce Dataset Project Report" (Willett, Segal & Walford, 2014).

In Australia in 2004, teacher registration boards commenced across all Australian States to act as professional bodies to represent teachers. Along with the establishment of these registration boards came new annual licensing requirements for teachers relating to police checks, working with children cards and the completion of regular professional development. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), a corporation representing the profession, commenced in 2010 with the express goal of promoting excellence in teaching and school leadership. AITSL formalised and published Australian Professional Standards for Teachers after extensive consultation across Australia. From 2016, new

licensing standards were introduced in Australia for teachers graduating from University. Prior to graduation, students are required to prove a minimum level of literacy and numeracy through testing by completing the Literacy and Numeracy Test in Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE). The minimum level ensures that graduating teachers achieve within the top 30% of the adult population for personal literacy and numeracy (AITSL, 2015; Australian Council for Educational Research, 2020). The inception of these incorporated bodies alongside their requirements for teachers, bring teachers more in line with the professional model and hence add to the professionalisation of teaching. In Finland, where teachers enjoy high prestige, as of 1974 all teacher training was transferred to universities, resulting in the current situation of teachers requiring a Masters' degree for certification (Malaty, 2006). This upgrade in training is not the only factor that allows Finnish teaching profession to be regarded as prestigious. Hargreaves (2009) recognised that "good working conditions, small classes, welfare role and professional autonomy in curricular decision-making, together with freedom from discipline problems, inspections and pressure from a private sector" (p. 223) are also contributors to the high prestige associated with teaching in Finland.

Given the importance of credentials to professions, it is not surprising that upskilling requirements for teaching have been a large part of international school reform over the years (Ingersoll & Perda 2008; Sahlberg, 2016). Upgrading certification should, in theory, enhance the qualifications of teachers, the quality of teaching and learning and the professionalisation of the profession (Hoyle, 2008). However, others argued that in order to attract and entice high-calibre people from other occupations and mature age students with experience, a lessening of requirements should be employed. For example, programs such as "Teach for Australia" (2020) reduce the number of years of training required for top performing individuals from industry to become teachers. This phenomenon of relaxing minimum requirements can also be seen in remote schools and low socio-economic areas where teaching roles are difficult to fill. Ingersoll and Perda (2008), argued that allowing people into the profession without the agreed credentials, whilst in many cases could be good for students and schools, is

ultimately de-professionalising teaching and hence reducing the perceived status (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008).

Professions, generally, exhibit extensive induction, post-university training and mentorship to fully prepare new entrants for their career. These programs can include both formal and informal internships, apprenticeships and a career pathway aligned to recognised achievement. The goals of the programs are to: aid new practitioners in adjusting to the realities of the role and environment; to address any underlying deficiencies in skill and knowledge; and for improvement in practices (Ingersoll & Perda 2008). Induction and mentoring programs for teachers tend to be informal, haphazard and school-based. AITSL (n.d.), developed induction and mentoring materials in 2014 for Australian schools to utilise on a voluntarily basis. These materials are used with early career teachers so that they can progress towards teaching proficiency more quickly and transparently.

Teachers' career pathways follow a linear model aligned to years of service, not recognised achievement (Hoyle, 2008). This fact may hinder the professionalisation of teaching. Access to, and engagement in, professional development is a hallmark of the formal professions. Ingersoll and Perda (2008) argued that professional learning is necessary to obtain mastery and continually improve. Professional development for teachers has been one of the most widely discussed teacher reforms in the last twenty years (Ingersoll & Perda 2008; Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia, n.d.). Since 2004, it has been compulsory for teachers in Australia to complete a minimum of 20 hours of professional development each year (Teacher Registration Board of WA, n.d.). Schools are expected to provide for 'student free' professional development days in the yearly calendar. Realistically, the level of support, funding and opportunities for individual teachers varies among schools and systems (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). The inclusion of licensing requirements may, over time, increase the professionalisation of teaching (Ingersoll & Perda 2008).

Professional authority exists to place high levels of control into the hands of those who are considered the most knowledgeable and best placed to make decisions. Professionals are seen as experts and enjoy a substantial degree of self-governance within agreed accountability procedures (Ingersoll

& Perda 2008). The distribution of power, authority and the role of hierarchical structures and teacher autonomy versus collaboration in schools have been given attention in educational reform (Masters, 2014; OECD, 2013; Suliteanu, 2014). The teaching profession in Australia has become increasingly regulated, which is indicative of the increasing influence at a federal level, as indicated in Chapter 2. Various compliance related activities, such as national testing and the delivery of the Australian curriculum have increased (Australian Government, 2004; 2019). Whilst in part, compliance and regulation are characteristics of other professions, the subsequent lack of autonomy teachers experience in the classroom, may be an obstacle to the full process of the professionalisation of teaching (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). There has been a push for teachers to engage in shared decision-making in schools, thereby increasing their influence over the direction of whole school initiatives and enhancing teacher participation at a school level (Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013). However, it remains to be seen whether this approach is widespread or has added any value to the perceived status of the profession.

Another factor that contributes to a profession's status is remuneration. 'Professionals' are generally considered well compensated in terms of pay and benefits (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). In Australia, graduates from teaching degrees are among the highest paid, the average starting point being $60 635 per annum. This figure is above the annual starting salary for engineering, law, psychology and architecture (PayScale, 2020; Queensland Government, 2017). Teachers generally move up the pay scale based on years of service and, therefore, the salaries are capped after a certain number of years. There has been discourse surrounding the introduction of performance-based pay in teaching (AITSL, 2019). However, it is not yet clear whether a move to a performance-based model, rather than automatic increments, would promote or demote the profession in terms of professionalisation (Ingvarson, 2010; Leigh, 2007). The notion of performance-based pay for teachers is raised periodically, but has yet to be implemented.

*3.5.3 Occupational esteem*

The perceived occupational esteem associated with a particular job is one element that helps to inform the societal image of the status of a profession. Occupational esteem is "the regard in which an occupation is held by the general public by virtue of the personal qualities which members are perceived as bringing to their core task" (Hoyle, 2001, p. 147). Occupational esteem for teachers tends to be assessed through interpersonal rather than technical skills (Hoyle, 2001). High esteem, however, does not always transfer to high occupational prestige or status (Hargreaves, 2009). For example, in a recent study on the image of professions Morgan (2017) found that 81% of 648 Australians rated schoolteachers as 'very high' or 'high' for their ethics and honesty. Teachers were rated an overall fourth, below doctors, nurses then pharmacists. A Market and Opinion Research International (MORI) survey (2005) revealed that 88% of those surveyed believed that teachers were the second most trusted profession after doctors (90%), and before professors (77%), judges (76%), and those in clergy (73%). In 2007 the MORI survey uncovered that 96% of people were satisfied with the manner in which teachers conduct their role. In contrast, in the 2002 MORI survey, of the 70 000 teachers interviewed, 68% indicated that they believed the general public gave them little to no respect at all.

Hoyle (2001) suggested that the *self-esteem* of teachers may have been negatively impacted by top down approaches to educational reform, increased policy requirements and the general scrutiny of the profession by politicians. He claimed that this negative response by teachers to government attention, intervention and new requirements may have caused a reduction in esteem from the public, and that a more positive acceptance of the reform changes may have resulted in an increase in public status for the profession. Hoyle argued that "the esteem in which teaching is held by the general public will derive largely from personal experience" (2001, p. 147). He proposed that this fact creates a capacity for improvement in the esteem of teaching, since such improvement is in the hands of teachers themselves. Teachers may be viewed positively in terms of esteem because the rewards

associated with their roles are viewed as intrinsic and toward the greater good, rather than financial and self-serving (Hoyle, 2001).

**3.6 Summary**

Literature on the status of the teaching profession indicates that teaching is generally viewed lower than the traditional professions of Medicine, Law, Engineering and Architecture (Geer, 1966; Hargreaves, 2009; Hoyle, 2001; 2008; Labaree, 1997). However, the public perspective of the occupational esteem associated with teachers remains positive over time (Hoyle, 2001; Morgan, 2017; MORI, 2005; 2007). People generally recognise that teachers play a pivotal role in the development of society and as such, are generally regarded with a high level of trust in terms of integrity and morality (Morgan, 2017; MORI 2005; 2007). The rewards for teachers are mostly considered intrinsic and related to the satisfaction gained from the growth of students (Hoyle, 2001). Whilst starting salaries are generally high, overall remuneration increases incrementally over time but becomes capped (Queensland Government, 2018). Therefore, the requirement to stay competitive and the scope for advancement within the field are limited (AITSL, 2019; Ingvarson, 2010; Leigh, 2007). The review of the literature on the status of teaching reveals a gap in the research in relation to student perspectives. That is, research on student views of the status of professions, specifically teaching, appears limited. Student views on the status of the various professions would influence their perspective of a teaching career. A sub-question to address this gap in the literature was created under Research Question Two:

- What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of choosing teaching as a career?
  - How does teaching compare in terms of status with other professions such as Physiotherapy, Accountancy, Law, Medicine and Engineering, and why?

### 3.7 Factors that encourage people to choose a teaching career

One of the aspects that helps to inform people's perspectives of a career is the positive images that they associate with the role. Therefore, it is important to understand what these positive 'draw cards' are for the teaching profession. The research surrounding what attracts people to a career in teaching is predominantly from the perspective of aspiring or qualified teachers. This review of literature provides insight into what is considered important, mostly to those who have already made the decision to go into a teaching occupation. When choosing a career in teaching, people are motivated by a combination of altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Balyer & Özcan, 2014). The degree of attraction to these factors is influenced by a person's values, expectations and cultural characteristics. A review of the literature reveals four overarching factors that attract people to a career in teaching. These factors include: vocation and social contribution; knowledge and learning; lifestyle choice; influenced by others (Table 3.4). Some studies have suggested in some studies that a proportion of teachers enter the profession due to a lack of viable alternatives, or as a fall-back option (Alexander, Chant & Cox, 1994; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Richardson & Watt, 2006). Given these are not considered as encouraging or discouraging factors per se, they will be omitted from the literature review.

**Table 3.4**

*Outline of factors that encourage people to choose a teaching career*

| | |
|---|---|
| 3.7.1 | Vocation and social contribution |
| 3.7.2 | Knowledge and love of learning |
| 3.7.3 | Lifestyle choice |
| 3.7.4 | Influenced by others |
| 3.8 | Summary |

*3.7.1 Vocation and the social contribution*

The characteristics of teaching that appeal intrinsically and altruistically to a person are related to a deep sense of calling to, and connection with, the profession (Hutchinson & Johnson, 1994). Intrinsic factors appeal to a person's inner psyche, such as an interest in a subject or

the activity of teaching children or the motivation to do a job of which one feels proud (Kane & Mallon, 2006). Altruistic factors appeal to a person's desire to make a difference in the world, such as the drive to shape future generations or help others. Both intrinsic and altruistic factors come from within a person and are not reliant upon external factors such as remuneration and status. Numerous studies have found that people are drawn to teaching mostly because of altruistic and intrinsic motivations (Alexander et al.,1994; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Scott, Stone & Dinham, 2001; Spear, Gould & Lee, 2000). Teaching is widely considered a noble and worthwhile career and is often cited as a vocation, requiring passionate devotion and a sense of selflessness (Berliner 2011; Department of Education, 2010; Milliband 2003). According to these perspectives, teaching is something that people are innately drawn to, or gravitate towards, as a life calling (Serow, Eaker & Ciechalski, 1992).

The word 'vocation' is a term with deep religious roots and associations (Dawson, 2005). Vocation was first used in the Middle Ages to describe the experience of an 'inner calling' towards a religious life in the Christian, Monastic tradition (Beder, 2000). Over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, it was understood that secular occupations had dimensions of human worth and dignity and existed alongside religious callings as vehicles for human expression and fulfillment (Dawson, 2005). The word vocation grew to include occupations that allowed for "selfless service and submission or devotion to a higher ideal, goal, or object" (Goldman, 1988, p. 14). In contemporary society, the word 'vocation' encompasses both theological and non-theological conations. The term 'vocation' is now used in many ways. For example, it can be employed to describe a person's familial role, such as Mother, or work title, such as Doctor. In this review of the literature, the concept of vocation, in relation to teaching, will be characterised by a sense of an 'inner calling' or gift, originating from a higher power or something beyond oneself, that demands an intentional choice, requiring selflessness, devotion, fidelity and an assumed responsibility once accepted (Buijs, 2005). Some people feel encouraged to become teachers if they experience an inner calling, which manifests in a sense of selflessness and devotion to the greater goals of education (Richardson & Watt, 2006).

Following an inner calling provides a sense of belonging and satisfaction. It encourages people to go beyond themselves and to give more than they ordinarily would. Serow et al., (1992) conducted research with 478 undergraduates to determine what attracted pre-service teachers to the profession and what drove their ongoing commitment. Those who exhibited a high commitment to a career in teaching tended to demonstrate a particular underlying orientation. This orientation was described as "a sense of calling" (p. 136). These students believed that their inner calling, and the expected self-efficacy that could be derived from helping others, were their strongest reasons for choosing teaching. Dinham and Scott (2000) undertook a large study with teachers from Australia, New Zealand and England. These researchers found that just under half of all teacher participants indicated that they "always wanted to be a teacher" (p. 284). This statement strongly implies that a sense of calling is common among teachers and that discovering this inner call is a fundamental factor in determining whether someone will pursue a teaching career. Page and Page (1984) conducted a study on "Perceptions of teaching as a future opportunity" with 2 478 senior students. One of the major results was that "the factor that best discriminates whether students will consider teaching is simply whether or not other individuals have discussed this possibility with them" (p. 4). In their recommendations they suggested that teachers and parents should investigate with children whether or not a call to education, or an 'inner teacher' lies latent within them. However, AITSL has recently argued that teaching is 'a profession, not a vocation' (2019). This comment was made in a submission to the Australian Government Inquiry into the Status of Teaching.

Researchers have suggested that when teachers operate from a sense of higher purpose, they have greater access to hope, faith, selflessness and devotion in the teaching and learning process (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2012). The ability to express hopefulness and work towards a greater good are both factors that encourage people to consider a career in teaching (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2012). In one study (Manual & Hughes, 2006), 71% of 79 pre-service teachers indicated that they believe teaching will offer a space for them to be selfless in the devotion to student outcomes,

and they believe this task provides personal fulfillment. In another study involving 133 teachers, by Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2015), the opportunity for personal fulfillment was identified as the strongest factor influencing decisions to entering the teaching profession.

Another aspect of vocation that encourages people to teach is the notion of service (Lortie, 1975). Buijs (2005) suggested that an inner call implies a divine purpose that individuals are summoned to fulfil. An expectation of this summonsing is being an authentic witness to certain educational beliefs and ideals. Since the call comes from beyond oneself, the task, purpose and commitment to serve also extend beyond oneself, for the benefit of others. Buijs (2005) indicated that the acknowledgment of a calling and the response to the call to serve others through a commitment to education, students and learning, are altruistic factors that draw people to the profession.

Other studies have affirmed that the qualities associated with a vocation, without the presence of an inner calling, are still seen as the significant motivators for people to become teachers (Johnston, McKeown & McEwen, 1999). For example, a person may not experience a summonsing of sorts, but can still be attracted to the profession because of the satisfaction that the role provides. The belief that teachers have a mission to educate and hence make a difference in the world is a widely accepted view (OECD, 2005). Johnston, McKeown and McEwen, (1999) conducted a study on perspectives of primary teaching as a career choice with 1 036 Irish senior students. The students ranked 'perceived job satisfaction' as the highest influencer of career choice. There was no mention of vocation or calling within the study. The students identified that the satisfaction and fulfilment associated with teaching is linked to the notion that "teaching performs a moral service to society" (p. 193).

The teaching profession offers teachers a tangible opportunity to shape the future of society. Kane and Mallon (2006) completed a study on teaching and teachers, which contained the perceptions of 827 principals, teachers and preservice teachers. They found that 73% of the participants were attracted to their roles because the profession gave them an opportunity to "give children the best possible start in life" (p. 31). It was

noted that "a feeling of professional efficacy was enjoyed when teaching enabled them to make a difference" (p. 31). Studies conducted by Butcher and Lewis (2002) involving high school students, and a large international study by Scott, Stone and Dinham (2001) revealed that being able to help students and making a contribution to the future of society consistently ranked in the top three attractions to teaching.

Teaching is an attractive career for those who wish to make a social contribution (Brookhart & Freeman 1992). Kane and Mallon (2006), discovered in their research that 77% of the teacher and principal participants and 75% of preservice teachers thought that an appealing factor associated with a teaching career, is the possibility to feel fulfilled in providing a social contribution. Of the teachers and principals involved in the study, 75% revealed that they chose teaching because they wanted to do something meaningful with their lives while 85% of the preservice teachers also noted this reason. The study revealed that a common reason for choosing teaching as a career was because it provides people with an opportunity to experience a sense of meaning and purpose, both at an individual and a community level. In a similar vein, 75% of participants in the Kane and Mallon study (2006) disclosed that they believed teaching is a job of which they can be proud.

Kane and Mallon (2006) suggested that the ability to work with children is a commonly known motivator that draws people to enter a teaching career. The study revealed that "dealing with children and young people, being involved in their learning and feeling a sense of doing a socially useful job, reflect intrinsic satisfiers which are very strong" (p. 7). According to Kane and Mallon (2006) and Young (1995), the desire to work with children is attractive for various reasons, such as being able to build caring relationships with, and relating to, the younger generation; making a positive difference in student achievement, attitudes and behaviours; contributing constructively to a child's development; helping students participate in the community; and assisting students to meet their goals and life ambitions. Furthermore, Watt and Richardson (2007) argued that working with youth provides teachers with the chance to shape the future and enhance social equity. Other studies also cited contributing to society,

helping to shape the next generation and making a difference in the lives of students as factors that attract people to a career in teaching (Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Williams & Forgasz, 2009).

*3.7.2 Knowledge and love of learning*

Those who enjoy the acquisition of knowledge, subject expertise and adding to a field of study often find teaching to be an attractive career (Spear et al., 2000). Kane and Mallon (2006) cite the mental stimulation associated with learning and helping others to learn as key incentives for choosing teaching as a career. Teaching can be viewed as a highly expert job that requires continuous professional development and a commitment to life-long learning (Richardson & Watt, 2007). Prior positive experiences of school, subjects and teachers, are often considered precursors that contribute to a love of learning and this often attracts people to the teaching profession (Robertson, Keith & Page, 1983). This point is confirmed in the Kane and Mallon (2006) study, which suggests that positive learning experiences and good relationships with teachers can bolster the perspective of teaching as an attractive career.

Summerhill, Matranga, Peltier and Hill (1998) conducted a study with 1537 senior students, of which 555 were interested in a teaching career. The study revealed that 84.5% of those interested in teaching indicated that knowledge and skill in a subject area were important reasons for their planned career choice. In the Manuel and Hughes (2006) study 70% of preservice teachers cited enjoyment of a subject as the second top factor that influenced their decision to enter the profession. Lai et al., (2005) found that 46% of 623 prospective teaching undergraduates noted that their desire to teach a subject that they liked was one of the most attractive factors drawing them to the profession. Watt and Richardson (2007) suggested that knowledge of and passion for a specific subject area are factors that particularly attract people to secondary school teaching.

The actual activity of teaching can be viewed as an appealing aspect of the job (Alexander et al., 1994). Preservice teachers in one study felt that strategically selecting pedagogy and the act of classroom teaching would be enjoyable and rewarding activities (Johnston et al., 1999). They also

envisaged that providing this instruction would offer meaningful and ongoing mental stimulation. In the Johnston et al., (1999) study, the third most influential factor that attracted 1025 aspiring primary teachers to the profession was the perceived challenge associated with helping others to learn and grow. Kane and Mallon (2006) showed that 63% of the participants were drawn to the challenging nature of the role and 70% liked the degree of variety associated with the classroom and day-to-day tasks. In the same study, 66% of senior students indicated that they believed teaching offers opportunities for life-long learning and professional development. These students rated these attributes as the second most attractive feature of teaching when considering learning and development. A teaching career satisfies those who have a desire to impart knowledge. Alexander et al., (1994) discovered that the ability to share knowledge was a common overarching theme that attracts people to teaching.

### 3.7.3 Lifestyle choice

The extrinsic factors that attract people to a career in teaching include holidays, job security, work-life balance and availability of jobs (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Teachers benefit from longer holidays comparative to other professions. The perceived lifestyle that accompanies the longer holidays is a factor that is considered attractive (Manuel & Hughes, 2006). Further, the working conditions and earlier finish time are characteristics of teaching that people find pleasing (Balyer & Özcan, 2014). For instance, Manuel and Hughes (2006) posited that teaching is conducive to family life and the holidays allow for the pursuing of personal interests and travel. Therefore, the increased possibility of a good quality of life is a factor that attracts people to the career (Bastick, 1999). The job security of teaching in terms of transferability between schools, both nationally and internationally, a steady income and possible career progression are extrinsic factors that are considered appealing (Yong, 1995). These factors are particularly valued during times of economic instability within society (Knoll, 2015).

Many studies have revealed that the longer length of holidays and shorter working day attract people to a career in teaching (Balyer & Özcan,

2014; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty 2015; Kane & Mallon, 2006). In studies that ask teachers or preservice teachers why they chose the profession, holidays generally rank highly as an extrinsic factor, but consistently below altruistic and intrinsic factors (Kane & Malon, 2006; Manual & Hughes, 2006). In a study that also engaged those not likely to choose teaching, holidays ranked more positively than other characteristics, as an attraction to the profession (Butcher & Lewis 2002). In the Bayler and Özcan study (2014), which included 1410 preservice teachers, 51% agreed or strongly agreed that 'more holidays' was a factor that positively impacted their career choice. In the same study, 57% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that 'good working hours' was an attraction associated with a teaching career. When 1036 secondary students were asked about primary teaching as a career, holidays ranked as the fifth factor that influenced decisions below job satisfaction, mental stimulation, salary and status (Johnston et al., 1999). Summerhill et al. (1998) found that 43% of 555 high school students who were interested in teaching believed that 'holidays and working hours' was an important reason for choosing teaching. This reason was ranked 8 out of a total of 24. In Manuel and Hughes' research (2006), only 2.5% of the 158 preservice teachers believed that holidays were a factor that influenced their decision to teach. However, Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) found that 72% of 298 undergraduates ranked holidays as the number one factor that would encourage them to consider a teaching career. Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2015) discovered that people in their study perceived a job in teaching to be conducive to family life because of the holidays, face-to-face hours and possibility for some flexibility in staffing. Extrinsic factors such as holidays and working hours are ranked as attractions to teaching as a career. However, these extrinsic factors consistently ranked below altruistic and intrinsic factors (such as job satisfaction) associated with teaching (Kane & Malon, 2006; Manual & Hughes, 2006).

Various studies have shown that people are attracted to the fact that teaching offers job security, employment opportunities and international transferability (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Lai et al., 2005). The size of the teaching workforce and the constant need for teachers means that high numbers of staffing requirements will continue

into the future (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). In a study involving 623 high school students who were interested in teaching, 65% noted 'better job security' and 35% noted 'easier to find teaching vacancy' as attractive factors for choosing teaching (Lai et al., 2005). The 'availability of jobs in teaching' ranked as the fourth most important reason for choosing teaching in the Summerhill et al. study (1998). Baylor and Özcan (2014) found that 33% of the 1410 preservice teachers in their study either agreed or strongly agreed that it is 'easier to find a teaching vacancy'. In the same study, 47% agreed or strongly agreed that teaching offers 'better job security'. Richardson and Watt (2007) rated the group 'job security, time for family and job transferability' as a medium to high level motivation factor that attracts candidates to the profession.

### 3.7.4 Influenced by others

A review of the literature suggests that people feel drawn to enter a career in teaching when someone has encouraged them to consider it as an option (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Howes & Delahunty, 2015; Lai et al., 2005). Making a choice about a future career because of the influence of others means creating an image about a profession, and making a deliberate decision to enter it, because of interactions and conversations with various people. The major finding in the Page and Page (1984) study was that "the factor that best discriminates whether students will consider teaching is simply whether or not other individuals have discussed this possibility with them" (p. 4). The main groups of influencers that encourage a career in teaching are, family and friends, teachers and experiences with school personnel (Kniveton, 2004).

Family and friends play a pivotal role in an adolescent's decision-making (Kniveton, 2004). In the Page and Page (1984) study, 67% of participants said that an encouraging conversation with parents would positively influence their decision to teach. It was also revealed that 38% would be influenced by friends in a similar manner. Johnston et al. (1999) found that parental approval ranked sixth and friends' approval ranked seventh as factors that influence the choice to become a primary teacher. Balyer and Özcan (2014) coded their survey results on 'preservice teachers'

reasons for entering teaching' into three groups, one of which was named 'influence of others'. This category included data which revealed that preservice teachers were motivated to enter the profession by different groups of people, namely family and friends. Lai et al. (2005) found that the opinion of peers and family members was identified as an influencer on student decisions as to whether teaching was considered a viable career.

Teachers and experiences with school personnel play significant roles in influencing student perspectives towards choosing teaching as a career (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Lai et al. 2005; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). In one study, it was identified that just over 73% of 79 preservice teachers had a significant teacher mentor who influenced their decision to teach (Manuel & Hughes, 2006). A majority of the "sample was persuaded to become teachers because of a relationship with a current or previous role model" (p. 15). Lai et al. (2005) found that 57% of 1249 senior students in Hong Kong said the influence of teachers impacts whether they would consider teaching as a career. Balyer and Özcan (2014) discovered that out of all groups of individual influencers, teachers ranked the most dominant force in the decision as to whether the student would consider teaching in their study. This finding was also evident in the Page and Page study (1984), which revealed that 70% of their 1537 student participants would consider teaching if encouraged by their teachers, 68% would consider teaching if encouraged by other staff such as a counsellor, and 57% would be influenced by the encouragement of the principal. The experience of seeing teachers enjoying their roles and interacting with teachers who visibly love their job, were viewed as being positive influences on the decision to teach (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Page & Page, 1984). Specifically, teachers who provide positive learning experiences for students have been recognised as instrumental in influencing students to consider teaching as a career (Butcher & Lewis 2002; Richardson & Watt, 2007).

### 3.8 Summary

A review of the literature indicates that there are many attractive factors that encourage people to enter the profession (Alexander et al., 1994;

Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Hutchinson & Johnson, 1994; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Scott et al., 2001; Spear et al., 2000). The opportunity for personal satisfaction, finding meaning and purpose and job fulfilment consistently rank among the highest factors (Hutchinson & Johnson, 1994; Johnston et al., 1999; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Lortie, 1975; Serow et al., 1992). These factors are linked to being able to make a difference, shape society, teach in an area of passion and work with children and adolescents (Berliner 2011; Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2012; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Milliband 2003; Scott et al., 2001). Many teachers feel attracted to the profession because of a sense of an inner calling, the desire to be of service, a love of learning and to help others grow (Buijs, 2005; Dinham & Scott, 2000; Hutchinson & Johnson, 1994; Lai et al., 2007; Robertson et al. 1983; Serow et al., 1992; Spear et al., 2000; Summerhill et al., 1998). The vast majority of researchers have discovered that these altruistic and intrinsic factors associated with teaching ultimately attract new teachers to the profession (Alexander et al., 1994; Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Brookhart & Freeman 1992; Hutchinson & Johnson, 1994; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Manual & Hughes, 2006; Scott et al., 2001; Spear et al., 2000; Young, 1995). However, extrinsic factors also encourage people to choose the profession, such as job security, holidays, hours of work and availability of employment (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Bastick, 1999; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Summerhill et al., 1998; Yong, 1995).

The influence of positive interactions with parents, friends, teachers and other school personnel also plays a significant role in encouraging people to enter the profession (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Lai et al. 2005; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). The literature used in this review is from both Australian and international perspectives. The majority of the research includes the perspectives of teachers, principals, preservice teachers, and aspiring teachers from senior schools. Only one of the high school studies used in this literature review is taken from a Catholic educational perspective (Butcher & Lewis, 2002). Moreover, there are only four studies that take into consideration the viewpoint of high school students, including those who have no interest in teaching (Berry, McCormick and Buxton, 1989; Hutchinson & Johnston, 1994; Page & Page, 1984;

Summerhill et al., 1998). Therefore, it is important to explore what Year 12 Catholic high school students in Western Australia believe to be the attractions to a career in teaching. Research questions One and Two include sub-questions that address student perspectives of the strengths of a teaching career and factors that contribute to an interest in selecting teaching.

**Research Question One**

- What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?
    - What are the strengths of teaching as a career?
    - Why do you think teachers become teachers?

**Research Question Two**

- What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of choosing teaching as a career?
    - What factors have contributed to your interest in selecting teaching as a career?
    - Has anyone spoken to you about becoming a teacher? If so, what was said and by whom and what impact did this have upon your perspective of teaching as a career?
    - How do you think your parents/family and friends would respond if you decided to become a teacher and why?

**3.9 Factors that discourage people from choosing a teaching career**

One of the aspects that informs people's perspectives of a career is the negative images they have come to associate with the role. Therefore, it is important to understand the features of teaching that people find less appealing. The characterisation of teaching as an undesirable occupation has long been identified in the literature emanating from different countries (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Crow, Levine & Nager, 1990; Empey, 1984; Howes & Goodman-Delahuny, 2015; Kane & Malon, 2006; Liu, Kardos, Kauffman, Preske & Johnson, 2000; OECD, 2005; Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant 2003; Ramsay, 2000). For the purposes of this literature review, four categories of research surrounding factors that discourage people from a

career in teaching will be examined: extrinsic factors; perceived teacher attributes; nature of the role; active discouragement.

**Table 3.5**

*Outline of factors that discourage people from choosing a teaching career*

| 3.9.1 | Extrinsic factors |
|---|---|
| 3.9.2 | Nature of the role |
| 3.9.3 | Perceived teacher attributes |
| 3.9.4 | Active discouragement |
| 3.10 | Summary |

*3.9.1 Extrinsic factors*

Extrinsic factors relate to external circumstances such as economic and job-related conditions and social-status standing. Perspectives towards extrinsic factors are reliant upon individual expectations, experiences and attitudes. According to the literature, the extrinsic factors that discourage people from entering teaching include the status of the profession, workload, remuneration, and working conditions (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Kane & Mallon, 2006; OECD, 2005).

The status of teaching has changed over time and varies depending on the country. In Australia, the status of teaching as a profession has diminished and is generally not considered a high status profession (Kelly, 1989; Symeonidis 2015). There is concern about the status of teaching in Australian society and this area is currently one of interest for the government, those in education, researchers and policy makers (Parliament of Australia, 2019; Commonwealth Parliament and Parliament House, 2013; Daniels, 2009). Masters (2015) suggested that the limited status of teaching in Australia is in part linked to remuneration and in part related to the low entry requirements for some universities. The low entry requirements associated with teaching, as previously discussed, and the perspective that teaching is not a high status career are factors that discourage people from entering the profession (Masters, 2015). Page and Page (1984), found that social status was a significant factor that discouraged students from selecting teaching as a career. Butcher and Lewis (2002) revealed that the status of

the profession was more likely to negatively impact male students' decision to choose teaching as a career. Summerhill et al. (1998) also discovered that males are more likely to be discouraged from teaching because of the perspective of it being a lower status profession. Further, Lai et al. (2005) noted that females were more likely than males to view the status of teaching favourably and that those studying arts-related courses were more interested in teaching than their counterparts in science and commerce courses. There has been a decline in the number of male high school teachers in Australia over the last 30 years, from 55% of the high school teaching workforce in 1981 to 42% in 2015 (Weldon, 2015). Given the dominance of male teachers over the age of 50 in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Computing and Information Technology, Weldon (2015) and Achterstraat (2008) projected a shortage of these specialist teachers for the future. A report on the perspectives of teachers' status (Commonwealth Parliament and Parliament House, 2013; 2019) outlined concerns the government has about the perceived lower status of the profession. It was suggested that this lower status discourages potential male and female teachers selecting teaching as a career.

Teaching is considered a public service role that extends beyond the confines of daily lessons (Howes & Goodman-Delahuny, 2015; Kane & Mallon, 2006). Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) uncovered that the hefty workload associated with teaching, both inside and outside of the classroom, is a factor that discourages some from selecting it as a career. The undergraduate teaching student participants in their study, specified marking, extra curricula camps and activities and the demanding nature of the job as points of concern. Howes and Goodman-Delahuny (2015) revealed that the volume of work expected of teachers has a negative impact on the profession. Kane and Mallon (2006) disclosed that perspectives surrounding the workload and the expanding expectations of teachers discourage people from choosing teaching. The general awareness of the increase in compliance-related, administrative and paperwork tasks negatively impacts the decision to select teaching as a career (Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000).

Another point raised in this study surrounding increased workloads, was the suggestion that the expanding role of teachers to now address social welfare issues, may discourage future candidates from entering the profession. For example, schools and teachers are now more likely to be aware of troubling home situations and the instances and consequences of family breakdowns and are therefore called to respond accordingly (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). Butcher and Lewis (2002) named 'the work demand of teachers' roles' as one of six key tensions reducing the attractiveness of a career in teaching. In their study, various high school students' experiences with teachers led them to believe that there is too much work associated with teaching. One student commented that teaching is "stressful. We see what teachers go through most of the day. It doesn't look easy, and it gets harder. It's stressful, some teachers can't handle it and get heart problems" (p. 4). Richardson and Watt (2006) found that their participants believed teaching to be "a highly demanding career in terms of a heavy workload, high emotional demand and generally requiring hard work" (p. 46). This perspective negatively impacted upon choosing a career in teaching. Similarly, Isenbarger and Zembylas (2006) identified the intensity of the workload and resultant teacher burnout as a factor that discourages some from choosing teaching as a career.

Remuneration within the teaching profession in Australia is organised into levels associated with longevity of service. In Australia, teaching is considered a relatively un-staged career with little potential for upward mobility and no opportunity for promotions or pay based on job performance within the classroom (Ferrari, 2014). Ferrari (2014), cited the structure of pay, and pay rises within the teaching profession as a factor that discouraged some. In particular, little monetary recognition has been given to the expert knowledge acquired by teachers through years of experience in the classroom and additional study in the field (Daniels, 2009; Hattie, 2015). Perspectives relating to the remuneration of a teaching career are slightly varied. However, many studies have named the level of pay associated with the profession as something that discourages people from selecting it as a career (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Howes & Goodman-Delahuny, 2015; Page & Page 1984; Richardson & Watt, 2007). In a study conducted by the

Commonwealth Government, students disclosed that they felt the pay that teachers receive for the work that they do, is too low and that this negatively influenced their perspective of entering the profession (Commonwealth Parliament and Parliament House, 2013). Both of the studies completed by Watt and Richardson (2007) and Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2015) emphasised this point by citing 'inadequate pay' and 'high in demand and low in return' as reasons for participants not wanting to be a teacher. In a study conducted by Davis, Wilson and Dalton (2020), it was found that the highest performing countries in the PISA tests have the highest paid teachers. Dalton was quoted by Singhal (2019) as saying that teachers need to be paid more, and that if teaching was a well-paid job a greater number of young people would want to do the job. Furthermore, she posited that a greater demand for teaching would attract higher achievers and that these higher achievers may get better outcomes for students. Alongside the perceived low level of remuneration, the Richardson and Watt study (2007), also noted participants thought the lack of career development opportunities to diversify or obtain promotions as discouraging factors. Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) interviewed 298 undergraduate university students and categorised the responses into three groups; anti teaching; pro teaching and undecided. When asked about reasons to become a teacher, all three groups ranked 'high earnings over length of career' and 'good starting salary' within the lowest three out of twenty reasons.

The working conditions associated with a career in teaching discourage some from considering it as a viable career choice. Of the 2478 student participants in the Page and Page study (1989), 56% said that 'working conditions' was a factor discouraging them from a future career in teaching. Summerhill et al., (1998) noted that those who were not interested in teaching suggested they would reconsider if working conditions were better. The study indicated that better working conditions might encompass smaller class sizes and fewer student-related discipline problems. Berry et al. (1989) discovered in their research involving 375 high school students, that students believed the physical environment of the classroom would not make for a comfortable daily working space. They specifically noted the unappealing nature of spending the day in a crowded room filled with

furniture and students. Further, Richardson and Watt (2006) pointed to the perceived lack of support from principals and others in leadership roles as reasons to not continue in the profession. In 1989, Berry et al. suggested that students thought teachers generally received little support from administration for discipline problems and that this lack of support contributed to their negative opinion towards teaching as a career option. This lack of support from administration is still perceived as a problem today, as noted by Fetherston and Lummis (2012). They stated that one of the key reasons teachers resign from the profession is due to a lack of support from administration. Conflict between current political developments and rapid changes in education were also raised as factors that discouraged some from teaching (Richardson & Watt, 2006). The same study reported the negative influence of working conditions such as poor work-life balance due to taking work home (Watt & Richardson, 2007). This 'out of hours' work was recognised as paperwork, administration, preparation, reporting and marking. The issue of boundaries between teacher's work and family contexts and commitments was identified as a key theme that negatively influenced student decisions to choose teaching (Butcher & Lewis, 2002).

*3.9.2 Nature of the role*

The literature revealed that negative personal experiences of poor classroom behaviour, unfriendly students, the routine nature of the job and difficult parental interactions were all considered unattractive features of the profession (Berry et al., 1989; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006). Butcher and Lewis (2002) revealed that participants expressed concerns about potentially having to manage poorly behaved students on a daily basis. The students in the study believed that having to deal with discipline problems was not only unpleasant, but also fear inducing. For example, various student participants questioned their own capacity to carry out effective and regular behaviour management, and worried about the undesirable consequences of not being able to achieve the intended result. Students in the Summerhill et al. study (1998) indicated that if there were "better student respect for teachers" (p. 232), then they may reconsider their negative view of a career in teaching. Page and Page (1989) showed that

76% of student participants noted discipline problems as a factor that would discourage them from choosing to enter the profession. This concern was mirrored in the Kyriacou and Coulthard study (2000), when 74% of 298 English undergraduate students noted 'dealing with disruptive pupils' as the most discouraging factor when considering teaching as a career. Moreover, early career teachers cited managing discipline problems and motivating disengaged students as their top concerns associated with teaching (Staton, 2016). Various studies suggest that a student's experience of poor behaviour in the classroom negatively influenced his or her perspective of teaching as a viable career choice (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006). This point is reflected in the Lai et al. study (2005), which posited that "students' negative image of teaching is constructed socially in their everyday life" (p. 164).

Studies indicated that some students believe teaching to be routine and boring in nature and this discourages them for wanting to enter the profession (Berry et al., 1989). In their research, Berry et al. propose that "frustrating working conditions may inhibit teacher enthusiasm and, in turn, may translate into "boring" learning experiences for students". Concomitantly, Barry et al. noted "boring" schoolwork for students may translate into their perspective of teaching as "boring" work" (1989, p. 5). The participant group in Kyriacou's and Coulthard's research (2000) identified "the amount of bureaucratic tasks to perform" (p. 9) as the second biggest discourager when considering teaching as a career. Other studies cited the perceived lack of teacher autonomy as a reason for students being discouraged from a career in teaching (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Kane & Mallon, 2006). The Berry et al. study (1989) further uncovered the belief that some students felt teachers were dispirited by a lack of autonomy. As these authors highlighted:

> Most students – irrespective of race, gender, or school location – expressed negative opinions about teaching as a career alternative. In focus group discussions, students cited teachers' boring and routine work, lack of autonomy, poor pay, limited opportunities for advancement, and frustrating working conditions as reasons for being discouraged from teaching. These students see teacher as disheartened and stymied by the conditions of their work. They see

their teachers as having little autonomy to teach what they believe is appropriate. (1989, p. 5).

Further, Kane and Mallon (2006) identified a "reduced sense of autonomy" (p. 74) and hence, a loss in the "sense of fun in teaching" (p. 74) as negative issues for those considering entering the profession.

Various authors recognised increasing parental expectations, complaints and difficult interactions with parents as unfavourable factors associated with a career in teaching (Berry et al., 1989; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006). For instance, in the Berry et al. study (1989) students discussed the fact that teachers "get pushed around" and "have to do what parents say". One student went so far as to refer to teachers as "impotent and underlings" (Berry et al., 1989, p. 23). These perspectives discouraged the students from considering a career in teaching. Kane and Mallon (2006) reflected this sentiment and stated "that the lack of respect from parents, who have unrealistic expectations" (p. xii) makes teaching seem less desirable to potential candidates. Increased expectations have been linked, in part, to teachers being increasingly asked to address social and welfare issues that previously may have been handled at home. The demanding nature of parents was a common theme that arose in the Kane and Mallon study (2006) and had a negative impact on the perspective of teaching as a career. One teacher participant commented:

> We have very high standards academically, but we have some very, verydemanding parents in this community who think the whole school should be geared to their wants, not the needs of their child and they are well versed in the art of knowing how policies and procedures work and they know which buttons to press so they don't just muck around coming and talking to the teacher, it's a letter to the principal, a letter to the board, it's a phone call to the Ministry, it's a letter to ERO, it's a letter to their MP and they expect things to happen. Now that is a big turn off for all teachers. (p. 79)

Berry et al. (1989) and Butcher and Lewis (2002) also identified the expectations of parents and limited authority of teachers as negative aspects of teaching.

*3.9.3 Perceived teacher attributes*

Teaching as a career often requires people to assume a particular identity or play a certain role in school relationships and community life (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Want, Schellings & Mommers, 2018). These identities are linked to other people's perspectives of how a teacher should behave, think, look and communicate, and can be influenced by the school community expectations and media. Researchers have suggested that many considering the profession discount it as a viable option if they feel that there is an intrinsic mismatch between their own persona and attributes and their perspective of the qualities required of a teacher (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Lai et al. 2005).

Butcher and Lewis (2002) examined the motives and reasons given by Year 11 and 12 students for considering or not considering a career in teaching. The students in their study perceived that teachers are held to a higher level of accountability when it comes to exercising good citizenship and role modelling, both inside and outside of the work environment. Some students noted the high expectations of teachers at all times was something that would discourage them from entering the profession. The study also posited that students believe having and exercising patience when dealing with children and adolescents, good communication skills and emotional self-regulation are necessary teacher attributes. If the students considered themselves to be impatient or incapable of exercising the required skills, this negatively impacted their view of selecting teaching as a career (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006). Of the participants in the Kyriacou and Coulthard research (2000) 24% noted that their 'personality and potential talent for teaching' would discourage them from considering a career in the profession. In the Lai et al. study (2005), the group of senior students who identified that they would not consider teaching cited "not fitting my personality" (p. 160) as the overall top reason (Lai et al, 2005). Some students in the Berry et al. (1989) research admitted that they felt "teachers are born, not made" and that one had to be "patient, love children and be able to put up with aggravation" (p. 22) in order to be drawn to teaching. Students who believed they did not possess or exhibit these characteristics were discouraged from choosing teaching and felt drawn to other more

appropriate careers. Want et al. (2018), researched the concept of a teaching identity. They argued that constructing, maintaining and evolving a professional identity plays a crucial role in the lifecycle of an effective teacher. Kane and Mallon (2006) also posited that "affective personality attributes which enable teachers to build caring relationships with children" and the "personality traits a teacher brings to the job" (p. xi) are considered paramount to the work of effective teachers. People who do not believe they have what it takes to act in a manner conducive to a school environment sighted this belief as a discouraging factor when considering the profession (Butcher & Lewis 2002).

It is a teacher's role to guide his or her students on a given learning journey. To control the environment and induce desired behaviours in the students requires that power or some form of influence must be exercised by the teachers (Staton, 2016). In this manner, teacher power is defined as "the potential to influence the attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviour of students" and teacher control as "the actual influence, or degree of influence, a teacher has over the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviour of students" (Staton, 2016, p. 168). The doubt as to whether they had the personality to exert power and gain control of a class was named as an area of concern for pre-service teachers in England. Those who had a limited self-belief in their ability to influence, were less likely to become teachers (Staton, 2016).

Over recent years, teachers have increasingly been portrayed negatively in the media and this may have "damaged teaching's appeal" (p. 5) as a career (OECD, 2005). Symeonidis (2015) argued that the mass media in a number of countries has been presenting unfavourable images of teachers, "the media keep conveying the image of teachers as lazy and unconstructive" (p. 36). Since media discourse shapes the perspectives of public education and impacts the status of teaching, this image discourages young people from engaging in the profession (Symeonidis, 2015). The Kyriacou and Coulthard study (2000) revealed that 32% of 298 participants believed that the media images of teachers discouraged them from considering a career in teaching. Similarly, the senior students involved in the Kane and Mallon study (2006) asserted that teaching was given "bad press and that its media image was poor" as a profession (p. 142). This impression

of teaching shapes student perspectives about choosing a career in teaching. Kane and Mallon (2006) suggested therefore that "for this generation it may well be that teaching is not 'cool'" (p. 143). This fact discourages some students from choosing to become teachers. Various authors posited that the negative perspectives might be in part, linked to the publicity and media air-time given to discussing educational reforms, changing policy, reporting and teacher improvement (Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; OECD, 2005).

*3.9.4 Active discouragement*

Research has recognised that parents and teachers can actively discourage students from considering a career in teaching (Berry et al., 1989; Butcher & Lewis 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Lai et al., 2005; Page & Page 1984; Plibersek, 2019). For example, in 1989, Berry et al. noted that parental influence was deemed significant in the child's decision not to enter the profession. Parents who were teachers were identified as being particularly vocal about their own children not becoming teachers. This theme also arose in Kane's and Mallon's research (2006), where it was revealed that "those students who have parents associated with teaching professions, said that their parents tend to explicitly put them off teaching and they themselves have seen the reality of their parents' working life as a teacher, which is not attractive" (p. 143). Many of the student teachers involved in the Kane and Mallon study (2006) recalled various "family members actively discouraging such choices" (p. 41). Likewise, in the Manuel and Hughes study (2006), family pressure was noted as the third most significant factor for those who did not select teaching as a first career choice.

Teachers are often a source of negativity when speaking to students about following a pathway into education. For example, Kane and Mallon (2006) noted that one teacher admitted, "in the 70s I tried to encourage suitable people to become teachers, but now I totally discourage them" (p. 45). A theme arising from the perspective of senior students in the same study, was that they felt discouraged to enter the profession, and that teachers suggested that they could have a superior lifestyle from an alternative career. In general, the study summarised that "senior students

report that most teachers directly dissuade them from teaching as a career option" (p. 142). Kane and Mallon (2006) asserted that this culture of discouragement is further affirmed by students' experiences with teachers. Some students see teachers as "stressed by pupils and workload, often complaining about how hard they have to work, and generally dissatisfied with the work of teaching" (p. 142). Their study revealed that negative experiences of teachers, as well as poor teacher reactions to their job actively discourages them from considering teaching as an occupation. Moreover, Symeonidis (2015) identified that school counsellors and teachers charged with the responsibility of helping students investigate future pathways, rarely promote teaching.

## 3.10 Summary

The literature confirms that, like many careers, teaching has numerous features that cause potential candidates to discount it as a desirable occupation (Crow et al., 1990; Empey, 1984; Liu et al., 2000; OECD, 2005; Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003; Ramsay, 2000). The review of literature uncovered various external factors that discouraged people from a career in teaching. The external factors included the perceived poor working conditions and the status associated with the job, a demanding workload, and limited remuneration and promotion opportunities (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kelly, 1989; OECD, 2005; Page & Page, 1984; Symeonidis, 2015). The literature suggested that some people, when considering a career in teaching, react negatively to factors relating to the nature of the role. These factors entail managing poor student behaviour, parental expectations and interactions and having relatively routine timetabled days (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Berry et al., 1989; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000).

The literature portrayed the perspective that a teacher must espouse a particular identity. The characteristics associated with this identity discourage some from considering the profession as a career option (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Want et al., 2018). This point is mainly the case for people who believe that their personality is not well suited to the role (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Lai et al., 2005; Want et al., 2018). Finally, the

research revealed that on many occasions, the media, teachers, family members and parents are somewhat responsible for denigrating the role of teachers and actively dissuading students from choosing it as a career option (Butcher & Lewis 2002; Berry et al., 1989; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Lai et al., 2005; OECD, 2005; 2007; Plibersek, 2019). The literature indicated that many students say that this active discouragement deters them from contemplating teaching as an option (Butcher & Lewis 2002; Berry et al., 1989; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). The negative factors associated with teaching that are presented in this literature review are taken from national and international studies. The majority of the perspectives in the literature review are from senior students who would consider teaching, preservice teachers and teachers. A limited number of studies include the perspectives of students who are and are not interested in teaching (Berry et al., 1989; Butcher & Lewis, 2002). The review of literature led to sub-questions in this study to uncover Year 12 Catholic school student perspectives of factors that contribute to a lack of interest in choosing a teaching career. These questions appear under Research Question One and Two

**Research Question One**
- What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?
    - What are the weaknesses of teaching as a career?
    - If not teaching, then what and why?

**Research Question Two**
- What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of choosing teaching as a career?
    - What factors have contributed to your lack of interest in selecting teaching as a career?
    - Has anyone spoken to you about becoming a teacher? If so, what was said and by whom and what impact did this have upon your perspective of teaching as a career?
    - How do you think your parents/family and friends would respond if you decided to become a teacher and why?

**3.11 The forming of perceptions and career choice**

In order to understand students' perspectives of teaching as a career, it is important to consider where perceptions come from, and the many ways in which they can be both formed and influenced. Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1994; 1999) bioecological model of human development will be reviewed as a framework to understand the influence of various contexts on the development of student perspectives. Once the literature on perspectives and influences is discussed, the research on forming perceptions in relation to career choice will be examined. Table 3.6 shows the presentation of literature for this section.

**Table 3.6**

*The forming of perceptions and career choice*

| |
|---|
| 3.11.1  How perception develops |
| 3.11.2  Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of human development |
| 3.11.3  How perceptions influence career choice |
| 3.11.4  Secondary school career counselling processes |
| 3.12     Summary |

*3.11.1 How perception develops*

Perception is a person's sensory experience of the world and involves both recognising environmental stimuli and actions in response to these (Cherry, 2016). Information about properties and elements of the environment that are critical to survival are gained through the perceptual process. The development of perception not only constructs a person's experience of the world, "it allows that person to interact within their environment" (Démuth, 2013, p.11).

Most explanations of the perception process involve the acquiring and processing of information and may be divided into two basic groups according to the direction of information flow. The first group of theories requires bottom–up brain processes when acquiring and processing sensory data. Bottom-up processes involve brain processes that start at the lowest sensory levels, the most distant levels of cognitive apparatus normally used for survival. An example of a process that operates in this manner is the

automatic bodily function of breathing. Then the information process gradually moves to more complicated and complex processes, which take place in higher brain structures. These structures are responsible for global and abstract ways of thinking and deal with more challenging cognitive functions not strictly necessary for survival, such as reasoning and language (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994; 2002). If a person hears a noise when he or she is home alone, that stimulus or perception will guide cognition. When people have no prior experience or understanding of the stimulus, they tend to use bottom-up processing. Therefore, the stimulus influences perception and is data driven. Perception directs cognition in bottom-up processing. In contrast, the top–down theories suggest that the process, mainly related to sensory stimulus, starts by "feeling" sensory data on receptors, and then processing assumes a downward influence of higher cognitive contents which organise first and later decipher (Démuth, 2013). For example, people can read an entire sentence of mis-spelt words and still make sense of it based on the letters they expect to see. This is top-down processing and the core of the approach is underscored by the fact that in order to process sensory stimulus, a person needs to have prior experience or knowledge, which helps him or her to organise and form cognitive contents (Cherry, 2016). Top-down processing relies on past experience and perception is constructed by cognition.

Perceptions are therefore formed through a combination of experiences in different contexts and processing of stimuli. How people make sense of the world through the development of their perceptions is also reliant upon many factors. Examples of such factors include, past experiences, self-concept, character traits, education and schooling, family and upbringing, faith, personal values and the values of close environments, preconceived notions, self, family and societal expectation and present circumstances (The Peak Performance Centre, n.d.). Some of these factors are stagnant and others are part of multiple systems that interact with each other, but all of these factors influence the development of perspective within the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

*3.11.2 Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of human development*

Bronfenbrenner (1977;1999) was interested in the ecology of human development, which he defined as "the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the life span, between a growing human organism and the changing immediate environments in which it lives" (p. 514). He clarified that "this process is affected by relations obtaining within and between these immediate settings, as well as the larger social contexts, both formal and informal, in which the settings are embedded" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 514). The process of human development encompasses the establishment and growth of perceptions and therefore this model depicts how various environments interact with the individual to influence perspectives.

In the years between 1977 and 1999 Bronfenbrenner established and fine-tuned a bioecological theory involving systems to explain the complex nature of human development. The theory postulated that the interplay between various interdependent systems greatly influences the individual's developmental transformations. Bronfenbrenner proposed that "human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects and symbols in its immediate external environment" (1994, p. 5). Bronfenbrenner suggested that for human development to be effective in this manner, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. The necessity, importance and influence of the interaction between an individual and his or her environment has been noted by many theorists as a cornerstone in the learning process (Astin, 1999; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Therefore, Bronfenbrenner's model supports the assertion that the development of a person's perspectives is influenced by the interaction between the individual and his or her contextual environments. The model places the individual at the centre of all systems. How an individual forms his or her perspectives is inextricably linked to age, gender, personality, health and other factors that are innate to a person. The development of perspectives will also be impacted by the manner in which someone is prone to processing information, such as using top-down or bottom-up processes (Démuth,

2013). In Bronfenbrenner's model, different layers of systems surround the individual. Each system is nested inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Interactions between the systems have the potential to influence the person's perspectives. The closer the system is to the centre (the individual), the closer the proximity of the system in terms of situational context. An examination of the different layers of Bronfenbrenner's model (Figure 3.2) will aid in understanding the environments that influence student perspectives and how this influence occurs. The literature explaining the various systems and the interactions will now be addressed.
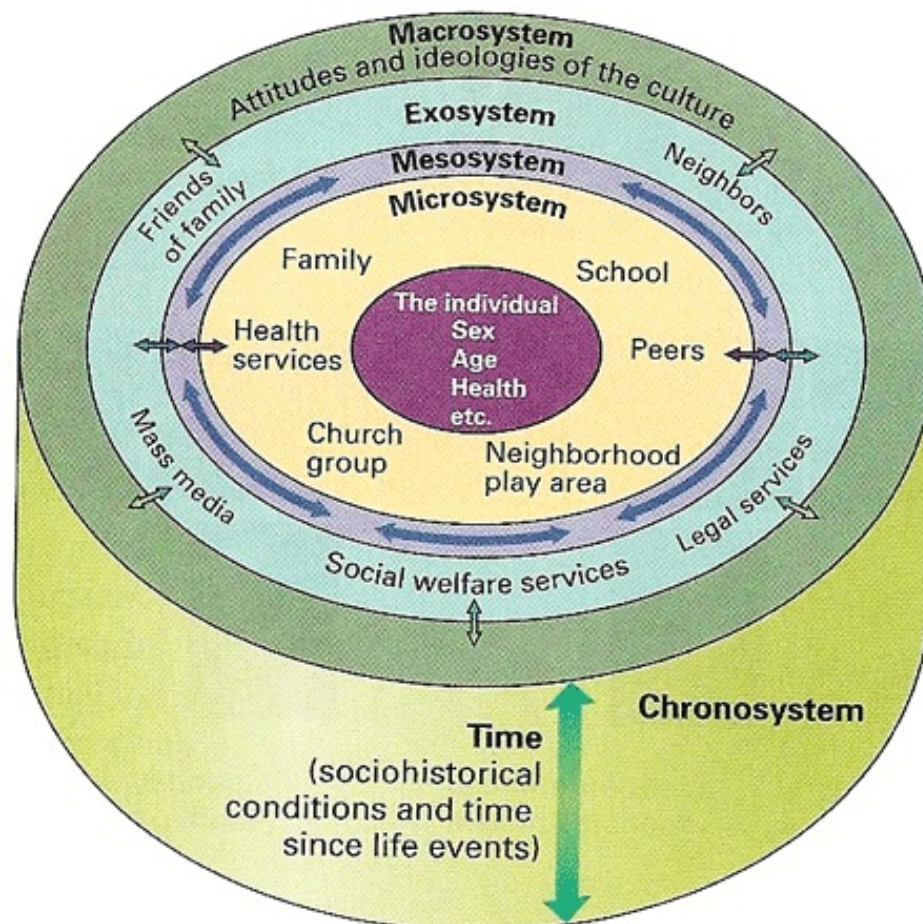


Figure 3.2 Note. reprinted from *Bronfenbrenner: Ecological Theory of Human Development (Santrock, 2008, p. 33)*

*3.11.2.1 The microsystem*

A microsystem is a setting in which the individual is situationally placed on a regular basis. Features of a microsystem include the occurrence

of a range of activities and interactions directly involving the individual and others. These 'others' assume specific interpersonal roles and relations in the individual's life. The various activities occur in a face-to-face setting and frequently over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1999). Examples of the microsystems surrounding a student include family, home, school, peers, street, class, neighbourhood, parish and clubs. The interactions between the individual and the different microsystems influence the development of the individual and their perspectives of reality (Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

### 3.11.2.2 The mesosystem

The next layer embedded in Bronfenbrenner's model for human development is the mesosystem. This structure can be defined as the relations or interactions between two or more microsystems in which the individual directly participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). The mesosystem can be seen as a system of microsystems. The influence of a mesosystem is created, or expanded, when an individual joins a new setting. Likewise, a mesosystem collapses, or reduces when the individual leaves a particular setting. The fundamental difference between a microsystem and a mesosystem is that the activities, relations and interpersonal roles occur within singular settings in the former and across two or more settings in the latter (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Examples of student mesosystems are family and school, parish and school, peers and family, neighbourhood and school and clubs and peers. The student needs to be an active member of each singular microsystem. For example, the direct interaction between a parent and a child, the teacher and the child and the parent and the teacher, together, influence the child in a two-way mesosystem. Looking at the interplay between two settings allows for a deeper understanding of how perspectives might be influenced through multiple interactions.

### 3.11.2.3 The exosystem

The third system sits underneath the individual, microsystems and mesosystems and is named an exosystem. Bronfenbrenner explained this ecological setting as one in which the developing person is not directly situated and therefore has no face-to-face activity, participation or

interactions within the setting. He postulated that even though the individual is not directly involved with the system, he or she is influenced indirectly by a ripple effect of consequences (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Examples of exosystems in a student's life include parental workplaces, the local council, economic disasters, friends of friends, department of education, curriculum changes, the media and a family member's sporting clubs. A student's perceptions may be influenced by an event or interaction between a distant third party and an exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). For example, if a parent experienced an upsetting situation at work, say as a teacher. The parent would most likely be impacted by this experience and it may manifest in the family home. Even though the student in question is not directly involved in the parent's school, the development of their perspectives is influenced through the parental experience. Similarly, if the student witnessed something in the media related to schooling that caused an emotional response, the student's perspective and development is altered even though the related incident did not directly involve the student. Therefore, the interplay between an individual and an exosystem, whilst not a direct setting of the individual, still has the ability to influence perspectives.

### 3.11.2.4 The macrosystem

The largest layer of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development is the macrosystem. It is a different type of system in that it covers the larger systems that play into culture. Such as the political, social, legal and education systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The trademark of a macrosystem is an overarching belief system or ideology that influences and programs individual behaviour, perspectives and impacts the functioning and processes of other systems. Macrosystems have the ability to fundamentally alter the characteristics of a given society (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). It should be noted that various theorists have criticised the notion that culture can be properly explained through the concept of a remote macrosystem (Mistry, Yoshikawa, Tseng, Tirrell, Kiang & Wang, 2016; Velez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Molina & Coll, 2017). These researchers think that culture is inextricably linked to individual behaviours and therefore cannot be separated from the individual. As such, there has been speculation

as to whether a macrosystem, which encases all other systems, is actually a fitting placement for the likes of culture. It was also suggested that a macrosystem cannot accurately describe how culture is operationalised at each level of system (Mistry, et al. 2016; Velez-Agosto et al. 2017). There is no doubt however, that culture and cultural norms influence perspectives on many levels. For example, a society's, school's and family's culture and cultural expectations will greatly impact student behaviours and perspectives.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), the people and places that operate to fuel macrosystems are situationally the most distant from the individual, yet significantly influence individual development. Patterns are set by macrosystems for activities and structures to operate on a concrete level in other systems. Bronfenbrenner (1977) suggested that macrosystems create 'blueprints' for systems to operate and that these activities and structures influence individual perspectives. An example of the operational impact of a macrosystem is the function of all the schools within a given society. The schools operate in a similar way, both formally and informally, because of the 'blueprints' set by macrosystems. This concept of the 'blueprint' suggests that the macrosystem reproduces culture from one setting to the next and is, therefore, "homogenizing rather than diversifying the human experience" (Velez-Agosto et al., 2017, p. 903). However, Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) highlighted the importance of the proximal processes. This notion refers to the unique process-person-context in relation to culture and the enactment of the influence of a macrosystem. Examples of macrosystems that indirectly but considerably influence student perspectives include laws, gender norms, religious beliefs, attitudes regarding socio-economic status, federal policy and cultural values.

### 3.11.2.5 The chronosystem

Chronosystems take into account the historical transformations in individual development and perceptions that occur inevitably in time and space. Characteristics of a person and environments change, or remain consistent, over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). These changes or consistencies play a significant role in shaping individual development. It is suggested that time is the most important element of the bioecological model

because all interactions in every system occur on a measurable chronological scale (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Time impacts all of the systemic interactions within a person's lifespan. For example, generationally, time influences the types of values and morals passed on through families and schools, which inevitably shape individual perspectives and development (Learning Theories, 2017). Examples of chronosystems in a student's lifespan may be a change in family structure or address, society's technological revolution, the changing place of religion within society, the changing age requirement for entering high school and the global financial crisis. The direct or indirect interactions between the individual and all of the systems within his or her life time influence human development and hence behaviour and perspectives. In this study Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career are explored. Bronfenbrenner's theory explains that these perspectives are constantly being influenced by the external environment. The perspectives belong to the students; however, the perspectives are also innately connected to everything and everyone in their microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems and chronosystems.

### 3.11.3 How perceptions influence career choice

Career selection is one of many important choices that students will consider when determining their plans for the future. The essence of the student's personality will be reflected in what the student wants to do for life-long work (Holland, 1997; Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). Student perceptions of various careers are formed both inside and outside of the schooling environment. People are active agents in, and shapers of, their career choice (Borgen, 1986; Lent, Brown & Hacket, 2002). Whilst Borgen suggests that people help construct their own career choices, he also notes that values and belief perspectives play key roles in the process of promoting or inhibiting choices. Since perspectives are constructed through experiences within different systems and information processing, how a person understands various career choices is linked to self-perception and what he or she already understands to be true about particular career options (Betsworth & Fouad, 1997; Hansen, 1997). Adopting a cognitive information processing approach

to career choice, identifies three key factors in forming perspectives about particular careers (Holland, Powell, & Fritzsche, 1994). The first is self-knowledge, the second, occupational knowledge and the third is occupational decision making. Social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994; 2002) is a theory that aims to explain three interconnected areas of career development. The first area of the theory explains how academic and career interests develop. The second area explains how educational and career choices are made and the third area explains how academic and career success is obtained (Lent et al., 2002). This section of the literature review will examine the cognitive information processing approach to career perceptions and the first two areas of the social cognitive career theory relating to career development. This section of the literature review will conclude with a review of processes that secondary schools generally adopt in relation to career counselling.

### 3.11.3.1 Cognitive information processing

The first factor in the cognitive information processing approach to career choice is self-knowledge (Holland et al., 1994). A person's perspective of career fit will be influenced by the understanding of his or her own personality, interests, strengths, beliefs, values, biases and background (Holland, 1997; Patterson & Darley, 1936; Williamson, 1939). Self-perception is formed through experiences in the different environments that people are exposed to, microsystems and mesosystems for example. Exposure to these environments in conjunction with social and familial relationships and self-reflection, leads to a person's self-perception (Démuth, 2013). A person's perception of self in relation to particular careers can be influenced by culture, gender, socio-economic status, and community expectations and assumptions. Schools and families therefore play an important role in helping students to identify and understand their own biases and self-imposed limitations (Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). Self-efficacy, or the self-belief that something can and will be obtained, also pays a significant role in determining possible career choices (Holland et al., 1994). Self-efficacy beliefs are said to originate from four basic sources of information "personal performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences (e.g., observing similar

others), social persuasion and physiological and emotional states" (Lent et al., 2002, p. 750). Therefore, a person's self-knowledge, or perception of self, is one factor that influences possible career choice.

Occupational knowledge is the second factor that influences an individual's career choice in the cognitive information processing approach to career perceptions (Holland et al. 1994). An occupation will be perceived according to how a person understands the characteristics and nature of that occupation (Gottfredson & Holland, 1990). Factors such as the social and economic status of the profession, pay and conditions, study and training requirements and the nature and difficulty of daily tasks play significant roles in people forming perspectives of occupations (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, in order to form valid perspectives, it is important for students to be exposed to, and gain an understanding of, various occupations. The individual can then examine their beliefs about an occupational perception in light of direct experiences and factual information (Lackman, Lackman & Butterfield, 1979).

The third factor in the cognitive information processing approach to career perceptions is occupation decision-making. Individuals will use their self-perception and knowledge, coupled with occupational perception and knowledge to arrive at a career choice. Parsons (1909) identified this point as true reasoning. Career choice fit is reliant upon the person having a true and accurate perception of self and the particular occupation (Janis & Mann, 1977; Watt & Richardson, 2007). Bandura (1982; 1986) acknowledged the need to evaluate the outcomes and reflect upon original perspectives after a final choice was implemented. Schools therefore require rigorous and reflective practices to enable students to be successful in their career selection process.

### 3.11.3.2 Social cognitive career theory

The basic building blocks of social cognitive career theory are self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and goals. Each of these building blocks helps to determine the degree to which an individual will consider, proceed and then succeed with a particular career choice. The three important aspects that this theory attempts to explain are "how basic academic and career interests develop; how educational and career choices

are made; how academic and career success is obtained" (Lent et al., 2002, p. 750).

Lent et al. (2002) suggested that individuals are likely to develop an enduring interest in a particular activity when they consider themselves proficient at performing it and when they expect that the accomplishment of the activity will generate desirable outcomes. Likewise, if individuals doubt their competence and expect negative outcomes in task completion, they are unlikely to develop an interest in related activities. Social cognitive career theory also suggests that when people have talent in certain areas, their interest will flourish when their environments expose them to the types of "direct, vicarious, and persuasive experiences that can give rise to robust efficacy beliefs and positive outcomes expectations" (Lent et al., 2002, p. 752). Regardless of the level of talent, interests are inhibited from fully emerging when individuals do not have the chance to form strong self-efficacy and positive outcome beliefs. Therefore, in terms of an individual developing an interest in a career area, his or her self-perception of capabilities and outcome expectations are highly influential (Lent et al. 2002).

Educational and hence career choice decisions traditionally follow-on from an interest in a particular field or activity (Lent et al., 2002). A person is likely to consider a particular career if it falls within a category of interest. Career-related decisions also arise from the notions of self-efficacy and outcome expectation. These beliefs help the individual to form educational and career goals. Choice of goals are also heavily influenced by environmental expectations. In situations where an individual's interest drives the academic and career related goals, and the goals are specific, strongly held, clear and public and the environment supports the decision, positive outcomes tend to occur (Lent et al., 2002). Conversely, many do not follow their interests into a career choice due to a lack of support from important figures or issues relating to perceived limitations. It is assumed that the decision making of these persons is controlled by experiences such as financial need, family expectations or educational restrictions over level of interest. Social cognitive career theory posits that in order for people to pursue a career in line with personal interests, environmental influences and opportunity need to support these interests (Lent et al., 2002). Otherwise,

interests "may need to be bypassed or compromised in favour of more pragmatic, pressing or culturally acceptable considerations" (Lent et al., 2002, p. 752).

The cognitive information processing model and social cognitive career theory relating to career choice, both reiterate the importance of an individual's self-efficacy and knowledge of particular areas of interest when forming perspectives of viable careers (Lent et al. 2002). People's perspectives of careers are also influenced by factors such as environmental expectation and likelihood of career success. It is therefore important to understand the various processes that schools utilise in order for students to obtain the necessary self-discovery and career knowledge to make informed career-related decisions.

### 3.11.4 Secondary school career counselling processes

Giving students the opportunity to form valid and reliable perspectives about different career options within the school environment is primarily the responsibility of career counsellors. However, parents, teachers and the broader community also play a significant role in preparing students for their futures (Bregman & Killan, 1999; Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). The choice of career for a student is a significant decision that requires considerable thought and reflection. What the student desires from a career will help determine the path he or she follows (Splaver, 2000). Ultimately, students carry with them the unique imprint and history of their past and this will determine how they see the world and interact within it (Blake & Sekuler, 2006). Splaver (2000) suggested that helping students to understand their own personality, the impact of environmental factors upon their perspectives and opportunity are keys to assisting them in making intelligent career plans. Holland (1997) posited that students might be unable and/or unwilling to translate their occupational desires into goals and their goals into actions if they perceive insurmountable barriers to career entry or success. Thus, it becomes fundamentally important that career counsellors within schools not only focus on career choice and expanding students' occupational options but also on assisting them to carefully consider potential barriers to their career success (Lent et al., 1996). The literature on career counselling

processes will be examined to provide an understanding of how schools assist students to form perspectives about suitable career fits.

Secondary schools use a variety of tools and processes to assist students to make career and further education choices (Vanin, 2015). Examples of processes and tools include online career education programs, one-to-one career counselling, work experience, occupational research activities and personality, aptitude and other online strengths-based surveys. The goal of ongoing career counselling is to assist students to identify, own and manage their personal career choices (McMahon & Watson, 2009). According to Victoria State Government, Education and Training (2012) school processes in relation to career development, loosely fall into three stages; namely, self-development, career exploration and finally career management.

During the self-development stage of career education, schools aim to assist students to understand themselves and the influences upon them, build their experiences and achievements and develop their capabilities. Vanin (2015) suggests that schools employ a variety of tools to accomplish this. These tools include personality tests, goal setting, formal career classes and work experience opportunities. Following self-development education, students then investigate suitable career options. The career exploration stage involves career counsellors assisting students to locate, investigate and consider opportunities for future work options (Vanin, 2015). Schools organise one-to-one and small group career counselling for the students. Websites such as 'My Future', 'Australian Job Search', 'My Career Match', 'Career Quiz' and 'Career Toolbox' are examples of tools used to help students during this phase. The final stage of the process is career management. According to the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (2010) in the Australian Blueprint for Career Development, students are required to create and adjust career and future study action plans over their final years of schooling. During this phase various support staff work with students to assist with the management of their life choices, study goals, changes and transitions. This process enables students to be actively reflective about their career and education plans. There appears to be a lack of evidence surrounding the

impact of the career counsellor and career education upon students'
decisions on viable career choices, such as teaching.

## 3.12 Summary

This section of the literature review presented research explaining a
variety of ways in which perspectives are formed and influenced
(Bronfenbrenner, 1977;1994; 1999; Cherry, 2016; Démuth, 2013; Lent et al.,
2002; Mistry, et al. 2016; Velez-Agosto et al. 2017). Research was then
examined surrounding the factors that impact perceptions relating to career
choice (Betsworth & Fouad, 1997; Borgen, 1986; Holland, 1997; Lent, Brown
& Hacket, 1994; 2002; Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). The literature suggested
that a cognitive information processing approach to career selection explains
the factors that influence an individual's occupation perspective and hence
likely choice of a particular career (Holland et al. 1994; Holland, 1997;
Patterson & Darley, 1936; Williamson, 1939). The individual's self-
knowledge, occupational knowledge and occupational decision-making
dynamics are fundamental factors in this approach (Bandura, 1986; 1997;
Gottfredson & Holland, 1990; Janis & Mann, 1977). Literature on social
cognitive career theory explains the career development process from career
perception, to career selection and eventual career success (Lent et al.,
2002). The foundations of the model are the individual's self-efficacy beliefs,
outcome expectations and goals. The research on the common processes
that schools utilise to assist in career counselling was explored (Blake &
Sekuler, 2006; Bregman & Killan, 1999; McMahon & Watson, 2009; Olamide
& Olawaiye, 2013; Splaver, 2000; Vanin, 2015). The second part of this study
is to ascertain how and why student perspectives of teaching as a career
were formed, and the ways in which the perspectives were influenced. The
literature review surrounding perceptions and career choice, led to sub-
questions addressing the influences on student perspectives. Additionally,
the career counsellors from each of the schools were asked a series of sub-
questions under Research Question Two to ascertain their opinions on the
influences on student perspectives of teaching as a career. These questions
are provided:

**Research Question Two**

- What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of choosing teaching as a career?

    *Student sub questions*

    o Has anyone spoken to you about becoming a teacher? If so, what was said and by whom and what impact did this have upon your perspective of teaching as a career?

    o How do you think your parents/family and friends would respond if you decided to become a teacher and why?

    *Career counsellors sub questions*

    o What formal process does your school use to approach career education with students? When and how do you roll out this process?

    o What are the top three influences on student career selection in your opinion?

    o Can you name two influences on student perspectives of teaching as a career?

**Research Question Three**

- In what ways have school experiences of Year 12 students impacted the perspective of teaching as a career?

    o How are your schooling experiences related to your perspective of teaching as a career?

    o Can you provide an example of an experience that impacted your perspective of teaching?

    o How are your views of teachers related to your perspectives about teaching as a career?

    o How has the use of technology and social media influenced your perspective of choosing teaching as a career?

## 3.13 Conclusion

This chapter presented five areas of literature that underpin the study of Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career. The first area examined the role of schools within society in terms of the purpose of schooling and the role of teachers. Two perspectives were considered. The first perspective took a general viewpoint while the second perspective focussed on the viewpoint of Catholic Education Western Australia. The second area reflected the literature on the status of the teaching profession within society. Teaching as a career was examined in relation to occupational prestige, professionalisation of teaching and occupational esteem. The third area examined literature on factors that encourage people to choose a career in teaching. This literature was summarised under four themes of vocation and social contribution; knowledge and love of learning; lifestyle choice; and influenced by others. The fourth area reflected the literature on factors that discourage people from choosing a career in teaching. This literature was summarised under four themes of extrinsic factors; nature of the role; perceived teacher attributes; and active discouragement. The last area of the literature review presented research on the forming of perceptions and career choice. The literature on how perspectives develop was considered first, followed by a review of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of human development. Literature was then addressed on how perspectives influence career choice and various secondary schools' career counselling processes were examined. The next chapter presents the research plan that was employed in the undertaking of this instrumental case study.

**Chapter Four: Research Plan**

**4.1 Introduction**

       The review of the literature in Chapter Three covered five areas related to teaching as a career. These areas included: the role of schools within society; the status of the teaching profession in society; factors that encourage people to choose a teaching career; factors that discourage people from choosing a teaching career; and the forming of perceptions and career choice. Three specific research questions were developed from the review of the literature, these directed the focus of the study and are listed below.

1. What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?
2. What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of choosing teaching as a career?
3. In what ways have school experiences of Year 12 students influenced their perspective of teaching as a career?

This chapter outlines the research plan utilised to explore these three specific research questions. This plan includes the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and data collection methods that align with this study. The chapter will also address the research participants, approaches chosen to maintain the trustworthiness of the study, data analysis processes and ethical considerations. An outline of the chapter is provided in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1**

*Overview of chapter three: Research plan*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4.1 | Introduction | |
| 4.2 | Theoretical framework | 4.2.1 Epistemology |
| | | 4.2.2 Constructivism |
| 4.3 | Theoretical perspective | 4.3.1 Interpretivism |
| | | 4.3.2 Symbolic interactionism |
| 4.4 | Methodology | 4.4.1 Case study |
| | | 4.4.2 Instrumental case study |
| | | 4.4.3 Concerns of the use of case study |
| | |     4.4.3.1 Subjectivity |
| | |     4.4.3.2 Generalisability |
| | |     4.4.3.3 Large volume of data |
| 4.5 | Methods | 4.5.1 Semi-structured interview |
| | | 4.5.2 Structured online survey |
| | | 4.5.3 Focus group interviews |
| | | 4.5.4 Researcher field notes |
| 4.6 | Research participants | 4.6.1 Sampling |
| 4.7 | Trustworthiness | 4.7.1 Credibility |
| | | 4.7.2 Generalisability |
| | | 4.7.3 Dependability |
| | | 4.7.4 Confirmability |
| 4.8 | Methodological rigour | |
| 4.9 | Data analysis | 4.9.1 Data reduction |
| | | 4.9.2 Data display |
| | | 4.9.3 Drawing verifications and conclusions |
| 4.10 | Ethical considerations | 4.10.1 Respect for people's rights and dignity |
| 4.11 | Design summary | |
| 4.12 | Conclusion | |

**4.2 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework of a research inquiry relates to the philosophical basis in which the research takes place. The theoretical framework is "an inter-related set of variables formed into propositions or hypotheses that specify the relationship between variables, enabling the researcher to predict and explain phenomena" (Creswell, 2013. p. 51). The four elements associated with the theoretical framework are epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. Crotty (1998) describes epistemology as the overarching theory of knowledge that is embedded in the theoretical perspective and impacts the choice of methodology and methods. The theoretical perspective is the philosophical stance that influences and informs the selection of methodology (Crotty, 1998). Methodology outlines the strategy that directs the choice of methods for undertaking the study. The tools and techniques that are utilised to collect and analyse data are the methods of a theoretical framework. The elements of the theoretical framework are reliant upon each other as any decision made in one element affects decisions made in others. They inform each other and cannot be viewed in isolation (Crotty, 1998; King & Horrocks, 2010). An overview of the theoretical framework underpinning this research is outlined in Figure 4.1.
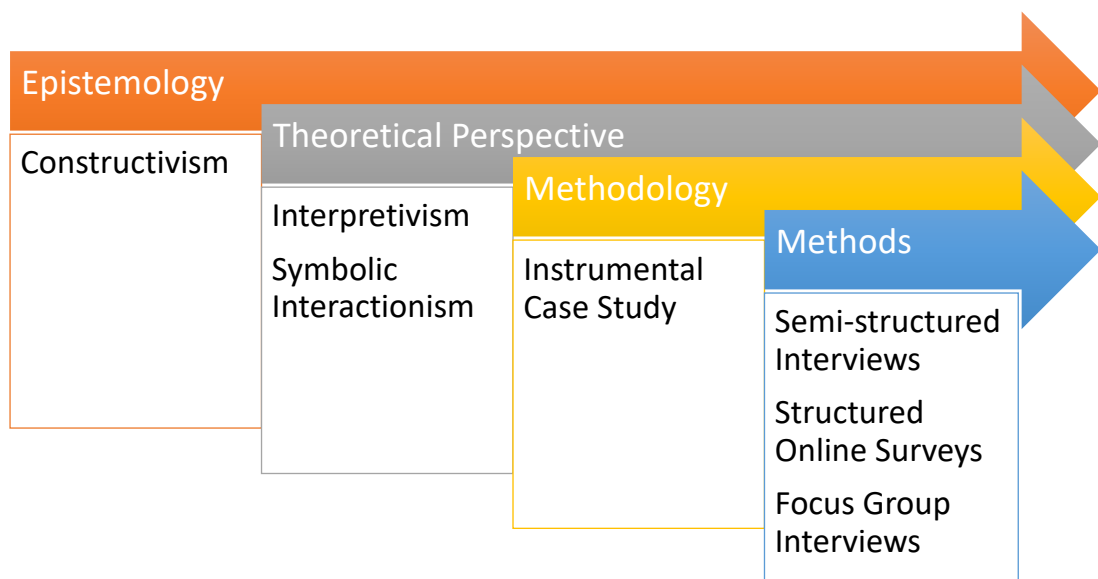


*Figure 4.1.* Theoretical Framework for the study. Adapted from Crotty (1998, p.4)

### 4.2.1 Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and its nature and scope (Hamlyn, 1995). It aims to provide a philosophical grounding for deciding what types of knowledge are possible and how researchers can ensure that the knowledge is both sufficient and reasonable (Maynard, 1994). Epistemology deals with the ways in which the truth can be reached and known (Neuman, 2014) and suggests that people construct their own interpretation of reality based on their interactions with their surroundings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The epistemological stance adopted in this research project is constructivism. The constructivist view of human knowledge rejects objective and absolute truth (Crotty, 1998). Constructivists believe that truth and meaning only become present through people's engagement with their realities. The researcher anticipates that his or her background often influences interpretation and accepts that interpretation is shaped by personal and cultural experiences (Creswell, 2013). This study explores Year 12 students' perspectives of teaching as a career. Students construct views and meanings in and through the interpretation of their lived experiences. Social constructivists acknowledge that typically, these views can be varied and multiple (Creswell, 2014; Fischer, 2003). The study gives students the opportunity to uncover and voice their perspectives of teaching as a career based on their own unique experiences and interactions within their various environments. As such, a constructivist epistemological approach was applicable for this study.

### 4.2.2 Constructivism

Constructivism is a perspective that is commonly applied as an approach to qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). In some instances, however, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used, with the quantitative data typically being used to support the qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). Within a constructivist approach, meaning is linked to the mind and is constructed, not discovered. In the constructivist's view of knowledge, people can construct meaning in different ways. A person's view is generated by the individual in response to, and in partnership with, a

subject and an object (Crotty, 1998). This study employs a constructivist viewpoint "to bring a wider range of contextually sensitive evidence and arguments" (Fischer, 2003, p. 134). As a form of qualitative research, constructivism assumes three distinct beliefs (Crotty, 1998). These three beliefs underpin the constructivist perspective. Since constructivism focuses on the individual's meaning-making in his or her own mind, it firstly proposes that an individual's understanding of reality is as valid and as worthy of respect as any other individual's viewpoint. Secondly, constructivists believe that humans interpret their world based on historical and social perspectives and, therefore, the environment and context of both the participants and the researcher are significant factors in qualitative research. Thirdly, individuals derive meaning from social settings and interactions within community, hence data collected in the field allow for a diverse range of perspectives (Patton, 2015). The constructivist approach permits participants to represent their knowledge within their own context.

A researcher undertaking a qualitative study aims to make sense of the world according to how individuals and groups construct the meaning of a particular social issue, phenomenon or question (Creswell, 2013). The researcher is aware that the process is interactive, and interpretation can be "shaped by her or his personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.3). Qualitative research is considered personal as the researcher records the participants' understandings and uses his or her own values and context to develop and interpret the results (Patton, 2015). The researcher attempts to uncover the complexity of a situation and focuses on the individual's meaning within that complexity.

A qualitative approach to the research was undertaken in this study to enable students to communicate their individual perspectives of teaching as a career based on their own experiences within their individual contexts. The researcher assisted by engaging in reciprocal conversation, questioning and clarification of answers (Mills & Birk, 2014). The researcher's experience in schools allowed her to have insight into student perspectives both as a teacher and a former Year 12 student. In keeping with the constructivist epistemology, the current study also employed quantitative survey questions.

These questions gathered data on demographics, identifiers such as whether a student intended to become a teacher, perspectives of teaching as a career and the perceived relative status of teaching. The quantitative survey results allowed the researcher to generate descriptive statistics to support or challenge results from both the focus group interviews and the review of literature.

## 4.3  Theoretical perspective

The theoretical perspective offers a philosophical framework that justifies and explains the research design and provides awareness of the way in which people see the topic (O'Donoghue, 2007). The theoretical perspective of interpretivism, specifically symbolic interactionism was chosen for this research. The interpretivist approach emphasises social interaction as the basis for knowledge (O'Donoghue, 2007). The focus for this research was to gather data, initially from Year 12 students, to explore their perspectives of teaching as a career and the reasons for these perspectives. Data were also collected from the career counsellors to provide context on how the schools deliver career education and to hear the counsellor's understanding of Year 12 student perspectives of careers. The study aimed to uncover the significant influencers upon Year 12 students' perspectives of teaching, in terms of whether they would consider it as a viable career. Additionally, the design of the research allowed the Year 12 students to voice their interpretation of how their schooling experiences impacted their perspective of teaching.

### 4.3.1 Interpretivism

Interpretivism stems from a constructivist epistemology. Within the context of this research an interpretive approach involves the use of techniques that endeavour to uncover a deep understanding of students' perspectives. Data generated during interpretive studies will generally be qualitative and empathetic in nature (Neuman, 2014). An interpretive approach focuses on an individual's reconstructed understanding of the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Key features of interpretivism include the belief that humans create a diverse range of meanings and

understandings of situations and that these arise from personal experiences in contexts and environments (Patton, 2015). To uncover meaning and make sense of the results an interpretivist researcher goes beyond the surface data, attaches significance to what is found and offers explanations and inferences in relation to the individuals' interpretations. The underpinning philosophical assumption of interpretivism is that people derive their own understanding of reality and construct meaning from interactions and surroundings. Therefore, interpretivists believe in the existence of multiple perspectives of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The interpretive nature of the research provided the Year 12 students with an opportunity to voice their varied and complex perspectives on teaching as a career. These perspectives are based on their own unique and lived experiences of reality. In this study, interpretivism as a theoretical perspective, allowed the researcher, through questioning, and field notes, to go beyond the students' surface level answers and to make sense of, and inferences on, the origins and influences of the students' perspectives.

### 4.3.2 Symbolic interactionism

Interpretivism has various approaches to understanding human meaning and actions. One such approach, and the one that underscores the theoretical perspective for this research, is symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism, as originating from the work of Mead (1934), is an approach to meaning-making that revolves around the ongoing process of constructing reality by interpreting interactions between individuals, context and symbols (O'Donoghue, 2007). According to Blumer (1969),
symbolic interactionism can be understood within three premises.
Firstly, human beings act towards phenomena based on the meaning that the phenomena have for them. The relationship between all the visible and invisible elements involved in the phenomena and the individual is shaped by the individual's culture, experience and context, which in turn informs the meaning attributed to the phenomena. Secondly, the meaning of phenomena is derived from the social interaction that one has with others. Meaning is created by the individual in and through verbal and non-verbal social communication, signs, symbols and gestures. The meaning-making is a

continual process that alters with changing social interactions and settings (Blumer, 1969). The third important premise of symbolic interactionism is that all meanings are handled in and modified through, an interpretative process employed by the person. These meanings are subject to change and are transformed in and through interactions within the person's social world. Therefore, the subjective meanings that people construct in this interpretative process will determine how they perceive things, which in turn influences their actions (Crotty, 1998). The world of subjective meaning is represented through language, gestures and signs that are produced through people's interaction with stimuli, that carry symbolic meaning for them (Neuman, 2014).

An individual's actions within a given setting, culture or group is determined by his or her interpretation of that setting, culture or group and not by stated norms, roles, goals or values (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Therefore, the interpretations and perspectives of individuals hold significant meaning as these interpretations and perspectives underpin their understanding of reality, and hence, inform behavioural choices. Crotty (1998) suggests that the symbolic interactionist is intent on entering into the perspectives, attitudes and values of a particular community, which changes the researcher in the process. In order to understand the reality of the other, the symbolic interactionalist puts his or her 'self' in the place of others. This research employed symbolic interactionism as the theoretical perspective, within the interpretivist lens. The researcher aimed to understand the personal perspectives and experiences of the Year 12 students in relation to teaching as a career. Consistent with the symbolic interactionist approach, this research also intended to understand the context and impact of the school environment in which the students are placed. As such, the career counsellors were interviewed to gain an understanding of context and the processes used for career counselling in each respective school.

## 4.4 Research methodology

A research methodology is the strategic plan of action that supports the choice and utilisation of particular methods (Crotty, 1998). In devising a methodology, the researcher is concerned with why, what, when, from where

and how data is collected and analysed. In essence, the methodology asks the question: how can the researcher go about finding out whatever he or she believe can possibly be known? (Guba & Lincoln 1994).

Qualitative research is situationally constrained, involves the researcher and uses few cases or subjects for purposes of validation (Neuman, 2003). It is an approach to research that aims to seek answers to a question and produce results that were not determined in advance. The strength of qualitative research is its ability to deliver complex textual explanations of how people experience a given subject (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). This project constructs meaning from the social experiences and perspectives of Year 12 students, across five Catholic secondary colleges in Western Australia, related to selecting teaching as a career. In line with the intent of qualitative research as an approach, the chosen methodology for this research is case study.

### 4.4.1 Case study

As a research methodology, case study is a systematic way of exploring events or themes, collecting multiple forms of data, analysing information and reporting the results for a given timeframe and within a set of boundaries (Creswell, 2007). A case study research design provides the framework for investigating a contemporary phenomenon, 'the case', in various real-world contexts (Yin, 2009). Case study as a methodology, accepts that numerous variables exist within a case and therefore often multiple tools are required for data collection such as, one-to-one interviews, field notes and surveys (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). A case study provides an avenue for the researcher to investigate how social structures and forces influence individuals' perspectives within their unique contexts (Neuman, 2014). This approach allows the researcher to experience the subtlety and complex nature of the case and the participants. Cohen et al., (2011) propose that case contexts are distinctive yet ever-changing and the interaction of the researcher and participants unfolds in a dynamic fashion according to human relationship, conversation and other uniquely contextual factors. This research was conducted across five Catholic secondary schools, each with its unique context and

participants. A case study approach was a relevant way to explore Year 12 students' perspectives of teaching as a career, based on their own experiences within their respective Catholic school settings and communities.

*4.4.2 Instrumental case study*

There are many variations of case study. Yin (2009) identified five types, which include explanatory, exploratory, descriptive, single and multiple-case studies. Other researchers (Punch, 1998; Stake, 2010) suggest that there are three categories of case studies, namely collective, intrinsic and instrumental. For example, multiple cases are explored in a collective case study and the topic is examined across and within each of the cases. The researcher is interested in the topic, case and context (Punch 1998). An intrinsic case study on the other hand, focusses on the exploration of one particular case. The researcher aims to examine the topic or refine a theory. An instrumental case study aims to explore a topic across situations, and gain insight into the case; however, the particulars of the case are generally of secondary interest (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) suggested that instrumental case study is used to explain deep issues by looking beyond a single case and using multiple cases. The use of multiple cases caters for the generation of results that originate from a broader range of perspectives. These varied perspectives provide an opportunity to appreciate complexities and contexts (McGloin, 2008).

An instrumental case study approach was adopted for this study. The researcher's aim was to understand a wide variety of Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career. As such, in keeping with the instrumental case study design, the research was conducted in five Catholic secondary schools in Perth, Western Australia. These schools were chosen because they provide for a maximum variation in contexts, such as single-gender and coeducation, country and city and varied socio-economic environments. The various contexts of the case allowed for a fuller understanding and broader picture of the topic. The primary interest for this research was Year 12 students' perspectives of teaching as a career, the secondary interest was the case context, which allowed for a deeper

understanding and exploration of the students' perspectives. Given these considerations, an instrumental case study approach was appropriate for the purpose of the study. However, whilst the instrumental case study is an appropriate methodology for this research, Cohen et al. (2011) outlined concerns when using a case study approach.

### 4.4.3 Concerns of case study methodology

There are several concerns associated with the use of case study as a methodological structure. These concerns fall into five categories, namely: subjectivity, generalisability, volume of information, methodological rigour and the quality of the research (Cohen et al., 2011). The research design phase in this study addressed the concerns associated with case study research. An explanation of subjectivity, generalisability and volume of information will be provided alongside how this study responded to the concerns. Methodological rigour and the quality of the research will be addressed separately, later in the chapter.

### 4.4.3.1 Subjectivity

Subjectivity refers to ideas and opinions being based in the mind and internal world, rather than existing factually in the external world. If knowledge is subjective in nature, it is open to bias and can be influenced by personal feelings and tastes. Burns (2000) proposed that the subjectivity of the researcher could make the results of a case study questionable and value laden. He therefore contended that a case study may be viewed as impure methodology. Other authors (e.g. Cohen et al, 2011) counter this proposition by asserting that researchers undertaking case studies can become engrossed in the subjective topics and therefore are able to form relationships with participants to further understand their perspectives (Cohen et al, 2011; Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) suggested that the ability to become immersed in the case with the participant, reduced the likely influence of the researcher's own subjectivity. Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argued that there is no greater bias in the researcher's preconceived ideas within a case study approach, than within other methods of inquiry. To check the accuracy of the collected data, Miles, Huberman and

Saldana (2014) suggested having case study participants confirm the interpretations from the case as a means of validating the data. Additionally, Stake (1995; 2010) emphasised the importance of the researcher examining and recording his or her own interest and motivations towards the topic and purpose of the study, as a means of consciously avoiding bias.

This case study addressed the concern of subjectivity within the research by including one-to-one semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and an online survey as research tools. This three-point triangulation allowed the researcher to test the themes and results that were generated from the data and therefore, reduced researcher subjectivity (Creswell, 2013). The online survey included numerous quantitative questions, which assisted to reduce the likelihood of subjective interpretations. The researcher consciously reflected on her opinions of the topics and motivations for engaging in research, which further aided with the reduction of bias in the interpretations.

*4.4.3.2 Generalisability*

Generalisability is the extent to which results from a research study can be relevant and applicable to other situations and contexts (Yin, 2009). Cohen et al. (2011) proposed that case studies have limited generalisability. Bryman (2008) counters this concern by highlighting that the initial intent behind a case study is to examine a particular case or topic, and that generalising can occur by comparing results to other cases and existing literature. Stake (1995) also suggested that the goal of a case study is to maximise understanding about a case or phenomenon, not to understand all other cases. The collection of the evidence in case study research can then be used to create theoretical generalisations when other researchers see the application in additional settings (Cohen et al., 2011). Additionally, Creswell (2013) suggested that surveys with both open-ended and closed-ended questions allow for the collection of a broad range of data and may be effectively used to generalise results.

The purpose of case study research is to examine and understand the case participants' perspectives, therefore the concern regarding the lack of generalisability can be considered as secondary to this research. However,

post-study generalisations and comparisons are still likely to occur. Surveys with both open-ended and closed-ended questions were used in this study to collect a broad range of data. Additionally, the researcher ensured that there was maximum variability in the Catholic educational sites. Whilst generalisability was not the goal of the study, this variation in data sources and broad range of questioning techniques, may assist with generalisability.

*4.4.3.3 Large volume of data*

The case study approach tends to illicit a large volume of data. Yin (2009) highlighted concerns that the sheer amount of information could potentially lend itself to the researcher being selective with the data, its interpretation and analysis. Marshall and Rossman (2011) defuse this concern through their suggestions of selecting a manageable topic, and the careful planning of the research questions, to ensure they are succinct and clearly address the topic. Burns (2000) reiterates this point and states that consistent coding and analysis should occur once all the data is collected. Creswell (2013) emphasised the importance of setting the boundaries for the study.

The researcher in this study paid close attention to the planning, editing, piloting and revising of all the survey tools and questions. The focus group interviews occurred in each respective site and ran for 45 minutes. The one-to-one interviews occurred for 30 minutes over the phone and there were 470 online surveys, each with qualitative responses. All the conversations and responses were recorded, and transcribed and researcher field notes were taken at each site. This large volume of information was coded and analysed consistently in a logical manner, post collection. This process helped to manage the volume of information and reduced the likelihood of the researcher being selective with the data. Piloting the research tools helped to make the questions succinct and ensured the questions were clearly linked to the intention and topic of the study, which reduced unnecessary information. The three specific research questions were pointed and set the boundaries for the study. Concerns regarding methodological rigour and the quality of the research will be addressed later in the chapter.

**4.5 Methods**

Research methods describe how data will be collected (Crotty, 1998). The methods of data collection employed in this research were predominantly qualitative in nature; however, the methods also included quantitative data collection. The methods used in this study were semi-structured interviews (Appendix E), structured online surveys (Appendix G), focus group interviews (Appendix F) and researcher field notes. The four methods of data collection will now be examined.

*4.5.1 Semi-structured Interviews*

Engaging participants in a purposeful and investigative conversation such as, semi-structured interviews, typically involves asking theoretically relevant questions, careful and reflective listening, and recording what was said for successive structured analysis (Yin, 2009). Qualitative researchers who engage case study methodology predominantly utilise interviewing as one of the most important sources of data. Farr (1982) describes semi-structured interviews as "essentially a technique or method for establishing or discovering that there are perspectives or viewpoints on events other than those of the person initiating the interview" (p. 38). The open-minded contemplation of such perspectives enables a researcher to validly understand the respondents' life and world as the respondent perceives it, and to draw associations with observations and accounts obtained in other ways. The primary objective of interviewing, according to Gaskell and Bauer (2000) is to gain "a fine-textured understanding of beliefs, attitudes, values and motivations in relation to the behaviours of people in particular social contexts" (p. 39).

The semi-structured interview combines a pre-determined set of open-ended questions, which provides the opportunity for the interviewer to follow topical trajectories and to see, understand and explore responses (Cohen et al., 2011). Creswell (2013) suggested the use of a protocol in conducting the interview, such as providing the guide list of questions to the interviewee beforehand. Creswell (2013) advocated for audio-recording so that responses could be replayed and reviewed at later dates. Bryman (2008) recommended that the interview question guide be piloted as a means of

testing that the questions target intended subject areas and to help with question feedback, revision and suggested edits. A key theme in interpretivism is understanding people's perceived reality, from their own frame of reference (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explore the context and frames of reference of career education in each of the schools.

This study employed the semi-structured interview method to collect qualitative data from the career counsellors (or equivalent) from each of the five schools. A career counsellors' role is to educate students on post-schooling pathways and to provide students with the opportunity to explore various careers that may suit their interests and talents. Career counsellors also provide information on the prerequisites for tertiary education pathways related to students' career goals. The goal of the semi-structured interviews was to understand the career counsellors' perspectives of the provision of tailored career education in their school's context and the impact these career experiences have on student perspectives. Before the interview was conducted, the career counsellor of each school was provided with a participant information sheet detailing the study (Appendix B), consent to be involved in the interview (Appendix B) and an interview guide, in terms of a list of intended questions (Appendix E). Prior to the semi-structured interviews, the interview guide questions were piloted with a career counsellor from a school not involved in the study. The researcher responded to the feedback and suggestions and edited the questions accordingly. The interview guide questions were developed to focus on the three specific research questions. Table 4.1 relates the guide questions from the interview, with the specific research questions of the study. The semi-structured interviews were held on a one-to-one basis and ran for approximately 45 minutes. The results of the semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

**Table 4.2**

*Linking of specific research questions to the semi-structured interview guide*

| Specific Research Question (SRQ) | Interview Guide Question |
|---|---|
| SRQ 1<br><br>*What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?* | 9 |
| SRQ 2<br><br>*What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of choosing teaching as a career?* | 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 |
| SRQ 3<br><br>*In what ways have school experiences of Year 12 students influenced their perspective of teaching as a career?* | 1, 2, 3, |

*4.5.2 Structured online survey*

Surveying is a data collection method that is normally aligned with quantitative research (Creswell, 2014). Neuman (2014) suggested that surveys can also be a useful tool when incorporated into qualitative research. There are many types of surveys, examples include, those conducted via telephone, paper forms, face-to-face, email and the internet. Structured online surveys require people to respond to an identical set of stimuli in order to examine the validity of certain statements (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012;). Generally, the participants are asked to answer the same set of questions in the same order and they are predominantly provided with the same selection of responses. The rationale behind such structured techniques is that they mitigate threats to reliability and validity, and results can be analysed and compared more easily (Creswell, 2014). In some instances, an online survey may ask qualitative questions, which allows the participants to provide greater detail in their responses. Creswell (2014) suggested that surveys with both open-ended and closed-ended questions allow for the collection of a broad range of data and may be used effectively to generalise results. Neuman (2014) proposed that surveys provide an avenue to ask numerous

questions at once and therefore, cater for measuring many variables at the same time.

Surveys are either cross-sectional or longitudinal in design (Gay et al., 2012). Cross-sectional surveys collect data at a given point in time and longitudinal surveys collect data over two or more intervals of time. As with all methods of data collection, the use of surveys comes with both advantages and disadvantages. Disadvantages associated with using a structured online survey include lower response rates, limited use and completion of open-ended questions and the inability to further probe participants (Burns, 2000; Sue & Ritter, 2012). However, when a snapshot of current or changing beliefs, perspectives and behaviours of a population are required, cross-sectional or longitudinal online surveys are an effective, straight forward, inexpensive and relatively quick and reliable method of collecting data (Gay, et. al., 2012).

This study employed the use of a cross-sectional, point-in-time, structured online survey to provide a 'snapshot' of Year 12 student perspectives (Appendix G). The survey contained both quantitative and qualitative questions. The quantitative questions incorporated multiple choice, five-point Likert scale and 11-point ranking style questions. A five-point Likert scale question allows the respondent to select their perspective on a stated comment from a range of options from one extreme to the other (e.g. strongly agree to strongly disagree). The five-point Likert scale also allows for a neutral response. This style of question provides the researcher with more granular feedback and nuance than binary "Agree" and "Disagree" questions (Survey Monkey, 2020). Ranking scale questions allow the respondent to rank their priorities. Ranking scale questions provides the researcher with insight into the participants' order of preferences from a list of options (Hino & Imai, 2019). The quantitative questions in this study elicited demographic information and allowed participants to respond to statements about career selection, teaching status, intention to teach and preferred reasons to choose a teaching career. Qualitative questions were also incorporated and required a written response concerning views on teaching as a career.

The rationale behind using quantitative methods in this study was to increase the trustworthiness of themes from the qualitative data (Neuman, 2014). The intent was to provide quantitative values to the qualitative data themes. This mix of quantitative and qualitative data allowed for a numerical value to be assigned to opinions, so that mean figures and rankings for all responses could be used as a method to summarise and evaluate the data. Capturing demographic information allowed for the analysis of the relationship between multiple variables. An online survey was also used in order to reach the highest number of respondents in the shortest amount of time. Using the web to collect and collate survey responses, allowed for greater ease during the data analysis stage.

All Year 12 students from the five schools were invited by their Year Coordinator to undertake the structured online survey. To maximise the response rate, this invitation occurred during school time and students were offered time to complete it. The survey was emailed to each student using a web link. The response rate across the five schools was 59%. That is, 470 completed surveys out of a possible 794. The online survey was piloted with students from a school not involved in the study and their valuable feedback was actioned accordingly. An example of the actioned feedback included, inverting the ranking scale so that '1' became the highest and '11' became the lowest in the 11-point ranking scale question.

The survey had three general sections. The first section collected data relating to demographic information and specific identifiers via multiple choice questions, such as whether the student studied Physics. The second section consisted of a collection of closed-ended five-point Likert questions and an 11-point ranking scale question. The third section provided open-end questions. The questions in sections 2 and 3 directly related to the 3 specific research questions of this study. The survey structure and the links to the specific research questions can be found in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3**

*Linking of specific research questions to the structured online survey*

| Specific Research Question | Question Style | Survey Qn |
|---|---|---|
| Demographic and identifiers | Quantitative | |
| | Multiple choice | 1, 2, 3, 4, |
| | 5-Point Likert Scale | 5, 6 |
| SRQ 1 | Quantitative | |
| *What are Year 12 student* | 5-Point Likert Scale | 7, 8, 10 |
| *perspectives of teaching as a* | Qualitative | 10, 11 |
| *career*? | | |
| SRQ 2 | Quantitative | |
| *What are the factors that* | 11-Point Ranking Scale | 9 |
| *influenced Year 12 student* | Qualitative | 13 |
| *perspectives of choosing teaching* | | |
| *as a career?* | | |
| SRQ 3 | Qualitative | 12, 13 |
| *In what ways have school* | | |
| *experiences of Year 12* | | |
| *students influenced their* | | |
| *perspective of teaching as a career?* | | |

*4.5.3 Focus group interviews*

A focus group interview is an in-depth group interview with participants who are purposively selected as a sample of a specific population. The interview was 'focused' on a given topic (Richards 1998). Participants are generally selected on criteria, which can include considerations such as their contributions to add to the topic, age-range, socio-characteristics and whether they would be comfortable talking to the researcher and each other (Cohen et al., 2011). Patton (2015) clarifies that focus group interviews are largely a social experience and because perspectives are formed, sustained and accepted in social groups, the trustworthiness and meaningfulness of the data is increased. The communications that occur, including the silences and awkward responses to topics, allows the researcher to identify areas of uncertainty and tension within the group. The attentiveness of the researcher

to these situations and his or her ability to probe further, can enhance the quality of the data (Patton, 2015). Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggest that an interview guide be created and loosely followed to provide a consistency of process and protocol. This guide also enables the researcher to have a structured way of entering into dialogue in each context and ensures all questions are addressed at each focus group interview (Patton, 2015). Creswell (2014), advocates for the piloting or pre-testing of the questions for the focus group interviews prior to use. This process enables the researcher to foretell problems and gaps and refine the research instrument. Marshall and Rossman (2011) point out that the piloting process enhances the trustworthiness and validity of the questions and hence the collected data.

Focus group interviews were employed in this study to gather Year 12 students' perspectives of teaching as a career. The participants were chosen to include a maximum variety of students. In coeducational schools, approximately an even number of males and females participated. In all focus group interviews, there was a range of academic abilities, ATAR and non-ATAR students, and a mix of students who were and were not considering a career in teaching with those who might consider it. The questions for the focus group interviews were piloted with a group of students from a school not involved in the study. The students' suggestions were considered, and the questions and question order were refined and altered accordingly. The interview question guide was not given to the students beforehand but was followed as part of the focus group interview protocol (Appendix F). The school Principal and Year Coordinator (or equivalent) were provided with the question guide prior to the focus group interview. At various points during the focus group interviews, the conversations took a turn in an unexpected direction and the researcher allowed these authentic interactions to occur with minimal interruption. At times, the researcher had to guide the conversation back to the topic at hand.

The aim of the focus group interviews was to give a variety of Year 12 students a time and a space to voice their perspectives on teaching as a career. Student were required to submit their own and their parents' consent to be involved in the focus group interview (Appendix C, D). Participants

were told that they could withdraw from the conversation at any stage, without negative consequences. Each focus group interview occurred in a classroom or boardroom on the school site. The conversations from the focus group interview questions were audio recorded and then transcribed. The duration of the focus group interviews across the five schools was between 45 and 60 minutes. Field notes were taken during each of the focus group interviews to record the atmosphere and tone of the group and moments of interest or difference. A special note was made on vocally dominant student perspectives and their impact on the perspectives and reactions of the other students in the group. The questions in the focus group interviews addressed the three specific interview questions of the study. A breakdown of the focus group interview questions and the links to the specific research questions can be found in Table 4.4

**Table 4.4**

*Linking of specific research questions to the focus group interview questions*

| Specific Research Question (SRQ) | Focus Group Question |
|---|---|
| SRQ 1 *What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?* | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 15 |
| SRQ 2 *What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of choosing teaching as a career?* | 8, 9, 10, 11 |
| SRQ 3 *In what ways have school experiences of Year 12 students influenced their perspective of teaching as a career?* | 12, 13, 14 |

*4.5.4 Researcher field notes*

Researcher-generated field notes were written by the researcher whilst on site, to provide an account of the visit. Berg (2007) suggests that field notes allow the researcher to have a complete, accurate and detailed account of the events that occurred during interviews and site visits.

The notes should be ordered chronologically with the date, time, and place on each entry. They serve as a detailed description of what the researcher heard and saw in tangible, specific terms (Neuman, 2003). Creswell (2013) outlined that the recording of field notes is a good protocol for qualitative research as they help maintain the understanding of complex social settings. The use of analytic field notes assists the researcher to maintain a record and memory of salient concepts and observations not captured by the interview recordings (Berg, 2007). Marshall and Rossman (2011) proposed that field notes enable the researcher to take note of non-verbal and visual communication, behaviours and relationships within the group. In this study, researcher field notes were recorded as a means of noting the context, tone and general atmosphere in the schools. Personalities, relationships and dominant characters and, their impact on others, were also recorded.

## 4.6 Participants

The participants involved in the study included the five career counsellors, one from each site; 470 Year 12 students across the five schools who undertook the online survey; and approximately 110 Year 12 students across the five schools who participated in the focus group interviews. The career counsellors (or equivalent) in each school participated in a one-to-one semi-structured interview. All Year 12 students in each school were invited to complete a structured online survey.

**Table 4.5**

*Research participants in each of the methods of data collection*

| Method and Participant | Gender | School Type |
|---|---|---|
| Semi-structured Interviews | 1 Female | Country Coeducation Y7-12 |
| | 1 Female | Metropolitan Coeducation Y7-12 |
| | 1 Female | |
| Career Counsellor or Equivalent | 1 Female | Metropolitan Coeducation K-12 |
| | 1 Male | Metropolitan Girls Y 4 -12 |
| | | Metropolitan Boys Y4 -12 |
| Structured Online Survey Year 12 students | 263 Females 207 Males | |
| Focus Group Interviews Year 12 students | 59 Females 50 Males | |

### 4.6.1 Sampling

Sampling entails selecting participants from a certain population for a study so that the results of the study can be generalised back to the original population (Silverman, 2005; 2013). Purposive sampling is a design strategy that allows researchers to choose cases and participants because they encompass features or characteristics that the researcher is interested in (Patton, 2015). Purposive sampling offers deeper insights into a phenomenon from chosen perspectives. Variation sampling occurs when there is a purposeful selection of a wide range of cases to provide maximum diversity and to identify common patterns or differences (Silverman, 2005).

Sampling for the study occurred through the selection of school sites and the selection of students for the focus group interviews at each of the sites. A detailed rationale for focussing the study in Catholic schools was provided in Chapter One. Schools in the Catholic sector within Western Australia were purposefully selected for two reasons. The researcher is specifically interested in what students from a Catholic school environment think and feel about teaching as a career. Moreover, the researcher has networks within the Catholic system and therefore was more likely to gain the schools' permissions for participation. The five school sites for the

study were purposefully selected to offer a variation of sampling that covers a breath of data within a Catholic context. This variation included a range of students from different ICSEA backgrounds and single gender, coeducation, Years K-12 and Year 7-12 schooling. The sites encompassed country and city environments and varying ATAR and academic achievement. The gender of the participants in each of the methods of data collection is outlined in Table 4.5.

### 4.7 Trustworthiness

The quality and legitimacy of qualitative research is measured through assessing its trustworthiness (Silverman, 2013). When the qualitative research has been deemed to have credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, it is considered to have high trustworthiness, and methodological soundness (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Various processes and measures can be used to increase the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Examples of such measures are piloting survey questions, practising interviews, attention to consistency and protocol during interviews, and the conscious application of significant researcher skills (Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Patton (2005) suggested that the researcher is an instrument of measurement within the study and should therefore have competent skills. Burns (2000) outlined these skills as; questioning, listening, being adaptive and flexible, being able to understand the complexities of issues and exercising an awareness of own bias and actively working to remove this bias during the interpretation of data.

The present qualitative research established trustworthiness through a range of measures. These measures included the piloting of all data collection tools prior to use, the in-depth experience of the researcher in conducting interviews, triangulation of data and the conscious and consistent attention paid by the researcher to adhere to protocol and methodological rigour at each phase of the study. A summary of the measures used in this research to meet the four criterion is provided in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6**

*Measures used to establish trustworthiness*

| Criterion | Measures |
|---|---|
| Credibility | Research knowledge and experience |
| | Documenting the context of each site |
| | Triangulation of data |
| Transferability | Purposive sampling |
| | Variation sampling |
| | Linking research results to literature review |
| | Cross-site analysis |
| | Defining research context |
| Dependability | Adhering to protocols in interviews and surveys |
| | Piloting of all questions |
| | Practising of interview skills |
| | Audio recording and transcribing all verbal interview data |
| | The use of multiple methods |
| Confirmability | The use of three methods and data points for triangulation |
| | Use of quantitative survey questions to confirm themes |
| | Reference to researcher's beliefs and assumptions |
| | In-depth methodological descriptions |
| | Stating concerns about limitations of research |

*4.7.1 Credibility*

Credibility involves establishing the truth of a social reality according to the participant's perspective (Bryman, 2008). For a qualitative study to have credibility, the researcher must be able to consider "all of the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained" (Mills, 2003, p. 78). Therefore, the credibility of research can be shown when the results from an inquiry are re-constructed by the researcher in such a way that they are deemed true by the participants (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). Guba (1981)

suggested that peer debriefing, triangulation and prolonged participation are all methods that can be used to achieve credibility. Shenton (2004) added the researcher's background qualifications and experience, familiarity with the culture of the participating organisations and reflective commentary, as additional methods to enhance credibility. In this study, credibility was strengthened through the measures of data triangulation and the researcher's background, knowledge of the organisations and reflective field notes.

Triangulation is the collection and use of multiple data points in a study, which allows for cross-checking of sources and information and, hence, enhances research credibility (Bryman, 2008). In social research, the credibility of the information is strengthened when multiple sources and perspectives can be observed (Neuman, 2014). Therefore, additional data sources will strengthen the results of social research, as will the number of participants (Shenton, 2004). To increase credibility, triangulation was used in the current study in two ways. Firstly, the research was collected from five schools, each with varying contexts and demographics. Secondly, four methods were used to collect information at each site, with three sets of different participants. That is, the career counsellors (or equivalent) through a semi-structured interview, an invitation to the whole cohort of Year 12 students with a structured online survey, 18-24 Year 12 students in a focus group interview and researcher-generated field notes. Through these means, the study gleaned multiple perspectives on the perspectives of teaching as a career. The three specific data points of collection from participants allowed for themes and results to be triangulated and compared. These varying sources also allowed for a deep analysis into participant responses. The researcher field notes served as a reminder of non-verbal communication, tone, atmosphere and dominant personalities and their impact on others. These notes aided in the credibility of the results.

Shenton (2004) suggested that the researcher can be an instrument for the credibility for a study. Specifically, experience in interviewing and the researcher's skill set, familiarity with the context and a reflective commentary can all add credibility to a study. The researcher in this study worked in recruitment for two years and interviewed for a living. She also spent the last

14 years in education, ten of which were in senior leadership. The last eight years she has been required to conduct student, parent, staff and personnel interviewing and has led various focus group interviews and action research projects. The researcher's qualifications cover a Bachelor of Commerce (Marketing), Graduate Diploma of Secondary Education (Business and Mathematics) and a Master of Education (Religious Education). The researcher's working experience has been within the Western Australian Catholic sector and she is well aware of the system context. She has also worked in two of the five sites previously and has networks in the other three schools. She has a strong level of awareness of, and familiarity with, the climate and culture of each of the sites. Field notes were taken at each site and these written reflections enhanced the credibility of results from the data.

*4.7.2 Transferability*

Transferability considers the ability of research to be generalised to other contexts (Patton, 2015). When the results of a study can be transferred to different cases, those results are considered more trustworthy (Punch, 1998). Qualitative research is generally more preoccupied with the depth rather than the breadth of views and information (Bryman, 2008). Both breadth and depth of results can increase transferability of research (Bryman, 2008). Case studies provide rich descriptions on participant perspectives and are contextually unique. Bryman (2008) suggests that the richness, depth and uniqueness of qualitative studies provide the reader with an opportunity to judge whether the results are relevant to other cases or contexts.

In this study, transferability was enhanced by providing context information, using purposive and variation sampling, engaging in cross-site analysis and using existing literature and research as a springboard for discussion and to confirm results. Chapter Two outlines the contexts in which this research took place and therefore allows the reader to make a judgement on the transferability of the results (Patton, 2015). To ensure that a breadth and depth of views were considered, the researcher chose sites that allowed for wide variation in participant demographics and school contexts and allowed adequate time for interviewing, with sufficiently open-

ended questions. This variation enabled the research to engage in cross-site analysis by comparing and establishing patterns in the perspectives of Year 12 students within the differing contexts. By inviting whole cohorts to be involved in the online survey, and a specific number in the focus group interviews, the researcher could engage with both a depth and breadth of perspectives. The interview guide allowed the researcher to invite participants to elaborate on their perspectives in a descriptive manner. Many of the results in the study were consistent with established research emanating from other contexts. The researcher was responsible for ensuring the research could be transferred to other settings. The limitations of this study are identified in Chapter One. These limitations assist the reader to understand the boundaries of the research. Patton (2015) argues that it is ultimately up to the reader to make a judgement as to whether the results can be generalised.

*4.7.3 Dependability*

Dependability refers to the consistency of the data. For research to be dependable, the results have to be repeatable over time, regardless of the choice of methodological approaches, methods or researchers (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Bryman (2008) suggests that the researcher adopts an auditing approach to ensure consistency. This auditing approach entails documenting processes, procedures, raw data, results, analysis and protocols as they occur, and at all phases of the research. The documenting creates a trail that can be retraced and examined at any time. Guba (1981) proposed using multiple methods of data collection to help overcome the perceived weaknesses of one method by the strength of another. In addition to the multiple methods, Guba recommends the piloting of interview questions to refine the process.

In this current study, the researcher enhanced the dependability of the results by creating an auditing trail of procedures and activities, which included the audio transcribing of interviews. All phases of the research plan were recorded and documented. The researcher also practised the interviews and piloted the questions prior to the first site visit. Three different methods were utilised in the study to check the stability and consistency of

results. These methods included semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and an online survey, which included quantitative questions. The methods were conducted by adhering to protocols and procedures. Examples of procedures include the refinement of instruments after piloting and the provision of the questions to participants prior to the interviews.

*4.7.4 Confirmability*

Confirmability is the criterion for trustworthiness that determines the degree to which research can be corroborated (Bryman, 2008). Confirmability requires the results in a study to be the product of the inquiry, not tainted by the researcher's bias (Shenton, 2004). Stake (2010) highlights that the researcher is a part of the process and therefore adds a unique perspective to the study. This fact requires the researcher to be aware of his or her biases and take steps to ensure objectivity is applied. When objectivity is present, the results will be generated by the perspectives of the participants rather than the preferences or ideas of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Bryman (2008) contended that complete objectivity when using qualitative methods for social research is impractical. He noted that it is essential for researchers to act in good faith by ensuring that they have not overtly allowed personal inclinations to manifest in the results. Measures that are commonly used to ensure confirmability include; triangulation of data, reference to researcher's beliefs and assumptions, the limitations of the study, and clearly documenting processes, procedures and methods (Bryman, 2008).

As discussed in the previous section, this study triangulated the results by utilising three different research methods. One of the methods, the online survey, included quantitative questions. The quantitative instrument questions allowed the researcher to rank themes numerically and hence support the qualitative results using descriptive statistics. The researcher has a background in education and is knowledgeable about the contexts of the school sites. Every attempt has been made in Chapter One to highlight her beliefs and assumptions with regard to the study. Limitations of the study have also been recognised. The researcher documented and recorded in-

depth methodological descriptions and piloted all instruments to ensure processes and procedures were free from bias.

## 4.8 Methodological rigour

In the context of this research, methodological rigour refers to the field-testing and assessment of the precision of the instruments used for data collection. Methodological rigour is assisted by a systematic and conscious approach to data collection, interpretation and communication and research design (Mays & Pope, 1995). In ensuring methodological rigour is applied, the choice of piloting participants must be representative of those involved in the study. The three intended research instruments were piloted in the researcher's workplace, which, as a Catholic coeducational secondary school, is representative of the participants in the study. This pilot enhanced the methodological rigour and effectiveness of the interview and survey questions. The semi-structured interview guide questions were trialled with the career counsellors in the researcher's school. He held the same role-title in the pilot school that the other career counsellor participants hold in their various schools. He was therefore in a good position to provide relevant commentary and feedback. One question was altered after the pilot. The focus group interview question guide was given to a group of 18 Year 12 students in the researcher's school. They answered the questions in a mock focus group environment and provided feedback on the sequencing of the interview guide. A class of 22 Year 12 students piloted the structured online survey and provided feedback on the wording of questions, ranking sequence of options in the 11-point ranking scale questions and the types of questions. The online survey was amended in line with the feedback. The students and staff member who piloted the instruments were all members of a Catholic school community. Moreover, the students who participated in the pilot were the same age and year group as those in the final study. The refined and final interview guides and online survey were then utilised with the participants (Appendix E-G).

## 4.9 Data analysis

Data analysis is an ongoing process involving continuous reflection on the data. Continuous reflection can take place by asking deeper questions and taking field notes throughout the research process (Creswell, 2014). Parlett and Hamilton (1976; cited in Cohen, et al., 2011) suggested, "the researcher takes a wide-angle lens to gather data, and then, by sifting, sorting, reviewing and reflecting on them, the salient features of the situation emerge" (p. 539). The process to analyse the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews, surveys and focus group interviews is based on the Interactive Cycle Process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Figure 4.2 represents the data analysis strategy used in this inquiry. This interactive process by Miles and Huberman (1994) consists of three concurrent activities of data reduction, data display and verification and conclusion drawing. The process is iterative and occurs continually throughout the different phases of the research. Quantitative responses from the online survey were analysed using descriptive statistics such as, mean, mode, median and rankings and were displayed using excel and graphical software.
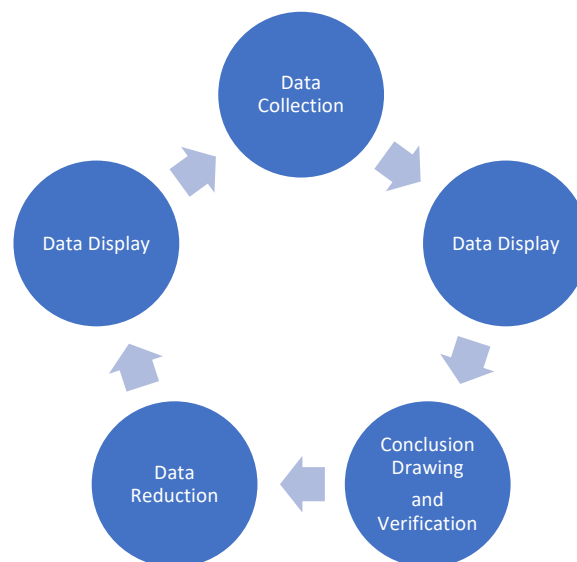


Figure 4.2 *Data Analysis Strategy - An Interactive Cyclical Process* (Adapted from Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.12)

### 4.9.1 Data reduction

Data reduction is the process whereby the quantity of qualitative data is condensed and organised. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that prior to data collection, the researcher anticipates data reduction through the selection of cases, instrument questions and the conceptual framework. The process of data reduction is ongoing and requires the use of a coding process to break down segments of data into themes. The process involves examining, comparing, hypothesising and classifying the data (Cohen et al., 2011). Reducing the data into multiple codes, patterns, clusters and then themes, is a significant part of analysing data. This iterative process of data reduction "sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards" (Cohen et al., p. 11) and organises data in a manner that enables final conclusions and verifications to be verified. The first cycle of coding requires sorting and sifting data chunks into numerous codes. The second and subsequent cycles generate pattern coding, which reduce the data further. These patterns can then be categorised into specific themes (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). The researcher anticipated the process of data reduction through the chosen research methodology, instruments and selection of questions. In this inquiry, the transcript data from the semi-structured interviews, qualitative answers from the surveys and focus group interview answers required continuous manual coding. There was a significant amount of text to analyse and summarise into specific codes, clusters and themes. Figure 4.3 depicts the scheme for analysing all the qualitative data collected from the transcripts.
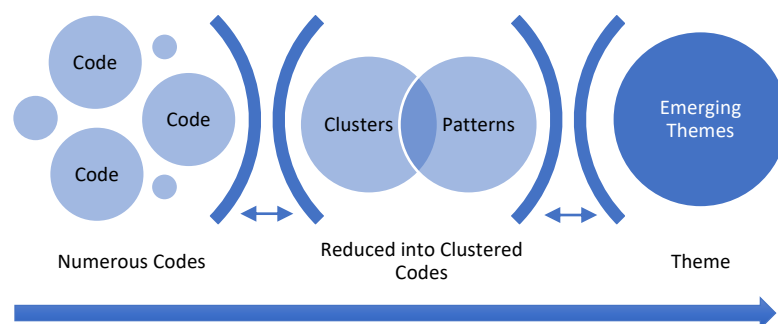


Figure 4.3 *Schematic depiction of the process for analysing data*

*4.9.2 Data display*

Assisting the data analytic strategy is the visualising of data through the generation of "an organised, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). Data displays are used throughout the analysis phase of research. Displays can come in many types, such as tables, extended text, diagrams, charts, matrixes or graphs. The types of displays that are used by the researcher will depend upon the nature of the data collected and the intended analysis. For example, a chart or matrix may enable the researcher to identify patterns and relationships across the study (Yin, 2014). The displays used to analyse the qualitative data in this research included, the grouping of extended text quotes, matrixes, word clouds and then, finally, the analysed data were coded into tables. The tables assisted with reducing the codes into patterns and clusters. These patterns and clusters were then reduced to emerging themes. The quantitative data in this research was analysed and displayed using bar graphs and tables and then were coded and filtered into the same table of themes alongside the qualitative data. The quantitative data did not generate any additional themes. In this research, the quantitative data from the online surveys confirmed and verified the themes emerging from the analysis of the qualitative data. Two examples of the data displays used to generate and code a small portion of the results for research question one are provided in Table 4.7 and Figure 4.4.

**Table 4.7**

*What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?*

| Quotes | Codes | Pattern | Theme |
|---|---|---|---|
| "Educating next generation" "Passing on knowledge" "Imparting experience and knowledge" | Passing to generations | Passing on knowledge to the next generation | **Purpose of teaching** |
| "Passing on legacy and tradition" "Helping students learn" | Traditions | | |
| "Skilling students with basic agreed content and skills" | Linking past to present | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| "Advancing society"<br>"Building on knowledge"<br>"Progression"<br>"Continual growth and learning"<br>"Influencing"<br>"Shape the future"<br>"Preparing students to solve societal problems"<br>"Skills for solving issues" | Future<br><br>Skills<br><br>Problem solving<br><br>Thinking orientated | Shaping the future of society | |
| "Developing well-rounded children"<br>"Community learning"<br>"Teaching skills for life"<br>"Inspiring students"<br>"Help students find their passion"<br>"Help students to think"<br>"Preparation for life"<br>"Form good citizens"<br>"Helping students grow" | Values orientated<br><br>All round learning<br><br>Growth centred | Developing well-rounded citizens | |
| "Sharing a subject passion"<br>"Influencing others to share a subject passion"<br>"To share interest in a subject"<br>"Subject content"<br>"Helping students learn content"<br>"Administering a Curriculum"<br>"Specific teaching areas"<br>"Live out a subject area passion and interest" | Information<br><br>Sharing passion<br><br>Love of content<br><br>Live an interest | Working within an area of interest | |

**Teaching is a High Status Career**
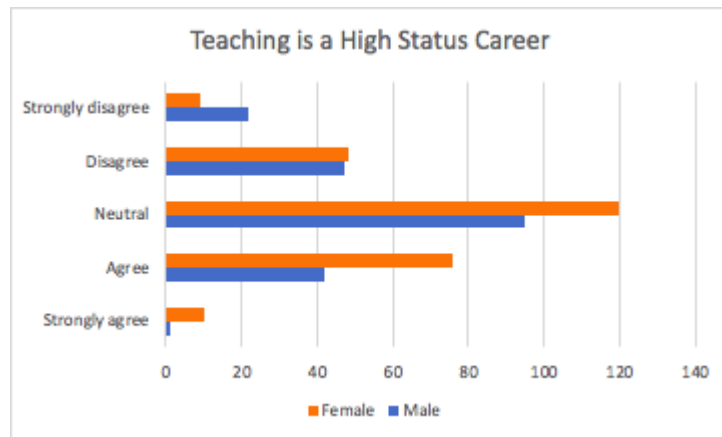
Figure 4.4 *Student perspectives of teaching as a career*

*4.9.3 Drawing verifications and conclusions*

The final stage of data analysis includes the drawing and verifying of conclusions. This process enables the researcher to derive meaning from the data, noting any regularities, patterns and possible explanations (Miles & Huberman, 2014). During the verification and conclusion phase of analysis, the researcher reduced an extended volume of text into quotes and reduced these to codes. The codes across the data revealed patterns, relationships and trends. The codes, patterns, relationships and trends were examined and re-examined over time in an iterative process. As the emergent themes became more visible, meaning was derived, and conclusions were verified.

Miles and Huberman (2014) suggested that the data must be revisited multiple times and "the meanings emerging from the data have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their confirmability, that is, their validity" (p. 11). The researcher interacted with the data and themes over an extended period of time and applied the quantitative data to the results as a tool to confirm the validity of the generated themes. The quantitative data also allowed the researcher to compare the similarities and differences within the generated themes, in terms of participant demographics such as gender, and relative ICSEA. As stated previously, triangulation was used across three data sources to confirm the results and generated themes. In addition, verifications and conclusions were examined in light of the review of literature.

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**4.10 Ethical considerations**

When conducting research, the protection of participants' rights and privacy are ethical concerns that a researcher must consider. The application of ethical principles assures the wellbeing and protection of the rights of those involved in the study (Creswell, 2014). Compliance with the University of Notre Dame Australia Policy for Research and adhering to the Australian Code of Conduct for the Responsible Conduct of Research assists to protect participants and uphold ethical considerations. Human research ethics review procedures play a fundamental role in the oversight of research involving humans (Creswell, 2014). The procedures ensure that research projects are ethically acceptable and in accordance with relevant standards and guidelines. This study complied with the University of Notre Dame Australia Policy for Research and the Australian Code of Conduct for the Responsible Conduct of Research. The detailed process and procedures undertaken during this research is displayed in Table 4.8.

A secondary ethical consideration is to ensure the research will be of benefit to humanity. This research paper outlined the project's potential contribution to knowledge and demonstrated compliance with all relevant guidelines according to the National Health and Medical Research Council Australian Research Council (Australian Government, 2015). The researcher adhered to the highest standards of professional conduct and practice.

**Table 4.8**

*Process and procedures for the ethical obligations of the research*

| Stage | Process | Appendix |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Formal approval from The University of Notre Dame Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee | H |
| 2 | Formal approval from the Catholic Education Western Australia Ethics Committee | I |
| 3 | Written approval from the Director of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese | J |
| 4 | School Participation Invitation, Consent and Information Email | K |
| 5 | Participant Invitation, Consent, Information and Right of Withdrawal Forms | |
| | • Principal | A |
| | • Career Counsellor | B |
| | • Parents | C |
| | • Students | D |

*4.10.1 Respect for people's rights and dignity*

This research project respected the rights of individuals pertaining to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were assured that all information would be treated confidentially. Specifically, each research participant was presented with an information document outlining a summary of the research procedures. Assurance was given that no personal information would be divulged to third parties, including other research projects, and that personal information would remain separate from the participant's research responses. Participants were not identified during the study, their anonymity was guaranteed and secured. All records of interviews and surveys have been stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher's premises and in password protected, cloud-based storage. The majority of

participants were under the age of 18 and therefore, parental consent was obtained for their involvement in the focus group interviews. All participants were informed of their freedom to participate or decline to participate at any time during the research process

## 4.11 Design summary

The design summary for this research is indicated in Table 4.9. The schedule of activities is presented in a chronological order.

**Table 4.9**

*Chronological summary of the research*

| Date | Activity |
| --- | --- |
| April 2017 | Presentation of Research Proposal UNDA |
| June 2017 | HREC Approval UNDA (Appendix H) |
| July 2017 | HREC Approval CEWA (Appendix I) |
| Aug 2017 | Research Instruments Piloted |
| Sept 2017 | Consent from participating schools |
| Nov 2017 to July 2018 | Data collection across the five schools <br> • Semi-Structured Interviews <br> • Online Surveys <br> • Focus Group Interviews |
| July 2018 to Nov 2018 | Transcription of interview recordings <br> Data analysis |
| April 2020 | Draft thesis |
| July 2020 | Submission |

## 4.12 Conclusion

The research explored the perspectives of Year 12 Catholic school students towards teaching as a career. This chapter outlined the research plan and justified the choice behind an interpretivist and symbolic interactionist perspective within constructivist qualitative research. The choice to include quantitative research was also explained. The rationale for selecting an instrumental case study design was provided. The methods of

data collection were outlined along with the particulars of the chosen data analysis procedures. Furthermore, the chapter considered elements of trustworthiness, methodological rigour and ethical considerations within the research plan. The chapter concluded with a design summary. The following chapter will present the results of the research, under the scaffold of the three specific research questions of the study.

**Chapter Five: Presentation of Results**

## 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research results from the instrumental case study which examined perspectives of Year 12 students in five West Australian Catholic secondary schools, towards teaching as a career. These results were derived from the synthesis of data, which were gathered utilising qualitative and quantitative means. Specifically, qualitative data were collected through five semi-structured focus group interviews, each with ten to fifteen students, five semi-structured one-to-one interviews with career counsellors or their equivalent, researcher field notes and 470 online surveys. Quantitative data were collected via the 470 online student surveys. The research results are organised into three sections based on the following three research questions.

1. What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?
2. What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?
3. In what ways have school experiences of Year 12 students impacted their perspective of teaching as a career?

## 5.2 What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?

This section presents data on the various perspectives of Year 12 students from five Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia towards teaching as a career. As indicated in Table 5.1, it is divided into four subsections: purpose of teaching; positive perspectives of teaching as a career; negative perspectives of teaching as a career; perspectives of the status of teaching as a career.

**Table 5.1**

*What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?*

| |
|---|
| 5.2.1  Purpose of teaching |
| 5.2.2  Positive perspectives of teaching as a career |
| 5.2.3  Negative perspectives of teaching as a career |
| 5.2.4  Perspectives of the status of teaching as a career |
| 5.2.5  Summary |

*5.2.1 Purpose of teaching*

Students held varying perspectives of the bigger-picture goal or purpose of teaching. Some students interpreted the question to mean the overall place of schools in society, and others interpreted the question to mean the overall purpose of entering a teaching career. All three responses were examined together, and common themes appeared. The four themes emerging from the focus group interview data are displayed in Table 5.2 and will be explored separately.

**Table 5.2**

*Themes: Purpose of teaching*

| |
|---|
| 5.2.1.1  Passing on knowledge to the next generation |
| 5.2.1.2  Shaping the future |
| 5.2.1.3  Developing well-rounded citizens |
| 5.2.1.4  Developing an area of interest |

*5.2.1.1 Passing on knowledge to the next generation*

Student responses in the focus group interviews revealed that passing on knowledge to the next generation was a common perspective of the purpose of teaching. For example, one student commented that, at its core, teaching is about "passing on basic skills that everyone needs, like Mathematics, basic English and foundational information". Another student suggested that teaching is "the application of the skills we learn. Being able to pick up a random book and understand the words and the meaning behind it, that's what teaching is about". In every focus group, students used the

words "next generation" to describe the purpose of teaching, as evidenced by the statement "teaching is about educating the next generations of children". One student took this point further by suggesting that teaching "is about building the next generation for all. Teachers help create workers for all occupations, everyone, leaders, politicians and those that we traditionally think of as lower status jobs in society". Another student remarked, "teaching is about helping people to understand concepts they otherwise would not understand and helping people learn". This idea was reiterated by another student who suggested that "teachers are ultimately responsible for assisting the next generation to obtain knowledge."

Students were asked to select an animal that they felt symbolised teaching as a profession. The student interpretation of this question varied. It appeared that a number of students used the animal motifs to symbolise the teaching profession's purpose and others chose to symbolise teachers as a stereotype. The purpose of this question was to uncover hidden or subconscious perspectives that students may have regarding teaching as career. These discussions revealed that numerous students chose animals that further endorsed the idea that teachers prepare the next generation. For example, students likened teaching to elephants, whales, bears and owls with regards to rearing offspring, providing wisdom and advice in preparation for adult life. There was agreement in one focus group that teaching resembles "an owl, because that's the symbol of older wisdom and teachers pass that on". Another focus group supported the student comment that teaching is "a bear because the job generally entails watching over everyone and teaching their young important lessons for life". One student referred to teachers as whales "because they are protective and swim around with their young, preparing them, until they are ready to go off into the ocean of life by themselves". Elephants were a popular motif to symbolise teaching. Comments mainly focussed on an elephant's stability, friendliness, memory and softness despite size. One student remarked that "teaching could be an elephant, it's big, elephants are wise, powerful creatures who nurture their young and show them the way".

*5.2.1.2 Shaping the future*

Students recognised the teaching profession as a vehicle to shape the future of society. For example, one student observed that teaching is "sharing knowledge and understanding of how the world works, so this generation can shape the future generation". Students identified that passing on knowledge is a necessary precursor for teachers to shape the future. As one student stated, "teaching is about replicating knowledge and then advancing on that knowledge so industries and disciplines can further progress and develop". Students had the perspective that teaching offered an opportunity to "improve our community" and could "provide younger generations with skills that will enable them to advance society in the future." One student asserted that teachers should equip students to "solve problems that the world is facing currently, and into the future". Several students raised the perspective of teachers being a necessary link between past, present and future. For example, a student commented, "teaching is concerned with learning about the past and comparing it to the present so we can also learn about how to shape the future". Another student remarked that the goal of teaching is "to further excel knowledge in order to advance the next generation … to build on the past knowledge". In two of the focus groups, students discussed the cyclical nature of teaching and learning. For example, a student raised the point, "teachers extend knowledge to their students, then the students take their learning further, acquiring new knowledge, and an understanding of the world keeps building in a cycle from teacher to learner".

One student raised the perspective that societal requirements play a role in influencing the direction a teacher takes to shape the future. The student commented:

> The teaching profession needs to build our younger generation into what society needs. For example, in WA we may need to learn about mining-based engineering. But over East and in Europe, it'll be slightly different. The teaching profession has a big role in influencing and providing for what the country needs, when it needs it.

Students suggested that future societal needs are governed by the particular economic and political requirements of the country or area. As one student remarked, "if the country needs something - like they need more people in

STEM or whatever sector, then the teaching profession will be required to train and teach people to be able to fill those positions". Using animal motifs, students symbolised the notion that the teaching profession guides students towards a certain future. One student commented, "teaching resembles a salmon, because they are pushing a whole school of fish up stream, up a steep hill, towards one point". Another student reinforced this idea by proposing that teaching is "a tortoise, they have their turtle hatchings on land from birth, and then they slowly push and lead them to the open water, where they let the turtles out into the real world at the end".

Students had the perspective that teaching involves helping individual students to grow and develop. Many students in one focus group agreed with the comment, "a teacher's role is to influence children to improve, whether that's to go to university, or to do something really good with their life". Other students concurred that teachers help shape the future of individual student lives. For example, one student explained that teachers "teach you how to succeed in life" and "help students reach their goals, they ask constant questions about what we want to become, then they try and tailor our education for that".

*5.2.1.3 Developing well-rounded citizens*

Student comments supported the theme that teaching involves developing and enriching the whole child, so that he or she may become a well-rounded citizen. One student stated that teaching is "not just about the academic qualifications; teachers are there to build a decent person who is able to function in society as a well-rounded, kind, moral individual". Another student agreed with this sentiment, saying that teaching is concerned with "adding to the well-being of student lives. Teachers provide whoever they are teaching with the life skills that will set them up in life".

Students in one focus group discussed that setting and achieving goals are essential ingredients for becoming a well-rounded citizen. One student identified the teacher's role in this goal-setting and achievement cycle, "teachers help students to figure out what they want to do and how they want to do it, develop good habits and understand how to live life like a good person". A second student concurred and added that teachers show

students "how to conduct everyday life, they impart life knowledge upon their students".

*5.2.1.4 Developing an area of interest*

A number of students agreed that a career in teaching provides an avenue for someone to be involved in a particular subject area of interest. For instance, one student understood that teaching is concerned with "passing on what you have learned about a particular interest that you are passionate about". Another student suggested that a teacher's role is to "inspire a student to learn a subject". Students saw a teaching career as an opportunity for "teachers to share their passion through a subject" and "advertise their subjects as a future career". In one focus group, students saw teaching as "basically administering the curriculum of a particular subject". As one student stated, "yes, it is about delivering information in one area". A second student agreed by expressing "teachers teach students in a certain domain".

*5.2.2 Positive perspectives of teaching as a career*

The students' positive perspectives towards teaching as a career were gleaned from the analysis of data from the five focus group interviews and 470 online student surveys. The four themes displayed in Table 5.3 emerged across the data. Each theme will be discussed separately.

**Table 5.3**

*Themes: Positive perspectives of teaching as a career*

| |
|---|
| 5.2.2.1  Job satisfaction |
| 5.2.2.2  Potential for impact |
| 5.2.2.3  Holidays and lifestyle |
| 5.2.2.4  Social nature of the job |

*5.2.2.1 Job satisfaction*

Students consistently identified in both the interviews and online surveys that teaching is a career that provides job satisfaction. Out of the 470

students surveyed, 64% (n=303) either agreed or strongly agreed that teaching is a fulfilling career.

Only 10% (n=48) of students disagreed with the statement that teaching is a fulfilling career (Figure 5.1).
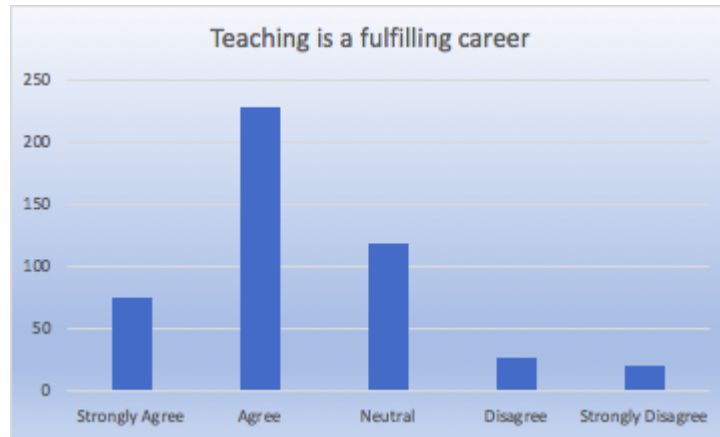


Figure 5.1 *Students perspectives that teaching is a fulfilling career*


**Table 5.4**

*Highest student preferences of reasons to become a teacher*

| Reason | Average Rank |
| --- | --- |
| Holidays / lifestyle | 7.08 |
| Fulfilling / rewarding career | 6.904 |
| Teaching the subject | 6.896 |
| Potential to influence social change | 6.75 |
| Work with children / adolescents | 6.75 |
| Shaping the future | 6.17 |
| Variety of job | 5.34 |
| Pay | 5.272 |
| Relationships and community | 5.268 |
| Ease of life | 5.15 |
| Inspired by one of my own teachers | 4.43 |

In all focus groups, students perceived that a career in teaching would be "satisfying". One student said that the "satisfaction of being able to help a child and seeing what you've achieved through helping, would be really quite fulfilling". A second student in the same focus group commented, "it's a very fulfilling job, helping other people to reach their potential is satisfying" to

which another student responded, "yes, it's rewarding because you are doing something for the child, in that you are helping people rather than just thinking about what you can get out of the job". Table 5.4 displays reasons to become a teacher, as ranked by 470 students through the online survey. A higher average rank indicates that students considered the associated reason more preferable when considering teaching as a career. Students ranked the rewarding nature of a teaching role as the second top reason for entering the profession.

Students perceived that the job satisfaction from teaching is linked to being able to do something that you love. One student reflected, "being able to do something you are really passionate about everyday would be amazing. If you love maths you can come to school and teach it day in day out". Students from all focus groups generally agreed that experiencing a teacher's passion for the subject influences them to see teaching as a satisfying career. This understanding is demonstrated through one student's positive perspective of teaching,

> You get to do what you love. Lots of teachers choose to teach things
> they really enjoy. Our History teacher, you can see that she loves
> History when she's teaching us. When we understand concepts, she
> gets really excited because it's something she obviously really enjoys.
> So, there's potential for happiness and satisfaction in teaching.

Another student proposed that teachers gain satisfaction through the variety of daily interactions with others. The student explained, "teaching must open up your perceptions of different concepts and ideas in the world because you're with such a variety of people, who must have so many opinions. It's fulfilling having more than one understanding of things". Out of 470 students, 59% (n=277) agreed or strongly agreed that teachers enjoy their jobs. Only 8% (n=40) thought that teachers did not enjoy their jobs (Figure 5.2).
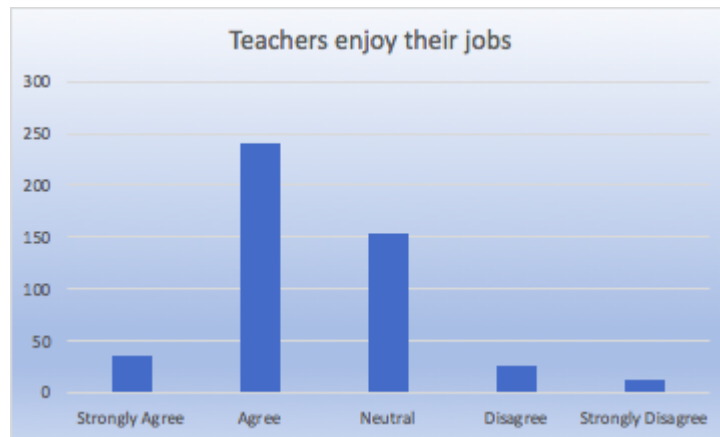
Figure 5.2 *Student perspectives that teachers enjoy their jobs*

Students associated opportunities for professional development in teaching with job satisfaction. One student suggested, "it is a satisfying career because teachers would need to continually learn and improve in areas like communication, self-awareness and leadership skills". A second student thought "teaching is satisfying because, as a teacher, you have to further your own learning and grow as a person in your job". A third student commented that being a teacher "makes you strive to be a good role model, as you need to be friendly and open and welcoming to kids". Yet, another student stated, "being a teacher is satisfying because to do your job well, you have to further your own learning and continually grow".

### 5.2.2.2 Potential for impact

Students spoke favourably about the teacher's potential to positively impact the lives of children. In one focus group, students conversed about the benefits of teaching. A student remarked, "teachers are able to see what they've achieved through helping a child, having that impact is rewarding". Another student added, "knowing that you have such an impact, and are an important piece of people's lives is a massive benefit". To which another student replied, "teachers are able to positively motivate people to live their lives well." Students recognised that teachers hold a privileged position as they "are able to help people change themselves and the world", they can "coach and mentor, to help kids along in their lives, as well as in their subjects". As one student commented, "being able to see children grow and develop into women or men in their own respective communities is really

good, and knowing that you have directly helped those kids grow and adapt is a big drawcard to the profession". Students reflected that teachers may also have an impact by being change agents. For example, one student stated that teachers can change the system. He felt that "if I was to go back, I would change things. That's appealing. I'd try to change the system so that kids who were feeling 'oh, school is awful' weren't saying it because of the same reasons I didn't like school. I could fix it."

### 5.2.2.3 Holidays and lifestyle

The holidays associated with teaching were consistently referred to during all focus group discussions when reviewing the positive perspectives of teaching as a career. Furthermore, out of the 470 online surveys, holidays and lifestyle ranked as the highest reason to choose teaching as a career (Table 5.4). As one student remarked, "holidays are a pretty good perk". Another responded "yes, what other profession offers 12 weeks off a year?" A third student pointed out that "you can use those weeks off to travel the world and focus on other things and generally have a great life balance".

During the focus group interviews, students raised the positive perspective that teaching is a safe, stable and reliable job with a relatively decent income. One student mentioned, "teaching is very stable work. Teachers aren't suddenly going to be replaced, and you know that with certainty". This sentiment was reflected in other focus groups when a student asserted, "within the foreseeable future, teachers aren't going to be replaced with robots". Another student agreed by stating "you will always need teachers. It is a very dependable job. There are always options for employment. It's not something that goes away". Students showed visible support for the perspective that teaching is "very stable, very secure and very dependable. It gives you a fairly consistent lifestyle, it's predictable and safe".

Students were somewhat conflicted in their perspectives about the remuneration associated with teaching. In one focus group, numerous students nodded in agreement when the comment was made that "teacher's pay has been steadily increasing and at very good rates, in fact, often at rates higher than inflation, so in that respect it has good pay". However,

others affirmed the student idea that "the pay for teachers is good, dependable, but not as high as other jobs".

Students reflected positively on the varied experiences that a job in teaching offers. One student commented, "you get to travel and go on school trips, as part of your job". Another agreed saying "so true, if you teach here, you get to go on some pretty cool school camps like New Zealand, Madagascar, Japan, The Netherlands". One student proposed that teaching is a transferable job and that "you can go to many different places with it, round the world, or remote schools because it is pretty much recognised as the same profession in different countries". One student likened teaching to a frog, and asserted, "you can jump from lily pad to lily pad and still know what you are doing". A student mentioned that "the variation of the job is attractive". Another student elaborated by saying "there's lots of ways that different people learn, and you are exposed to that diversity, there is always something different going on". Two students connected going to school and experiencing a variety of teachers, with understanding what it entails to be an effective teacher. For example, one student remarked, "having come through the school system, you have lots of experiences with different teaching styles. It's like every student of teaching is ahead, because you can use those experiences to be a great teacher". The idea that going to school actually prepares you for entering the profession was raised as a unique strength of choosing it as a career. For example, a student commented "it's like you have done an apprenticeship, just by going to school. No other profession offers that insight into how to do the job".

### 5.2.2.4 Social nature of the job

Students admired the relational, communal and social aspects of the teaching profession. Many students agreed with the suggestion that, "teaching is a very social job, it enables you to communicate and connect with a lot of other people". Another student took this idea further by stating, "teachers have to be relatable and they get to be really involved with others as part of their job". Students spoke about teachers needing to be "around large groups of people" and that this necessity is appealing because "you can be part of a strong community". One student pointed out that "if you love

being around kids you can develop relationships with so many young people. This gives you a broad, worldwide understanding, because you're working with so many different groups and ages". Student data from the online survey ranked 'relationships and lifestyle' comparatively low on the list, coming out as the ninth reason out of eleven to select teaching as a career (Table 5.4). However, in most of focus groups, students agreed that developing relationships and being a part of community life were both attractive factors about the teaching profession. In one focus group the students acknowledged support for the idea raised by one student that, as a teacher, "you can have better chats with everyone, and debates. It's fun when people question what you are teaching. It is a more active, social process with other people involved". One student described teaching as a butterfly, "it flies above everyone watching and observing the community. Also, butterflies are said to be social because they interact with so many people and are such a big part of society, always social and helping".

### 5.2.3 Negative perspectives of teaching as a career

The negative perspectives of students towards teaching as a career were gleaned from the analysis of data from five focus group interviews and 470 online student surveys. The four themes displayed in Table 5.5 emerged across the data. Each theme will be discussed separately.

**Table 5.5**

*Themes: Negative perspectives of teaching as a career*

| 5.2.3.1 Nature of job |
| --- |
| 5.2.3.2 Student behaviour |
| 5.2.3.3 Required personality traits |
| 5.2.3.4 Pay and lifestyle |

*5.2.3.1 Nature of job*

A number of students perceived that teaching could be a monotonous career. There was general consensus in all of the focus groups that "teaching is a repetitive job. You're teaching the same content every year to a lower

level". A second comment reiterated this sentiment, "repetition of school is boring, for six years we've been doing the same thing over and over again". Another student expanded by stating, "as a teacher, it's pretty much the same every year, teaching the same subjects forever. There is no subject or course that I could do for years on end, on end, on end and keep going". One student commented that "there's something unappealing about spending your whole education at school and at times, not really liking it. And then, post-school, you get thrown back into the other side of the equation." A number of students showed support for the statement, "as a teacher you are back into the cycle, except instead of receiving something you don't like, you're administering it! I wouldn't like that." Students raised the idea that "teaching, is a cyclical thing" and "there's always more kids who are going, or have to go, somewhere" and that the "only new thing is just the personalities, I don't feel that's enough, it's monotonous". A student commented that whilst the students are moving towards their interests, teachers are not and that "teachers are like cows, they do the same thing every day and year. Eat their grass, drink their water and walk around the farm".

One student suggested that many teachers are "in a backup career" and recalled, "teachers have said 'Yeah, I love my subject, but I don't really want to teach this'. They feel there's more effective methods and material out there, but there's this curriculum that they have to teach". A student suggested the necessity of "administering a set curriculum" added to the monotonous nature of the job. In two focus groups students selected sloth motifs to represent teaching. One student reflected that teaching as a career could be symbolised as a sloth because "teachers are stuck, and not moving forward at any speed. They are slowly moving, but not really able to go anywhere, like a sloth". The sloth symbol was raised in another focus group when a student said, "I don't think teachers are lazy, it's just that sloths have a lot of potential but they don't live up to it, that's like the education system in Australia". The student went on to clarify, "education, I mean teaching has so much potential to give more than it currently does, but it just isn't living up to it, like a sloth."

Various students perceived that the credibility of teachers as information providers has diminished. For example, as one student observed,

"there's less reliance on teachers now. I mean, regardless of whether a teacher is an expert in a field, we really don't need to ask them for information, because we have the Internet". Another student concurred and said "we can actually get information from people who are like 10 times more qualified than high school teachers. As in worldwide and PhD qualified. And, usually, YouTube channels administer that subject in a much easier to consume form". Many students agreed with the comment, "the availability of information online and the access to resources has probably affected my perspective of how I view teaching as a career. People can now just find their own information". This sentiment was reflected by another student with the statement, "teaching has become easier. With technology and PowerPoint, teachers just use other's resources and reuse and send the same stuff from say five years ago. They do a lot less teaching". One student suggested that some teachers say, "here's the PowerPoint, copy it down" and here's a textbook, read 20 pages". A student remarked that "our class is like, great, we could do this from home." Students believed that teachers who simply deliver information "make teaching look like a joke career, in that you don't even need a teacher anymore for that". On the other hand, one student suggested that teachers need to hold the knowledge:

> Students lose so much respect for teachers who don't actually know, or say 'I need to look this up'. We pay money to go to you. You have to actually help us do well, instead of just being oh I'm here for the money. One of my teachers said 'I don't care. I still get paid'.

Students commented that increased technology has reduced the role of the teacher. As one pointed out, "now we can see our marks and resources online and we can stay in contact without seeing teachers, you just have to email them". Another student remarked, "you don't have to get what you need from the teacher. You can get it yourself if you know how. They literally just supervise". Another student agreed stating, "if you don't understand something, you just YouTube it. You can find anything now. You actually don't need a teacher for information."

Students disliked the idea of lesson preparation, marking and the unpredictability of classroom duties. In one focus group, a student mentioned that "a teacher could lose long hours in marking, preparing content and

getting ready for the classroom, that's tough". A second student agreed saying "my teacher was up until 1am the other night and she regularly tells us that she does that". Students thought that "the job could be really taxing" and "you have to be able to adapt to all the different learning abilities, personalities and learning styles, it's complex". A student proposed that teaching is like a frog: "teachers have to jump around frantically in class, like they don't know what they are doing, because it's not predictable. It's just not a relaxed career, they have to try to do everything". Another student mirrored this idea by suggesting "teaching is a bee. They are always busy and have so much work to do and have so much responsibility to make everything work". The busyness of teaching was reiterated in another focus group when a student chose a duck to symbolise the profession "because beneath the surface of the water there's so much going on, fast paddling and frantic movement, a lot of effort being put in. Whereas, on the surface it is calm and put together".

*5.2.3.2 Student behaviour*

Students across all focus groups noted "poor student behaviour" as an undoubtedly negative characteristic of teaching. One student feared that "dealing with issues with kids who are not your biggest fans would be too difficult". Another student added that "I sometimes think when I see a disrespectful student 'that poor teacher' why would you want to put up with that?" One student said, "kids are rebellious and give cheek for no reason". There was visible support in one focus group when a student raised the idea that "teaching kids who just don't want to learn, would be awful. That would be one of the most frustrating things about the career". Another student reflected this opinion by sharing "yes, my teacher just had 20 kids playing on iPads, not caring about learning at all. I suspect she knew. That would be very difficult". A student took this point further with the remark, "especially if you were trying to teach something you're passionate about. I think that would make it even worse, when your students just don't care". Another comment mirrored this sentiment, "when kids don't want to work, but you know they have potential, and you as the teacher are still expected to help them achieve what they can, that would be frustrating".

Students noted that poor behaviour went beyond the classroom. One student suggested, "bad behaviour happens everywhere, in the yard, at break times". Another student added, "kids even stalk teachers online, on Facebook and then share the pictures. Sometimes students don't give teachers their privacy". Another student commented that teachers have to be like tigers "because they must be tough to deal with immature students everyday". Other animal motifs included: "teachers could be symbolised as a rhino, because they need thick skin to overcome lots of bad student behaviour"; "I agree, I'd say tortoise though, they need a hard shell exterior and they kind of need to hide in it really"; "teachers need to be like a gazelle, always on the run from student and parent predators, they have to be alert and able to run away to survive".

*5.2.3.3 Required personality traits*

Students suggested that they would not enter the teaching profession if they thought that they did not possess the necessary personal traits. Many students referred to their own lack of patience as a reason for not entering the profession. For example, "I have a low tolerance for people who annoy me so if I was a teacher, I'd have to try to control or change students, rather than be patient". Other students agreed and stated, "it is a huge responsibility to be patient with others, it can be overwhelming"; "you'd have to be patient, I'm not patient, I couldn't be a teacher". Students across all focus groups reflected that teaching is difficult. There was general agreement in one discussion that teaching "is stressful. Having to separate your emotions from your reactions in tense situations, so that you don't have a negative impact on the kids, that's a reason to not choose teaching". Another student showed the same concern, "it's hard to separate your emotions from your work life and even from your personal life. I couldn't do that in stressful classroom situations". One student used an owl motif to explain that teachers require patience and emotional mastery and must be ready to react quickly during tense situations. As she explained, "teaching is an owl, because of their calm manner and also the fact that their heads turn all around. Something can happen, but they'll just spin right back."

Students held the perspective that teachers "enjoy power" and are "sticklers for the rules". Students noted that teachers need to follow and enforce rules. As one student pointed out, "they have to be like sticklers for enforcing the rules and if they're not, they come across as lazy and like they just don't care". Another student observed that "teachers need to enjoy controlling and being in charge of people". This idea that teachers like power and control came out strongly when focus group participants were asked to symbolise teaching as an animal. Many students selected powerful animals such as lions and crocodiles. For example, students selected lions to represent teaching because "lions control the rest of the jungle"; "they are fearless and in charge"; "everyone fears lions, but they don't fear anyone"; "lions are on a pedestal, they rule the rest"; "they are ferocious and scary and have the power to hurt and shame you if they want to". One student reflected the idea that teachers enjoy the power of a crocodile: "crocodiles are silently waiting to get you, and when you get close to the water, they grab you. If you stuff up, you know the teacher will be waiting to snap and shame you".

### 5.2.3.4 Pay and lifestyle

Students identified the lack of remuneration potential and long hours of work as factors that would stop them from becoming teachers. On average, students ranked 'pay' as eighth and 'ease of life' as tenth out of eleven reasons to become a teacher. Various students suggested that pay was an unattractive feature of teaching as evidenced through the student comments, "teaching is not a bad job, the main problem is the pay, it's kind of capped"; "there's not a lot of opportunity for job and income progression". One student asserted, "the pay is the reason why many people do not go into teaching". A second student felt that "if people can do a job that provides better pay, they'll do it, because, as the old saying goes, money makes the world go around". There was general agreement in all focus groups that money plays a big part in the decision about career selection. For example, one student remarked, "you need money to live, and if teaching, as fulfilling as it is, can't pay for you to live a basic standard of life with a house and everything you want, then there are other job options that can".

Students perceived teaching to be a job that requires considerable effort for not enough rewards. For example, one student reflected, "some teachers stay up really late marking. What about their family? If you're up marking then you're grumpy the next morning, it affects your family". Another student added, "considering the hours, care and effort that they put in, the pay is pretty low". There was agreement in one focus group with the statement "it's just one of those jobs that you're underpaid for what you actually do. There's a lot of after school stuff that you don't get paid for". Students stated, "the pressure to have to do all these extra things, like go to all the communions, masses and co-curricular activities is too much"; "you also have to give up your own time, students email at all hours, like on the weekend and stuff". One student observed that "teachers are like flies; they have to be everywhere all the time". Another student responded "teachers are like otters; they have to be versatile and be everywhere. On the water, on the land and be everything to everyone, like a counsellor, friend, teacher, police. It's full on". This idea that teaching requires versatility was also evident in the comment "teaching is like an octopus; it has to be a flexible profession and has to go all over the place."

### 5.2.4 Perspectives of the status of teaching as a career

The perspectives of students towards the status of teaching as a career were gleaned from the analysis of data from five focus group interviews and 470 online student surveys. The quantitative results from the online survey will be categorised using five different identifiers (gender, intention to teach, subject choice, predicted ATAR and ICSEA of school) and then results will be compared on the basis of the identifiers. These quantitative results are presented first. The themes arising from the analysis of the uncategorised online surveys and focus group interviews will then be examined.

### 5.2.4.1 A comparison of the quantitative results on student perspectives of the status of teaching as a career

The quantitative data gathered from the 470 online surveys showed

that student perspectives on the status of teaching varied greatly. The data was then classified, separated, compared and analysed using five particular identifiers. When separated in this manner, the results revealed significant variation in perspectives, based on the identifiers. The five identifiers used to classify and compare the data were: gender; intention of choosing teaching as a career; predicted ATAR score; currently studying Mathematics Specialist and/or Physics; ICSEA of the school.

**Table 5.6**

*Gender: Perspectives on the status of teaching*

Teaching is a High Status Career

|  | Strongly Agree % | Agree % | Neutral % | Disagree % | Strongly Disagree % | Total % | Total Stud |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 0 | 20 | 46 | 23 | 11 | 100 | 207 |
| Female | 4 | 29 | 46 | 18 | 3 | 100 | 263 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 470 |

Table 5.6 highlights that a variation in perspective of the status of teaching occurs between the genders (Table 5.6). Generally, females were more likely to consider teaching as a higher status career while males were more likely to not consider teaching as a high status career. Of the 207 males, 20% (n=41) agreed that teaching is a high status career compared to 33% (n=87) of the 263 female students. At the other end of the scale, 34% (n=70) of males disagreed that teaching is a high status career, compared to 21% (n=55) of females.

**Table 5.7**

*I would consider teaching as a career: Perspectives on the status of teaching*

Teaching is a High Status Career

|  | Strongly Agree % | Agree % | Neutral % | Disagree % | Strongly Disagree % | Total % | Total Stud |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 7 | 39 | 35 | 15 | 3 | 100 | 143 |
| Maybe | 0 | 27 | 53 | 15 | 3 | 100 | 143 |
| No | 1 | 13 | 47 | 28 | 11 | 100 | 184 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 470 |

A variation appeared in student perspectives towards the status of teaching when comparing the responses of those students who would, and would not choose teaching as a career (Table 5.7). Generally, if students indicated that they would select teaching as a career, they viewed the status of teaching more favourably than those who indicated that they would not select teaching as a career. Of the 143 who would teach, 45% (n=64) agreed teaching is a high status career compared to 14% (n=26) of the 184 students who noted that they would not choose teaching. Again, at the other end of the scale 18% of those who would select teaching disagreed with the statement that teaching is a high status career, compared to 39% of those who would not choose teaching.

**Table 5.8**

*I am completing Mathematics Specialist and/or Physics: Perspectives on the status of teaching*

| | Teaching is a High Status Career | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Strongly Agree % | Agree % | Neutral % | Disagree % | Strongly Disagree % | Total % | Total Stud |
| No | 2 | 28 | 45 | 19 | 6 | 100 | 327 |
| Yes | 2 | 17 | 48 | 24 | 9 | 100 | 143 |
| | | | | | | | 470 |

The way in which students viewed the status of the teaching profession varied according to whether they were studying Physics or a Specialist Mathematics course (Table 5.8). Generally, if students were studying one of these courses, it was more likely that they considered teaching to be of a lower status than those not studying the courses. Of the 470 students, 143 students were studying Mathematics Specialist and Physics and 19% (n=27) agreed or strongly agreed that teaching is a high status career. Of the remaining 327 students who were not studying these subjects, 30% (n=98) agreed or strongly agreed that teaching is a high status career (Table 5.5). A similar variation occurs at the other end of the scale with 33% (n=47) of the143 students studying these subjects either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that teaching is a high status career, compared to 25% (n=82) of the 327 students not studying these subjects.

**Table 5.9**

*I have the following predicted ATAR score: Perspectives on the status of teaching*

| | | | | Teaching is a High Status Career | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Strongly Agree % | Agree % | Neutral % | Disagree % | Strongly Disagree % | Total % | Total Stud |
| 90+ | 3 | 22 | 49 | 18 | 7 | 100 | 152 |
| 80-90 | 2 | 26 | 45 | 24 | 3 | 100 | 110 |
| 70-80 | 3 | 31 | 38 | 22 | 6 | 100 | 78 |
| 60-70 | 0 | 23 | 43 | 25 | 10 | 100 | 40 |
| 50-60 | 0 | 20 | 40 | 20 | 20 | 100 | 10 |
| Non ATAR | 3 | 26 | 49 | 15 | 8 | 100 | 80 |
| | | | | | | | 470 |

Variation in results occurred when the data was broken down into the students' predicted ATAR Score (Table 5.9). Out of all the range of scores, students with a predicted ATAR between 70-80 had the highest agreement to the statement 'teaching is a high status career' (34%, n=78). The broadcasted prerequisite for teaching at most of the Western Australian Universities is within this range. Students with a predicted ATAR of either 90+ or 80-90 generally had an even spread of perspectives on 'teaching is a high status career'. Approximately 50% of students indicated that they were neutral and 25% indicated they either agreed or strongly agreed and 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

**Table 5.10**

*ICSEA of school: Perspectives on the status of teaching*

*(1= Highest ICSEA)*

| | Teaching is a High Status Career | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Strongly Agree % | Agree % | Neutral % | Disagree % | Strongly Disagree % | Total % | Total Stud |
| 1 | 3 | 19 | 48 | 29 | 1 | 100 | 69 |
| 2 | 6 | 27 | 50 | 15 | 2 | 100 | 88 |
| 3 | 1 | 21 | 38 | 23 | 17 | 100 | 92 |
| 4 | 4 | 21 | 52 | 13 | 10 | 100 | 52 |
| 5 | 1 | 22 | 51 | 21 | 4 | 100 | 103 |
| 6 | | 42 | 35 | 18 | 5 | 100 | 66 |
| | | | | | | | 470 |

Significant differences within the data are found when the results are ranked by the school's ICSEA (Table 5.10). The school with the lowest ICSEA had 42% (n=28) of students agreeing that teaching is a high status career. The school with the highest ICSEA had 22% (n=16) of students agreeing that teaching is a high status career. The school with the second highest ICSEA had the second highest percentage (33%, n=29) of students agreeing that teaching is a high status career. The highest percentage of students who disagreed that teaching is a high status career (40% n=37) was the school ranked with the third highest ICSEA.

*5.2.4.2 Student perspectives of the status of teaching as a career*

Data relating to student perspectives of the status of teaching from the focus group interviews was analysed alongside the results from the 470

online surveys. This analysis revealed three emerging themes as displayed in Table 5.11. Each theme will be discussed separately.

**Table 5.11**

*Themes: Student perspectives of the status of teaching as a career*

| 5.2.4.1 Teaching is a medium to high status career |
| --- |
| 5.2.4.2 Teaching is a low status career |
| 5.2.4.3 Teaching has a stand-alone status |

*5.2.4.1 Teaching is a medium to high status career*

A small proportion of students perceived that a teaching career has a medium to high status in Australian society. The online surveys showed that, 27% of 470 students (n=129) agreed or strongly agreed that teaching is a high status career and 46% (n=215) of students neither agree nor disagree that teaching is a high status career (Figure 5.3).
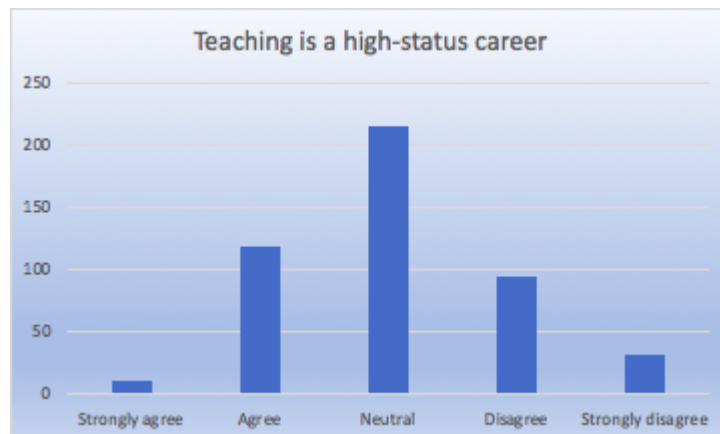


Figure 5.3 *Student perspectives of teaching as a career*

Various students discussed the idea that teachers form all other careers and therefore the status of teaching should be relatively high. For example, one student commented "teaching stacks up well in terms of status. In the first instance, all other careers depend on teachers to get there. So, the status of teaching is valued in the community as it is the pathway to other careers". Students broadly agreed that the status of teaching becomes higher relative to the age group of the students being taught. For example, one student felt that "a high school teacher has a higher status and a

university teacher is higher again". Another student added that "it's one thing to teach a child or even a teenager, they are naive and don't know much. But in university students are adults. To be able to teach adults is impressive. University teaching is high status". One student suggested that the connection between the increasing status of teaching as a career and the age of the student was "linked to the mental ability required, so primary teaching is low status , secondary teaching is medium status and university teaching is high".

*5.2.4.2 Teaching is a low status career*

A large number of students in the focus group interviews agreed with the comment that "teachers do incredible work, but it's not socially a high status career". Students identified the ATAR requirement for studying teaching to be linked to the status of the profession. For example, one student pointed out that "teaching has a super low ATAR requirement, which doesn't help the status. You need high marks to get into law or med, but you can do teaching with a minimal 70". Another student agreed stating, "it's like, I can't get into anything else, I'll just do teaching. So yes, it has a low status ". A student clarified that "because it's easier to get into, it influences the perspective that the status is low". There was general agreement in one focus group for the student statement:

> You have to be smart to get into University to have a high status
>      career like law or engineering. Whereas in teaching, you don't
> need to be smart. If you get good grades, you're told do medicine or
> law and if you aren't on good grades most people would be like 'try
> teaching'. It is low status because you don't need to be smart.

A student reiterated this sentiment by stating, "teaching is a last resort, it has a low ATAR entry and status. Those who can't do, teach". Another student added, "it's not seen as specialised, it's more seen as a backup, so low status". There was some agreement with one student's idea that:

> Teaching is very underestimated. I think the status should be level
> with physio, accounting, law, medicine and engineering. But it's
> obviously a lot easier to get into teaching over those professions, and
> so in comparison it's not seen as high status by students or society.

The online surveys revealed that 27% of the 470 students (n=126) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the perspective that teaching is a high status career (Figure 5.4).

Students who considered teaching to be a low paid job generally, thought that this point was connected to the profession having a low status. One student remarked, "it's not one of the top paying jobs, so pay scale influences status". Another student clarified, "society thinks better pay, better job, harder to get and achieve. Therefore, teaching is like a fall-back option, with a low status". A student added to the conversation that "if you can't do highly paid medicine, teach human biology. It's not a glamorous way of looking at it, but it's the perspective I have. It's a fall-back career and therefore lower status". There was agreement in one focus group with the comment, "teachers are looked down upon, they don't have a lot of respect or pay, that's become a thing in our society". This idea was reflected in another focus group through the statement, "I'm not saying their job isn't important or anything, it's just very low on the social status chain". Students considered the large number of teaching jobs to negatively influence the status of the profession. For instance, as one student reflected, "because there are so many teachers, then they are more common, and therefore what's more common has less status"

Students recognised that those who viewed a career in teaching as low status, may be linking their perspective to personal experiences of school. This statement reflects the general agreement in one focus group:

> The teaching profession is not really valued in Australian society. I feel it gets shunned a lot because people associate it with teachers who taught them, and everyone has had a few teachers they had a problem with. It's not the most attractive occupation from a student perspective, unless you're a Principal.

Other student comments related to this sentiment included, "yes, I think people judge the status alongside their experiences with teachers, and if you had a teacher that you didn't think was smart then you don't think the profession has much of a status"; "I guess then it matters what school you went to in terms of status of teaching, like a high or low socio economic area would have differences in the quality of teachers". In one focus group, the

conversation about the students' teachers was particularly positive and the students in this focus group generally acknowledged teaching as a higher status career. By contrast, in another focus group there were various negative statements made about their own teachers, and students in this group tended to think teaching is a relatively low status career.

There was recognition that schooling forms the basis of education for other professions and that ultimately the status of teaching is in the hands of society. A student acknowledged that teachers assist others to obtain high status careers as exemplified by the student statement, "it's unfair towards teachers, seeing how in order for the people to get jobs with high status social rankings, the teachers needed to teach them to start with". The discussion concluded in one focus group with a student taking a bigger picture approach by suggesting:

> It's not just related to negative views of our own teachers. There's an inherent issue in Australian society with the place of education. There's this notion of education not having a valued place in society, and I think that comes down to the main reason why the teaching profession is not viewed as high status by many people.

This notion of the status of teaching being related to the value society places on education was only raised in one focus group. However, students in this focus group displayed a general agreement for the statement.

### 5.2.4.3 Teaching has a stand-alone status

Many students had no opinion on whether teaching has a high status in Australian society. The online surveys showed that 46% of 470 students (n=215) felt neutral towards the statement that teaching is a high status career (Figure 5.4). An idea was raised in one focus group that teaching is not like other jobs and that the vocational nature of the career meant that, as a profession, it is exempt from the normal status judgements. One student asserted, "it's not recognised like other professions. The social skills you need to become a teacher are so valuable, they can't get measured or compared to, the high status careers". In one focus group students agreed that teachers are seen as having a role to play in society rather than completing a job. There was agreement for the comment, "I don't think

people think of status when they think teacher. It's more that it's just seen as part of who you are, and the role you play in society. Parent, Teacher. So, kind of difficult to measure, and that's why people don't".

There was general consensus in two focus groups that teachers play a formational role in all other careers and therefore the status of the job cannot be measured in a similar way to the professions it helps form. As one student asserted, "without teachers who'd teach the high status people? There'd be none. Teaching is not high status, it's on its own kind of level, it has to be." One student thought that the status of teaching depends on how you view the profession, "if you think of teaching as just a job, it's pretty underrated and low status. But if you think of it as actually shaping the future then it's a totally different thing, and on its own level".

*5.2.5 Summary*

The Year 12 Catholic secondary students in this study had numerous perspectives towards teaching as a career. When discussing student perspectives on the overall purpose of teaching, many students commented that teachers pass on knowledge, shape society, develop well-rounded citizens and work in subject areas of passion. Students expressed various positive perspectives about teaching as a career. It was common for students to identify job satisfaction, potential for impact, holidays, lifestyle and the social nature of teaching as themes that would encourage them to consider teaching as a career. Students also voiced negative perspectives towards teaching. Discussion of these negative perspectives mainly surrounded the nature of the job, student behaviour, the perceived personal traits required, pay and lifestyle. There were diverse, and sometimes contradictory perspectives of the status of teaching. These perspectives ranged from high to medium to low status, and various students suggested teaching is a stand-alone profession not requiring a status at all. In focus group interviews, it became obvious that student perspectives of the status of teaching were at times linked to the required university ATAR score for teaching, perceived remuneration and the students' understanding of the greater purpose of teaching. When quantitative data from the online survey was analysed using criterion such as gender, intention to teach, subject choice, predicted ATAR

and school ICSEA, significant trends and variation occurred in perspectives towards the status of teaching.

## 5.3 What has influenced Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?

This section is divided into two subsections: student identified influences and career counsellors identified influences. Students identified school related experiences as the top influence upon perspectives of teaching as a career. This view is endorsed through the online survey when 82% of 470 students (n=392) noted that school related experiences influence their perspective of teaching as a career in the online survey (Figure 5.4). The results related to school experiences are presented separately in response to Research Question 3.
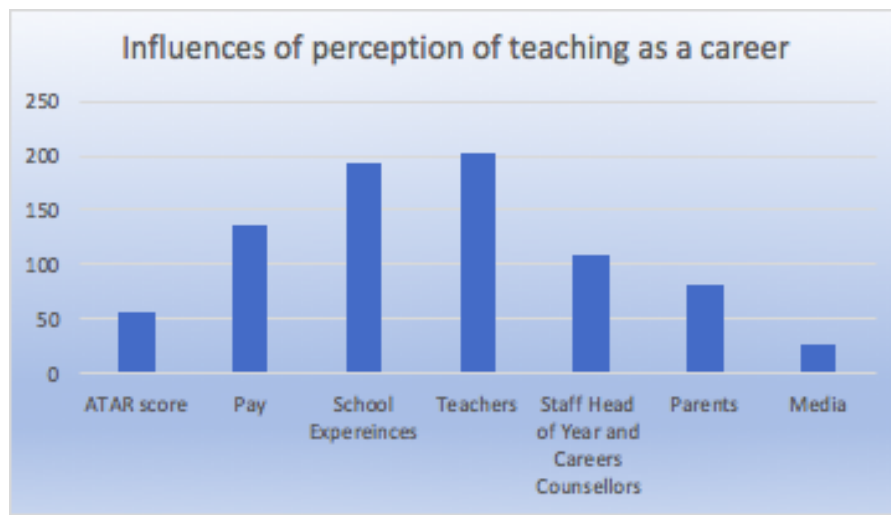


Figure 5.4 *Student identified influences on perspectives of teaching as a career*

### 5.3.1 *Student identified influences*

The student identified influences on perspectives of teaching as a career were derived from the analysis of data from five focus group interviews and 470 online student surveys. Three themes emerged across the data and are outlined in Table 5.12. Each theme will be discussed separately.

**Table 5.12**

*Themes: Student identified influences on perspective of teaching as a career*

| 5.3.1.1 Conversations with parents and friends |
| --- |
| 5.3.1.2 University requirements and job remuneration |
| 5.3.1.3 The media |

*5.3.1.1 Conversations with parents and friends*

Students believed that both parents and friends influence their perspectives of teaching as a career. The online survey showed that 17% of 470 students (n=81) noted that parents have influenced their perspective of teaching as a career (Figure 5.4). Parents and friends as influencers of perspective also was generated as a theme in the focus group interviews.

Students identified that parents have influenced their perspective of teaching as a career through revealing their own opinions of the profession. One student disclosed, "my parents said 'you're too smart to be a teacher'. So, I guess they have influenced me to think of teaching as not a 'smart person's' career". Other students reinforced this theme by sharing, "my parents tell me that I can do better things, other than teaching and this makes me look at teaching as a lesser career"; "my parents have actively encouraged me to go for medicine instead. When I talked about teaching, they said they wouldn't want us kids to throw our good results away for nothing".

Students suggested that the positive and negative things that their parents say about teachers influences their own perspectives of teaching as a career. A student shared that "my Dad is always going on about teachers. He mainly tells us when he thinks our teachers are doing something wrong, which changes my opinion. It negatively influences my perception about teaching, but he's not a teacher". A second student added his own thoughts to the conversation and took a more optimistic stance by saying:

> My parents have always been positive about my teachers because of the good interactions they have had with them. Plus, they experienced the positive impact that some teachers have had on me and then the negative impact that others have had. So, they understand the

importance of their job, and they point this out to me. That has influenced my perception of teaching as a career.

A third student agreed that his parents have positively impacted his perspectives of teaching and remarked, "my Mum's a teacher, I quite like the lifestyle she lives. She appears very happy, excited and enthusiastic to go to work each day. Seeing that influences me, I like the idea of being a teacher because of that".

Students in a number of focus groups mentioned that they value the opinion of friends and that these opinions influence their perspectives. There was agreement in one focus group when a student asserted, "talking to friends always influences your perception, doesn't matter what about, you always consider what they think". A second student elaborated "friends always ask each other what it is that we want to do after school, and then we talk about it in terms of whether we think it would be a good match". A third student took this point further by saying, "for example, my friends laughed when I suggested teaching, because we have this idea of the personality of a teacher, and they don't think I'm like that. And when thinking about it, they are right! This influenced my perception."

*5.3.1.2 University requirements and job remuneration*

Students identified university requirements and job remuneration as influencers of their perspectives of teaching as a career. The online survey showed that 29% of 470 students (n=136) felt that the university ATAR requirement influenced their perspective of teaching (Figure 5.4). This point was also reflected in all of the focus group interviews. For example, one student commented negatively, "my perception of teaching as a backup is because of the low ATAR. Whether it's right or not, the lower the ATAR needed, the less 'special' the job is perceived to be". A student in another focus group held the same sentiment and commented "because teaching is easier to get into, it influences the perspective that the status is low". A third student acknowledged the link between ATAR score and perspective by stating "it's a last resort, (because) it's low entry and status. Those who can't do, teach".

The online survey showed that 12% of 470 students (n=56) noted that pay was a factor which influenced their perspectives of teaching (Figure 5.4). When the remuneration of teaching was discussed in the focus group interviews, there appeared to be varying opinions on whether it was considered high or low. Across the focus groups, when students remarked that they considered the pay high, they generally also thought of the profession positively. This connection between pay and perspective of the profession was also true for those who considered the pay to be poor. For example, one student simply said, "my perspective is linked to pay, teaching is low paid and therefore I see the career negatively".

*5.3.1.3 The media*

A small collection of students believed that the media influenced their perspectives of teaching as a career. The online survey revealed that 6% of 470 students (n=27) selected the media as an influencer of their perspectives of teaching as a career (Figure 5.4). This sentiment was reflected in a few conversations within two of the focus group interviews. For example, one student pointed out that "you never really see anything positive about teaching in the media, it has to influence your perception". To which another student added, "yes, teachers are not portrayed positively in the media. You don't want to watch television about teachers anyway, you watch it about something else, and if teachers happen to be involved, they're never usually likeable". A student in another focus group mirrored this opinion by stating, "in the media and in shows, teachers are usually someone who is mean to the kids, an entertaining bad teacher. That's kind of how you always see teachers, and because you can relate to it, it influences your general perception". A second student challenged this negative view but agreed about the influence of the media by asserting, "no, I think teachers are portrayed well in movies, but the only one I remember seeing is Freedom Writers. That was one of the best movies I ever watched. And that shows how the teacher can change a whole class's life for the better!"

*5.3.2 Career counsellor identified influences on student perspectives of teaching as a career*

The five themes listed in Table 5.13 emerged across the data, which was synthesised from five semi-structured interviews with career counsellors (or equivalent). Each theme will be discussed separately. No students in the focus groups explicitly named the career counsellors as someone who influenced their career-related perspectives or decisions. Having said this, students in the focus groups were not specifically asked to comment on the role that the career counsellors played in influencing their perspectives. Students were however, prompted in the online survey to consider whether the career counsellors, along with other staff members, were potential influencers. In the checkbox question that asked students 'who has influenced your perspectives of teaching as a career', 23% (n=109) of the 470 students selected 'Staff at school (e.g. Careers and Head of Year)' as one of their answers (Figure 5.4).

**Table 5.13**

*Themes: Career counsellors identified influences on perspective of teaching as a career*

| |
|---|
| 5.3.2.1 Parental expectations and aspirations |
| 5.3.2.2 Academic ability of the student |
| 5.3.2.3 Remuneration |
| 5.3.2.4 Media |
| 5.3.2.5 Community and teacher expectations |

*5.3.2.1 Parental expectations and aspirations*

A predominant theme amongst all of the career counsellors was that parents and their expectations influence student perspectives on careers. One career counsellor stated, "parents are a big influence, some kids want to follow in their parent's footsteps or do what their parents suggest and expect, and if that isn't teaching then often students just don't bother even considering it". Other comments in line with this theme included, "parents are the number one influence at my school. If they themselves have gone to university or have a high-flying job, they definitely encourage their son to

strive for something better than teaching"; "at my school, parents are massively influential. They spend time with their kids, they've raised and developed them, there's lots of expectation that goes with that. So, their opinion of teaching as a viable career influences their child's perception"; "the parents have a dream for their child's' future, which is not a bad thing. But it sometimes takes the focus off what the child wants and instead the child tries to please their parents or meet expectations." Similarly, three career counsellors noted that parental views on both school and the role of education influence the students' perspective of teaching as a career. These comments included, "parents see education as more of a commodity, there's constant parental criticism. If kids aren't strong enough academically, it will come into question with the teacher, and I think this is a big influence on student perspectives of teaching."; "parents absolutely influence the students. But the parents aren't always necessarily the best influence because they've got old-fashioned stereotypes about professions and education, when really these have changed over time."; "a lot of parents and families whinge about teachers. I don't think teachers are as respected by parents in Australia, compared to other countries. Lots then pass this view on to their children."

*5.3.2.2 Academic ability of the student*

Two career counsellors mentioned that the students' current academic standing often influenced their perspective of careers. One counsellor suggested, "student marks influence their perspective of careers, as in how capable they consider themselves to apply for courses with high entry scores." The second comment directly reflected this sentiment, "the perspectives is, if you've got a high ATAR, then you should be doing careers with high prerequisites such as medicine or engineering. Teaching is often not even on the radar".

*5.3.2.3 Remuneration*

Four of the career counsellors believed that student perspectives on teaching as a career have been influenced by the pay associated with the occupation. In three of the cases, the career counsellors suggested that male

students tend to care more about remuneration than female students. One counsellor emphasised, "boys want money! The first thing they always ask about early on is which jobs get them a lot of money." This notion that males are more focussed on the pay associated with a career was evident through such comments as, "teaching doesn't get paid enough. In my experience, most male students still think that they are going to need to be the breadwinner. And therefore, need a higher paying job than teaching"; "boys say 'I just want money'. They look at what they want their lifestyle to look like in terms of finance. Then they project down the line, often teaching isn't looked at. So, money is a big influencer". One career counsellor revealed that pay is such a big influencer on both male and female perspectives that she had to "build it into the careers course. They all want to know 'how much money do I earn in this job?' Students are very money-centric, they do eventually realise there's more to it than pay, but it plays a part."

### 5.3.2.4 Media

Four career counsellors believed that media, specifically television, influences student perspectives on careers. This influence was discussed in terms of careers in general, not specifically in relation to a career in teaching. For example, the four career counsellors disclosed similar opinions surrounding the notion that the media points students' attention towards other professions in a way that does not occur with a career in teaching. One counsellor suggested that "students see professions on television, and it influences them. For example, lots say they want to be forensic scientists and when I ask why, they say they like how it looks on the show CSI!" Another counsellor offered a similar opinion, "there are lots of lawyers, nurses, doctors, police and cooking shows on television. Students sometimes see these professions as glorified and expect them to be as they are on the screen. There aren't any glorified teaching shows!" The idea that the media encourages students to create unrealistic and idealised images of other professions was revealed by the comment, "when students think about teaching vs detective or fashion work, they think about the media. Detectives work in a beautiful setting in New York. They see fashion designers on television and they think 'fashion, that sounds great." One counsellor

commented about the mystique and excitement generated for other professions through the media and the absence of such media in relation to teaching, for example, "students see policemen on television or in an advertisement, both look interesting. It's active, they're saving the world, so they want to be a policeman. Examples of exciting teaching jobs or advertisements on the screen are limited".

*5.3.2.5 Community and teacher expectations*

All career counsellors mentioned that student perspectives of teaching as a career are influenced by the community and teacher expectations. For example, one career counsellor suggested that "the community here has high expectations, vocal ones and that influences student perspectives on what they are expected to do, and capable of doing. Teachers and the community don't generally see teaching as a high enough career goal". Another career counsellor had the opposite opinion but with the same sentiment surrounding community influence, "we are a working-class community, so certain things are expected. A lot of students will be expected to take on apprenticeships, and they listen. It's actively encouraged by teachers and the community". A third viewpoint was voiced with a similar theme on the connection between influence and community expectations, "it's acceptable for students to go through certain pathways here and select any career, because there is no stigma with any option in our community."

Career counsellors spoke about the influence that teachers have upon student perspectives of teaching as a career. One noted, "teachers have a really big influence. Those who are passionate, it's contagious. They make kids want to know more. Then kids think 'I love this, I can teach too'. I think that is key to influencing perspectives on teaching." Two additional comments reiterated this point, "it's really important that the subject teachers inspire their students, and go through all the jobs that align to their area. That's what the kids will listen to, that's what influences them"; "Teachers are a big influence, just by teaching students and being in front of them so much. Students watch and absorb all the time, so teachers have an impact on whether the students chose it as a career." One career counsellors pointed out that teachers need to be more aware of how much influence they actually

have on student perspectives of teaching. She voiced particular concern about the damaging impact of negative comments. The counsellor stated, "a teacher said to one student considering teaching, 'oh we had high hopes for you'. It was as if she'd settled for less because she was choosing to be a teacher. It turned the student off teaching. Teachers aren't always the profession's biggest fans!"

*5.3.3 Summary*

Students and the career counsellors spoke about similar factors as influencers of student perspectives towards teaching as a career. These factors also appeared thematically in the student online survey. Both groups identified parental expectations, teachers, prospective remuneration and the media as items that may contribute to current perspectives that influence selecting a career in teaching. Additionally, students indicated that they were also influenced by the required ATAR of the course at university and their friends' opinions of the occupation. Career counsellors further identified the broader community expectations of career choice and the students' academic ability as potential areas that influence student perspectives of teaching as a career. The number one influence was deemed to be school-related experiences, which will be addressed under Research Question Three.

## 5.4 In what ways have school experiences of Year 12 students impacted their perspective of teaching as a career?

School-related experiences were clearly identified as the top influence upon student perspectives of teaching as a career. In the online survey, 83% of 470 students (n=392) acknowledged that school-related experiences directly impact their perspective of teaching as a career. The results concerned with the ways in which school experiences impacted student perspectives of teaching will be presented in two sections: student experiences of teachers; student experiences with other students.

*5.4.1 Student experiences of teachers*

Student experiences of teachers have a major impact upon their perspectives of teaching as a career. In the online survey, 42% (n=203) and 23% (n=109) of 470 students noted that their own teachers, and other teachers (such as Head of Year and Career Counsellors) respectively, have directly impacted their perspective of teaching as a career. Students in one focus group unanimously agreed with the comment "pretty much everything I know about teaching as a career has come from the teachers that I've had". Student experiences with teachers were categorised through the analysis of data from five focus group interviews and 470 online student surveys. Two themes emerged across the data. The themes included the positive experiences with teachers and negative experiences with teachers. Both types of experiences significantly impacted student perspectives of teaching as a career. Each theme will be discussed separately.

*5.4.1.1 Positive teacher experiences that impacted student perspectives of teaching as a career*

Students disclosed that certain characteristics and behaviours of teachers positively impact student perspectives of teaching as a career. The most common words used by students to describe these characteristics and behaviours can be found in the qualitative section of the online survey (Figure 5.5). The four most frequently used words by the students were enthusiastic (n=106), passionate (n=99), helpful (n=89) and happy (n=60).

Frequency of words used to describe teachers who positively impact student perceptions of teaching as a career
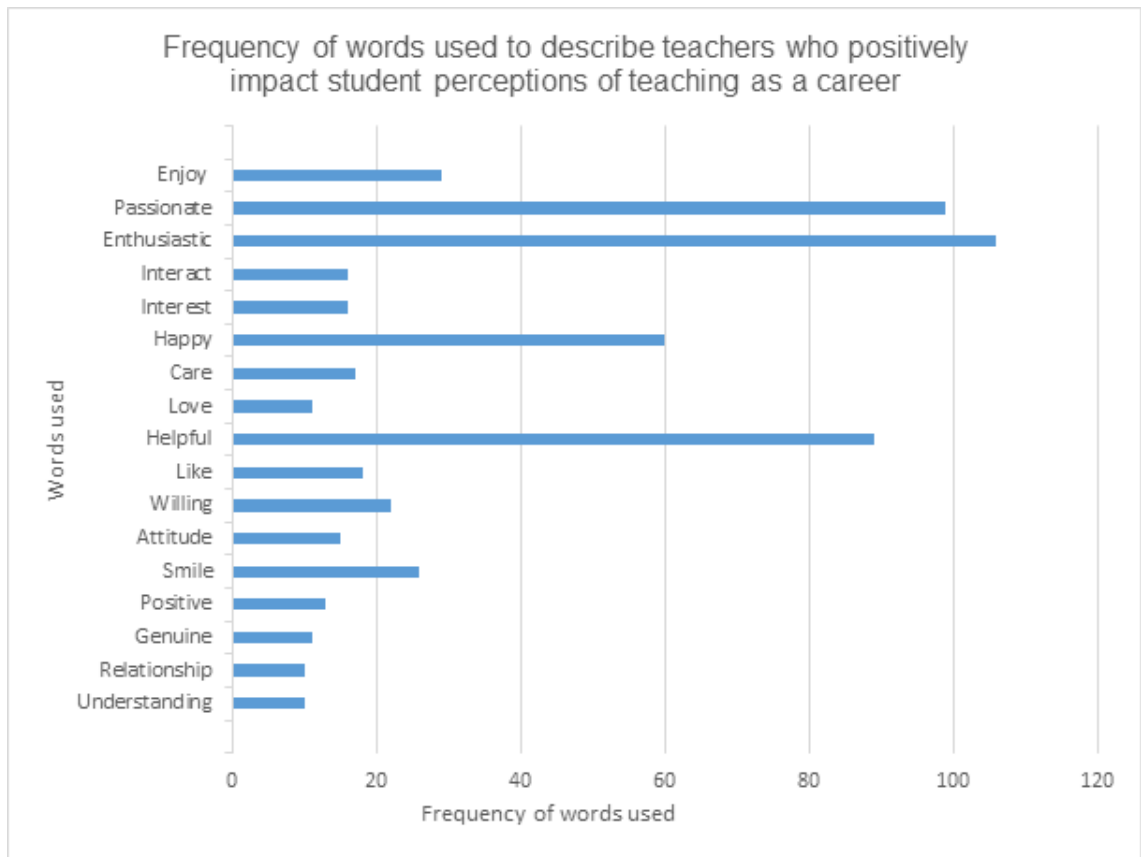
Figure 5.5 *Frequency of words used by students when describing teachers who positively impacted the perspective of teaching as a career* n=470 students

The synthesis of the online qualitative responses revealed that students believe 'good' classroom practitioners, who are enthusiastic and passionate about their job, leave a positive impression of teaching upon the students. These notions were reiterated through the focus group interviews. For example, one student commented, "when I see a good teacher in action, who really tries hard and does well in the classroom, it gives me a positive feeling about becoming a teacher". A second student agreed with this sentiment by stating, "the way teachers apply themselves to the class and have the ability to help students without a fuss, that impresses me and makes me think that teaching is a good career". Another student articulated, "it makes me want to become a teacher when I see certain things. Like when teachers come to class with lots of enthusiasm and deliver their content with energy and when they are passionate about their subject". Students in the focus group nodded in support as he went on to clarify, "when teachers go

above and beyond for their students, when they connect with their students on a deeper level, when they find new ways to engage, motivate and excite their students. That's when I think teaching could be good".

Students spoke about the positive impact of teachers who integrate their occupation into their identity, see the bigger picture of their role and enjoy their job (Figure 5.5). For example, one student stated that he views the profession favourably "when teachers show their students how what they are learning relates to real life and that they are not just teaching content, but teaching people values and shaping lives". A student suggested that a teacher's enjoyment of their role contagiously affects their perspective of teaching as a job, "when teachers are passionate about teaching their subject to the students, spend many hours of their own time preparing, marking, helping students and running tutoring sessions, it makes you feel like teaching is a rewarding career". In one focus group there was support for the comment, "when teachers incorporate their personal lives into their teaching it shows that they care about being 'real' with us, as equals". A student agreed with the comment and took it further by stating, "if they are enthusiastic and consider their job a core part of their life, we see that, and it makes me think optimistically about a career in teaching."

In all five focus groups, students spoke about the importance of caring teacher-student relationships and a supportive classroom learning environment, as positive influencers towards a career in teaching. One student exemplified this idea by commenting, "when you enjoy school because of a relationship with a teacher, that impacts you. It makes you want to become a teacher to pass that on, you think 'oh I can do that for someone else'". A second student suggested, that "when you see teachers caring about students and building relationships, rather than just delivering content and collecting a pay cheque, that's what makes you think better about it as a career choice". Another student elaborated on this point,

> My experience of schooling has had a major impact on my perspective
> of teaching. It is all down to the teachers. Everything counts, the way
> they address the class from the minute the roll is taken. When we talk
> as a class, if they are enthusiastic, organised, timely and have a
> positive nature, then I believe they enjoy their job. The attitudes and

the vibes they produce set the standards for the classroom environment and this allow students like myself to actively engage and enjoy learning. When I see this happen, it makes me feel like I would enjoy being a teacher.

All of the students in the focus groups visibly and vocally agreed with the sentiment raised in this comment.

A few students indicated that their teachers had spoken to them and suggested that they possessed the requisite qualities to be a good teacher. In most instances students acknowledged that this affirmation encouraged them to think more positively about the profession. For example, one student shared "my Mathematics teacher told me I'd be a good teacher because I am good at explaining things. That definitely made me think about it seriously, I hadn't thought of it before that". Another student commented, "teachers have told me that I am good at helping others and I have the personality for teaching, which has made me more interested."

*5.4.1.2 Negative teacher experiences that impacted student perspectives of teaching as a career*

A theme that surfaced in all focus groups was that disengaged and angry teachers who are easily annoyed turn students off a career in teaching. One student contributed, "unhappy teachers not only change your perspective about teaching, they form them. Especially angry teachers, why so angry all the time? Must be the job. Why would you want to spend your time doing something that makes you angry?" Another student linked teachers' mood to their job enjoyment, "I have had a few angry and bored teachers, who clearly don't like what they do." The student elaborated, "that turns you away from teaching. There must be a reason why they don't like it". There was resounding agreement from students in all focus groups that poor teachers have a negative impact on their perspectives of the profession. This idea can be seen through the comment, "having bad teachers makes you think 'I'm never coming back to school. Ever. Ever again'." Another student asserted that the impact of having bad teachers also made him consider the types of work colleagues he would want to avoid, as shown through the comment, "I have had really bad teachers. One teacher, every aspect of

everything he does annoys me. He is one of those teachers who doesn't actually teach anything, he won't try to help you, he doesn't care." The student then explained, "I don't think I could be a colleague of his. I couldn't work with those type of teachers. It would be very frustrating."

Conversely, some students discussed the idea that negative experiences with poor teachers actually made them think more positively about choosing a career in teaching. For example, one student commented,

No one goes through school and likes all of their teachers. There's always going to be teachers who put you through negative experiences, who are unfair and unkind and put you off teaching. But, you could look at those teachers as motivators for the career. We could go back into schools as teachers and be the teacher who doesn't put people through what you went through!

Two students addressed the idea that teacher negativity does not always discourage future teachers. One student commented that negative experiences with teachers do not necessarily have to negatively influence student perspectives of teaching at all. Another student suggested that during school there is a "spread of teachers, good and bad. You can't let teachers be the influence. You have to become indifferent to them, it's like swings and roundabouts. You ultimately get to choose your own perspective of the career".

Students in the focus groups discussed their experiences of what they believe a teacher's job entails, and how their understanding of the role impacts their view of teaching. One student commented with the support of the others in the group, "teaching, like most jobs, involves working with people that at times may be difficult. Parents and staff often blame some teachers for the actions and results of a student". Another student added to this comment about being blamed unfairly, "even when the incidents are completely unrelated to the teacher, teachers are blamed, for a lot actually. I see that at school and think, poor teachers, I wouldn't choose it". Student experiences of the rigid nature of course content and strict teaching expectations have impacted their perspectives of a career in teaching. One student reflected on his experience, "during schooling, I have seen teachers have to follow a very rigid syllabus structure. They are not able to deviate too

much from the content outlined, even when the class is interested and wants to follow a direction." The student then clarified, "in some cases, during discussions, the need for professionalism may interfere with their own personal interests and self-expression." Another student reflected on this comment by remarking, "not being able to express your views because you are supposed to be objective, not being able to directly influence opinions of students, even if you feel strongly about it, is impossible, so no, teaching is not for me".

*5.4.2 Students' experiences with other students*

Students' experiences with other students have an impact upon their perspectives of teaching as a career. It was mentioned earlier that watching teachers help students succeed and enjoying student relationships are positive influences on the perspective of teaching as a career. However, students also spoke frequently about the undesirable experiences they have had with other students, and the negative impact these experiences have had on their view of teaching as a career. For example, a theme emerged across all focus groups that poor student behaviour translates negatively to choosing teaching as a career. In the online survey, 34% of 470 respondents (n=158) cited student behaviour, and the need to deal with this behaviour, as negatively influencing their perspective of a career in teaching. This theme was reflected by the majority of students in one focus group, who agreed with the comment, "my perspective of teaching as a career is directly related to the lack of respect that I have seen occur in the classroom. High school kids are disrespectful. I don't want to be around that as an adult". This notion was present in another focus group when a student said,

> I see kids around the school showing cheek to teachers, they are
> really rebellious and show the teachers up, and just won't listen. I
> often think about that from a teacher's perspective, as in, you have to
> deal with that every day. So that experience makes me reluctant to
> think positively of teaching as a career.

Many students in one focus group affirmed the opinion that "dealing with kids who aren't interested and aren't motivated must be awful. I see kids that sit

there and say, 'I'm bored; I don't want to be here'. What do you do as a teacher? I wouldn't want that".

*5.4.3 Summary*

The most significant influence on student perspectives towards teaching as a career appeared to arise from school-related experiences. Students sighted both positive and negative dealings with teachers and students as influencing their perspectives of teaching. Positive experiences with teachers at all times translated to students viewing the profession favourably. Negative experiences with teachers predominantly tainted student views on the profession. However, at times, students suggested that these negative experiences could be taken in the affirmative, proposing that people may be motivated to rectify the situation by becoming a teacher. Students acknowledged positive and rewarding experiences with other students encouraged them to view the profession approvingly. However, the vast majority of conversation about other students was around poorly behaved students. Witnessing discipline issues and a lack of student respect for teachers influenced students to see teaching as an undesirable profession.

## 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the results from an instrumental case study involving five focus group interviews with Year 12 students, 470 student online surveys and five one-to-one interviews with career counsellors. The data was presented under the following three Research Questions.

1. What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?
2. What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?
3. In what ways have school experiences of Year 12 students impacted their perspective of teaching as a career?

The first question sought to examine the various student perspectives on teaching as a career. The second question focussed on how these

perspectives were influenced and the third question uncovered the ways in which student perspectives were impacted by their experiences at school. The next chapter will provide an analysis and interpretation of the results alongside the relevant literature.

**Chapter Six: Discussion of Results**

**6.1 Introduction**

This study explored Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career. The first three parts of the discussion are organised around the research questions of the study. There is a degree of overlap, intersection and similarity within the discussion of the research questions. To honour the student voice, the analysis has been presented in full under the specific research question. The final part of the discussion examines the interplay between student perspectives, settings and influences through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1994; 1999). The three research questions are outlined below.

1. What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?
2. What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?
3. In what ways have school experiences of Year 12 students influenced their perspective of teaching as a career?

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the qualitative data collected from five student focus group interviews, five semi-structured career counsellors' interviews and the quantitative and qualitative data collected from 470 online surveys. This discussion will take into account the literature presented in Chapter 3. Specifically, the literature relates to the topics of: the purpose of schools; the status of teaching; various positive and negative factors that either encourage people to or discourage people from a career in teaching; and the forming of perspectives, both generally, and in relation to career choice. Table 6.1 outlines the structure of Chapter Six.

**Table 6.1**

*Outline of chapter six: Discussion of results*

| |
|---|
| 6.1  Introduction |
| 6.2  Year 12 perspectives of teaching as a career |
| 6.3  Factors that influenced Year 12 perspectives of teaching as a career |
| 6.4  The ways in which school experiences influenced Year 12 perspectives of teaching as a career |
| 6.5  The interplay between Year 12 student perspectives, settings and influences |
| 6.6  Conclusion |

**6.2 Year 12 perspectives of teaching as a career**

The following section discusses the Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career and is divided into four areas. These areas are: student perspectives relating to the purpose of teaching; positive perspectives of teaching as a career; negative perspectives of teaching as a career; and perspectives of the status of teaching as a career. These areas will now be discussed in light of the relevant literature.

*6.2.1 Purpose of teaching*

Students offered a variety of responses when asked generally about the purpose of teaching. Some students responded to the question by commenting on the broader purpose of teaching and teachers. Other students interpreted the question to be about the overall purpose of schooling. There was no complete agreement on the purpose of teaching in any of the focus groups. In the current study, the range of student opinions on the purpose of teaching mirrors the sentiments found in the literature. Various authors suggested that no country in the world has one particular, articulated and agreed vision for schooling, but rather a variety of thoughts exist on the matter (Biesta, 2008; Curren, 2014; Hoyle, 2008; Labaree, 1997). The multifaceted nature of a teacher's role was also highlighted in the literature (Hoyle, 2008). The themes presented in Table 6.2 will now be discussed in relation to the relevant literature.

**Table 6.2**

*Purpose of teaching*

| |
|---|
| 6.2.1.1  Passing on knowledge to the next generation |
| 6.2.1.2  Shaping the future |
| 6.2.1.3  Developing well-rounded citizens |
| 6.2.1.4  Developing an area of interest |

*6.2.1.1 Passing on knowledge to the next generation*

Students identified that one of the broader purposes of teaching is to pass on knowledge to the next generation. Responses referred to teachers providing students with necessary foundational knowledge to prepare the next generation for life in society. The ideas that teachers prepare students by way of qualification, socialization and subjectification are common in the literature (Biesta, 2008; Collins & Allender, 2013). Students perceived teachers to play a care-taking role in school life. The data revealed the student perspective of the teacher as a wise leader, guiding the student on a journey to an end point of safety and preparedness. The literature affirmed the notion that teachers provide care to students for individual development and that this care enables students to progress through stages towards adulthood (Department of Education, Training and the Arts, 2008; Levin, 2003).

Students acknowledged that teachers help to create all other professions by assisting the next generation to obtain knowledge and follow a path into various occupations. Research by Labaree (1997) reflected this sentiment and asserted that schooling provides individuals with credentials to compete for desirable social positions. The process of equipping students with credentials is named social mobility and is reiterated by Collins and Allender (2013) and Biesta (2008). Participating students acknowledged that a purpose of teaching is to bring students to a level of cultural, social and academic understanding. They stipulated that this foundational knowledge would support them to eventually shape society. The literature mirrored this notion and suggested that one of the ways that teachers assist with the evolution of the next generation is by instilling foundational knowledge in

students (Bajunid, 2000; Barber 2004; Biesta, 2008; Collins & Allender, 2013; Labaree, 1997).

*6.2.1.2 Shaping the future*

Various participants identified the overall purpose of teaching to be related to shaping society and shaping the future. They spoke about the role teachers play in the advancement of knowledge through educational investment in students, and how ultimately students would use this knowledge to improve community and progress humanity. A similar sentiment was echoed in the literature with the notion that societies use schooling as a mechanism to shape the future for the public good (Biesta, 2008; Cranston, Mulford, Keating & Reid 2010). Likewise, the "Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australian" (2008) and the "Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration" (2019) recognised education as a means of advancing Australia as a democratic, equitable and just society. Furthermore, Rogach, Frolova and Ryabova, (2018) believe that education is an investment in human capital and is ultimately responsible for the future of state development.

The results from the current research indicated that the Year 12 students were of the view that teachers help to shape the future. They believed that teachers did this by moulding students into what the economy requires at a certain point in time. The literature also reflected the perspective that schooling is an engine for future economic development and helps to create national wealth and an efficient economy (Power, 2003; Rogach et al., 2018; UNESCO, 1996). Students recognised that a purpose of schooling is to equip and prepare students to help solve issues and problems that currently face our world as well as to address those issues and problems that may emerge in the future. This global understanding of education is not specifically addressed in the literature. However, various authors confirmed the belief that education can be a tool for human advancement, evolution and enhancing the parochial interests of particular societies (Biesta, 2008; Collins & Allender, 2013; Labaree, 1997; Levin, 2003; Cranston et al., 2010).

The research participants identified that the purpose of schooling is to shape society. They suggested that teachers do this shaping of society by

helping students to grow, develop, reach their goals and full potential. Similarly, the literature reflected the idea that schooling encourages the individual to grow and allows for the actualisation of human potential. Cranston et al., (2010) and Levin (2003) referred to schools as institutions that fulfil individuals', community and societal needs. Schools meeting the individual's needs was named the 'private function' of education and schools meeting community or societal needs was named the 'public function' of education. These dual functions of schooling were commonly mentioned across the literature (Bajunid,2000; Biesta, 2008; Collins & Allender, 2013; Cranston et al., 2010; Elfert, 2015; Labaree, 1997; Levin, 2003; Power, 2003; UNESCO, 1996).

### 6.2.1.3 Developing well-rounded citizens

The research participants perceived a broader purpose of teaching that involved developing and enriching the whole child. The language and goal of teachers developing the whole child is particularly evident in the literature emanating from CEWA (n.d.; 2009). Students noted that teachers help students to be kind and live life as good and decent people. Students also identified the significant role teachers play in helping their pupils become well-rounded citizens. The literature from CEWA refers to the values that Catholic schools hope to develop in students, such as love, kindness and living a good and moral life (CEWA, 2009). Also mentioned in the literature, was the important role that schools play in building character and shaping students into active citizens, ready to embrace their civic responsibilities (Education Council, 2019; Bajunid, 2000; Department of Education, Science and Training Curriculum Corporation, 2003; Labaree, 1997; Levin, 2003). Students recognised that one purpose of teaching is to assist students to gain life knowledge so that they can function in society, look after their own well-being and the well-being of others. The Department of Education, Training and the Arts (2008) reinforces the expectation that schools prepare students to build fruitful relationships and accept their individual parts in the shared responsibility for the wellbeing of others, self and the broader community.

Students widely acknowledged that one of the purposes of teaching is to create well-rounded citizens and hence, teachers have a role in helping students to uncover and then achieve their unique goals. The participants thought that they would only become active citizens with good habits if schooling taught and enabled them to set and then achieve their goals. The literature reflected the notions that schools play a part in the evolution of students and in developing humans with the capacity to critically think and act accordingly (Education Council, 2019; Bajunid, 2000). Schools ultimately enable the growth of a group, which cannot occur without addressing the growth of the individual first (Labaree, 1997). The literature appears to focus mainly on the importance of schools developing the child into what society deems to be a well-rounded citizen, not what the student deems as personally important. The literature reviewed in this study did not address the methods schools use to develop students into well-rounded citizens.

*6.2.1.4 Developing an area of interest*

The participants in this research perceived that one purpose of teaching is to provide an avenue for teachers to work within an area of passion and, in turn, to generate student interest in that area. Additionally, students suggested that one of the purposes of teaching is to administer particular curricula, inspire students to learn specific things and to advocate for various subjects as possible future careers. The literature similarly reflected that one of the purposes of school is to transmit knowledge within domains and provide students with necessary qualifications for a life of work (Bajunid, 2000; Barber 2004; Biesta, 2008; Collins & Allender, 2013; Labaree, 1997; Mocanu & Sterian 2013). Students perceived that one of the purposes of schools is to provide employment and an avenue for people to work and be involved in an area of interest. Schools do provide significant employment opportunities and a means for those employed to express their interest and passion through teaching their subjects and teaching children. However, the literature examined in this study did not suggest the provision of employment to be a specific purpose of education.

*6.2.2 Positive perspectives of teaching as a career*

Students outlined their positive perspectives of teaching as a career through the focus group interviews and the 470 online surveys. These results were categorised into four themes as shown in Table 6.3. From the literature, it was clear that there are many positive factors that encourage people to choose a career in teaching, with most being altruistic and intrinsic in nature (Alexander, Chant & Cox, 1994; Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Berliner 2011; Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Butcher & Lewis, 2000; 2002; Department of Education, 2010; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Milliband, 2003; Scott, Stone and Dinham, 2001; Spear, Gould & Lee, 2000; Young, 1995). A discussion of the results of the positive perspectives of teaching as a career will now be presented alongside the literature that was examined in the study.

**Table 6.3**

*Positive perspectives of teaching as a career*

| |
|---|
| 6.2.2.1  Job satisfaction |
| 6.2.2.2  Potential for impact |
| 6.2.2.3  Holidays and lifestyle |
| 6.2.2.4  Social nature of the job |

*6.2.2.1 Job satisfaction*

Students in the current study frequently spoke about the opportunity for job satisfaction as a positive attribute associated with teaching. The perspective of teaching as a rewarding career was very common across the literature (Alexander et al.,1994; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Scott et al., 2001; Spear et al., 2000). The participants perceived that satisfaction would be gained through various means, such as, helping students and watching them succeed, interacting and building relationships with students and generally by being of service to others. These ideas were reflected in the literature as intrinsically appealing factors associated with teaching, and hence an avenue for experiencing job satisfaction (Berliner 2011; Department of Education, 2010; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Milliband, 2003; Scott et al., 2001). The students reacted positively to the notion that a career in teaching offers an opportunity for someone to engage in a knowledge area of interest as well as being an

intellectually stimulating occupation. These points are echoed in the literature. Acquisition of knowledge, subject expertise and the mental stimulation required to help others learn are cited as common attractions to a career in teaching (Kane & Mallon, 2006; Lai, Chan, Ko & So, 2005; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Richardson & Watt, 2007; Spear et al., 2000; Summerhill et al., 1998).

Students spoke positively about their perspective of teachers being role models who continually grow as lifelong learners. Moreover, they found it affirming that teachers are required to engage in ongoing professional development. The participants deemed these considerations as satisfying and thought teaching would therefore be personally fulfilling. Literature from Mocanu and Sterian (2013) and Bruner (2002) highlight the expectation that teachers are role models to students, especially in terms of modelling learning, continual growth and engagement in professional development. In the 470 online student surveys, students ranked the fulfilling and rewarding nature of teaching as the second top reason for choosing to become a teacher. Literature from Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2015) identified personal fulfillment as the strongest factor influencing decisions to enter the teaching profession. Similarly, Johnston et al., (1999) discovered that students in their study ranked 'perceived job satisfaction' as the highest influencer of career choice.

### 6.2.2.2 Potential for impact

Students identified teaching as an occupation that allows an individual to positively impact the lives of others, and therefore change the world. Some students expressed their opinions on the appealing nature of helping individuals to grow and develop. Others spoke about the larger impact that teachers create, in terms of making a difference in the world. The term 'change agents' was associated with a positive perspective of teachers. The literature similarly reflected these positive perspectives of teaching. Many sources suggested that altruistic factors associated with teaching appeal to a person's desire to make a difference in the world, such as the drive to help others and shape future generations (Alexander et al.,1994; Johnston et al., 1999; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Lortie, 1975; OECD, 2005; Scott et al., 2001;

Spear et al., 2000). Kane and Mallon (2006) and Brookhart and Freeman (1992) cited the aspirations to make a social contribution and enabling students to have the best start in life, as factors that encourage people to enter the profession.

*6.2.2.3 Holidays and lifestyle*

Students frequently referred positively to the length of holidays associated with the teaching profession. A summary of the students' 470 online survey responses showed that 'holidays and lifestyle' ranked as the highest reason to choose teaching as a career, out of 11 possible reasons. Of the 74 students who ranked holidays and lifestyle as their top reason to enter teaching, 18 (24%) indicated that they would consider teaching as a career. The other 56 (76%) respondents, whilst noting holidays and lifestyle as their main reason for entering the profession, had no current intention of becoming a teacher. Therefore, those who would not consider teaching as a career thought 'holidays and lifestyle' was a good reason to enter the profession. Those who were planning to select teaching as a career did not view 'holidays and lifestyle' as one of their top reasons for selecting the profession. Instead, these students noted job satisfaction and other altruistic options among their top reasons for wanting to enter the profession. The literature supports the perspective that the number of holidays associated with teaching is attractive (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty 2015; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). However, the literature also suggested that holidays are generally less appealing than other altruistic and intrinsic factors offered through the teaching (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Manual & Hughes, 2006; Summerhill et al., 1998). This point was echoed by student perspectives in the current study.

Students reflected positively on the possible travel and lifestyle opportunities afforded by a teaching career because of the access to substantial holidays. They highly valued the longer breaks in teaching and suggested that the time away from work would provide a greater opportunity for world travel. This point is supported by the literature from various authors, who suggested that the length of breaks in teaching are conducive to the pursuing of personal interests and travel (Bastick, 1999; Manual & Hughes,

2006). The sources also mentioned that the longer holidays are more favourable for family life. Students did not identify holidays as being conducive to family life.

The participants perceived teaching to be a stable and dependable career. They mentioned the continual need for teachers in society and asserted that there will always be employment available within the field, and that such employment is transferable both nationally and internationally. The student perspectives surrounding the stable nature of teaching are supported by the literature, which suggested that factors such as job security, availability of jobs and transferability attract people to a career in teaching (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Lai et al., 2005; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). When referring to the stability of a teaching career, some students expressed comfort in their belief that teachers would not be replaced by technology and robots, unlike many other careers that may disappear due to technological advancements and automation. The literature depicts teaching as a steady and reliable profession, particularly in times of economic instability (Knoll, 2015; Yong, 1995). However, the literature did not support or challenge the assumption that the teaching profession will remain stable into the unforeseeable future. The Centre for Future-Ready Graduates (2017) asserted that change within teaching is necessary due to the advancements in technology, increasing access to and the abundance of information. Students did mention the impact of technology in the classroom, but not in relation to a positive perspective of teaching as a career.

A number of students vocalised that they considered remuneration to be a positive factor associated with a career in teaching. These students favoured the fact that a teacher's yearly salary increases steadily with length of service, over a significant number of years. Other students were unsure about whether the remuneration of teaching is comparatively favourable with other professions. The literature reinforces these mixed opinions on the pay associated with a career in teaching. The starting salary for Australian graduate teachers is among the highest in the country (Queensland Government, 2017). Various authors noted in the literature that a teacher's pay generally increases incrementally over time, without the need for further

qualification or skill advancement, and is capped after approximately ten years (AITSL, 2019; Howes & Goodman-Delahuny, 2015; Ingvarson, 2010; Leigh, 2012). However, the authors that examined people's perspectives towards remuneration in teaching mostly yielded negative views (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Daniels, 2009; Ferrari, 2014; Hattie, 2015; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Richardson & Watt, 2006).

Students commented favourably on the variety of experiences that a teaching career offers. They considered the opportunity to engage in excursions and overseas school trips as attractive aspects of the job. The literature did not specifically comment positively or negatively on a teacher's access to free travel and excursions by way of supervisory roles on student trips. However, the literature did address the requirement for teachers to attend extra-curricular activities such as camps and clubs. This requirement was generally considered as a negative aspect of the job. Various authors suggested that the need for teachers to engage in such activities led to a blurring of boundaries between work and family contexts. It was posited that in some cases these extra activities cause school responsibilities to encroach upon the teacher's family time (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Richardson & Watt, 2006).

Students regarded the variation of activities within a teacher's day as a positive aspect of teaching. Specifically, students mentioned as attractive, the diversity of classroom activities, student personalities, relationships and teaching and learning experiences. A similar sentiment was evident in the literature from a number of authors. These authors wrote positively about the degree of variety and challenge within teaching (Alexander et al., 1994; Johnston et al.,1999; Kane & Mallon, 2006). However, literature also suggested that the variety and challenge associated with teaching can be viewed negatively, resulting in a hefty workload and perhaps leading to teacher burnout (Howes & Goodman-Delahuny, 2015; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000).

Several students commented positively on the idea that going to school can prepare a student to become a teacher, and that the resulting depth of insight and the 'apprenticeship' students have is not evident in any other profession. Students commented positively about going through the

school system and experiencing many teachers. They suggested that these experiences provide scaffolding for students to become good teachers. Interestingly, the literature exploring positive perspectives of teaching did not include this rationale as an attractive aspect of the profession. However, the notion of schooling experiences providing students with an 'apprenticeship' in teaching does exist in the literature from a number of authors (Labaree, 1997; Lortie, 1974; White, 1994). Labaree (1997), suggested that this 'apprenticeship' experience actually removes the mystique surrounding the teacher's role, and that this experience can be viewed positively or negatively in comparison to other professions.

### 6.2.2.4 Social nature of the job

Students spoke fondly about the social side of teaching and agreed that the role is essentially social in nature. They talked positively about teachers having the opportunity to build meaningful relationships, engage in community life and have interesting conversations with a variety of students, parents and staff. The social nature of teaching, the ability to forge caring relationships and participate in community and social settings appear in the literature as factors that attract people to the profession (Kane & Mallon, 2006; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2007; Young, 1995). Students thought it socially gratifying to work alongside children and young adults. The literature echoes these perspectives, suggesting that dealing with children and being involved with young people are common motivators that draw people to teaching (Kane & Mallon, 2006; Williams & Forgasz, 2009; Young, 1995).

### 6.2.3 Negative perspectives of teaching as a career

Students identified their negative perspectives of teaching as a career through the focus group interviews and the 470 online surveys. These results were categorised into four themes as shown in Table 6.4. The literature drawn from a variety of countries characterised teaching as an undesirable occupation (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Crow, Levine & Nager, 1990; Empey, 1984; Howes & Goodman-Delahuny, 2015; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Liu et al., 2000; OECD, 2005; Ramsay, 2000; Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003).

Many negative factors that discourage people from choosing a career in teaching were highlighted in the literature. These factors relate mostly to the nature of the job, the perceived persona expected of teachers, along with certain extrinsic factors (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Masters, 2015; OECD, 2005; Page & Page, 1984; Richardson & Watt, 2006). A discussion of the results alongside appropriate literature is now provided.

**Table 6.4**

*Negative perspectives of teaching as a career*

| |
|---|
| 6.2.3.1  Nature of job |
| 6.2.3.2  Student behaviour |
| 6.2.3.3  Required personal traits |
| 6.2.3.4  Pay and lifestyle |

*6.2.3.1 Nature of job*

Students perceived teaching to be a monotonous and repetitive career. They specifically identified the routine nature of the timetabled day, lack of autonomous time, and the repetition of teaching the same courses, as unappealing factors associated with the profession. A number of authors mirrored these sentiments in their literature by presenting the perspective that teaching as a career can be regarded as routine, boring, frustrating and lacking in autonomy (Berry et al., 1989; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Kane & Mallon, 2006). Some students thought that teachers lose enthusiasm because of the routine nature of the job. They recounted their own experiences of high school as monotonous and boring. Various authors noted the belief that some teachers are dispirited, and that translates to boring learning experiences for students (Berry et al., 1989; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). Kane and Mallon (2006) also attributed a teacher's reduced sense of autonomy to a loss of a sense of fun in teaching.

Students disclosed that the thought of spending their entire post-school life back at school led them to think that teaching as a career would be uninspiring. Various students commented that the thought of attending school followed by university and then returning to school to teach, was

unappealing. They thought that teachers do not enter the real world, but instead are caught in a cycle of helping others to enter the real world. The intermediate nature of the teacher's role, to bridge the gap from childhood to adulthood is addressed by Hoyle (2001) and Geer (1966). These authors stipulated that the role of the teacher is to help students achieve, accomplish and move beyond the control of school, but that teachers remain behind in a dependent social role. Geer (1966) suggested that teachers are depended upon to lead by example and to conform, or act in congruence with certain school norms. He proposed that in some cases, these norms are not actually practised or adhered to in the real world.

Students thought the idea of teaching as a viable backup career is no longer encouraging, given the compliance required for teachers to deliver certain content and complete administration tasks. They suggested that the teacher's lack of autonomy in choosing what to teach reduces the possibility for creativity and renders a teacher's role to revolve around administering a set curriculum and completing administration duties. The literature from a number of authors mentions the idea that teaching can be seen as a backup or fall-back career, where those who 'can't do, teach' (Alexander, Chant & Cox, 1994; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Hoyle, 2001; Richardson & Watt, 2006). A number of authors reported increasing compliance and accountability requirements in teaching as negative aspects of teaching (Hoyle, 2001; Mocanu & Sterian, 2013; Valli & Buese, 2007). However, there does not appear to be a specific link in the literature between increasing compliance requirements and reduction in the perspective that teaching is a viable backup career, as was suggested by a small number of students in this study.

Students spoke about how technology has diminished the importance of, and student reliance on, the teacher as an information provider. They perceived that teaching is less appealing as a career because students can access content from more qualified sources over the internet, at anytime and anywhere. The literature also confirmed the notion that student access to technology removes the teacher as the sole information provider, but suggested that access to technology complicates the role of the teacher in other ways (Centre for Future-Ready Graduates, 2017; Valli & Buese, 2007).

The literature examined in this study did not address or propose that student access to technology deters people from entering the profession. Similar to this notion, students identified that they are able to access their marks, resources and class notes online and that learning management systems allow them to see instant feedback on assessments. These points, coupled with the ability to email a teacher at any time, made the students question the relevance of the teacher as anything other than a supervisor. The literature reflected the need for teachers to leverage technology to enhance learning experiences now and into the future, but it did not suggest that failure to do so would deem the teacher irrelevant (Kale & Akcaoglu, 2018; Stosic, 2015).

Students negatively perceived a number of tasks directly associated with classwork and proposed that the thought of enacting these tasks discouraged them from considering teaching as a career. Specifically, students identified the marking, lesson preparation and the requirement for appropriate differentiation of learning activities as draining and unappealing. The demanding nature of a teacher's job is presented frequently in the literature. For example, marking and out-of-hours preparation are commonly referred to as negatives associated with the profession (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). Winchester (2004) acknowledged the taxing task of teachers having to be on the front line of knowledge transfer for students with cognitive and social welfare issues. Also noted in the literature is the increasing number of students diagnosed with learning difficulties and the diverse nature of the social and familial issues faced by students. The awareness of such situations means that teachers are now legally required to adjust and differentiate their teaching to cater for the special needs of the impacted students. Authors suggested that this expanded role of the teacher makes the profession less appealing (Hoyle, 2001; Valli & Buese, 2007).

*6.2.3.2 Student behaviour*

Students commonly perceived poor student behaviour as a discouraging feature of a career in teaching. They referred to disrespectful and uninterested attitudes and the rebelliousness of some students as factors that prevent them from considering teaching. Experiencing discipline

problems and having to interact with unpleasant students is commonly noted by authors in the literature as an undesirable trait of a teaching career (Berry et al., 1989; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006). Studies by Summerhill et al., (1998), Page and Page (1898) and Kyriacous and Coulthard (2000) presented disruptive and disrespectful pupils amongst the top two negative factors associated with teaching. When students disclosed their dislike of discipline problems, they frequently recounted their own direct experiences of other students behaving poorly in classes and in the school yard. The relationship between the undesirability of dealing with unruly children and the students' own experiences appears in the literature of Lai et al., (2005). These authors proposed that negative images of teaching are constructed by students socially in their everyday school life.

The participants in the current research recognised that it would be disheartening for the teacher to teach a class that possibly contained uninterested and apathetic students. They acknowledged that teachers tend to be passionate about subjects and passing on their knowledge. They believed it would be particularly discouraging if students failed to positively engage with activities that teachers viewed as fulfilling. This aspect of student behaviour contributed to the students' negative perspective of teaching. The literature also noted the view that student disengagement in the classroom discourages people from the profession (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006).

Students commonly referred to the disrespectful behaviour of students outside of the classroom as a factor that would deter them from choosing teaching as a career. Specifically, students were concerned about discipline problems during break times and online cyber-stalking of teachers. They questioned their own ability to respond to and deal with such situations and suggested that it would cause them fear. Some students said that this fear would stop them from considering teaching as a profession. The literature from numerous authors confirmed that a limited self-belief in the capacity to manage behaviour and the consequences of not achieving the desired result, deter people from entering teaching (Berry et al., 1989; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Summerhill et al., 1998). Butcher and Lewis (2002) cited student fears induced by imagining the need to deal with discipline problems as a negative

student perspective associated with teaching. Interestingly, there was no mention of online cyber-stalking of teachers in the examined literature.

*6.2.3.3 Required personal traits*

The participants thought that to be suited to teaching, certain personal traits are required. Many students commented that they did not possess these traits and therefore would not ever consider teaching as a career. The most common traits that students discussed as necessary for teaching were patience and emotional mastery. Similarly, there was strong support in the literature for the perspective that people believe certain traits are required of teachers. An individual's self-concepts of his or her capacity in those areas consequently influenced the likelihood of that individual considering teaching as a viable career option (Berry et al., 1989; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Lai et al., 2005; Want et al., 2018). The qualities of patience and emotional self-regulation appeared in the literature as perspectives of the requirements for teachers (Butcher and Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006).

Students perceived that to be a teacher, you need to enjoy or be comfortable with exerting power and control over students. They thought that teachers are authoritarian rule enforcers who can induce fear and shame. Various students commented that they were not interested in controlling others in this manner and therefore the perspective of teachers as controllers discouraged them from considering teaching as a career. The themes of power-hunger, control, fear and shame were particularly evident when students were asked to explain the animal that first came to mind when considering teaching and teachers. The fact that the students failed to mention teachers inducing fear and shame when asked directly about the qualities of a teacher may suggest that students view teachers in this manner on a subconscious level. Of particular focus in the literature was the perceived positive teacher attributes required for teaching and how the absence or presence of these attributes in a person's understanding of self, impacted their desire to teach (Butcher & Lewis, 2001; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Want et al., 2018). There was little to no mention of the more negative personality attributes found in the teaching profession, such as power-hunger

and controlling. However, research surrounding the teacher's ability to engage in behaviour management presented the perspective that those who had a limited self-belief of their capacity to influence and exert power and control over students in the classroom, negatively viewed their ability to teach (Staton, 2016).

Students perceived teachers to be role models both inside and outside of the school environment. Some students felt intimidated by the high moral and behavioural expectations associated with being a role model and these expectations discouraged them from considering the profession. Some students disclosed that if they did not feel they could meet the standards required by the community they would be reluctant to consider a career in teaching. The literature emanating from the CEWA (2009) heavily emphasised the need for teachers in Catholic schools to role model a Christ-like presence to others, be witnesses to their faith and to assist with ensuring Gospel values permeate the school. Other authors reflected the idea that teachers are role models who must personally, actively and visibly showcase the standards of behaviour and attitudes that they expect of students (Bajunid, 2000; Bruner, 2002; Lortie, 1974; Lumpkin, 2008; White, 1994). Literature from Butcher and Lewis (2002), and Kane and Mallon (2006) reflected the negative impact of a misalignment between a person's self-belief in their role-modelling abilities and their likelihood for entering the teaching profession.

### 6.2.3.4 Pay and lifestyle

Whilst it has been previously noted that some students considered the pay associated with teaching to be an attractive feature of the profession, other students thought the reverse. This group of participants identified money as playing a part in the decision to follow a particular career path. They deemed low pay as a reason why teaching may get overlooked. Specifically, these participants thought that teachers are underpaid. They negatively perceived the fact that teachers work out-of-hours without overtime pay or time-in-lieu. The literature on the pay associated with teaching also reflects conflicting views. Teaching graduates are now among the highest paid graduates in the country, but the perspective that teaching is

low paid remains (Queensland Government, 2018). Many authors suggested that the remuneration in teaching is a factor that discourages people from considering it as a viable career option (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Page & Page 1984; Richardson & Watt, 2006). Students also identified the unappealing nature of the pay structure associated with a teaching career. They thought that having pay capped at a certain amount was demotivating and therefore negatively impacted their perspective of teaching as a career. Similarly, the relatively un-staged and capped nature of a teacher's pay, beyond years of service, was reflected in the literature as a point that discourages some people from entering the profession (AITSL, 2019; Commonwealth Parliament and Parliament House, 2013; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Page & Page 1984; Richardson & Watt, 2006). However, numerous authors also presented the notion that pay and extrinsic factors are not significant motivators for people to enter teaching and that generally people are drawn to the profession because of altruistic and intrinsic factors (Alexander et al., 1994; Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Brookhart & Freeman 1992; Hutchinson & Johnson, 1994; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Manual & Hughes, 2006; Scott et al., 2000; Spear et al., 2000; Young, 1995).

Students identified the lack of promotional opportunities and limited career progression as negative factors associated with a career in teaching. Specifically, they referred to the considerable effort that teachers increasingly put into their work, for no extra rewards in terms of pay, time-in-lieu and recognition. Students also spoke negatively about the limited number of promotional positions. These negative perspectives regarding the lack of upward mobility and inadequate recognition for expert teachers were also well-reflected across the literature as unattractive factors associated with a teaching career (Daniels, 2009; Ferrari, 2014; Hattie, 2015; Richardson & Watt, 2006).

Students spoke about the challenging nature of the lifestyle associated with teaching. They negatively referred to the high workload of teachers and the requirement to perform tasks outside of the school day. Students thought teaching as a career would impinge on family life. They cited working late into the night to mark assessments and prepare lessons

and the extra duties such as camps, communions, masses and extra-curricular activities as overly taxing. The literature confirmed that the heavy workload and the lack of boundaries between a teacher's work and family contexts and commitments, negatively influence people's perspectives of teaching (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Richardson & Watt, 2006).

*6.2.4 Perspectives of the status of teaching as a career*

Student perspectives on the status of teaching were gleaned from the five student focus group interviews and 470 online surveys. The spread of results in the online survey showed a variation in student perspectives towards the statement that 'teaching is a high status career'. This variation of opinion about the status of teaching is reflected in the literature (Ganzeboom & Treiman 1996; Hargreaves, 2009; Hoyle, 1995; 2001; 2008; Ingersoll & Perda 2008; Masters 2014; MORI 2005; 2007; OECD, 2005; 2018). Firstly, the quantitative results on the status of teaching from the online surveys will be discussed under five different perspectives. These perspectives include: gender; intention to teach; subject choice; predicted ATAR; ICSEA of school. Secondly, the qualitative results from the focus group interviews with be presented under three themes alongside the relevant literature. These themes include teaching is a medium to high status career; teaching is a low status career; teaching as a career has a stand-alone status.

*6.2.4.1 Gender and perspectives of the status of teaching*

There was significant gender difference in the perspective of the status of teaching. Females were more likely to agree that teaching is a high status career and less likely to disagree that teaching is a high status career. Males were less likely to agree that teaching is a high status career and more likely to disagree that teaching is a high status career. This disparity of opinions between the genders was also evident in the literature. Males were found to be discouraged more than females from teaching because of the perceived low status of the profession (Lai et al., 2005; Summer et al., 1998). Moreover, other authors suggested that males are more likely to be

influenced by the status of an occupation than females (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Hutchinson & Johnson, 1994; Lai et al., 2005).

*6.2.4.2 Intention to teach and perspectives of the status of teaching*

There were noteworthy differences in the perspectives of the status of teaching between those who would, may and would not consider teaching. Those students who indicated that they 'would consider' teaching were most likely to view teaching as a high status career, followed by the 'may consider' teaching group. Whereas those students who indicated that they 'would not consider' teaching, were least likely to view teaching as a high status career. These results are consistent with the literature, which suggested that people who would consider a teaching career were more likely to perceive the status of the profession favourably than those who would not consider teaching as a career (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Lai et al., 2005).

*6.2.4.3 Subject choice and perspectives of the status of teaching*

There were variations in the perspectives on the status of teaching between those students studying and not studying Mathematics Specialist (highest possible Mathematics course) and/or Physics courses. Students who were not completing Mathematics Specialist or Physics were more likely to view teaching as a high status career. Students who were studying Mathematics Specialist or Physics courses were less likely to view teaching as a high status career. A study by Lai et al., (2005) revealed that students predominantly from arts-related courses were more likely to be interested in teaching than their counterparts who were predominantly studying science or commerce courses. However, this study did not specifically examine the perspectives of these students in relation to the status of teaching.

*6.2.4.4 Predicted ATAR and perspectives of the status of teaching*

Students' perspectives towards the status of teaching varied according to their predicted ATAR score. The students with a predicted ATAR between 70-80 were the most likely to view teaching as a high status career. The results from the other ATAR bands did not suggest a clear pattern of perspectives based on ATAR results. Literature from various

authors suggested that more students with low university scores were interested in teaching than those with high university scores (Butcher and Lewis, 2002; Lai et al., 2005; Weldon, 2015). Numerous authors proposed that the teaching profession does not attract young people with high academic standards of achievement (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Lai et al., 2005; Masters, 2015; Watt & Richardson, 2007). However, none of these studies specifically examined student perspectives of the status of teaching in relation to their university scores.

*6.2.4.5 ICSEA of school and perspectives of the status of teaching*

There was variation in the perspective of students from schools with differing ICSEA scores towards the status of teaching. Students from the school with the lowest ICSEA were more likely to view teaching as a high status career. Students from the school with the highest ICSEA were less likely to view teaching as a high status career. The literature examined in this study somewhat reflected this trend. The Lai et al., study (2005) found that students from families with greater wealth were less likely to be interested in teaching. The study also discovered that the higher the education level of the family, the less likely students were to be interested in teaching. The current research, however, did not specifically examine the perspective of the status of teaching in relation to family income and education.

*6.2.4.6 Teaching is a medium to high status career*

There were a number of students who considered teaching to be a medium to high status career. Students commented that all other occupations depend on teachers to assist students to achieve the necessary requirements to enter the pathway for their chosen career. This point was raised by students as a reason why teaching has a relatively high status. The literature from Hargreaves (2009) supported the perspective that teachers provide foundational knowledge and enable students to enter occupations of their choice. However, the research of Hoyle (2001; 2008) did not suggest that teachers equipping students to enter all manner of career pathways translates into a positive perspective of the status of teaching in society. The view that teachers enable others to pursue their career goals has existed for

some time, with a resultant impact on the status of the profession. For example, Geer (1966) suggested that seeing the teacher as the intermediate enabler of students, between school and the real world, actually impacts negatively on the perspective of the status of teaching. Hoyle (2001) identified that teachers assist students to enter other occupations, but that the 'children' cliental they are helping, as opposed to individual adult cliental, is an image barrier to occupational prestige.

Students suggested that their perspective of the status of a teaching career to be relative to the level of difficulty of the content and the age of the students being taught. They considered the role of a high school teacher to have a higher status than that of a primary school teacher. Students thought that the mental ability required for high school teaching extends beyond that of primary teaching and therefore is afforded the perspective of a higher status. The literature from a number of authors reflected this sentiment of a positive correlation between the perspective of occupational prestige of teaching and the age of students (Hargreaves, 2009; Hoyle, 2001; Treiman, 1977). Moreover, the Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale revealed that pre-primary teaching is ranked below primary teaching and that primary teaching is ranked below secondary teaching in terms of prestige (Ganzeboom & Treimann 1996).

### 6.2.4.7 Teaching is a low status career

A number of students perceived teaching to be a low status career. Students frequently noted that the low ATAR requirement for university entrance into education reinforced their perspective that teaching is a low status career. They compared the ATAR requirement for teaching to the ATAR requirement for some of the higher-status professions and stated that in all cases, the higher-status careers positively correlated with a higher ATAR requirement for entrance into the relevant university courses. The literature from Masters (2015) mirrored the student perspectives that teaching can be seen as a low status career and that this perspective may be influenced by the low university requirements. In Australia, school leavers entering teaching comprise a greater number of students with lower academic achievement when compared to all other university courses

(Weldon, 2015). To address low entry requirements into teaching from a political level, the Australian Government introduced the Literacy and Numeracy Test in Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE). The LANTITE is a test which ensures that graduating teachers achieve within the top 30% of the adult population for personal literacy and numeracy (AITSL, 2015). The literature from a number of sources also confirmed that in countries where teaching is deemed to have high prestige, the university entrance is taken from the top-performing 30% of students (Masters, 2015; McKinsey and Company, 2007). Furthermore, various authors reinforced the point that professions with high status emphasise the importance of credentials, qualifications, post-university training and mentorship (Hoyle, 2008; Ingersoll & Perda, 2008; Malaty, 2004).

Students identified teaching to be a low status career because they did not consider teaching to be a specialised occupation. They believed that teaching is varied and not specialised like brain surgery or dentistry. Students suggested that a human biology specialist may be a doctor, as opposed to a human biology teacher. Students acknowledged that the specialised role of a doctor has a high status in the community, whereas the human biology teaching role is seen as having a low status. The literature from Hoyle (1995; 2001) reflected the perspective that teaching is not considered a specialist career due to the varied nature of the role and the multiple tasks teaching requires. Furthermore, he suggested that the teaching profession does not have the high status normally attributed to expert or specialist professions. Hoyle (2001) also noted that people in high status specialist roles normally work with adult clients, individually and on a needs-basis. He proposed (2001) that the nature of a teacher's role involves dealing with children en masse, in a routine and forced manner and that this negatively impacts the perspective of the status of teaching. Students commented that the idea of teaching as a back-up career was related to their perspective of teaching having a low status. The literature by Geer (1966) and Hoyle (2001) suggested that the perspective of teaching as 'those who can't do, teach' negatively impacts the prestige associated with the profession.

A number of students commented that their perspective of the low remuneration and structure of pay associated with teaching influenced their belief that teaching is a low status career. They explained their perspective that if an occupation has a high remuneration, it tends to be more difficult to obtain and therefore a higher status is attributed to the profession. The literature from various authors confirmed that the opportunity to gain a high income from work is characteristic of occupations with a high status (Hoyle, 2001; Ingvarson, 2010; Leigh, 2012). Numerous authors suggested that teaching is considered a relatively un-staged career with little potential for higher income or promotion based on job performance (Daniels, 2009; Ferrari, 2014; Hattie, 2015). Many studies have cited the pay associated with teaching as a negative factor (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Howes & Goodman-Delahuny, 2015; Page & Page 1984; Richardson & Watt, 2006). However, literature from the Queensland Government (2018), noted that Australian graduates from teaching degrees are among the highest paid in the country, above engineering, law, psychology and architecture.

Students perceived teaching to be a low status occupation because of the 'commonness' of the job in terms of the volume of teachers in society. Students explained that if something is common, it is generally perceived as having less value and hence a teaching job has a lower status. This point was reflected in the literature of Hoyle (2001), which suggested that the sheer number of teachers required in society has a limiting factor on the status of the profession. Hoyle also suggested that in the past, the large number of people required for teaching were more likely to come from a lower social class with a white-collar background. He proposed that the lower social class associated with the people choosing teaching limited the status of the profession.

The students acknowledged that their perspective of teaching being low status may be linked to their personal experiences with teachers in schools. They specifically referred to negative incidents in school and poor opinions of their teachers as reasons why they perceive teaching to be a low status career. The literature from Lai et al., (2005) mirrored the sentiments that students' negative images of teachers and the teaching profession are constructed socially in and through their daily interactions at school. This

point was not extended upon in the literature to suggest that negative or positive images of teachers, constructed socially in and through daily interactions, negatively or positively influence perspectives on the status of teaching as a career.

Students expressed their belief that the place of education in Australian society is not valued and that this is a factor that adds to their perspective of teaching being a low status career. The literature from a number of authors suggested that the poor presentation of teachers in the media negatively impacts the public perspective of teaching; however the authors do not address how this poor presentation in the media specifically impacts the perspective of the status of the profession (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; OECD, 2005; Symeonidis, 2015). Furthermore, Hoyle (2001) proposed that the general scrutiny of the profession by politicians, the top-down approaches to education review and reform and the defensive response by the teaching profession to the government interventions has perhaps negatively impacted the public perspective of the status of teaching.

*6.2.4.8 Teaching as a career has a stand-alone status*

Many students held the opinion that teaching as a career was exempt from the normal status-related judgements. Students asserted that teachers help form students for all other professions and are therefore, in a different category altogether. They also suggested that the social and soft skills required of teachers cannot be measured in the same manner as the specialised skills required for the traditional high status roles, such as lawyers and doctors. A large number of authors strongly supported the idea that teachers largely choose to enter the profession for altruistic and intrinsic motivations, and less so for extrinsic motivations such as status (Alexander et al., 1994; Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Brookhart & Freeman 1992; Hutchinson & Johnson, 1994; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Manual & Hughes, 2006; Scott et al., 2000; Spear et al., 2000; Young, 1995). However, the literature did not suggest that teaching is exempt from status-related judgements. The literature did not propose that the status of teaching should be considered or measured in any different manner to that of the other professions.

Students identified that teachers have a societal role to play and likened this role to that of a parent. They suggested that people do not think of status when considering teachers and referred to teaching as a vocation, an identity and a necessary societal role. Authors commonly suggested in their literature that teaching has long been considered a vocation and that teachers have a role to play in forming society (Buijs, 2005; Dinham & Scott, 2000; Johnston et al., 1999; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Lortie, 1975; OECD 2005; Scott et al., 2001; Serow et al., 1992). The literature from Buijs, (2005), uses the term vocation to refer to certain characteristics that draw people to teaching, such as a sense of an 'inner calling' or gift, originating from a higher power or something beyond oneself, that demands an intentional choice, requiring selflessness, devotion, fidelity and an assumed responsibility once accepted. However, the literature that was reviewed in this study did not suggest a relationship between viewing teaching as a vocation or societal role and the status of the profession. Furthermore, AITSL (2019) made it clear in a recent publication that teaching is to be considered a profession in Australia, and specifically stated that teaching is not to be considered as a vocation.

## 6.3 Factors that influenced Year 12 perspectives of teaching as a career

Students indicated that school-related experiences were one of the top influences upon their perspectives of teaching. These influences will be discussed separately in response to Research Question 3. This section of the discussion is divided into two areas. These areas are: student identified influences and career counsellors identified influences. These areas will now be discussed in light of the relevant literature.

### 6.3.1 Student identified influences

Three themes emerged across the data on student identified influences: conversations with parents and friends; university requirements and job remuneration; the media. The literature from various authors on factors that influence a person to be encouraged by or discouraged from teaching reflected these three themes (Berry et al., 1989; Butcher & Lewis 2002; Johnston et al., 1999; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kniveton, 2004; Kyriacou

& Coulthard, 2000; OECD, 2005). The themes will now be discussed in light of the relevant literature.

### 6.3.1.1 Conversations with parents and friends

Students acknowledged that their own perspectives of teaching as a career were likely influenced by their parents' opinions. Some students spoke about their parents persuading them to consider teaching as an inadequate career, given their high academic standing. Other students noted that their own parents were teachers and either discouraged them from considering teaching as a career or were pleased to recommend teaching. All students noted that parental opinions on the matter influenced their perspectives. The literature from many sources confirmed that parents play a significant role in influencing student perspectives about choosing teaching. However, a number of authors suggested that parents actively discourage students from teaching, and this fact was particularly true for those parents who were teachers themselves (Berry et al., 1989; Butcher & Lewis 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Lai et al., 2005; Page & Page 1984; Plibersek, 2019).

Students identified that when parents share their opinions of teachers and their actions and education, it influences their perspective of teaching in general. They suggested that when parents speak positively about their child's teachers and education, this transfers directly to student perspectives. Likewise, students commented that when their parents speak poorly of teachers and education it negatively influences their perspective of the profession. The literature from various authors suggested that people form images of teaching under the influence of others and that parents play a pivotal role in both positively and negatively influencing perspectives of teaching as a career (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Howes & Delahunty, 2015; Lai et al., 2005). Furthermore, research by Page and Page (1984) and Johnston et al., (1999) proposed that encouraging conversations with parents about teaching and teachers positively influences students' perspectives on entering the profession.

Students acknowledged that their friends' opinions influence their perspectives of teaching as a career. They mentioned that school friends understand each other and have first-hand experience of being in a class

room environment together. The students felt that this knowledge puts their friends in a good place to provide an opinion on whether teaching would be a good personality and career fit for them. The opinion and approval of friends was discussed in the literature as strong influences on an adolescent's career decision making process (Johnston et al., 1999; Kniveton, 2004; Page & Page, 1984).

*6.3.1.2 University requirements and job remuneration*

Students identified that the university ATAR requirement for teaching influences their perspective of teaching as a career. They suggested that if a course is harder to get into and they had the necessary results, then they would view that profession more favourably. Students acknowledged that because teaching is among the courses with the lowest ATAR requirement, this negatively influences their perspectives of a career in teaching. As noted previously, numerous authors reflected the perspective that teaching generally does not attract young people with high academic standards of achievement (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Lai et al., 2005; Watt & Richardson, 2007; Weldon 2015). The literature from a number of sources also confirmed that values and beliefs play key roles in the process of promoting or inhibiting career choices (Holland, 1997; Lent, Brown & Hackett 2002; Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). The literature by Holland, Powell & Fritzsche (1994) and Lent et al., (1994) suggested that a student's career choice is linked to self-perception and personal values and beliefs. The student aims for an alignment between this self-knowledge and required occupational knowledge. The students' self-perspectives and occupational beliefs can be influenced by university cut off requirements (Holland, 2001).

The participants in the study acknowledged that the pay associated with a career influences their perspectives of that career. Those students who mentioned that teaching provides a good income, generally thought positively about the profession. Those students who indicated that the pay associated with teaching was low, thought more negatively about the profession. This connection between high pay inducing a positive perspective of teaching and low pay inducing a more negative perspective of teaching was common among students. The literature from Ingersoll and Perda (2008)

also suggested that, generally, a higher wage is associated with professions of higher perceived status. Other authors also revealed that the idea of teaching providing low pay is linked to negative perspectives towards a career in teaching (Commonwealth Parliament and Parliament House, 2013; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Richardson & Watt, 2006).

### 6.3.1.3 The media

Students suggested that the media influence their perspectives of teaching as a career. They mostly referred to the negative images of teachers in television shows and specified that they believe these images influence perspectives. One student referred to the influence of positive images of teachers in movies and described how a particular film showed the potential that a teacher has to change students' lives for the better. A number of studies reflected the notion that teachers are portrayed negatively in the media and that this portrayal may have damaged the appeal of the profession (OECD, 2005; Symeonidis, 2015). Studies undertaken by Kane and Mallon (2006) and Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) confirmed that poor media images of teachers negatively impact student perspectives of teaching as a career. Furthermore, various authors suggested that the air-time given to educational reform and the publicity surrounding teacher improvement in the media may cause negative perspectives towards teaching as a career (Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; OECD, 2005).

### 6.3.2 Career counsellor identified influences

The data from the semi-structured interviews with the career counsellors identified five influences on student perspectives of teaching as a career. These influences are: parental expectations and aspirations; academic ability of the student; remuneration; media; community and teacher expectations. Literature from a number of authors also acknowledged the five career counsellors identified influences (Berry et al., 1989; Butcher & Lewis 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Lai et al., 2005; Page & Page 1984; Plibersek, 2019). These influences will now be discussed in light of relevant literature.

*6.3.2.1 Parental expectations and aspirations*

All career counsellors in the study suggested that parents influence student perspectives of teaching as a career by communicating to their children their expectations and aspirations for them. They suggested that parents who share their dreams for their child with their child, influence the students' perspective as to whether teaching will be an adequate and appropriate career. They also said that if the parent is employed in a high status role, they tend to influence their children to aim for one of the high status occupations and that this influences student perspectives. Career counsellors mainly referred to parents having a negative influence on student perspectives of teaching as a career. As stated previously, the majority of the reviewed literature confirmed that parents play a significant role in influencing student perspectives about teaching. This point is mainly presented by authors as parents influencing perspectives of teaching through active discouragement from choosing the profession (Berry et al., 1989; Butcher & Lewis 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Lai et al., 2005; Masters, 2015; Page & Page 1984; Plibersek, 2019; Watt & Richardson, 2007).

*6.3.2.2 Academic ability of the student*

Two career counsellors agreed that the academic standing or current academic ability of students influences the students' perspectives of teaching as a career. They suggested that in general, the more capable the student, the less likely he or she is to view teaching as a viable career. Instead, students will look at a career that requires a higher ATAR entrance for university. As previously indicated, a number of authors confirmed the perspective that teaching does not attract young people with high academic standards of achievement (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Lai et al., 2005; Masters, 2015; Watt & Richardson, 2007). The literature suggested that the ATAR score associated with teaching is a factor that induces negative perspectives about a career in teaching (Commonwealth Parliament and Parliament House, 2013; Daniels, 2009; Parliament of Australia, 2018).

*6.3.2.3 Remuneration*

Four of the career counsellors suggested that student perspectives of an occupation are influenced by the remuneration associated with the job. Counsellors identified that students frequently ask about money very early on in the counselling process. Three career counsellors acknowledged that males tend to be more focussed on remuneration and suggested that male students still hold on to the expectation that they are going to be the breadwinner for families. In four of the career counsellors' experiences, the remuneration associated with teaching negatively influences students' perspectives of the profession. The literature from various sources reflected the point that the remuneration of teaching negatively influences perspectives of a career in teaching (Commonwealth Parliament and Parliament House, 2013; Dolton, 2018; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Richardson & Watt, 2006). The literature from Butcher and Lewis (2002) and Summerhill et al (1998) specified that the pay associated with teaching was a major factor that influenced males' more so than females, in terms of their perspectives of teaching as a career.

*6.3.2.4 Media*

All of the career counsellors in the study identified the media as an influencer of student perspectives on careers. Specifically, they mentioned that popular television shows and various advertisements draw students' attention towards occupations in the police force and detective work, fashion and law. It was suggested that there is a lack of positive media promoting teaching and the absence of this media influence has a negative impact on the attractiveness of a career in teaching. The literature confirmed that the media's discourse helps to shape perspectives (Symeonidis, 2015). The lack of positive media on teaching was not specifically addressed in the literature, but the presence of negative media surrounding teaching and its negative impact on the perspective of the profession was well documented (Kane & Mallon, 2006; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; OECD, 2005; Symeonidis, 2015).

*6.3.2.5 Community and teacher expectations*

The career counsellors in every site mentioned that student perspectives of teaching are influenced by community expectations. It was suggested that high professional expectations from the community toward students' future career choices generally translated to the perspective of teaching as an inadequate choice. Minimal community expectations, in terms of preconceived notions about desired careers for the students, generally resulted in a lack of negative stigma associated with teaching as a career. The literature that was examined in this study presented the expectations of family, society, self and those people in close environments as influencers of student perspectives on careers (Bronfenbrenner, 1977;1999; The Peak Performance Centre, n.d.). Various authors confirmed that students are influenced by the expectations of their families and communities and generally attempt to meet these expectations (Berry et al., 1989; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Butcher & Lewis 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006).

All five career counsellors spoke about the direct and large influence teachers and their academic and career expectations for their students have upon student perspectives of teaching as a career. They suggested that the positive influence emanates from students enjoying the teacher's subject and learning experiences. At other times the positive influence comes directly from relationships and admiring a teacher who translates a passion and enthusiasm for teaching. They proposed that if the teacher promotes the profession and is happy in the job this happiness translates to students having positive perspectives of teaching. Likewise, one career counsellors mentioned teachers who communicate negative images of teaching can damage student perspectives on the viability of a teaching career. Students suggested that when a teacher communicates that a student should set a higher career goal than teaching, this expectation negatively impacts the student's perspective of a career in teaching.

Two career counsellors acknowledged that students absorb their surroundings and spend their days watching the teacher. This point was used by one career counsellors to explain the significance of the teacher in influencing student perspectives as to whether teaching would be an enjoyable and worthwhile future career. A number of authors mirrored the

sentiment that teachers play significant roles in influencing student perspectives of teaching as a career (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Lai et al., 2005; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). It was specifically noted in the literature that teachers who provide positive learning experiences and maintain fruitful relationships with students have a positive influence upon student perspectives of teaching as a career (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Page & Page, 1984). The literature identified that teachers commonly dissuade students from teaching, or rarely promote the profession, which negatively impacts student perspectives of teaching as a career (Kane & Mallon, 2006; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Symeonidis, 2015).

**6.4 The ways in which school experiences influenced Year 12 perspectives of teaching as a career.**

Students indicated that school-related experiences were one of the top influences upon their perspectives of teaching. The reviewed literature reflected the notion that student perspectives of teaching are influenced by experiences in school (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Howes & Delahunty, 2015; Lai et al., 2005). The results on school experiences that influenced student perspectives are divided into two areas, namely, student experiences of teachers and student experiences with other students. These areas will now be discussed in light of the relevant literature.

*6.4.1 Student experiences of teachers*

Students identified that their experiences with teachers have a significant impact on their perspectives of teaching as a career. Their responses indicated that they were influenced by both positive and negative experiences. Numerous authors reflected the sentiment that teachers can make a substantial impact on student perspectives of teaching (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Lai et al., 2005; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). Student experiences with teachers will be presented alongside the relevant literature under two categories. These categories are positive teacher experiences that influenced student perspectives of teaching as a

career and negative teacher experiences that influenced student perspectives of teaching as a career.

*6.4.1.1 Positive teacher experiences that influenced student perspectives of teaching as a career*

Students acknowledged that teachers who appear enthusiastic, passionate, helpful and happy, positively influence their perspectives of teaching as a career. The literature of a number of authors mirrored this point and suggested that students think more positively about teaching when they experience teachers who visibly enjoy and love their roles (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Page & Page, 1984). Students identified the positive influences of teachers who are good classroom practitioners, go above and beyond for their students and inspire deeper relationships. Students perceived engaging and motivating learning experiences to have a positive impact on their perspectives of teaching as a career. Various authors recognised that teachers who provide positive learning experiences are instrumental in influencing students to think positively about teaching (Butcher & Lewis 2002; Richardson & Watt, 2006). The Balyer and Özcan (2014) and Manuel and Hughes (2006) studies identified relationships with teachers as the dominant influence on student perspectives of teaching as a career.

Students proposed that teachers who see teaching as a part of their identity positively influenced their perspectives of teaching as a career. Specifically, students mentioned the positive impact of teachers who go beyond content delivery, link learning to life values and understand that as teachers, they are shaping lives, inspiring students and providing mentorship. The literature confirmed that many people become teachers because of their experience with a mentor or inspirational teacher (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Page & Page, 1984). The literature also confirmed that a large number of teachers see their work as vocational and part of their identity (Berliner 2011; Department of Education, 2010; Milliband, 2003). However, AITSL, a corporate body that provides national leadership for the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership in Australia, recently

produced literature that advocated for teaching to be viewed as a profession and stipulated that "teaching is not a vocation" (AITSL, 2019).

A few students identified that teachers who suggested teaching was a good career match for their personality positively impacted their perspective of teaching. This acknowledgement and affirmation from a respected teacher encouraged the student to consider teaching as a viable career. As stated previously, various authors confirmed the significant influence that teachers have over student perspectives of teaching as a career (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Lai et al., 2005; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Page & Page, 1984). The literature proposed that students thought more positively about becoming a teacher after someone suggested it to them as a good career fit. Moreover, teachers were named as the most dominant group of influencers when it comes to the positive impact of suggesting teaching as a career to a student (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Page & Page, 1984).

### 6.4.1.2 Negative teacher experiences that influenced student perspectives of teaching as a career

Students in all focus groups recognised that disengaged and angry teachers who are easily annoyed turn students off a career in teaching. Specifically, students thought that these teachers impacted their perspectives negatively because they assumed the unhappy demeanour was linked to their role as a teacher. Students also commented that they would be discouraged from teaching as a career because they would not like to work alongside disgruntled and negative colleagues. The literature confirmed one factor that discouraged students from entering teaching was teachers who complain and are unhappy and frustrated with their roles (Kane & Mallon, 2006; Symeonidis, 2015). The literature did not mention working alongside unhappy teachers as a factor that negatively impacts perspectives of teaching as a career.

Some students did mention that negative experiences of difficult teachers and bad teaching actually motivated them to consider teaching as a career. They suggested that they could return to school as a teacher in order to correct the situation and cultivate better learning experiences for students. Other students suggested that experiencing difficult teachers and bad

teaching is inevitable at some point in schooling and therefore does not impact their perspective of teaching as a career. The literature did not reflect these points. Instead, it proposed that negative experiences of teachers generally led to negative perspectives of teaching as a career (Berry et al., 1989; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006).

Students suggested that experiencing the extent a teacher's responsibility negatively impacted their perspective of teaching as a career. They referred to seeing the teacher taking ownership and blame for poorly behaved and under-achieving students. Answering to challenging parents and administration in relation to these points was viewed as experiences that negatively impact their perspective of teaching as a career. The literature reflected that poorly behaved students and challenging relationships with parents are factors that discourage people from the profession (Berry et al., 1989; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006). Lack of support from administration for discipline problems was identified in the literature as a factor that negatively impacts the perspective of teaching (Berry et al., 1989; Fetherston & Lummis, 2012; Richardson & Watt, 2006).

Students identified that experiencing teachers talk about having no autonomy negatively impacts their perspective of entering the profession. Students commented that some teachers indicate they would like to follow a particular learning direction but are unable to because of course demands, and that this lack of autonomy turns students off teaching. Various studies cited the perceived lack of teacher autonomy as a reason for students being discouraged from a career in teaching (Berry et al., 1898; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Kane & Mallon, 2006). Students recognised that teachers have to be objective and sometimes have to teach content and/or values that may conflict with their personal opinions. Students who experienced incidents like these suggested that such experiences negatively impacted their perspective of entering the profession. The literature referred to teachers having to espouse values that are not necessarily adhered to in the real world, but it did not comment on whether this positively or negatively impacted student perspectives of choosing teachers (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006). However, the literature did confirm that the high expectation for teachers to be role models does negatively impact some

student perspectives of teaching as an appropriate career (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Want, Schellings & Mommers, 2018). The literature did not specifically address the impact of a misalignment between a teachers' values and that of the values of their school or learning area. The literature did not mention how student perspectives of teaching changed when their teachers withheld personal self-expression in order to stay true to the intended student learning.

## 6.5 The interplay between Year 12 student perspectives, settings and influences

This section of the discussion will consider the interplay between student perspectives and the identified influences, in light of the literature on how perspectives are formed and Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development (1977; 1994). It was evident from the focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and the online surveys that the students at each of the five sites had similarities and differences in their range of perspectives about teaching as a career. Students generally identified similar people, environments and stimuli that influenced their perspectives. However, the impact of these influences on their resultant perspectives were, at times, notably different. Each site has a unique culture and context and the students within each of the sites come to understand schooling, teaching and teachers according to their experiences within that community.

The literature supported the notion that environmental stimuli and the associated responses are critical elements in the forming of perspectives (Cherry, 2016; Démuth, 2013; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002). The literature also reflected that perspectives are formed by the individual in response and reaction to their unique environmental stimuli, and are generally reliant upon previous experiences. The interactions with the environment and associated information are processed by the individual in one of two ways, through bottom-up processing or top-down processing (Cherry, 2016; Démuth, 2013; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002). Bottom-up processing typically occurs when the individual has had no experience of the environmental stimulus and therefore the senses direct perception. Top-down processing typically occurs

when the individual has had prior experience of the stimulus and therefore can organise the stimulus first and interpret the information after, cognition directs perception. The literature suggested that people make sense of the world through their perspectives. These perspectives then influence the individual's behaviour, choices and development as a human (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

All students in the study experienced their secondary schooling within a Catholic education environment, in partnership with their parents and their own school community and setting. The following section will discuss the interplay between these contexts, student perspectives and the influences on those perspectives in relation to each layer of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model for human development (Figure 3.2). Table 6.5 outlines the structure of this section. A summary matrix of the interplay between student perspectives, settings and influences is provided in Appendix L.

**Table 6.5**

*The interplay between Year 12 student perspectives, settings and influences*

| |
|---|
| 6.5.1  Individual influences |
| 6.5.2  Microsystem influences |
| 6.5.3  Mesosystem influences |
| 6.5.4  Exosystem influences |
| 6.5.5  Macrosystem influences |
| 6.5.6  Chronosystem influences |

*6.5.1 Individual influences*

Individual student perspectives of teaching as a career were multiple and varied and appeared to be influenced by the individual's experiences and beliefs. Many students spoke about their individual experiences with teachers and how these experiences influenced their perspective of a career in teaching. For example, the students in all focus groups spoke about the individual positive experiences they had with teachers and how this added to his or her perspective of a career in teaching. In three focus groups, students spoke about their individual negative experiences of, and with, teachers. However, a small number of these students stated that they believed the

experiences have not directly impacted their perspective of teaching as a career. Interestingly, three students said that their respective undesirable experiences made them think that they "could come back and do it better" and may now choose teaching because they know what it feels like to be that student at the bottom and to be mistreated or viewed in a negative manner. However, most of the individual students who recalled negative experiences of teachers indicated that these experiences influenced their perspective of teaching, making it a less desirable career. It was not clear why negative experiences of teachers negatively influenced some students' perspectives of teaching and operated as a motivational drive for others to join the profession. The literature suggested that the central force in the development of perspectives and the shaper, reactor and responder to environmental stimuli is the individual person (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). He stipulated that different experiences and contexts will be responded to in different ways by different individuals, based on factors, such as age, gender, health, size and other influences on the individual's life (Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

The individual perspectives of the status and pay associated with teaching were also quite varied. Both male and female students expressed the perspective that teaching is not a well-paid or high status profession. More individual male students than female students voiced this perception. Furthermore, a greater number of individual students in the higher socio-economic schools indicated that teaching would not be a good career because of the perceived lower pay and status. Two career counsellors suggested that gender roles in the home influence individual male perspectives, stating that some young men still expect to be the 'bread winners' in the family. One career counsellor said that some individuals come from families which are 'money centric'. However, both individual male and female students from the higher socio-economic schools also indicated that the pay and status associated with teaching was a positive influencer, whilst others noted that the pay and status was neither a positive or negative influencer. It was clear that at times the individual student interpreted factors and influences that they each experienced, in a unique manner. At other times the students appeared to interpret factors and influences they each experienced in a similar manner. Moreover, these unique interpretations led

to multiple and varied perspectives of teaching as a career, even when coming from similar schooling experiences. The literature consistently highlighted the central role of the individual (and his or her unique experiences) in the interpretation of information and the forming of perspectives. Bronfenbrenner maintained that the individual always develops within their context, but that each individual brings their unique conditions to the interactions with the influences on his or her development and forming of perspectives (1999). Lai et al., (2005) confirmed that an individual student's perspective of teachers and teaching, whether negative or positive, is constructed socially in his or her everyday life.

Individual student perspectives on the purpose of teaching and teachers and the advantages and disadvantages associated with working in the profession were many and varied. The themes arising on the student perspectives of teaching as a career and the influencers of these student perspectives have been discussed in sections 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 of this chapter. Throughout the study it became clear that individual student perspectives were influenced by similar people, environments and stimuli. However, the resultant response or reaction from each student and at times, groups of students, to the people, environment and stimuli were varied. This phenomenon is consistent with the literature, which supports the idea that individuals engage in information processing through a process of steps that first includes organising and identifying information. This information processing process concludes with the individual interpreting the information based on his or her experiences, consciously or sub-consciously, to arrive at his or her own individual perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Cherry, 2016; Démuth, 2013; Lent et al., 2002).

### 6.5.2 Microsystem influences

Microsystems are settings in which an individual is situationally placed on a regular basis. Features of a microsystem include the occurrence of a range of activities and interactions that directly involve the individual and others. These 'others' assume specific interpersonal roles and relations in the individual's life (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). The microsystems (contexts or settings) that lie closest to a student have the potential to greatly influence

the development of the student and his or her perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Parents and family expectations and their views and the school culture, view of education, career education program, and teachers are all examples of microsystemic contexts that influence a student. These microsystemic contexts will now be examined.

*6.5.2.1 Parents and family expectations and their views*

During the focus group interviews students spoke about their parents and family expectations and views on career selection. There were some markedly different views across the focus groups that appeared to have certain influences on student perspectives. For example, in two of the focus groups the majority of the students indicated that their family had little to no expectations about their career selection, beyond what the student was interested in pursuing. The majority of the students in these focus groups indicated that their parents did not attribute any positive or negative stigma to different occupational choices or the status of those occupations. A small number of students in these focus groups had a different perception. These students indicated that their parents had higher expectations than teaching for them, in terms of careers. In some cases, these students indicated that their parents' expectations were due to the student's current academic achievement and ability.

A greater number of students from the three higher socio-economic sites suggested that they believed their parents would expect them to select careers in fields such as engineering, politics, law, accountancy and medicine and that these perspectives influence their choices. A number of students added the caveat that their parents would support a career in teaching, if that was what the student strongly desired to pursue. At one site, a number of students stated that their parents were running their own business. These students typically noted that their parents would expect them to participate in the family business within the community and that this expectation influenced their perspective of careers. Having said this, one student asserted that if they told their parents they wanted to pursue a different career, their parents would support that choice too.

Students revealed that parents and family expectations and views influenced their perspectives on careers. This influence came in many forms. Some students reconsidered career interests based on parental views, other students put more attention in pursuing expected career fields. Some students were influenced by their parents to make a career choice based on their own individual student desires. The literature confirmed the notion alluded to above, in that students are influenced by the expectations of their parents and families and that they generally attempt to meet these expectations (Berry et al., 1989; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Butcher & Lewis 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006). Bronfenbrenner (1999) proposed that the closer the setting is to the individual, the greater the influence the setting has on his or her development and the forming of his or her perspectives.

*6.5.2.2 School culture and view of education*

The results from this study indicated that the culture of a school, for example in terms of student and teacher relationships, both positive and negative, has the potential to have a significant influence on student perspectives on teaching as a career. In one focus group the students appeared to revere their teachers. The majority of these students expressed their thoughts that teaching is a significant, noble and worthwhile profession upon which the future of society relies. There was one vocally dominant student in this focus group who asserted the negatives of the teaching profession in society, but these views did not appear to get any support from the other students. In another focus group the students appeared quite negative about their teachers, and this translated to lots of conversation surrounding teaching being an easy job with low significance, requiring little effort and intelligence. In this focus group there was also a verbally dominant student, who appeared to gain student support and agreement for her negative views. One student retaliated with positive remarks, but these remarks appeared to gain no traction with the other students and the conversation immediately returned to a more negative stance on teaching and teachers. At the conclusion of the focus groups it was evident from student responses and discussion whether the students in the group enjoyed and appreciated their teachers and school, generally did not enjoy and

appreciate their teachers and school, or whether a mixture of both views were present. The cultural differences between the schools variously impacted upon student perspectives. The literature supports the notion that the influence of positive experiences of school, subjects and teachers, are often considered precursors that attract people to the teaching profession (Robertson, Keith & Page, 1983). Research has also confirmed that an organisation's culture and cultural norms are inextricably linked to individual behaviours within that organisation (Mistry, et al., 2016; Velez-Agosto et al., 2017). Furthermore, it is evident from the literature that culture and cultural norms directly influence perspectives and therefore operationalise individuals on many levels (Mistry, Yoshikawa, Tseng, Tirrell, Kiang & Wang, 2016; Velez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Molina & Coll, 2017).The school, teachers and students within the school are considered part of a microsystem. The school, as a microsystem, is one of the closest systems in which the student is situated and therefore wields significant influence over student perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

### 6.5.2.3 Career education program

The career education program at each site was investigated as it was deemed likely to be a contextually relevant microsystem of influence on student perspectives of careers. These career education programs have been presented in Chapter 2 as part of each site's context. Each of the sites had their own methods for delivering career education. However, all sites linked the career education methods to their Year 10 subject selection and review processes for Years 11 and 12. Career education programs in most schools occurred intermittently in Year 10 (and some in Year 9) over short spaces of time. Two career counsellors indicated that they purposefully influence student perspectives by encouraging and discouraging students (and sometimes parents) on potential career pathways and subject selections during counselling. Two other career counsellors suggested that they were careful not to encourage or discourage students in a particular manner during counselling, instead focusing on providing experiences for students to engage in self-discovery, reflection, goal setting and decision making. The final career counsellors indicated that encouragement or

discouragement would depend upon the situation. Generally, the students from the sites that were encouraged or discouraged to some degree, appeared more confident when discussing possible career selections. The two sites that stipulated they purposefully do not influence student perspectives appeared to have a greater number of students indicating that they had not yet decided on a career path. Having said this, no student in any focus group specifically indicated that the career education program influenced their perspectives of careers. A number of students did point out that professionals from industries such as science, business and engineering tend to present university offerings at the school, but that no such promotion exists for education. Such presentations from industry professionals were named by the career counsellors as part of the career education program. None of the career counsellors in this study indicated that representatives from the education sectors presented at their career events.

The career education program and counselling in each school was intermittent in nature. The literature reviewed supported the phenomenon that no student in the focus group identified these experiences as being significant influencers on their career perspectives. To be classified as a microsystem and hence to have a significant influence on an individual's development and the forming of their perspectives, usually the individual must have frequent, face-to-face interactions with that setting over an extended period of time (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). It was evident from the literature that career education should occur over an extended period of time and in three stages; self-development, career exploration followed by career management (Victoria State Government, Education and Training, 2012). Helping students to understand their own personality, the impact of environmental factors upon their perspectives and opportunity are keys to assisting students in making informed career plans (Splaver, 2000). Holland (1997) posited that students might be unable and/or unwilling to translate their occupational desires into goals and their goals into actions if they perceive insurmountable barriers to career entry or success. Lent and Brown (1994) proposed that it is fundamentally important for career counsellors within schools to not only focus on career choice and expanding students' occupational options but also on assisting them to carefully consider potential

barriers to their career success. Lent et al., (2002) suggested that many students do not follow their interests into a career due to a lack of support from important figures or issues relating to perceived limitations. Furthermore, it is assumed that the decision making of these persons is controlled by experiences such as educational and academic restrictions over level of interest. Janis and Mann (1977) proposed that career fit is reliant upon the person having a true and accurate perception of self and of the occupation of interest. Both a review of the literature and the current study results suggest that for career education to be an effective tool for helping students to plan for their futures, the career education experiences have to be ongoing, relational and involve a mix of activities that include self-reflection, career research, counselling and goal setting.

*6.5.2.4 Teachers*

Students in each focus group identified teachers as having a significant influence on their perspectives of teaching as a career. Teachers are a central part of the microsystem that is a school. Numerous Year 12 students spoke about the role of the teacher in terms of being an influencer and inspirer of hope. This theme arose more frequently in one particular focus group interview, where participants also identified that, as the senior Year 12 students, teachers also operated as 'friends' and support people. These students thought that "teachers influence kids to be their best" and "they influence the future generation, so they need to know how the world works." During the focus group interviews several students spoke about various teachers who consistently advocate for professions in the subject area in which they teach. There was agreement that teachers influence students' career decisions when they are "passionate about their subject and actively encourage students to explore possible professions in that area of expertise". Students provided examples such as business teachers promoting an accounting career and mathematics teachers promoting an engineering career. However, some students commented that they thought many teachers are at times "lazy, in it for the holidays and the pay check" and are "not passionate about helping the students to progress".

Unsurprisingly, these students articulated that they perceived teaching to be an undesirable career.

The literature reviewed supported the notion that teachers within a school are considered a significant part of a microsystem. Bronfenbrenner suggested that a microsystem is the closest of systems in which the student is situated and, therefore, wields significant influence over student perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Research has found that of all groups of individual influencers, teachers ranked as the most dominant force in student perspectives of teachers and teaching as a career (Balyer & Özcan, 2014). Acknowledgement and affirmation from a respected teacher encourages the students to consider viable career (Berry et al., 1989; Kane & Mallon, 2006). Palmer (1990) proposed that whilst the relationship between teachers and students is vitally important for positive perspectives to form, it is the 'capricious chemistry' between the student, subject and the teaching practices that creates the value. A number of researchers have found that teachers are often a source of negativity, and at times this discourages students from considering a pathway into education (Berry et al., 1989; Butcher & Lewis 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Lai et al., 2005; Page & Page 1984; Plibersek, 2019).

*6.5.3 Mesosystem influences*

The interactions and relationships between the contexts in which a student is situated have an influence on his or her perspectives. Bronfenbrenner (1999) named the interrelations between two or more microsystems, a mesosystem. It was evident from this study that the interactions between the two microsystems of school and home, played a part in shaping student perspectives of teaching as a career. One example of the impact of the school-home mesosystem connection was when a student identified the school as being 'prestigious' and the teachers as being insistent on students doing well academically. He also indicated that his parents have high expectations for his career. The student suggested that these ideas from home and school both influenced the student to aim for a higher-status career than teaching. This interrelation between the microsystems of home and school has the power to influence students, particularly when the

message of influence is the same. Another example of the impact of the school and home mesosystem can be shown by the student who noted that her parents expected her to join the family business. Her experiences in school however, made her question this expectation. The student said that she had spoken to her parents at home and gained support for moving away to university. The school conversations impacted the family views and the acceptance of these views by the family increased the new perspective of the student towards a career requiring a university degree. Bronfenbrenner (1999) explained that situations and interactions in one microsystem impact the other microsystems and therefore the mesosystem created by both contexts influence the individual's perspectives.

A second example of a mesosystem that arose as an influence in the study involved the peer and home microsystems. Students spoke of the influence these settings had upon them. Again, when the suggested message or experience in both microsystems was strong and roughly aligned with the student's thinking, the mesosystem's influence upon the student perspectives appeared greater. However, the influence from one microsystem also impacted the other microsystem. For example, one student indicated that her parents would be happy for her to choose teaching as a career but that her friends found the idea to be ridiculous. The student's friends explained to the girl that they thought her personality lacked patience and therefore they could not see her in a teaching capacity. When the student shared the friends' views at home, it triggered a conversation with her mother about the members of their family who were teachers, and the personality traits they each have versus their ability to be a good teacher. The mother and daughter then discussed the student's own personality. In this example the student indicated that she felt her friends were correct and that she did lack the patience that she perceived to be necessary for a successful career in teaching. Therefore, the conversations that happen in one microsystem impact the conversations that happen in another microsystem and hence influence student perspectives. The notion that interactions in one area of a student's life directly influence other areas and his or her perspectives is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's literature on human development (1999). Furthermore, literature from Lent et al., (2002),

concluded that the idea that students need to be supported in their career views and interests and that a lack of support may cause students to bypass their interests, in favour of more culturally acceptable considerations.

In the present study, the microsystems in a student's life, such as home and school, and home and peers, appeared to work together as a mesosystemic influence on the development of the student's perspectives. What was evident from the study was when the views about teaching as a career were similar across microsystems, the student appeared more likely to be influenced towards a similar view. When the views about teaching as a career were contrasting across microsystems, generally the student either favoured one view or discussed both views with one or more members of each microsystem to arrive at their own conclusion. This study did not reveal the impact of those within the mesosystems deliberately not vocalising or sharing their views on teaching as a career, or the suitability of the student to teaching as a career.

### 6.5.4 Exosystem influences

An exosystemic context is one in which the individual has no direct participation or face-to-face activity. The mass media, as a context, fits into the exosystem category. The various forms of mass media generally sit outside of the individual's setting and have no interaction with the individual. Rather, the interaction is a one-way broadcasting of information. Students in this study noted that the media influenced their perspectives of teaching as a career. Students spoke about the influence of university advertisements, the positive influence of inspiring teaching movies and the negative influences of news programs about education and the adverse portrayal of teachers and the teaching profession in the wider media. Bronfenbrenner (1999) confirmed that exosystems impact student perspectives, despite the fact that the person has no direct or physical contact with the context. He stated that the individual's perspectives are influenced indirectly by a ripple-like effect. Furthermore, Symeonidis (2015) stated that the media, for example advertisements, actually shapes the perspectives of viewers and has the power to encourage or discourage particular views, depending on the lens the media utilises to portray and deliver information.

The alumni of a school can be considered an exosystem of influence in a student's life. Students in one school spoke about their knowledge of the career accomplishments of former students. They noted that these successful alumni set a certain expectation for current students to follow in similar footsteps. The students indicated that stories of alumni who had been successful in their fields made the school seem more prestigious and influenced their perspective to strive for a high status career. Literature from Bronfenbrenner (1999) and Lent et al., (2002) concurred that student perspectives are indeed influenced by factors such as environmental expectation, and that students generally attempt to meet these expectations.

### 6.5.5 Macrosystem influences

A macrosystem is situationally the most distant context from an individual and creates 'blueprints' for systems to operate. Generally, a macrosystem will have an overarching belief system or ideology that attempts to influence and program individual perspectives and behaviours. Examples of the macrosystemic contexts that are likely to have influenced Year 12 student perspectives of careers, are the Catholic nature of the School, Catholic Education of Western Australia Ltd, the Australian Blueprint for Career Education, the regulatory and governing bodies for education in Australia and Western Australia, such as the School Curriculum and Standards Authority and the Tertiary Institutions. The students in this study were not directly asked about the influence of these macrosystems on their perspective of teaching and students did not specifically mention any of these bodies as influencers of their perspectives. Students did speak about the impact and influence of the ATAR and course pre-requisites set by tertiary institutions. The fact that the students failed to identify various macrosystems as having influenced their perspectives could be explained by Bronfenbrenner (1994). He suggested that the policies, processes, structures and activities of a macrosystem do influence individual perspectives and behaviours, but at times beneath the awareness of the individual.

CEWA is an example of a macrosystem that students are situated within. All of the students were completing their schooling within the Catholic system; therefore, their experiences and perspectives were from a Year 12

Catholic school student perspective. The Year 12 students in one of the focus group interviews did specifically refer to teaching as a career within the Catholic system. She said, "when you work in a Catholic school you have to do a lot of extra things on top of classroom teaching, like attend out of hours sacraments, masses and retreats with students". Students in all five of the focus group interviews spoke about their perspective that teachers must engage in extra-curricular activities such as camps, sports, outings and trips. Only one student identified this requirement as being related to teaching within the Catholic system as opposed to Education Department or Independent schools. There was a mix of opinions as to whether the need to engage in extra curricula activities was something that would encourage or discourage students from teaching. Only one student showed knowledge of, or specifically mentioned the differences in expectation for teachers in the Catholic system versus the Department of Education or Independent systems. It appeared as though the students' perspectives of teaching as a career were based upon the assumption that their school experiences are similar to students' experiences in other schools and systems. Research confirmed that teachers within the Catholic education system are required to participate in extra curricula activities. It is recognised that in Catholic schools in Western Australia "much of the life and culture of the school is derived from school activities involving teachers and students conducted outside regular classroom contact" (The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Perth Teacher's Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, 2015). Catholic schools and Catholic school teachers are called to espouse Christian Gospel values beyond the classroom walls. These values are said to underpin and permeate every facet of school culture (CEWA, 2019). It is well-documented in the literature that cultural norms influence people on many levels and that macrosystems have the power to program individual perspectives and behaviour through these cultural norms, belief systems or ideologies, consciously or sub-consciously (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Mistry, et al., 2016; Velez-Agosto et al., 2017). Therefore, the students in the study are likely to have been influenced by these macrosystems, regardless of whether they are aware or that influence or not.

Catholic education as a macrosystem offers the community of students, staff and parents an overarching belief system. This belief system was not identified by students as influential on their perspectives of teaching as a career. The students that acknowledged the faith life of the school did so in the context of religious education teaching. Students in two focus groups indicated that they would find it difficult to teach content within the classroom "that may be counter to their own beliefs", such as religious education. Students did not speak about the school or teaching in relation to being a part of the Church; however, students were not directly asked to speak specifically about Catholic-school teaching. The literature proposed that Catholic schools are indeed ecclesial communities that play an integral part in the Church's mission of salvation. Catholic schools are therefore called to serve as institutions that evangelise and educate students and their families, within a Catholic framework (Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015). It is evident from the literature that teachers involved in Catholic schools are called to adhere to a manner of life, in word and deed, that is consistent with Catholic beliefs and teachings (The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Perth Teacher's Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, 2015). Students are likely to have experienced many people, not just their schoolteachers, who adhere to a Catholic manner of life. These people may or may not be Catholic. Therefore, it is probable that students see little difference between a morally good human and a Catholic teacher adhering to a Catholic manner of life. If this were the case, it is understandable that the students did not identify their teachers' witnessing of the Catholic faith as influencing their perspectives of teaching as a career.

The overarching purposes of Catholic education in Western Australia are set by CEWA, the macrosystem. CEWA explicitly states that one of the purposes of Catholic education is to provide a "nurturing and safe community" where children and their families experience a "sense of belonging and connectedness" (CEWA, 2019). This purpose is operationalised at a school level in and through the organisational culture. A common theme that arose from the online surveys and focus group interviews was that students thought teaching as a career would offer an opportunity to "form many positive relationships" and be a "connected

member of a community." Students in every focus group interview referenced assisting students to grow and develop and helping students to prepare for a good life as tasks of the teacher. The student responses are consistent with the literature on Catholic schooling, which recognises the importance of community in education and teaching, and actively promotes and engages the partnership between teachers, parents, students and peers. CEWA specified that Catholic schools must intentionally direct educational programs towards the growth of the whole person. (Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015). The students in this study did not link their expectations that teaching as a career would offer positive relationships and a community connection to the fact that their own schooling experiences were Catholic. As stipulated earlier, it is possible that students are unaware of the impact of Catholic schooling and CEWA upon their own teacher-student relationships, sense of community and perspectives of teaching as a career (Bronfenbernner, 1999).

The macrosystem of CECWA, the governing body of CEWA, calls Catholic school teachers to be Christian witnesses by offering a "Christ-like presence to others" (p. 21). Teachers are asked to act in a manner that allows students to feel loved (Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015, 2009). Students in every focus group mentioned the caring relationships they have experienced with their teachers as positive influences upon their perspectives of teaching as a career. Students in two focus group interviews spoke in depth about the quality of their relationships with teachers, suggesting that "I have very good relationships with all my teachers, I can rely on them inside and outside of school" and "the relationships we've built with our teachers are so fulfilling." One student said that one of her teachers "had such a big impact on me, she brought up my confidence so much, I will never forget it." The literature on Catholic education reveals that it is the intention of the Catholic system to provide students with loving relationships. However, students did not identify the Catholic nature of the school as a reason for, or significant in, the positive and caring teacher-student relations.

This study does not suggest that results are confined to Catholic schools, Catholic school students and teachers. However, the students in

this study are all from Catholic secondary schools and have therefore been influenced, to some degree, by the Catholic system of education. The literature concurred that the direct or indirect interactions between the individual and all of the systems within his or her lifetime influence human development and hence behaviour and perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Furthermore, the literature suggested that the trademark of a macrosystem (e.g. a school system) is an overarching belief system or ideology that influences and programs individual behaviour, perspectives and impacts the functioning and processes of other systems, such as families (microsystem) and schools together with families (mesosystem) (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

*6.5.6 Chronosystem influences*

A chronosystem is the system of influence that occurs over time due to historical transformations, or constants within an individual's life (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The characteristics of settings and individuals change, or remain constant over time. The constant characteristics and the changing characteristics both influence the individual's growth, behaviours and perspectives. Bronfenbrenner (1994) suggested that time and space are the most important elements in an individual's lifespan because all interactions in every system occur on a measurable chronological scale. Students identified two examples of chronosystems that impacted their perspectives of teaching. The expanding and changing nature of the role of a teacher over time was mentioned by students as negatively impacting their perspective of a career in teaching. Students proposed that the increasing access to digital technologies and devices within the classroom impacted their perspective of teaching over time.

Students spend a significant part of their life in school interacting with teachers. A number of students thought that the duties of a teacher have been increasing over their schooling years. Increasing compliance related to administration and curriculum was named by students as having expanded over the years. They suggested that this fact made teaching as a career seem less desirable. The changing nature of a teacher's role is an example of a historical transformation within society and therefore fits Bronfenbrenner's definition of a chronosystem (1994). This transformation

has played a part in shaping student views of teaching as a career. Students also spoke about how the increase in access to technology has changed teaching over time. Students had mixed opinions on the influence of the technological advancements upon their perspective of teaching as a career. The decreasing privacy of teachers, especially with the advent of social media, the lack of control over what students are accessing with their devices during class, the increasing access to teachers outside of school hours as well as student access to subject experts online were all mentioned as making teaching as a career appear less attractive. There is little doubt that technology has changed society over time. These changes have been reflected in schools and therefore the 'technological revolution' is an example of a chronosystem setting that impacts student perspectives of teaching. The chronosystems of the changing role of the teacher and technological advancement are consistent characteristics in Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development (1999). He concluded that the direct and indirect interactions over an individual's lifespan significantly impact that individual's behaviour and perspectives.

It was expected that the career education programs within the schools over the years would have impacted student perspectives of various careers. The programs that were embedded varied in length from six months to three years. The students did not specifically mention the career education programs within their schools as having impacted their perspectives over time. Bronfenbrenner (1994) suggested that limited exposure to information, experiences and interactions generally results in minimal influence (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Research by Patton and McMahon (2001) proposed that the goal of ongoing career counselling is to assist students to identify, own and manage their personal career choices. Regular, ongoing and student-directed counselling was not named as a feature of the career education program by any of the career counsellors in this study. The lack in regularity of career-related interactions within the schools' career education programs may explain why students failed to name the career counsellors or the career education program as influencers of their perspectives of teaching as a career (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This explanation for why students did not specify the career education program and counsellor as influencers is

supported by Bronfenbrenner's work on how chronosystems impact human development over time (1999).

Bronfenbrenner considers time to be the most important element in his ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Time is of paramount importance because the occurrences in various settings happen at particular points in history. The historical transformations and constants within society at that time, interact with all the settings in an individual's life space. Therefore, the chronosystems in a student's life impact his or her development and influence and shape his or her perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

## 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided an analytical discussion of the results from chapter five. The relevant literature was utilised to interpret the data. The results from the study were discussed alongside the literature in four sections. The first three sections specifically discussed the results from the three research questions of the study. The final section explored the interplay between the student perspectives, settings and influences utilising Bronfenbrenner's model ecological model of human development as a structure (1999). The chapter provides the foundation for the final chapter of the study, the review and conclusions.

## Chapter Seven: Review and Conclusions

### 7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore the perspectives of Year 12 students from five Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia towards teaching as a career. Specifically, the research reviewed the ways in which Year 12 students perceive teaching as a career, why they perceive teaching in this way, why they might or might not select it as a career and the impact that their school experiences have had on their perspectives of teaching as a career. Foundational to this research is the belief that student perspectives surrounding careers lead to decisions that manifest in university course preferences and that those perspectives can be influenced (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1999; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Cherry 2016; Démuth, 2013, Hoyle, 2001; Kane & Mallon 2006; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002).

### 7.2 Design of the research

The theoretical framework underpinning this research was predominantly qualitative in nature. Quantitative survey question results were utilised to support qualitative results. Specifically, the research was based on a constructivist epistemology, with an interpretivist theoretical perspective using a symbolic interactionist lens. The symbolic interactionist lens was appropriate for this study because it emphasised the importance of the interactions between individuals, groups and communities in the process of constructing and attributing meaning to conversations and events and to the forming of perspectives (O'Donoghue, 2007). The methodology employed was an instrumental case study, which aimed to elicit the perspectives of Year 12 students from five Catholic secondary schools towards teaching as a career. These sites included two single-gender schools, one male and one female, and three co-educational schools; one country school and four metropolitan schools with varying ICSEA scores, as presented in Chapter Two. The data were gathered from structured online surveys and focus group interviews with Year 12 students, semi-structured interviews with each school's career counsellor and researcher field notes. Three research

questions were explored to investigate the perspectives of Year 12 students towards teaching as a career. The three specific research questions were:

1. What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career
2. What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?
3. In what ways have school experiences of Year 12 students impacted their perspective of teaching as a career?

The Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) interactive model for data management and analysis was utilised to sort, reduce, examine, draw conclusions and verify the conclusions on the data. The three components of this model consist of data reduction, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). An overview of chapter seven is presented in Table 7.1.

**Table 7.1**

*Overview of chapter seven: Review and conclusions*

| |
|---|
| 7.3   Research questions answered<br>    7.3.1  What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?<br>    7.3.2  What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?<br>    7.3.3  In what ways have school experiences of Year 12 students impacted their perspective of teaching as a career? |
| 7.4   Research conclusions |
| 7.5   Framework: Domains of influence on Year 12 perspectives of teaching as a career |
| 7.6   Knowledge added to the field of study |
| 7.7   Implications for the teaching profession |
| 7.8   Recommendations for the profession |
| 7.9   Further research |
| 7.10   Benefits and limitations of the research |
| 7.11   Conclusion |
| 7.12   Addendum |
| 7.13   Personal impact statement |

## 7.3 Research questions answered

*7.3.1 What are Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?*

The results from the research suggest that Year 12 students from Catholic schools hold a variety of perspectives towards teaching as a career. Four themes emerged from the data, namely, perspectives on the purpose of teaching; positive perspectives of teaching as a career; negative perspectives of teaching as a career; and perspectives of the status of the teaching profession.

*7.3.1.1 The purpose of teaching*

The depth of the student focus group discussions around the purpose of teaching varied. Some students displayed a deep philosophical, societal and big-picture level of insight on the purpose of teaching. It was common for these students to explore the notion that the purpose of teaching is to shape the future of society and develop well-rounded citizens. Students mentioned that teachers help their students to plan their futures and think about solving current and future world problems. They discussed teachers needing to enrich the whole child, assist with his or her development and enhance wellbeing. Those students who discussed the purpose of teaching more broadly, thought that the ultimate purpose of teaching revolves around developing and improving individuals and communities and advancing societies. Other students focussed on the more immediate and surface-level purpose of teaching and spoke about interactions between the teacher, lesson content and students in the classroom. It was common for these students to discuss teaching as an avenue to pass on knowledge to younger generations and work in a subject area about which they were passionate.

*7.3.1.2 Positive perspectives of teaching as a career*

Students expressed various positive perspectives about teaching as a career. They readily identified job satisfaction, potential for impact in the world, holidays, lifestyle and the social nature of teaching as the positive perspectives associated with the profession. When students explored their perspective that teaching as a career provides a sense of satisfaction, they touched on topics such as the feelings of fulfilment that accompany helping others to grow and the joy of being able to work in an area of passion and subject interest. They thought that the exposure to multiple interactions and differing opinions of students, staff and parents would be sources of satisfaction. Students perceived that teachers would need to commit to lifelong learning and that this commitment to an ongoing growth process would provide teachers with self-satisfaction and self-actualisation.

Students believed that teaching as a career offered people the potential to have an impact. They identified the ability to shape, guide and motivate children as positive perspectives of teaching. They believed that

being part of a student's life provides teachers with a substantial degree of influence and impact. They positively perceived this influence, and suggested that teachers encourage students to improve themselves, and this ultimately translates to their capacity to make a positive contribution to society. Students referred positively to teachers as potential change agents and acknowledged that teachers have the unique opportunity to influence people to live better lives. These points led the students to positive perspectives of teaching as a career.

Students spoke positively about the holidays and lifestyle associated with a teaching role. They thought that teachers could travel the world and pursue other interests during the extended holiday periods, and that these are positive perspectives of a teaching career. Students imagined that the lifestyle of a teacher allowed for free travel, both world-wide and domestic, through attendance at camps and excursions. They also perceived the variation in daily activities as a positive aspect of a teacher's lifestyle. The stability of a teaching job was discussed in terms of transferability and job security, which students thought were positive and dependable aspects of teaching.

Students perceived teaching to be social in nature. They spoke encouragingly about the numerous and varying relationships that a teacher maintains and engages in. Students thought that maintaining these relationships and being a part of a strong community are points that reflect positively upon their perspective of teaching. The number and types of activities, and the subsequent interactions available to a teacher were also raised as attractive perspectives of teaching as a career. The positive perspectives of teaching as a career, besides holidays and lifestyle, tended to cover the altruistic offerings of the profession.

*7.3.1.3 Negative perspectives of teaching as a career*

Students also voiced negative perspectives towards teaching as a career. Discussion of these negative perspectives mainly surrounded the nature of the job, student behaviour, the perceived personal traits required of teachers, pay and lifestyle. Students perceived teaching could be a monotonous and repetitive job. They spoke negatively about the undesirable

and routine nature of operating under a timetable and administering a set curriculum to a class. Students did not like the idea of leaving school to study and experience the 'real world', only to return to school to be employed. They thought that teachers are structured information providers, whose job entails teaching content related to a subject or career, rather that actively working in that subject or career. They mentioned that the Internet allows students to access more qualified experts online and that this point makes teaching less specialised and less desirable as a career. Additionally, students mentioned that the lesson preparation, marking and busy nature of a teaching role are unattractive aspects of a teacher's duties.

Dealing with challenging students and managing student behaviours were commonly discussed as unattractive aspects of a teaching career. Students frequently spoke about their experiences of disrespectful behaviours of fellow students towards teachers in the classroom, online and in the school yard. They stipulated that the thoughts of tolerating, managing and dealing with disrespectful student behaviour creates negative perspectives of a career in teaching. Students noted that they would not want to deal with students on a daily basis who do not want to learn, and that this reality makes them perceive teaching less favourably. In a similar manner, students also identified that they perceived teachers required certain personality traits in order to be successful at behaviour management and teaching. They commonly noted patience, the need for control and emotional regulation as necessary teacher traits and suggested that these qualities allow teachers to effectively deal with challenging student behaviours and parental demands. Some students perceived a misalignment between these traits and their own personality traits, which led to a negative perspective of teaching as a career.

A number of students vocalised negativity about the capped financial structure and remuneration level associated with teaching. They also suggested that the long hours, effort, and dedication required of teachers does not result in an adequate monetary reward. Students said that a teaching lifestyle consisting of after-hours, time away from family, marking and preparing lessons takes considerable effort without additional compensation through overtime pay or time off in lieu. Furthermore, students

mentioned that as the pay is capped, there is little opportunity for earning additional money. Students also mentioned that they considered teaching lacked opportunity for upward mobility, promotion and career progression and these factors generate negative perspectives of the profession.

*7.3.1.4 Perspectives of the status of the teaching profession*

Students revealed diverse, and sometimes contradictory perspectives of the status of teaching. These perspectives ranged widely from low to medium to high status. Moreover, in some cases students perceived teaching to transcend status judgements altogether. They suggested that teaching is a stand-alone profession with a societal identity as a role model or caretaker. Female participants were more likely than males to consider teaching as a higher status career. When students indicated an intention to select teaching as a career, they were more likely to attribute a higher status to teaching than those who indicated that they have no intention of selecting teaching as a career. Students who studied the higher-level Mathematics and Physics courses were more likely to consider teaching to be of a lower status than those not studying these courses. The school with the lowest ICSEA had the highest percentage of students agreeing with the statement 'teaching is a high status career'. Conversely, the school with the highest ICSEA had the lowest percentage of students agreeing with the statement 'teaching is a high status career'.

The students who perceived teaching to be a medium to high status career attributed this judgement to the fact that teachers help their students to undertake all other high status professions. This point led them to think that teachers have a medium to high status. Students also identified that the age group of students being taught is directly proportional to the perceived status of the profession. For example, students indicated that they perceive primary school teaching to have a lower-status and high school teaching to have a higher-status. Students who attributed a low status to the teaching profession noted the low ATAR requirement for university entrance to education, low pay, large number of teachers in the workforce and their own personal experiences with incompetent teachers.

Interestingly, a number of students perceived teaching to be exempt from social status judgements. They articulated their perspective that teachers hold a place or identity in society, similar to that of a mother or priest. Moreover, they suggested that teachers play a role in the formation of all other professions. Students noted that teachers are more likely to be judged on social skills, relational qualities and their ability to help students meet these future academic professional goals, rather than wealth and social status. For these reasons, a number of students perceived teachers to stand alone, exempt from professional status judgements.

### 7.3.2 What are the factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career?

The factors that influenced Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career were considered under two broad headings: student identified influences and career counsellor identified influences. Students repeatedly identified school-related experiences as the greatest influence upon their perspective of teaching. Students commonly cited conversations with parents and friends, university requirements, remuneration and the media as common influences on their perspectives of teaching as a career. Career counsellors frequently named parental expectations and aspirations, the academic ability of the student, remuneration, media and community and teacher expectations as the top influences on student perspectives of teaching as a career.

### 7.3.2.1 Student identified influences

Students spoke about the influence that parents and friends have had over their perspective of teaching as a career. When considering parental influence, students mentioned that parents frequently push their children towards the careers with the highest possible entry requirements and remuneration. Many students, notably those who were high achievers or had parents as teachers, reflected that their parents encouraged them to aim for occupations with a higher status, such as medicine, law and engineering. Such encouragement caused them to discount teaching as a career option. Other students commented that their parents would be happy for them to

become teachers, which made them look favourably on the profession. Some students identified that hearing their parents criticise teachers made them think poorly of joining the profession. Students thought that their friends' opinions generally influenced their career perspectives. When asked to reflect specifically on teaching, a number responded that their friends would question their 'goodness of fit' for the profession, in terms of their personality. Students identified these types of comments from friends as either negative or positive influencers on their perspectives of teaching as a career.

Students frequently spoke about the negative impact of the ATAR requirement and remuneration for teaching on their perspective of teaching as a career. Students interpreted the relatively low ATAR entry to mean that the occupation is easy to get into and not particularly difficult or specialised in terms of skills or knowledge. Some students also linked the ATAR requirement to the notion that teaching does not have high remuneration. Generally, these students had negative perspectives of teaching as a career. Conversely, those students who commented favourably on teacher remuneration mostly had positive perspectives of teaching as a career.

Students spoke about the negative influence that the media has upon their perspectives of teaching as a career. The media included film, television and online videos and memes. Students felt that teachers are mainly framed as mean, odd and funny characters in the media and that this characterisation resonates and stays with viewers because most people have experienced such a teacher at some point. One student mentioned heart-warming movies about the impact of an inspirational teacher and said that these films likely create positive perspectives of teaching as a career.

### 7.3.2.2 Career counsellors identified influences

Career counsellors predominantly identified parents and their expectations and aspirations for their children as the main influences on student perspectives of teaching as a career. Generally, career counsellors indicated that parental approval of an occupation led to the students having a positive perspective of the career. It was noted that parental expectations were linked to the parents' level of education and occupational status, and the child's academic achievement. The career counsellors from schools with

a lower ICSEA indicated that there was either a positive or little to no stigma associated with choosing teaching, particularly when the child was not an academically high achiever. The career counsellors from the communities with a higher ICSEA generally noted that parents held more negative views of teaching as a career for their child, even when the perspective of teachers and their roles was positive. This was particularly true for students who were academically high achieving.

Two career counsellors noted that students typically tried to aim for occupations with the highest possible pay and status. They suggested that students' academic ability influences their perspective of teaching as a career. They indicated that the higher the students' achievement the more likely they are to look at university courses with higher ATAR requirements. The career counsellors suggested that students do not look favourably upon selecting teaching when they have the option to apply for courses deemed more difficult to enter. They proposed that students' high results indicate their capability and capacity to achieve, and that a high ATAR university entrance requirement suggests the course requires people with strong academic ability. Students viewed favourably the prestige of the high ATAR requirement, which translates to positive perspectives of the occupation. The career counsellors indicated that this logic translated to a negative perspective of teaching as a career for high achieving students.

All of the career counsellors mentioned that the remuneration of an occupation influences student perspectives. This fact was particularly true for male students. Generally, career counsellors thought that the remuneration associated with teaching negatively impacted student perspectives of the career.

Four of the career counsellors indicated that the media, specifically television, influences student perspectives of careers. They explained that many shows romanticise professions such as the police force, detectives, lawyers, fashion designers, nurses and doctors. All four career counsellors stated that this romanticising makes those professions more appealing. They pointed out that very few, if any, shows on television create idealised or glorified versions of the teaching profession. The absence of this media influence draws students' attention away from teaching as a career and

towards those professions that are framed as exciting. One counsellor also conceded that this framing is only possible because the students have no experience of those careers, and that a certain mystique is lost in teaching because students witness teachers at work in the classroom on a daily basis.

The career counsellors noted that community and individual teacher expectations influence student's perspectives of careers. They indicated that if the community had high or low expectations in terms of academic achievement, university (ATAR) pathway verses a vocational education and training (VET) pathway and remuneration, then this directly translated to the students' perspectives of careers. This influence was identified for communities who expected students to consider apprenticeships and trades as the norm as much as it was for communities who expected students to aim for a career in the most prestigious professions. All career counsellors addressed the significant influence of individual teachers. Career counsellors indicated that a teacher's encouragement can have a substantial impact on student career-related perspectives and decision-making. This point was particularly true when the teacher was passionate about teaching his or her subject and had a good relationship with the student. One career counsellor questioned whether teachers realise just how big an influence they can have upon students' perspectives of careers.

### 7.3.3 In what ways have school experiences of Year 12 students impacted their perspective of teaching as a career?

School related experiences were clearly identified as the top influencer of student perspectives of teaching as a career. The results are presented in terms of student experiences with teachers and student experiences with other students. The positive experiences with teachers all translated into positive perspectives of teaching as a career. Students spoke about the positive influence of seeing good practitioners in action. They frequently used the words enthusiastic, passionate, helpful and happy to describe teachers who positively influenced their perspectives of teaching as a career. Students felt drawn to exploring a career in teaching when they encountered staff who appeared to incorporate teaching into their identity. They explained that seeing someone care so much about, and get great

enjoyment out of a job, made them think they would like to consider teaching as a career. Students also felt that the caring relationships they experienced with teachers made them think positively about a career in the profession. They valued the relationships and suggested that they would like the opportunity to replicate the relationships again, as the teacher. Finally, students identified that few teachers actively encourage students to consider a career in the profession. However, students added that when a teacher did encourage a student to become a teacher, for example because of a personality fit, then this encouragement positively influenced his or her perspective of teaching as a career.

Negative experiences with teachers have a significant impact upon student perspectives of teaching as a career. Students commonly spoke about the negative influence of angry, moody, lazy and grumpy teachers, and poor classroom practitioners. They suggested these types of teachers damage their perspective of teaching as a career. Students interpreted that the teacher's bad mood or poor classroom practice may be directly related to a lack of enjoyment derived from being a teacher. Students also noted that even if they wanted to be a teacher, having to work alongside such colleagues would make them reconsider their career options. Conversely, some students noted that these negative experiences motivated them to consider teaching as a profession to ensure future students did not have the same experiences.

Students noted that witnessing various negative aspects of a teacher's role changed their perspective of teaching for the worse. They mentioned that seeing teachers dealing with unreasonable parental complaints, deliver a crowded and regimented syllabus, having a lack of support from administration for dealing with disrespectful students, being held responsible for disengaged students' results and adhering to beliefs that appear to not align with their own, all added to a negative perspective of teaching as a career.

Students experiences with their peers were mentioned as both positive and negative influences on student perspectives of teaching as a career. The positive experiences of other students centred around seeing teachers help fellow students grow, change and improve. Positive and fruitful

student interactions and relationships also influenced students to consider teaching as a favourable profession. Students frequently identified poor student behaviour and disrespectful communications and interactions as points that impact negatively upon the perspective of teaching as a career. Seeing troubled or bored students disrupting the teacher, class and the learning were points of negativity for some students. They suggested that as adults, they would not want to be around this type of behaviour continually, which negatively impacted their perspective of teaching.

## 7.4 Framework: The influences on student perspectives of teaching as a career

As a result of this study, the researcher proposes a framework for understanding the domains of influence on student perspectives of teaching as a career. The domains of influence are categorised as public, school, home and the nature of a teacher's role. The influences described in each of the quadrants are the areas that have the potential, under certain circumstances, to positively or negatively impact student perspectives of teaching as a career. There are certain experiences in each domain that appeared to always render positive student perspectives of teaching as a career. The most notable of these experiences came from the school domain and included the experience of being in a positive, supportive and encouraging school environment and having enthusiastic, passionate, helpful and happy teachers. The framework is intended to cover broad domains of influence as outlined in this study and as such, the potential for further research may determine that these domains can be generalised and applied to other educational systems and countries.
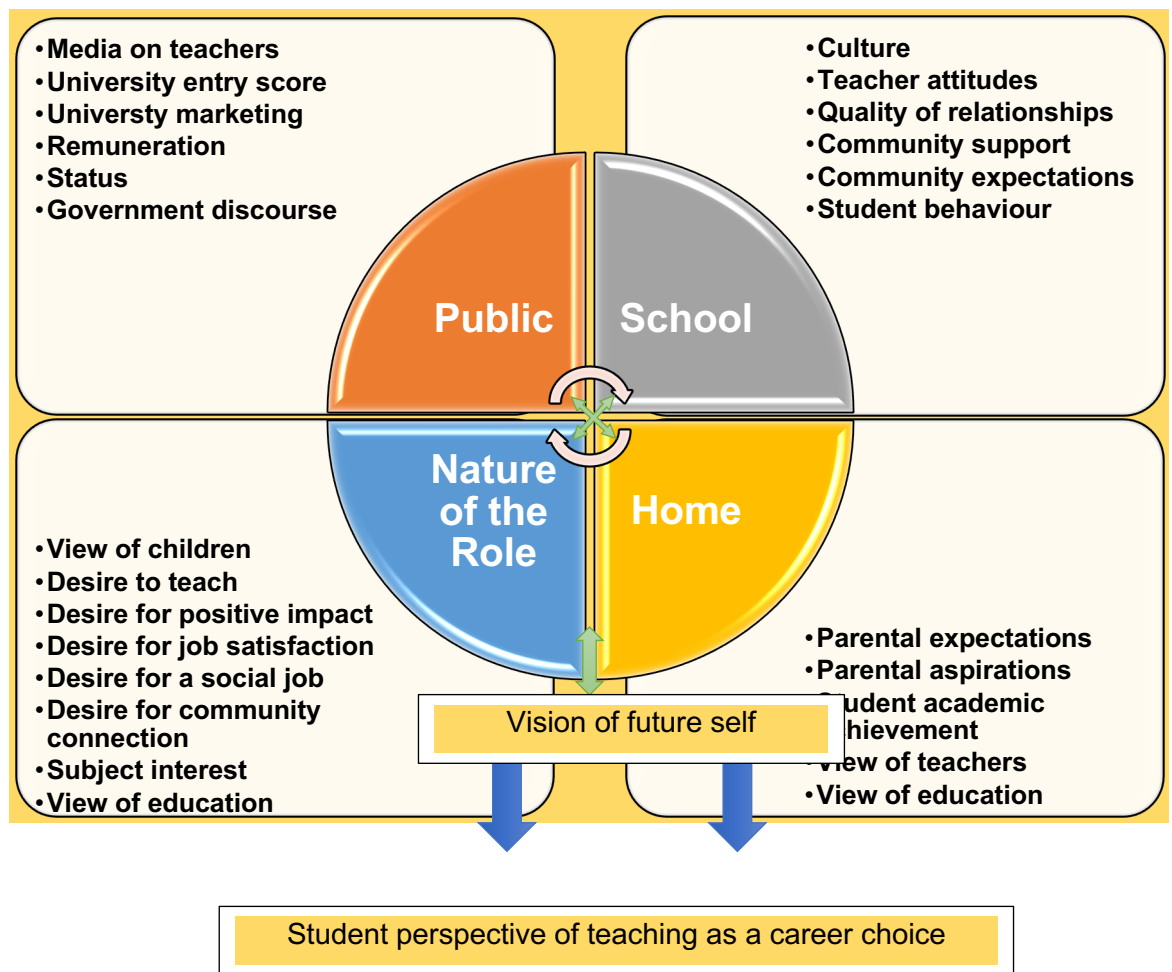
*Figure 7.1 A framework of the domains of influence on Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career*

## 7.5 Knowledge added to the field of study

The research revealed possible additions to the existing body of published literature pertaining to student perspectives of teaching as a career. However, this study is highly contextualised and therefore it is recommended that these additions are subjected to further investigation. The research has revealed four domains of influence that impact upon student perspectives of teaching as: home, school, public and the nature of the role (of teacher). The research revealed the characteristics within these domains, which may increase the likelihood of positively or negatively influencing perspectives of teaching as a career. However, the study also revealed that students' perspectives are formed in the interplay or interaction between the individual and these domains, along with the vision of his or her future life.

The individual is not separate from his or her experiences within the different domains. Rather, he or she makes his or her own sense of these experiences.

The impact that teachers have upon student perspectives of teaching was well documented in the literature (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Lai et al. 2005; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). However, the impact of the culture of a school and the purposeful and vocal revering and valuing of teachers by leaders and teachers within the school, did not feature significantly in the literature. This study revealed that these points have a positive impact on secondary school students' perspectives of teachers and teaching. The opposite also appeared true. Where the school did not have a culture that positively promoted teaching and teachers this generally resulted in a more negative perspective of teaching as a career. The study identified that schools which visibly and verbally appreciate teachers and the teaching profession positively impact student perspectives of teaching as a career.

Teachers who encourage students to consider teaching as a career have a positive impact on student perspectives. This result was supported by the research literature (Lai et al. 2005; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). The study revealed this point. Some schools deliberately did not encourage students towards careers because they did not want to influence students, while other schools purposefully encouraged students towards or away from various pathways. The students in the schools that purposefully influenced student perspectives appeared to have a better idea of what they wanted to do post school. It was apparent in this study that the lack of guidance and encouragement towards any pathway, generally led to some students not having a clear direction towards post-school goals. Moreover, no student identified the career education program within their school as having an influence or impact on their career-related perspectives, goal setting and decision-making.

It is well documented that parents directly influence their children (Berry et al., 1989; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Butcher & Lewis 2002; Kane & Mallon, 2006). It was evident in this study that students who actively created future visions of their career with their parents, appeared more goal-driven and vocalised their desire to consider a particular career-direction. The

students with a future vision were able to readily identify whether teaching as a career would or would not allow them to fulfil this future vision. The significance of a future vision, co-created with parents, appears to be limited in the literature on student perspectives of teaching.

The significance of the collegiality among teachers did not appear to be in the literature on perspectives of teaching as a career. In this study, students' perspectives of teaching included a consideration of whether they would enjoy working alongside teacher colleagues. Teachers' visible relationships with other teachers have a role in influencing student perspectives of teaching as a career. Generally, students who experienced teachers enjoying each other's company and displaying collegial comradery, resulted in positive perspectives of teaching. Students who witnessed negative interactions and colder collegial relationships, generally translated these experiences to negative perspectives of teaching as a career. Teachers' who visibly display their professional relationships with colleagues have a positive influence on student perspectives of teaching.

The literature confirmed that poor teacher-student relationships and negative experiences with teachers generally led to students having a negative perspective of teaching (Butcher & Lewis 2002; Richardson & Watt, 2007). This study revealed that, at times, these negative experiences and poor relationships can be a motivational force that ultimately draws people towards the profession. The underlying motivation was connected to the desire to be a change agent. Students thought they would like to return to school as teachers and take responsibility for bettering student outcomes. Without these negative experiences, some people may not have had the drive to enter teaching, and perhaps lead educational change and reform.

Finally, the results of the study suggested that some students see teachers as providers of an essential community service, inherently linked to the structure of society. They concluded that because teachers hold this essential place within society, the profession is exempt from the normal social status related judgements. Students likened teachers to mothers, fathers and priests to explain their understanding of this social status exemption. Interestingly, teachers were among the first to be called 'essential workers' in the latest COVID-19 pandemic. Governments called teachers to

physically return to school as an integral part of the first phase of re-opening countries. Therefore, this recognises that teachers are 'essential workers' within society.

**7.6 Implications for the profession**

The results of this research have implications for the following stakeholders. These implications will be discussed under each group.

1. Schools
2. Education sector leaders and unions in Western Australia
3. Federal and State Government: Education ministers
4. AITSL
5. Universities

The research has implications for schools and every teacher employed in the schools, regardless of the system, subject or year. The results of the research revealed that schools and teachers are the prime force in determining student perspectives of teaching as a career. Teachers are the ambassadors for their profession. The research revealed that students see teachers' words and actions on display every day. Hence, it is a teacher's responsibility to know and understand that what he or she says and does translates to a perspective in their students about the teaching profession. This research did not intend to return information on the role of the career counsellors in schools. However, it cannot be ignored that the students in this study did not deem the career counsellor as a significant influencer on student perspectives. This point has implications for the career planning programs in schools.

This research has relevance for the education system leaders in Western Australia, who oversee Western Australian schools and the education unions who advocate for and represent the interest of teachers. This study is particularly relevant for CEWA, considering all the participants were enrolled in Catholic schools. However, given that the place of Catholic religious beliefs was not identified by the students as a significant influence on their perspectives of teaching, the results may also be of relevance for the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) and the

Department of Education system leaders. Among other duties, the leaders of these three education sectors and the education unions have a responsibility to manage and contribute to the media discourse surrounding teaching, policy development, and promotion of the profession, lobbying and advocating for teachers, the profession's public image and succession and workforce planning for teachers in schools.

The results of this research have relevance for both the State and Federal Governments in Australia. The status of teaching in society is an area of interest for our state and federal education ministers, as noted by the 2019 Parliamentary inquiry into the status of the teaching profession (Parliament of Australia, 2019). Some of the issues identified in the inquiry included, the media representation of teachers, concern over the social status of the teaching profession, recruitment and retention of teachers, projected teacher shortages, particularly in the specialist areas of Mathematics and Physics, teacher wellbeing and burnout, early career teacher attrition, gender imbalances and university entrance requirement. The Federal and State education ministers have a role in protecting and promoting the public image of the teaching profession. It is important that these bodies acknowledge the complexities of student perspectives surrounding teaching as a career and the influences upon those perspectives. Student perspectives of teaching as a career could be emphasised in formal communication about teachers and teaching.

This research is relevant for those leaders and personnel at AITSL who are responsible for representing and promoting the profession and leading its professionalisation. One of the major purposes of AITSL is to cater for the needs of current and future teachers and school leaders (AITSL, 2020). Therefore, this research has implications for AITSL as the insight provided by students may assist AITSL to deliver on its core purposes. For example, AITSL could incorporate a greater emphasis on relational, social emotional and community building skills into the professional standards for teachers.

This study has implications for the personnel in universities responsible for marketing, recruitment, course enrolment and course development. Universities historically exist as institutions for knowledge

creation, distribution and transfer. They are charged with preparing students to take up roles in various industries. One of these industries is education. Students in this study identified the types of teachers who have a positive impact on student perspectives. University staff could be encouraged to appreciate the critical role they have in influencing the perspectives of pre-service teachers through their own role modelling.

Universities offer students enrolments in their institutions and work to attract, recruit and retain students. The results of this research have particular relevance to those universities who offer teaching degrees. Many students commented that the low ATAR and university requirements for teaching influences their perspectives about the desirability and status of the teaching profession. They also suggested that universities are seen to promote other degrees more rigorously than teaching such as commerce, engineering, medicine and law. The results of this study may contribute to an explanation of how universities have a role in shaping the current perspective of teaching as a career. Moreover, this explanation may help schools of education within universities to investigate their responsibilities for the promotion of the status of the profession in society, through entry requirements and other creative measures. Offering alternate pathways into teaching to school leavers may impact upon the perspective of teaching as a career, and it is therefore recommended that universities consider the implications of programs such as these.

## 7.7 Recommendations for the profession

It is acknowledged that there are currently initiatives operating to promote the teaching profession in Australia. In light of the results of this research, the following eight recommendations for the profession are presented, which may further support current efforts to promote the profession

Recommendation 1
Federal and state ministers for education, universities and education system leaders create public and extensive marketing campaigns and initiatives to draw attention to the benefits of entering the teaching profession. Strategies

might include an expansion of the current nationally recognised awards in the field of education, and an increase in the marketing of these award winners. These three groups might use their influence and available media channels to promote positive public discourse on the teaching profession.

Recommendation 2

AITSL and universities work together and utilise media channels, schools and education sectors to address the perspective among students surrounding the notion that a higher ATAR entry for university equates to a more high status choice.

Recommendation 3

Unions, education sector leaders and AITSL continue to advocate for education policy adjustments that address the undesirable issues associated with teaching, such as workloads, overtime, increasing compliance and managing disrespectful student behaviour. Furthermore, these bodies should continue to lobby for greater autonomy for teachers in the classroom, a reduction in face-to-face contact hours and an increase in preparation and professional learning time.

Recommendation 4

Education sector leaders create recruitment initiatives that include promoting education as a desirable career. Sector leaders work with schools to identify prospective teachers and offer awards, mentoring, acceleration programs and scholarships to entice identified high school age students into teaching. Extensive and targeted recruitment strategies are devised by these organisations to attract appropriate high school age students towards a career in the areas of projected teacher shortage, for workforce planning. Examples include attracting high-achieving Mathematics and Physics students into specialist Mathematics and Physics teaching and males into primary school teaching.

Recommendation 5

Education sector leaders influence the relevant school curriculum and standards authorities in each state to develop and initiate Year 11 and 12 ATAR courses in educational psychology or teaching. These courses may provide high school students with insights into teaching and may act as a precursor to selecting an education-related course at university.

Recommendation 6

Universities continue to review entry requirements for education courses, and ideally work towards increasing the requisite ATAR above minimum university entrance requirements. If not already doing so, University leaders consider applying qualitative measures to admission offers to ensure future entrants have the necessary social and emotional skills for building and maintaining positive relationships with students, parents and colleagues. Examples include psychometric and skills-based testing and face-to-face interviews. Additionally, universities raise the awareness amongst teaching graduates that their advocacy for the profession has a positive impact on student perspectives of teaching as a career.

Recommendation 7

Education sector leaders and schools deliver professional learning to teaching staff with a focus on emphasising the critical role they play in influencing student perspectives of teaching as a career. Such professional learning could include: Year 12 perspectives of teaching as a career; the importance of good relationships with students and other staff; the importance and necessity of vocal loyalty to their profession; and the impact of discouraging or encouraging students in relation to teaching as a career. Education sector leaders request that school leaders and teachers adopt a purposeful discourse in public forums and assemblies surrounding the value of teachers and their importance in society. Formal measures for student feedback and performance management practices may encourage a culture of excellence.

Recommendation 8

Schools conduct an audit of the effectiveness and influence of current career education programs within schools. This audit is used to ensure school staff, students and parents develop and regularly track explicit career-related goals for students, in a three-way partnership, particularly in senior years.

## 7.8 Further research

The study provides a basis for areas of suggested further research. The research could be replicated in other sectors in Western Australia, nationally or internationally, which may account for cultural differences. Researchers interested in studying the tension and complementary aspects of the vocational nature of teaching and the professionalisation of teaching may find the literature review and results of this study useful as a foundational and contextual basis for their research. The results of this study could act as a stimulus for those interested in exploring further the impact of the media on the perspective and status of the teaching profession. This research could be extended to investigate the perspective of teaching and teachers in society. This suggestion is particularly pertinent given the recent changes to education and teaching due to the Covid-19 lock down and the growing necessity of access to remote teaching.

This research has identified that teachers and career counsellors rarely promote teaching as a career. This point appeared particularly true for students from schools with higher ICSEA scores. Researchers interested in investigating the accuracy of this phenomenon, and the level of promotion of the teaching profession in general would benefit from the results of this study. This study revealed that student perspectives of teaching were not significantly influenced by career counsellors and career education programs. The results of this study may be useful for those researchers who are interested in the impact and influence of career counsellors and career education programs. Finally, those researchers interested in student perspectives of teachers could use the framework for the domains of influence (Figure 7.1) as a basis for research with other year groups to explore whether the results can be replicated. This further study could help to ascertain the similarities and differences in perspectives of teaching and

influences on perspectives between primary, middle and high school students and contexts.

## 7.9 Benefits and limitations of the research

The benefits of this research extend to teacher recruitment, training, elevating the status of the teaching profession and offers the addition of student voice to the body of knowledge on perspectives of teaching as a career. The listed recommendations may assist with attracting and recruiting high-performing students to the profession. Furthermore, this recruitment may be tailored to target areas of projected teacher shortage. The relevant bodies may actively and positively influence the public discourse around the profession. The results of this study may assist these bodies to redress the negative perspectives and promote the positive perspectives of teaching. Influencing public discourse in this manner may help to elevate the status of teaching in society. Given the limited nature of the literature on the topic of Year 12 student perspectives towards teaching as a career, this research has the potential to provide a valuable addition of student voice to the existing understanding of the topic.

There are factors that may limit the scope of this research study, as presented in Chapter One. The research is confined to five Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia and therefore generalising the results to other jurisdictions within Australia or internationally may be problematic. The study only considers student perspectives and career counsellor opinions and not parents, teachers and other influencing parties. The researcher's experience working in and attending Catholic schools provided insight into student perspectives and a knowledge of the culture of the schools. However, the researcher also anticipated that her background could influence interpretations and accepted that without due reflection, personal bias may unconsciously appear. To mitigate the potential for bias a three-point data triangulation was used to test the themes and results. Further, the researcher examined and recorded her own interest and motivations towards the topic, as a means of consciously avoiding bias.

## 7.10 Conclusion

This study was concerned with the exploration of perspectives of Year 12 students from five Catholic schools in Western Australia towards teaching as a career. The aim of the research was to reveal these perspectives, the reasons for the perspectives and the people, places and experiences that influenced the perspectives. In identifying the perspectives and in the deconstruction of the influences upon the perspectives, the study hoped to provide insights that would enable the profession to attract, recruit and retain passionate and high achieving students. Attracting, recruiting and retaining these candidates, will serve to sustain the succession of the teaching profession and will help schools and society to flourish into the unforeseeable and unpredictable future.

The study has returned the conclusion that Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career are multiple and varied. As such, attracting prospective students to consider teaching as a viable career remains a complex undertaking. An individuals' perspective is intimately connected to his or her experiences in different contexts over time and his or her sense of self and future self. Positive perspectives of teaching are more likely to occur under certain circumstances, such as in a flourishing school culture where teachers are valued, supportive teacher-student relationships exist, and media discourse promotes teachers and education. Negative perspectives of teaching are more likely to occur under certain circumstances, such as when teacher-student relations are strained, parents and peers do not support teachers or education and the media frames education or teachers in an undesirable manner. The research has highlighted the central place that the individual, his or her personality, interpretation of reality and vision for their future-self play in the construction of perspectives. The study has also revealed that students are not separate from the contexts in which they are placed and the experiences they have. However, on an individual level, interplay exists between the interactions, interpretations and influences within these contexts and experiences. Therefore, a student's perspectives of teaching as a career are reciprocally determined.

### 7.11 Addendum

This research has already generated interest. Following the recent Covid-19 disruption to schools and society, two Principals, one from a Catholic school and one from an independent school, expressed an interest in reading the results of this research in relation to student perspectives of the purpose of teaching and the literature review on the purpose of schools in society. A copy of the literature review and the discussion chapters were sent to both Principals via email. Both Principal's used these chapters as data sources to consider the future opportunities for their schools.

Further, the results of the study were summarised and submitted as a reference paper to the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. This Parliamentary Inquiry was titled 'status of the teaching profession in Australia' and was conducted in 2019. Additionally, the results of the research were presented by the researcher at the Western Australian Institute for Educational Research conference in August 2019.

### 7.12 Personal impact statement

Conducting this research has had a significant impact on me. The inspiration for the study came from my immense enjoyment and sense of fulfillment from teaching as a career, coupled with background knowledge and experience in sales and marketing. I felt that governments, universities, education sectors and schools were doing very little to expose students to the satisfaction, fulfillment and career opportunities associated with entering the profession. The influence of this exposure was particularly absent during the process of career discernment. I believed it was necessary for the profession to have greater representation in the form of recruitment advocates. These advocates would hopefully attract passionate and inspired people to the profession, to help shape the future of society through teaching.

This research has enabled me to understand the impact of schools, school cultures and teachers upon students, their learning and the forming of perspectives. The insight gleaned has been immeasurably useful when investigating school improvement practices. As a Deputy Principal of Teaching and Learning in a large and busy secondary College, the process

of conducting this research has helped me to lead teams to explore and understand grass-root issues within my own school and system. I then used this understanding with the teams to develop and implement solutions in the form of initiatives and projects, in a methodologically rigorous manner. The realisations I gained from the results of the study and the experience of undertaking the Doctor of Philosophy degree has further inspired me to continue to have a positive impact in this world, by advocating for teachers and working to elevate the place of the teaching profession in our society.

# Appendix A: Principal information sheet and consent form

THE UNIVERSITY OF
**NOTRE DAME**
A U S T R A L I A

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION and CONSENT SHEET - Principal

## Project Title: Perspectives of Year 12 Catholic school students towards teaching as a career.

Dear Principal,

I would like to invite your school to participate in the research project described below.

### *What is the project about?*

The research project investigates the perspectives of Year 12 Catholic school students towards teaching as a career. The study also hopes to uncover how these perspectives were formed and why.

### *Who is undertaking the project?*

This project is being conducted by Ms. Lucie McCrory and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Education) at The University of Notre Dame Australia, under the supervision of Dr. Anne Coffey and Associate Professor Shane Lavery.

### *What will the school be asked to do?*

It is important that you understand the purpose of the study and how members of your community will be asked to participate. Please read the below and ensure any questions that you have are answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

### *What does participation consist of?*

### *Career Counsellor (or equivalent)*

The career counsellor (or equivalent) will be invited to be involved in a semi-structured interview. Specifically, the career counsellor will be asked a range of open-ended questions about career education and student perspectives of teaching as a career. The interview will likely take 60 minutes and will be audio recorded.

### *Students*

Participants may be asked to be involved in one or two activities. These activities will take place on College grounds and include an online anonymous survey sent electronically and a focus group discussion with other students and the researcher.

- Online Survey All Year 12 students

    o Students will be asked to answer a range of multiple-choice and short answer questions about their perspectives of teaching as a career. The survey will likely take 10 minutes and will be anonymous.

- Focus Group (audio-taped for purpose of reviewing answers) 18-24 Year 12 students

    o A total of 18-24 students will participate in focus-group interviews. The group should include a random mix of students from Year 12. The focus group will likely take 60 minutes. The researcher will take notes while the students discuss the statements and the interview will be audio recorded. Responses will remain unidentifiable.

### *Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?*

Participating in this research project will take up some time, but we will ensure that disturbance to daily routines are kept to a minimum. There is a slight risk that students might become stressed in thinking about future careers, in which case they will be allowed to withdraw immediately.

# Appendix A: Principal information sheet and consent form

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### *What are the benefits of the research project?*

The purpose of this research is to review the ways in which Year 12 students perceive teaching as a career and why they perceive teaching in this way. Career choice is considered an area of great interest for students, particularly nearing the end of their secondary schooling. The perspectives of the students towards selecting various careers are formed both inside and outside the school environment (Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). It is expected that this research will provide a range of factors that influenced student perspectives of teaching as a career choice. It is anticipated that identification of these factors will benefit universities, policy makers and those interested in recruiting future teachers and promoting the status of the profession. Participation in this research may also help you to further consider future career options.

### *What if I change my mind?*

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time without discrimination or prejudice.

### *Will anyone else know the results of the project?*

Information gathered will be held in strict confidence. Names will not be recorded during focus group and semi-structured interviews and the online survey is anonymous.

The data collected will be unidentifiable and will be stored securely in the School of Education at The University of Notre Dame Australia for at least a period of five years. The results of the study will be published as journal articles and thesis.

### *Will I be able to find out the results of the project?*

Once the information has been analysed the school will be provided with a summary of the results. The results will also be available through The University of Notre Dame once the thesis is completed and approved.

### *Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?*

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself on 0404 760 748 or my supervisors, Dr. Anne Coffey on 9433 0153 or Associate Professor Shane Lavery on 9433 0173. My supervisors and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

### *What if I have a concern or complaint?*

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (approval number 017065F). If you have a concern or complaint regarding the ethical conduct of this research project and would like to speak to an independent person, please contact Notre Dame's Ethics Officer at (+61 8) 9433 0943 or research@nd.edu.au. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

### *How do the relevant parties participate?*

Students will be provided with an information sheet, which will include an online survey link. If students are happy to participate in the focus group interviews a signed consent form will be need to be returned to the me, via the school.

If the career counsellor is happy to participate, a consent form will need to be signed and returned to me via the school.

If you agree to your school's participation in the research project please sign the below.

- I agree for the school to take part in this research project.

- I have read the Information Sheet provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this research project and what is involved.

- I understand that Year 12 students will be invited to complete an online survey

# Appendix A: Principal information sheet and consent form

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- I understand that up to 24 students and the career counsellor will be interviewed and that the interviews will be audio-recorded.

- The researcher has answered all my questions and has explained possible risks that may arise as a result of the interview and how these risks will be managed.

- I understand that the school may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.

- I understand that all information provided by people in this school will be treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.

- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name, my school's name or other identifying information is not disclosed.

- I understand that results from the research data may be used for future research but my name and other identifying information will be removed.

| Name of Principal | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Signature of Principal | | Date | |

- I confirm that I have provided the Information Sheet concerning this research project to the above participant, explained what participating involves and have answered all questions asked of me.

| Signature of Researcher | | Date | |
|---|---|---|---|

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

**Ms. Lucie McCrory**

### COLLECTION NOTICE FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

As part of the research, recordings of students' and the career counsellor's voices will occur. The voice recordings will be taken by a mobile device for the duration of the (approximately) 60-minute interviews.

Students who do not have permission for recordings to be taken will not be involved in the interviews.

The recordings will be stored securely on the device and will be transcribed. Transcriptions will be stored in a secure cloud-based drive and accessible only to the researcher and her supervisors. After a period of five years they will be destroyed by deletion and hard copies will be shredded. The recordings will not be passed on to any other party. Transcriptions of the recordings will be used in the data analysis phase of the research.

# Appendix B: Career counsellor information sheet and consent form

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## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET - CAREER COUNSELLOR (Or Equivalent Representative)
## Project Title: Perspectives of Year 12 Catholic school students towards teaching as a career.

Dear Career Counsellor,

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

### What is the project about?

The research project investigates the perspectives of Year 12 Catholic school students towards teaching as a career. The study also hopes to uncover how these perspectives were formed and why.

### Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by Ms. Lucie McCrory and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Education) at The University of Notre Dame Australia, under the supervision of Dr. Anne Coffey and Associate Professor Shane Lavery.

### What will I be asked to do?

If you consent to take part in this research study, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study and how you will be asked to participate. Please read the below and make sure that any questions are answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

### What does participation consist of?

Participants will be asked to be involved in a semi-structured interview. Specifically, the career counsellor will be asked a range of open-ended questions about career education and student perspectives of teaching as a career. The interview will likely take 60 minutes and will be audio recorded.

### Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

Participating in this research project will take up some time, but we will ensure that disturbance to your daily routine is kept to a minimum.

### What are the benefits of the research project?

The purpose of this research is to review the ways in which Year 12 students perceive teaching as a career and why they perceive teaching in this way. Career choice is considered an area of great interest for students, particularly nearing the end of their secondary schooling. The perspectives of the students towards selecting various careers are formed both inside and outside the school environment (Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). It is expected that this research will provide a range of factors that influenced student perspectives of teaching as a career choice. It is anticipated that the identification of these factors will benefit universities, policy makers and those interested in recruiting future teachers and promoting the status of the profession. Participation in this research may also help students to further consider future career options.

### What if I change my mind?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you consent, you can withdraw from the study at any time without discrimination or prejudice and the data will be deleted.

### Will anyone else know the results of the project?

Information gathered will be held in strict confidence. Names will not be recorded during the semi-structured interview. This confidence will only be broken if required by law and if identifiable.

# Appendix B: Career counsellor information sheet and consent form

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Once the study is completed, the data collected from you will be further de-identified and stored securely in the School of Education at The University of Notre Dame Australia for at least a period of five years. The results of the study will be published as journal articles and a thesis.

### *Will I be able to find out the results of the project?*

Once the information has been analysed the school will be provided with a summary of the results. The results will also be available through The University of Notre Dame once the thesis is published.

### *Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?*

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself on 0404 760 748 or my supervisors, Dr. Anne Coffey on 9433 0153 or Associate Professor Shane Lavery on 9433 0173. My supervisors and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

### *What if I have a concern or complaint?*

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (approval number 017065F). If you have a concern or complaint regarding the ethical conduct of this research project and would like to speak to an independent person, please contact Notre Dame's Ethics Officer at (+61 8) 9433 0943 or research@nd.edu.au.  Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

### *How do I participate?*

If you are happy to participate, please sign both copies of the consent form, keep one for yourself and return the other to me via return to the school.

**Thank you for your time. This information sheet is for you to keep. The consent form is on the next page.**

# Appendix B: Career counsellor information sheet and consent form

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**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – CAREER COUNSELLOR CONSENT**

**Project Title: Perspectives of Year 12 Catholic school students towards teaching as a career.**

- I agree to take part in this research project.

- I have read the Information Sheet provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this research project and what is involved.

- I understand that I will be involved in a semi-structured interview that will be at most an hour in duration.

- The researcher has answered all my questions and has explained possible risks that may arise as a result of the interview and how these risks will be managed.

- I understand that I may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.

- I understand that all information provided by people in this school will be treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.

- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name, my school's name or other identifying information is not disclosed.

- I understand that results from the research data may be used for future research but my name and other identifying information will be removed.

| Name of Career Counsellor | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Signature of career counsellor | | Date | |

- I confirm that I have provided the Information Sheet concerning this research project to the above participant, explained what participating involves and have answered all questions asked of me.

| Signature of Researcher | | Date | |
|---|---|---|---|

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

**Ms. Lucie McCrory**

### COLLECTION NOTICE

As part of the research, recordings of students' and the career counsellor's voices will occur.
The voice recordings will be taken by a mobile device for the duration of the (approximately) 60-minute interviews.

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## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET - PARENT/GUARDIAN
### Project Title: Perspectives of Year 12 Catholic school students towards teaching as a career.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child is invited to participate in the research project described below.

### *What is the project about?*

The research project investigates the perspectives of Year 12 Catholic school students towards teaching as a career. The study also hopes to uncover how these perspectives were formed and why.

### *Who is undertaking the project?*

This project is being conducted by Ms. Lucie McCrory and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Education) at The University of Notre Dame Australia, under the supervision of Dr. Anne Coffey and Associate Professor Shane Lavery.

### *What will my child be asked to do?*

It is important that you understand the purpose of the study and how your child will be asked to participate. Please discuss the below with your child and make sure that any questions that you and your child have are answered to your satisfaction. Your consent is required for your child to participate in the focus group interviews.

### *What does student participation consist of?*

Participants may be asked to be involved in one or two activities. These activities will take place on College grounds and include an online anonymous survey sent electronically and a focus group discussion with other students and the researcher.

- Online Survey All Year 12 students

    o The students will be asked to answer a range of multiple-choice and short answer questions about their perspectives of teaching as a career. The survey will likely take 10 minutes and will be anonymous.

- Focus Group Interview (audio-taped for purpose of reviewing answers) 18-24 Year 12 students

    o A total of 18-24 students will participate in focus-group interviews. The group should include a random mix of students from Year 12. The focus group will likely take 60 minutes. The researcher will take notes while the students discuss the statements and the interview will be audio recorded. Responses will remain unidentifiable.

### *Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?*

Participating in this research project will take up some of the students' time, but we will ensure that disturbance to their daily routine is kept to a minimum. There is a slight risk that students might become stressed in thinking about future careers, in which case they will be allowed to withdraw immediately.

### *What are the benefits of the research project?*

The purpose of this research is to review the ways in which Year 12 students perceive teaching as a career and why they perceive teaching in this way. Career choice is considered an area of great interest for students, particularly nearing the end of their secondary schooling. The perspectives of the students towards selecting various careers are formed both inside and outside the school environment (Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). It is expected that this research will provide a range of factors that influenced student perspectives of teaching as a career choice. It is anticipated that identification of these factors will benefit universities, policy makers and those interested in recruiting future teachers and promoting the status of the profession. Participation in this research may also help students consider their future career options.

### *What if my child changes their mind?*

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Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you consent, you can withdraw your child from the study at any time without discrimination or prejudice. Your child can at any stage decide not to participate by letting the teacher or myself know. However, once the survey and focus group have been completed the data cannot be withdrawn.

### *Will anyone else know the results of the project?*

Information gathered from your child will be held in strict confidence. Names will not be recorded during focus group interviews and the online survey is anonymous.

Once the study is completed, the data collected from your child will be further de-identified and stored securely in the School of Education at The University of Notre Dame Australia for at least a period of five years. The results of the study will be published as journal articles and a thesis.

### *Will I be able to find out the results of the project?*

The information from this study we will provide a summary of our results to the College to communicate as appropriate. The results will also be available through The University of Notre Dame once the thesis is completed and approved.

### *Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?*

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself on 0404 760 748 or my supervisors, Dr. Anne Coffey on 9433 0153 or Associate Professor Shane Lavery on 9433 0173. My supervisors and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

### *What if I have a concern or complaint?*

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (approval number 017065F). If you have a concern or complaint regarding the ethical conduct of this research project and would like to speak to an independent person, please contact Notre Dame's Ethics Officer at (+61 8) 9433 0943 or research@nd.edu.au. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

### *How does my child sign up to participate?*

Your child can complete the online survey via the emailed survey link. If you are happy for your child to participate in the focus group interviews, please sign and return to the school the Parental Consent Form.

**Thank you for your time. This information sheet is for you to keep. The consent form is on the next page.**

Yours sincerely,

**Ms. Lucie McCrory**

# Appendix C: Parent information sheet and consent form

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**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET - PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT**
**Project Title: Perspectives of Year 12 Catholic school students towards teaching as a career.**

- I agree for My child to take part in this research project.

- I have read the Information Sheet provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this research project and what is involved.

- I understand that Year 12 students will be invited to complete an online survey

- I understand that up to 24 students and the career counsellors will be interviewed and that the interviews will be audio-recorded.

- The researcher has answered all my questions and has explained possible risks that may arise as a result of the interview and how these risks will be managed.

- I understand that the child may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.

- I understand that all information provided by people in this school will be treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.

- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my child's name, my child's school's name or other identifying information is not disclosed.

- I understand that results from the research data may be used for future research but my name and other identifying information will be removed.

| Name of Parent | | Name of Child | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Signature of Parent | | Date | |

- I confirm that I have provided the Information Sheet concerning this research project to the above participant, explained what participating involves and have answered all questions asked of me.

| Signature of Researcher | | Date | |
|---|---|---|---|

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

**Ms. Lucie McCrory**

### COLLECTION NOTICE FOR PARENTS

Students who do not have permission for recordings to be taken will not be involved in the interviews.
The recordings will be stored securely on the device and will be transcribed. Transcriptions will be stored in a secure cloud-based drive and accessible only to the researcher and her supervisors. After a period of five years they will be destroyed by deletion and hard copies will be shredded. The recordings will not be passed on to any other party. Transcriptions of the recordings will be used in the data analysis phase of the research.

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**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET - STUDENT**
**Project Title: Perspectives of Year 12 Catholic school students towards teaching as a career.**

Dear Student,

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

***What is the project about?***

The research project investigates the perspectives of Year 12 Catholic school students towards teaching as a career. The study also hopes to uncover how these perspectives were formed and why.

***Who is undertaking the project?***

This project is being conducted by Ms. Lucie McCrory and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Education) at The University of Notre Dame Australia, under the supervision of Dr. Anne Coffey and Associate Professor Shane Lavery.

***What will I be asked to do?***

It is important that you understand the purpose of the study and how you will be asked to participate. Please discuss the below with your parent/guardian and make sure that any questions that you have are answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate. The Parental Consent form will need to be signed and returned in order to participate in the focus group interviews.

***What does student participation consist of?***

Participants may be asked to be involved in one or two activities. These activities will take place on College grounds and include an online anonymous survey sent electronically and a focus group discussion with other students and the researcher.

- Online Survey All Year 12 students

    o You will be asked to answer a range of multiple-choice and short answer questions about your perspectives of teaching as a career. The survey will likely take 10 minutes and will be anonymous.

- Focus Group (audio-taped for purpose of reviewing answers) 18-24 Year 12 students

    o A total of 18-24 students will participate in focus-group interviews. The group should include a random mix of students from Year 12. The focus group will likely take 60 minutes. The researcher will take notes while the students discuss the statements and the interview will be audio recorded. Responses will remain unidentifiable.

***Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?***

Participating in this research project will take up some time, but we will ensure that disturbance to your daily routine is kept to a minimum. There is a slight risk that students might become stressed in thinking about future careers, in which case they will be allowed to withdraw immediately.

***What are the benefits of the research project?***

The purpose of this research is to review the ways in which Year 12 students perceive teaching as a career and why they perceive teaching in this way. Career choice is considered an area of great interest for students, particularly nearing the end of their secondary schooling. The perspectives of the students towards selecting various careers are formed both inside and outside the school environment (Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). It is expected that this research will provide a range of factors that influenced student perspectives of teaching as a career choice. It is anticipated that identification of these factors will benefit universities, policy makers and those interested in recruiting future teachers and promoting the status of the profession. Participation in this research may also help you to further consider future career options.

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***What if I change my mind?***

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time without discrimination or prejudice. You can at any stage decide not to participate by letting the teacher or myself know.

***Will anyone else know the results of the project?***

Information gathered will be held in strict confidence. Names will not be recorded during focus group interviews and the online survey is anonymous.

The data collected will be unidentifiable and will be stored securely in the School of Education at The University of Notre Dame Australia for at least a period of five years. The results of the study will be published as journal articles and thesis.

***Will I be able to find out the results of the project?***

Once the information has been analysed the school will be provided with a summary of the results. The results will also be available through The University of Notre Dame once the thesis is completed and approved.

***Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?***

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself on 0404 760 748 or my supervisors, Dr. Anne Coffey on 9433 0153 or Associate Professor Shane Lavery on 9433 0173. My supervisors and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

***What if I have a concern or complaint?***

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (approval number 017065F). If you have a concern or complaint regarding the ethical conduct of this research project and would like to speak to an independent person, please contact Notre Dame's Ethics Officer at (+61 8) 9433 0943 or research@nd.edu.au.  Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

***How do I sign up to participate?***

To participate in the online survey, follow the link attached to this email. If you are happy to participate in the focus group interviews, please ask your parent/guardian to sign both copies of the consent form, keep one for yourself and return the other via return to the school.

**Thank you for your time. This information sheet is for you to keep.**

Yours sincerely,

**Ms. Lucie McCrory**

### COLLECTION NOTICE FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

Students who do not have permission for recordings to be taken will not be involved in the interviews.
The recordings will be stored securely on the device and will be transcribed. Transcriptions will be stored in a secure cloud-based drive and accessible only to the researcher and her supervisors. After a period of five years they will be destroyed by deletion and hard copies will be shredded.  The recordings will not be passed on to any other party.  Transcriptions of the recordings will be used in the data analysis phase of the research.

**Appendix E: Semi-structured interview questions for career counsellors**

**Semi-structured interview questions for career counsellors**

RQ2: In what ways have Year 12 students arrived at their perspective of teaching as a career?

i)     What formal process does your school use to approach career education with students?

ii)    When and how do you roll out this process?

iii)   In your opinion, how effective is this process in making students aware of careers that potentially suit their skill set and future goals?

iv)    Why would you encourage a student to consider teaching as a career?

v)     Why would you discourage a student from considering teaching as a career?

vi)    If teaching required a specific personality type, what would that be and why.

vii)   What are the top three influences on student career selection in your opinion?

viii)  In what ways would a student's academic results impact your perspective as to whether teaching would be a viable option?

ix)    Can you name two perspectives of teaching as a career that you typically hear from students?

## Appendix F: Focus group interview questions for Year 12 students

**Focus group interview questions – Year 12 Students**

RQ1:  What are Year 12 perspectives of teaching as a career?

    i)       Would you ever consider teaching as a career at any stage?

    ii)      On the basis of your personal experiences, what do you understand teaching to be about? Why do you think this way? Can you provide an experience you have had that exemplifies this understanding?

    iii)    What are the strengths and weaknesses of teaching as a career?

    iv)    Why do you think teachers become teachers?

    v)     If you were to become a teacher what would your area of specialization be and why?

    vi)    If not teaching, then what and why?

    vii)   How does teaching compare in terms of status and attractiveness with other professions such as Physiotherapy, Accountancy, Law, Medicine and Engineering, and why?

RQ2:    In what ways have Year 12 students arrived at their perspective of teaching as a career?

    i)       What factors have contributed to your interest/ lack of interest in selecting teaching as a career choice?

    ii)      Has anyone spoken to you about becoming a teacher? If so, what was said and by whom and what impact did this have upon your perspective of teaching as a career?

**Appendix F: Focus group interview questions for Year 12 students**

    iii)     How do you think your parents/family and friends would respond if you decided to become a teacher and why?

    iv)     How has the use of technology and social media influenced your perspective of choosing teaching as a career?

RQ3:    In what ways have schooling experiences of Year 12 students impacted the perspective of teaching as a career?

    i)     How are your schooling experiences related to your perspective of teaching as a career?

    ii)     Can you provide an example of an experience that impacted your perspective of teaching?

    iii)     How are your views of teachers related to your perspectives about teaching as a career?

Closing

If teaching as a career was an animal, what would it be and why?

**Appendix G: Qualitative and quantitative online survey questions for Year 12 students**

# Perceptions of teaching as a career

* Required

1. I have read the Participant Information Sheet: http://bit.ly/2vkJVso *

   *Mark only one oval.*

   ◯ Yes

2. I am happy to proceed with this anonymous survey *

   *Mark only one oval.*

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

3. Gender: *

   *Mark only one oval.*

   ◯ Male

   ◯ Female

4. Which pathway are you currently studying? *

   *Mark only one oval.*

   ◯ ATAR

   ◯ Certificate 4

   ◯ General

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# Appendix G: Qualitative and quantitative online survey questions for Year 12 students

5. What would you estimate your ATAR to be, based on current performance *

   *Mark only one oval.*

   ◯ 50 - 60

   ◯ 60 - 70

   ◯ 70 - 80

   ◯ 80 - 90

   ◯ 90 +

   ◯ I am not completing an ATAR pathway

6. I am completing at least one of the following: Mathematics Methods, Mathematics Specialist and Physics *

   *Mark only one oval.*

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

7. I would consider teaching as a career *

   *Mark only one oval.*

   ◯ Strongly disagree

   ◯ Disagree

   ◯ Neutral

   ◯ Agree

   ◯ Strongly agree

8. I would select to study the following field of teaching *

   *Mark only one oval.*

   ◯ Early childhood teaching

   ◯ Primary teaching

   ◯ Secondary teaching

   ◯ I would not select teaching

# Appendix G: Qualitative and quantitative online survey questions for Year 12 students

9.  Teaching is a high status career *

    *Mark only one oval.*

    ◯ Strongly disagree

    ◯ Disagree

    ◯ Neutral

    ◯ Agree

    ◯ Strongly agree

10. Teaching is a fulfilling career *

    *Mark only one oval.*

    ◯ Strongly disagree

    ◯ Disagree

    ◯ Neutral

    ◯ Agree

    ◯ Strongly agree

# Appendix G: Qualitative and quantitative online survey questions for Year 12 students

11. Rank the following reasons to select teaching as a career (1: Best reason 11: Worst reason) *

*Mark only one oval per row.*

|  | Rank 1 | Rank 2 | Rank 3 | Rank 4 | Rank 5 | Rank 6 | Rank 7 | Rank 8 | R |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Working with children / adolescents | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ( |
| Ability to enact social change | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ( |
| Holidays / lifestyle | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ( |
| Fulfilling / rewarding | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ( |
| Teaching the subject I love | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ( |
| Pay | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ( |
| Shaping the future | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ( |
| Variety of job | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ( |
| Ease of life | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ( |
| Relationships and community | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ( |
| Was inspired by one of my own teachers | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ( |

## Appendix G: Qualitative and quantitative online survey questions for Year 12 students

12. My teachers enjoy their job *

*Mark only one oval.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Disagree
- ( ) Neutral
- ( ) Agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

13. How can you tell when teachers love their job? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. Why might you not want to be a teacher? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

# Appendix G: Qualitative and quantitative online survey questions for Year 12 students

15. What have been the major factors influencing your perception of teaching as a career? *

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Pay
- ☐ ATAR score
- ☐ My own experience of school
- ☐ My own experience of teachers
- ☐ Staff at school (Careers / Head of Year)
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Media
- Other: ☐ _____

Rotate clockwise

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## Appendix H: Formal approval from The University of Notre Dame Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA**

19 Mouat Street (PO Box 1225) Fremantle WA 6959
(61 8 9433 0555 | enquiries@nd.edu.au

7 June 2017

Dr Anne Coffey & Ms Lucie Rice
School of Education
The University of Notre Dame, Australia
Fremantle Campus

Dear Anne and Lucie,

**Reference Number: 017065F**

**Project title: "Perceptions of Year 12 Catholic school students towards teaching as a career."**

Your response to the conditions imposed by the university's Human Research Ethics Committee, has been reviewed and assessed as meeting all the requirements as outlined in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007, updated May 2015). I am pleased to advise that ethical clearance has been granted for this proposed study.

Other researchers identified as working on this project are:

| Name | School/Centre | Role |
|---|---|---|
| A/Prof Shane Lavery | School of Education | Co-Supervisor |

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

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

Yours sincerely,

Dr Natalie Giles
Research Ethics Officer
Research Office

Cc:    A/Prof Dianne Chambers, SRC Chair, School of Education

ABN 69 330 643 210 | CRICOS Provider Code: 01032F

# Appendix I: Formal approval from the Catholic Education Western Australia Ethics Committee

CATHOLIC EDUCATION
OFFICE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

20 July 2017

Mrs Lucie Rice
Deputy Principal
Teaching & Learning
Sacred Heart College
PMB 6
WANGARA WA 6947

Dear Mrs Rice

**PERCEPTIONS OF YEAR 12 CATHOLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS TOWARDS TEACHING AS A CAREER – CEWA REFERENCE RP2017/39**

Thank you for your completed application received 6 July 2017, whereby the aim of this research is firstly to explore the perceptions of Year 12 Catholic school students towards selecting teaching as a career and secondly to identify those factors that contribute to forming these perceptions in Year 12 students,

I give in principle support for the selected secondary Catholic schools in Western Australia to participate in this valuable study. However, consistent with Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) policy, participation in your research project will be the decision of the individual principal and staff members. A copy of this letter must be provided to principals when requesting their participation in the research

The conditions of CEWA approval is that as your research project is being conducted for longer than one year, a completion of annual reports as well as a final report are to be forwarded to CEWA

Responsibility for quality control of ethics and methodology of the proposed research resides with the institution supervising the research. CEWA notes that the University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee has granted permission for the duration of this research project (Reference Number: 017065F)

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

Further enquiries may be directed to Jane Gostelow at jane.gostelow@cewa.edu.au or (08) 6380 5118

I wish you all the best with your research

Yours sincerely

Dr Tim McDonald

# Appendix J: Copy of the introductory email to Principals confirming involvement

Dear Principal

Thank you for speaking with me on the phone earlier about my research project on Year 12 student perspectives of teaching as a career. Thank you for agreeing to participate.

Please find attached to this email all the participant information and consent forms pertaining to study.

As a snapshot, I have summarised below the total commitment required of the school. Once the below has been completed, no other commitment is required. Ideally it will occur between Term 3 2017 and Term 2 2018.

- One online survey for all Year 12 students to complete, it will likely take 10 minutes
- One semi-structured interview with the career counsellor or equivalent, up to 60 minutes
- One focus group interview with a random mix of 18-24 Year 12 students, up to 60 minutes

I appreciate that this is a very busy term for the Year 12s and the teachers. I am keen to accommodate whatever is easiest for the school. I'll wait to hear from you as to who to contact and when.

Many thanks,
Lucie McCrory

**Appendix K: Copy of the email to Principals in support of the research**

**15/02/2017**

Good afternoon XXXX,

I hope the year has started well for you, the school is going well and you didn't forget Valentine's Day.

Our DP Teaching and Learning, Lucie Rice (McCrory) – formerly of Mater Dei and JTC is completing a PhD at Notre Dame on "Perspectives of Year 12 Students Regarding Teaching as a Career."

Your schools have been suggested by her supervisors as providing a range of SES backgrounds and a gender split.

What the study would involve is:
- · A meeting with your career counsellor
- · An online survey of all your Year 12s – 20 minutes.
- · Meet a group of students (up to 24) at the end of the year for sixty minutes.

Obviously, all the surveys and data would remain anonymous. She is seeking ethics approval from CEWA.

I am sure that the whole Catholic teaching fraternity will benefit from her work and I am hoping that when Lucie approaches you, permission will be given.

I am happy to discuss further with you if you wish.

All the best. I hope to see you soon.

Peter Bothe

**Appendix L: Summary matrix of the interplay between student perspectives, settings and influences**

| Site | Interplay between student perspectives and setting | Interplay between career education and perspectives | Influence of student perspectives of teachers on teaching as a career | Specific notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Parents value stereotypical 'professions'<br><br>ATAR pathway expectation. Stigma surrounding VET<br><br>Teaching is a noble, secure and a backup career<br><br>Slight stigma on teaching due to pay and ATAR required | School timetables careers one class a week in Year 10 for 6 months to ensure students engage in exploration. Year 9 recently introduced class and work experience is commencing. Follow national Blueprint curriculum and MyCareerMatch for the Year 10 classes<br><br>School influences student career decisions through compulsory research, personality testing and exploration. Career counsellor intentionally neither encourages or discourages selections but questions students and families<br>Every student must attend at least two interviews with senior leaders | Mostly very positive perspectives of teachers, resulting in positive comments about the value of teaching as a career.<br><br>Three negative perspectives of teachers, resulting in positive comments about teaching as a career - in terms of coming back and doing it differently | Students appeared deep thinking. They articulated well the big-picture role of a teacher and education's place in society. Excellent thought-provoking discussions |
| B | Students kept returning to teaching as a vehicle to inspire, influence and shape student lives for the better<br>Career counsellor stated that students tend to follow in their parents' | School delivers career education during scheduled pastoral care times and over two full days and predominantly in Year 10, prior to subject selection. The school uses the inline programs of JIIG-CAL and Career Voyage, visits to the Career Expo in the city and various | Mostly positive perspectives of their teachers, resulting in positive comments about the value of teaching as a career. | Subject teachers named as influencers of career decisions e.g. Maths teacher promotes |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | footsteps, particularly when trades are involved<br><br>Students say perspectives of teaching and of career selection in general is directly linked to their experiences with teachers in class<br><br>Teaching seen as a backup career, specific reference to drama and sports | universities, internal speakers and ex-students.<br><br>VET pathway students engage in work experience. ATAR pathway students do not.<br><br>Every student must attend an interview with the career counsellor to discuss careers and subject selection | Four negative perspectives of teachers, three resulting in negative perspectives of teaching as a career and one resulting in positive comments about teaching as a career - in terms of coming back and doing better | engineering and Math related jobs<br><br>Numerous times, students referred to teachers as needing to inspire hope and influencing students to be their "best self" |
| C | Very goals orientated and use of alumni and prestigious school culture as a motivating factor<br><br>A love of their teachers and a reverence and respect for the teaching profession and their school. A belief that teaching is rewarding but very demanding on time and personal resources.<br><br>Teaching as a backup is seen as positive - second career | Parent information evening and expo for families. Two full days of character strength testing, guest speakers and research. Half hour interviews with the school, parents and students guided by a question sheet. They discuss and decide on pathways and subjects for Years 11 and 12.<br><br>Years 11 and 12 are about career goal management and students and parents must meet with the school once each year to discuss this | Very positive experiences of teachers as highly skilled professionals. Students spoke in a manner that would suggest that they revere their teachers and respect the profession.<br><br>Two negative comments about teachers in other systems and one about teachers in the site, but it was clarified that perhaps the teaching | Very affirmative of their teachers and the role they have played in their lives.<br><br>Comments about their school pushing them to reach their potential. Use of alumni |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | just didn't suit the learner | |
| D | Students interested in careers with high pay.<br><br>Many parents prefer higher status occupations for their child<br><br>Students mentioned that physical education teaching is more attractive than other teaching posts | Students start with two hours of personality testing and research in Year 9. Then have four lessons in Year 10 of online programs and career research. Subject selection with students and parent.<br><br>Interviews on a need basis with students and parents. | Many negative comments about teachers and teaching as a career, in terms of not liking the actual role.<br><br>Positive comments about teachers who are passionate, and physical education teachers in general | Large range of personalities. Some inflammatory comments. Careers with money, status and less repetitive preferred over teaching |
| E | Working class community, family trade businesses and farms<br><br>VET expectations, no stigma for non-ATAR pathways<br><br>No stigma on status of careers in trades and teaching an acceptable career | School intentionally does not influence student career decisions<br><br>Limited Year 10 program<br><br>Student driven for further information<br><br>No interview required | Many negative perceptions of teachers, resulting in negative comments about teaching as a career.<br><br>A few positive perceptions of teachers, resulting in positive comments about teaching as a career | Dominant student appeared to drive a negative influence towards teachers at the school and teaching as a career |

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