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**A longitudinal study of the personal and professional  
responses of recently assigned secondary Religious  
Education teachers to curriculum demands**

Chris Hackett

Doctor of Philosophy Thesis

University of Notre Dame Australia

## ABSTRACT

This research is a longitudinal study, conducted in Catholic schools of Perth and its environs. From 1998 to 1999, recently appointed secondary Religious Education teachers were surveyed and interviewed, and re-interviewed eighteen months later.

Initially, a comprehensive survey of three dioceses in Western Australia was conducted and formed a contextual database for the study. The database acted as the foundation for the selection of a purposive sample of teachers for the first round of interviews. Follow-up interviews with this sample cohort were carried out the following year. The research design used in this study assisted the development of a representative, grounded analysis of the perceptions of recently assigned RE teachers.

In the first interview, participants were asked to comment on their experiences of implementing a new draft RE program in Catholic schools in Western Australia. The teachers were invited to relate their experiences and perceptions of implementing the curriculum materials, the advised teaching approaches and understandings of the theological and pedagogical principles underlying the new Units. In the second interview, teachers were invited to reflect upon their personal and professional growth as they became more familiar with the demands of this RE curriculum. What emerged were insights into the nature and depth of formation these teachers experienced as they introduced the draft Units of Work.

Using qualitative analysis techniques such as NUD•IST, findings emerged about the importance of the personal spiritual and faith formation of teachers during this period. Teachers felt passionate about why they were teaching RE and implemented the Units with enthusiasm. They were initially optimistic about the future of their RE teaching but were then confronted with challenges to their personal, spiritual and faith formation. Most teachers continued to look forward to teaching RE, while some were relieved when they had the opportunity to discontinue. These findings suggest that there is a need to consider how these teachers can be personally and professionally supported as they face the transition from a 'crusade of delivery' to a 'pilgrimage of formation' in their RE teaching lives.

# DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

This thesis is the work of the candidate and contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Candidate's Name

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Date

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## LIST of ACRONYMS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CBAM	Concerns Based Adoption Model
CBCEW	Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
CC	Congregation for the Clergy
CCE	Congregation for Catholic Education
CECWA	Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia
CEO(s)	Catholic Education Office(s)
CEOWA	Catholic Education Office of Western Australia
CIWA	Catholic Institute of Western Australia
CSPAWA	Catholic Secondary Principals' Association of Western Australia
PADRE	Perth Archdiocesan Department of Religious Education
PAGRE	Perth Archdiocesan Guidelines for Religious Educators entitled <i>The Truth Will Set You Free</i>
PAREC	Perth Archdiocesan Religious Education Course
QSR NUD•IST	QSR International's Non-numerical Unstructured Data, Indexing, Searching and Theorizing (computer software)
RARE	Recently Assigned Religious Education (Teacher)
RE	Religious Education
REC(s)	Religious Education Coordinator(s)
SCAA	School Curriculum and Assessment Authority in Britain
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences computer software by SPSS Inc.
UNDA	University of Notre Dame Australia