# Building teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice: A crystallised account of one school's journey

**Karyn A. Cameron**

**BEd [Prim], MEd [TESOL]**

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**Doctor of Philosophy**

**Principal Supervisor: Professor Maria Northcote**

**Co-supervisor: Dr Kevin Petrie**

**Avondale University**

**Date Submitted: December 2023**

## STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted previously for a degree or diploma at this institution, an Australian or overseas university or any other institution of higher education. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed: 

Date: October 30, 2023

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## ABSTRACT

Education in Australia is thwarted by complexities, compliance and unprecedented change. As schools rise to meet the needs of students in such a climate, teachers are faced with pressures from many stakeholders and an increasing plethora of expectations. There is a widely recognised need for teachers to engage in reflective practice, which is purposed to gain insight and improve student outcomes. There are a number of identified barriers to effective reflective practice. In addition, the concept of reflective practice is often misunderstood and underplayed, further reducing teachers' capacity to engage in it effectively.

The primary research question of this qualitative case study asked: *"How can school leaders build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice?".* The secondary research questions explored the barriers and supports to teacher capacity from the perspectives of the school leaders and teachers in one rural K-12 Australian school as they engaged in a school-wide initiative requiring deep reflective practice.

Data collection involved multiple site visits and interviews with school leaders and teachers. A crystallised approach applied triangulated analysis synthesising constructivist grounded theory, situational and heuristic analysis. Findings revealed nine overlapping and interdependent themes and identified a range of barriers and supports to deep reflective practice. In response to the primary research question, the overarching finding is that school leaders need to provide a dynamic web of support for their teachers, using relational and structural approaches to support teachers' reflective practices individually and collectively. The crystallised report format integrates the traditional academic genre with creative reflexive genres to express a nuanced account of the journey of this study, thus honouring the participants' voices and engaging the reader.

This study contributes to an understanding of teacher capacity for deep reflective practice in the context of busy schools. It offers a literature-based descriptive definition of deep reflective practice, a multifaceted model of reflective practice, a model for a dynamic web of support as suggested in the overarching finding, an exploration of metaphors to enhance shared understanding of reflective practice for schools and a list of recommendations for school leaders to consider.

**Keywords:** Reflective practice; capacity-building; leadership; crystallisation; metaphor; professional learning

## BIOSKETCH OF CANDIDATE

Karyn Cameron is the wife of a very good man, a mother of two sons, and a doting grandmother. She is also a passionate educator.

Karyn Cameron graduated from Avondale College in 1996 with a Bachelor of Education (Primary), upgrading her Diploma of Education (Primary) from 1991. In 2006, she was awarded a Master of Education (TESOL).

She has taught at all levels of primary education at Avondale SDA Primary School, Narromine SDA Primary School, Victoria Park Christian School, and Carmel Adventist College Primary School. She has ten years of school leadership experience as Principal and has lectured at Avondale University in the fields of curriculum and pedagogy in Primary Teaching.

Karyn is passionate about teaching the "whole" child and has embraced a foundational value from Adventist Education's heritage:

> True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come. (White, 1903, p. 13)

Her passion for "harmonious" education, which encompasses cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual, and physical ways of being, continues to impact Karyn's personal and professional interests, and acts as a foundation for her desire to engage in deep reflective practice.

*Please Note: All references to Karyn prior to 2019 are as Karyn Stanton. Since 2019 Karyn is referred to as Karyn Cameron due to marriage and a subsequent name change.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the teachers and school leaders who so generously welcomed me to journey with their school for the duration of the data collection period of this study. I was privileged to speak with each one and hear their stories. I have intended to honour their voices throughout this thesis.

I would also like to thank both Adventist Schools Australia and Avondale University for their sponsorship and encouragement throughout this significant learning journey. I remain committed to the values and ideals of these two fine educational institutions.

I will always be indebted to the warmth, wisdom and professionalism of my supervisors, Professor Maria Northcote and Dr Kevin Petrie. The things that have worked well in this research study are due to their assistance; however, the flaws are all mine.

The artistic visual representations used throughout this thesis were drawn by the talented Marlene Vogel following a number of professional conversations about reflective practice along with the metaphors and allegories that allude to criteria within the concept.

When seeking a copy editor, I turned to John Pocock, a man well-known for attention to detail, deep thinking and getting things right. I am grateful that he was willing to use those talents on my behalf.

My sons, Richard and Robert, and my husband, Kim, supported me with encouragement and understanding when the road got tough, and my resolve was weakening. I am forever grateful for their love and support.

Finally, I acknowledge my God. He has been by my side through the joys and the hard parts of this research journey. He was my strength and my creativity.

Over the course of this study, I have had many opportunities to share the emerging findings with others. I have written two book chapters, *Promoting reflective thinking with mathematics (Stanton, 2017)*, and *Digging deep to reveal Jesus: Seeking light in the hidden corners (Cameron, 2020)*; lectured on reflective practice to both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching students; and both formally and informally presented on reflective practice to educational leaders.

Much of this thesis was written during the tumultuous times of Covid-19, a time where fear and anxiety invaded the lives of multitudes around the world. Never has there been a more important time for teachers to deeply reflect on their practice, with a willingness to swim against the flow to offer their students hope and values through which they might navigate difficult times with integrity and dignity.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the teachers, both present and future, who shape the lives of their students. May they have the capacity, commitment, and courage to reflect deeply and change the world … one student at a time.

I would like to thank my parents and the many teachers who have inspired me to love to learn, to think critically, and to act with values-rich conviction and responsibility.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP ..... ii
COPYRIGHT STATEMENT ..... iii
ABSTRACT ..... iv
BIOSKETCH OF CANDIDATE ..... vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... vii
DEDICATION ..... viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS ..... ix
FIGURES ..... xvi
TABLES ..... xvii
GLOSSARY ..... xviii
PREFACE ..... 1
My Voice, My Footprints - The Quest: An Allegory of Reflective Practice ..... 5
Leaving a Trail: Chapter Précis ..... 8
CHAPTER ONE THE LIE OF THE LAND: INTRODUCING TH STUDY AND ITS CONTEXT ..... 9
1.1 General Overview ..... 9
1.2 The Lie of the Land: Current Issues in Australian Education – The Problem ..... 10
1.3 The Discomfort of Reflective Practice – John Dewey and Donald Schön ..... 14
1.4 *Seeking Jewels of Wisdom* – Purpose, Aims and Research Questions ..... 14
1.5 The Staff of Travellers – Case Study Context ..... 16
1.6 Researcher: My Voice, My Footprints ..... 17
1.7 Leaving a Trail: Chapter Précis ..... 19
CHAPTER TWO SEEKING WISDOM FROM THE SCROLLS: A LITERATURE REVIEW ..... 20
2.1 General Overview ..... 20
2.2 Literature: The Current Landscape of Reflective Practice ..... 21
2.3 Literature: Building Teacher Capacity ..... 23
2.4 Literature: Barriers and Supports to Capacity Building ..... 25
2.5 Literature: Constructing a Conceptual Framework from Theory and Research 26
2.5.1 Of Walls and Swamps: Theoretical Foundations ..... 27
2.5.2 The Quest of Reflective Practice: Seeking a Definition ..... 29
2.5.3 Towards a Conceptual Framework: The Lens of Purpose - Why ..... 32

2.5.4 Towards a Conceptual Framework: The Lens of Process - How ..... 33
2.5.5 Towards a Conceptual Framework: The Lens of Position - Where ..... 37
2.5.6 Towards a Conceptual Framework: The Lens of Perspective - Who ..... 40
2.5.7 Towards a Conceptual Framework: Levels of Reflective Practice – Depth 44
2.5.8 Towards a Conceptual Framework: The Four Lenses and Four Levels ..... 46
2.6 Developing the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice ..... 47
2.7 Researcher: My Voice, My Footprints ..... 51
2.8 Leaving a Trail: Chapter Précis ..... 53
CHAPTER THREE PLANNING THE JOURNEY: METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN ..... 54
3.1 General Overview ..... 54
3.2 Theoretical Foundations ..... 56
3.2.1 Paradigms, Presumptions and Perspectives ..... 57
3.2.2 Orientation: Constructivism and Social Constructionism ..... 58
3.2.3 Approach: Crystallisation ..... 59
3.3 The Research Sample ..... 63
3.3.1 Case Study ..... 63
3.3.2 Context: School Site ..... 63
3.3.3 Participants ..... 64
3.4 Research Design ..... 65
3.4.1 Research Design: Emergent Design ..... 66
3.4.2 Research Design: Reflective Practice ..... 67
3.4.3 Research Design: Information Needed and Data Collection Methods ..... 69
3.4.4 Research Design: Methods for Analysis ..... 72
3.5 Research Timeline ..... 78
3.6 Data Collection ..... 81
3.7 Data Analysis ..... 83
3.7.1 Grounded Theory Analysis: Coding, Memos and Categories ..... 83
3.7.2 Situational Analysis: Mapping the Situation ..... 84
3.7.3 Heuristic Inquiry: Seeking Understanding Through Narrative ..... 85
3.7.4 Answering the Research Questions ..... 86
3.8 Crystallising the Report ..... 87
3.9 Trustworthiness: Quality Criteria ..... 88
3.9.1 Criteria for Quality: Worthy Topic and Significant Contribution ..... 89
3.9.2 Criteria for Quality: Sincerity, Resonance and Ethics ..... 90

3.9.3 Criteria for Quality: Rich Rigour, Meaningful Coherence and Credibility.91
3.10 Limitations and Delimitations: Acknowledging and Addressing .....92
3.11 Researcher: My Voice, My Footprints .....94
3.12 Leaving a Trail: Chapter Précis .....95
CHAPTER FOUR ON DISCOVERING PITFALLS AND GLIMMERS: FINDINGS .....97
4.1 General Overview .....97
4.2 Themes - Overview .....101
4.3 Theme One: Leadership .....101
4.3.1 Barrier Finding: Leadership Issues .....102
4.3.2 Support Finding: Lead Intentionally .....102
4.3.3 Building a Response to the Research Question .....106
4.4 Theme Two: Space .....106
4.4.1 Barrier Finding: No Time, Personal or Professional Space .....107
4.4.2 Support Finding: Create Space .....107
4.4.3 Building a Response to the Research Question .....113
4.5 Theme Three: Support .....114
4.5.1 Barrier Finding: Lacking Support .....114
4.5.2 Support Finding: Give Support .....116
4.5.3 Building a Response to the Research Question .....121
4.6 Theme Four: Perspectives .....122
4.6.1 Barrier Findings: Limited Perspectives .....122
4.6.2 Support Finding: Broaden Perspectives .....123
4.6.3 Building a Response to the Research Question .....129
4.7 Theme Five: Focus .....130
4.7.1 Barrier Finding: Scattered Focus .....130
4.7.2 Support Finding: Synergise Focus .....131
4.7.3 Building a Response to the Research Question .....133
4.8 Theme Six: Pathways .....134
4.8.1 Barrier Finding: Lack of Structure and Direction .....134
4.8.2 Support Finding: Create Pathways .....135
4.8.3 Building a Response to the Research Question .....142
4.9 Theme Seven: Collaboration .....143
4.9.1 Barrier Finding: Limited Collaboration .....143
4.9.2 Support Finding: Cultivate Collaboration .....144

4.9.3 Building a response to the research question....148
4.10 Theme Eight: Momentum....149
4.10.1 Barrier Finding: Inertia....150
4.10.2 Support Finding: Build Momentum. ....150
4.10.3 Building a Response to the Research Question....154
4.11 Theme Nine: External Arenas....155
4.11.1 Barrier Finding: External Pressures and Distractions....155
4.11.2 Support Finding: Engage External Support....156
4.11.3 Building a Response to the Research Question....162
4.12 Situating the Findings: The Place and the People....163
4.12.1 Situating the Findings: Social Worlds and Arenas of Faith School....164
4.12.2 Situating the Findings: The Individual Participants....166
4.13 Responding to the Research Questions – In Summary....176
4.13.1 The Secondary Questions....176
4.13.2 The Primary Research Question....178
4.14 Researcher: My Voice, My Footprints....180
4.15 Leaving a Trail: Chapter Précis....182
CHAPTER FIVE REFLECTING ON THE JOURNEY: DISCUSSION....184
5.1 Chapter Overview....184
5.2 Interpreting the Findings – Seeking Insight in the Murky Swamp....185
5.3 Purpose: Capacity Building....186
5.4 Acknowledging the Barriers....187
5.4.1 Time – A Scarce Resource....187
5.4.2 Physical and Emotional Depletion – Beyond the Clock....188
5.4.3 Reduced Professional Efficacy – Deficit Orientations....189
5.4.4 Focus Fatigue – Scattered Attention....190
5.4.5 Compliance - Ticking the Boxes....191
5.4.6 External Pressures – Marginalising and Prescribing....192
5.4.7 Isolation - Working as Silos....193
5.4.8 Limited Perspectives – Avoiding Deep Reflection....194
5.4.9 Teamwork That Inhibits Reflective Practice....194
5.4.10 Unclear Process – Ambiguity and Uncertainty....195
5.4.11 Barriers – Acknowledge the Accumulative Impact....196
5.5 Organisational Inertia....196

5.6 School Leaders Make a Difference ..... 197
5.6.1 Leadership Issues That Constrain Reflective Practice ..... 197
5.6.2 Dialectical Leadership – Seeking a Balance ..... 198
5.6.3 Building A Web of Cultural Change – Changing the Architecture ..... 199
5.6.4 Lead by Knowing ..... 200
5.6.5 Lead by Focused Empowerment ..... 202
5.7 Creating Space – Structural Supports ..... 204
5.7.1 Time ..... 204
5.7.2 Processes ..... 205
5.7.3 Scaffolds ..... 206
5.8 Creating Space – Relational Supports ..... 207
5.8.1 Emotional Capacity – Listen and Build ..... 208
5.8.2 Professional Efficacy – Reflect and Grow ..... 210
5.8.3 Reflective Dialogue – Communicative Space ..... 211
5.8.4 Teamwork – Better Together ..... 212
5.8.5 Facilitating Deep Reflective Practice – Engaging Support ..... 214
5.9 Organisational System of Support – Dynamic Web of Support ..... 215
5.10 Another Way of Seeing: Crystallisation, Models and Metaphors ..... 219
5.10.1 Crystallisation ..... 220
5.10.2 Models ..... 222
5.10.3 Metaphors ..... 227
5.11 Deep Reflective Practice: Reviewing the Definition, Reviewing the Theory 229
5.12 Researcher: My Voice, My Footprints ..... 232
5.13 Leaving a Trail: Chapter Précis ..... 236
CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION: FILLING THE BACKPACK ..... 237
6.1 Overview ..... 237
6.2 Research-informed Conclusions and Recommendations for Practice ..... 238
6.2.1 The Dynamic Web of Support ..... 239
6.2.2 Lead with Intention ..... 240
6.2.3 Create Space ..... 241
6.2.4 Give Support ..... 242
6.2.5 Perspective, Pressure and Focus ..... 242
6.2.6 Create Pathways ..... 243
6.2.7 Cultivate Collaboration ..... 243

6.2.8 Build Momentum....244
6.2.9 Engage External Support....245
6.2.10 Summary: Conclusions and Recommendations....245
6.3 Trustworthiness and Limitations....246
6.4 Research Contributions and Recommendations for Further Research....248
6.5 Researcher: My Voice, My Footprints, My Final Reflections....251
6.6 Leaving a Trail: Thesis Précis....255
REFERENCES....257
APPENDICES....284
Appendix A: Harvest Project....285
Appendix B: Ethics Original Application....286
Appendix C: Ethics Approval....289
Appendix D: Excerpt from Participant Information Sheet....290
Appendix E: Participant Consent Forms - Principal....291
Appendix F: Participant Consent Forms - School Leader Consent....292
Appendix G: Participant Consent Forms - Teacher....293
Appendix H: Excitements and Fears – November 15 Focus Group....294
Appendix I: Allegory Two – [Shared in the Final Staff Meeting]....295
Appendix J: Pre-liminary Co-Constructed Recommendations....298
Appendix K: Example – Interview Guides – Semi-structured Interviews....300
Appendix L: Excerpt from School Leader Interview Transcript – January 2016..302
Appendix M: Excerpt from Teacher Interview Transcript – October 2016....303
Appendix N: Example Teacher Summary Member Check Email Message....304
Appendix O: Excerpts from Teacher Summary Email - May 2016....305
Appendix P: Example Teacher Summary Member Check Email – May 2016....306
Appendix Q: Example – Excerpt from “Building the Narrative” – Portraits....307
Appendix R: Situational Map: Human & Non-Human Elements – Faith School .310
Appendix S: Memo List: November 17, 2019....311
Appendix T: Excerpts from Researcher's Journal....312
Appendix U: Code Hierarchy November 18, 2019....315
Appendix V: Focused Codes December 10, 2019....318
Appendix W: Situational Maps – Examples....319
Appendix X: Expanded Social Worlds Ordered Maps - Administrative....321
Appendix Y: Expanded Social Worlds Ordered Maps – School Campuses....322

Appendix Z: Social Worlds Ordered Maps – Local Community.....323
Appendix AA: Social Worlds Ordered Maps – External Bodies.....324
Appendix BB: Expanded Social Worlds Ordered Maps – Discursive Discourses 325
Appendix CC: Social Worlds Maps – Example.....326
Appendix DD: Positional Maps – Examples of Purpose Maps .....327
Appendix EE: Positional Maps – Example of Assumption Map .....329
Appendix FF: Positional Maps – Example of Process Map.....330
Appendix GG: Positional Maps – Examples of Position and Process Maps .....331
Appendix HH: Heuristic – Exemplary Portrait - Example .....332
Appendix II: Heuristic – Individual Depiction Example .....339
Appendix JJ: Heuristic Analysis – Summing up Feedback on Capacity Builders.340
Appendix KK: Answering the Primary Research Question.....342

## FIGURES

**Figure 1** *Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice* ..... 49
**Figure 2** *Methodology Chapter Layout* ..... 55
**Figure 3** *Research Design, Definition & Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice* ..... 68
**Figure 4** *Research Timeline* ..... 78
**Figure 5** *Findings Chapter Layout* ..... 99
**Figure 6** *Support Finding One - Lead Intentionally* ..... 106
**Figure 7** *Participants' Emotional Responses to the Harvest Initiative* ..... 110
**Figure 8** *Support Finding Two - Create Space* ..... 114
**Figure 9** *Support Finding Three - Give Support* ..... 122
**Figure 10** *Support Finding Four - Broaden Perspectives* ..... 130
**Figure 11** *Support Finding Five - Synergise Focus* ..... 134
**Figure 12** *Support Finding Six - Create Pathways* ..... 143
**Figure 13** *Support Finding Seven - Cultivate Collaboration* ..... 149
**Figure 14** *Support Finding Eight - Build Momentum* ..... 155
**Figure 15** *Support Finding Nine – Engage External Support* ..... 163
**Figure 16** *The Social Worlds and Arenas of Faith School – A Situational Map* ..... 165
**Figure 17** *The Findings – A Dynamic Web of Support Model* ..... 178
**Figure 18** *Using the Model to Support Questioning for Deep Reflective Practice* ..... 224
**Figure 19** *Using the Model to Support Questioning for School Leaders* ..... 226

## TABLES

**Table 1** *Identified supports and barriers to effective reflective practice 2002-2014* ..... 13
**Table 2** *Definitions for Reflective Practice 2018-2023* ..... 30
**Table 3** *Participant Overview* ..... 65
**Table 4** *Overview of Information Needed and Suitable Data Collection Methods* ..... 70
**Table 5** *Audit of Interview Data* ..... 82
**Table 6** *Themes - Barriers and Supports* ..... 100
**Table 7** *Barriers - Leadership Issues* ..... 102
**Table 8** *Barriers - No Time, Personal or Professional Space* ..... 107
**Table 9** *Barriers - Lacking Support* ..... 115
**Table 10** *Barriers - Limited Perspectives* ..... 123
**Table 11** *Barriers – Scattered Focus* ..... 131
**Table 12** *Barriers – Lack of Structure and Direction* ..... 135
**Table 13** *Barriers - Limited Collaboration* ..... 144
**Table 14** *Barriers - Inertia Theme* ..... 150
**Table 15** *Barriers - External Pressures and Distractions* ..... 156
**Table 16** *Individual Primary Teacher Responses to the Research Question* ..... 167
**Table 17** *Individual Secondary Teacher Responses to Research Question* ..... 170
**Table 18** *Individual School Leader Responses to Research Question* ..... 174
**Table 19** *Researcher Responses to Research Questions* ..... 175
**Table 20** *Summary of Participants' Identified Barriers and Supports* ..... 177

## GLOSSARY

**Please note***: Reflective practice is an important concept within many professional fields. The definitions below are contextualised to the field of education and selected for relevance within this research report.*

**Abductive reasoning –** A type of reasoning that uses an inferential process to lead from a surprise to a possible explanation. It involves "grappling with the process of sense-making" and of "coming up with an interpretation that makes sense of the surprise, the tension, the anomaly" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 28). Abductive reasoning is not a linear process, better described as a "circular-spiral pattern … in which the puzzling requires an engagement with multiple pieces at one time" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 28).

**Constructivism** –An epistemological perspective that views reality as socially constructed. Researchers within constructivism "enter the phenomenon, gain multiple views of it and locate it in its web of connections and constraints" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 342).

**Constructivist grounded theory** – A contemporary form of grounded theory continuing to use "coding, memo-writing, and theoretical sampling", whilst paying focused attention to:

> … the production, quality and use of data, research relationships, the research situation, and the subjectivity and social locations of the researcher. Constructivist grounded theorists aim for abstract understanding of studied life and view their analyses as located in time, place, and the situation of inquiry. (Charmaz, 2014, p. 342)

**Critical reflection** – A response to a professional problem that involves a purposeful consideration of multiple perspectives, including questioning broader societal contexts. Critical reflection involves considering how things are, and how they should be with the purpose of bringing about positive change (Jay & Johnson, 2002).

**Crystallisation** – An approach to research which combines:

> … multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts, building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that problematizes its own construction,

> highlights researchers' vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them. (Ellingson, 2009, p. 4)

**Focus groups** – "Focus group interviews or discussions bring together a group of people to discuss a particular topic or range of issues" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 119).

**Grounded theory** – An approach to data collection and analysis that develops theory through systematic, constant, comparative investigation of data grounded in "observations of the social world" (Robson, 2011, p. 526).

**Heuristic Inquiry –** A systematic and transparent methodology for self-inquiry which "entails creating a story that captures the qualities, meanings and essence of a human experience" (Hiles, 2008, p. 391), in particular, the human experience of the researcher.

**Metaphor** – A broad term to describe a number of forms of imagery that act as "a device of representation through which new meaning may be learned" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 85).

**Narrative reporting** – Narrative is a form of writing organised and purposed as a story, including a sequence of events that have significance to the person whose story it is (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Stories have settings and characters, complications and resolutions. In this research project, narrative is used as one of the structures of reporting, "dealing with phenomenon as it changes over time" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 201). Narrative reporting uses "rhetorical devices that draw the reader in and hold attention" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 201). One rhetorical device used in the narrative reporting in this research is allegory.

**Practice wisdom** – "The accumulation of information, assumptions, ideologies, and judgments that have seemed practically useful in fulfilling the expectations of the job" (Dybicz, 2004, p. 197).

**Reflection-in-action** – reflective practices purposed to adjust methods, questioning, and content delivery whilst "on-the-spot" (Schön, 1983, p. 63), to improve student outcomes (Anderson, 2019).

**Reflection-on-action** – a deliberate and systematic professional act of "thinking back over one's actions" (Dimova & Loughran, 2009, p. 208) to improve student outcomes.

**Reflection-for-action** – deliberate thinking forward to bring about change and "promote social justice, educational opportunity, and equity" (Thorsen & DeVore, 2013, p. 88) and thereby improve student outcomes.

**Reflective practice** – A simple but important definition for this process is "a twenty-first century imperative to mindfully and effectively negotiate the emerging landscapes through pausing, attending, revising, adopting and adapting new insights" (Ganly, 2018, p. 721).

**Reflective practice [deep] –** A descriptive definition as stated in Chapter One:

> Deep reflective practice is a deliberate iterative professional process embedded in context and action and purposed towards seeking insight that leads to the transformation of beliefs and behaviours, ultimately leading to improved outcomes. It involves both individual and collective questioning and analysis of current assumptions and practices through theory and varied personal and professional perspectives, seeking understanding from both the past and the present to build a better future. (Benade, 2018; Brookfield, 2009; Damore & Rieckhoff, 2021; Dewey, 1910/1997; Fergusson et al., 2019; Josten, 2011; Kramer, 2018; Lubbe & Botha, 2020; Marshall, 2019; Mohamed et al., 2022; Rodgers, 2002a; Schön, 1983; Schön, 1987)

**Scaffolding** – "Temporary, structured support designed to move learners forward in their thinking" (Timperley et al., 2007, p. 284). In the context of this study, scaffolding refers to the process of supporting teachers' critical reflective practice in a manner that promotes eventual self-directed independent practice.

**Situational analysis** – A grounded theory approach where "the situation itself is the key unit of analysis" (Clarke, 2010, p. 871). This approach involves the development of situational, social and positional maps as analytic tools (den Outer et al., 2013). Situational

analysis acknowledges that a situation, including site, social and positional dimensions, impacts phenomena. It goes beyond the voices, "helping the silences speak" (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 108).

**Structured reflection** – An organised mode of reflection using questions, prompts, and other dialogic tools to support deep thinking about an issue. In the context of this study structured reflection is referred to as an approach using narrative journal writing and recording internal dialogue "as reflective internal talkback" (Shumack, 2010, p. 1).

**Technical rationality** –

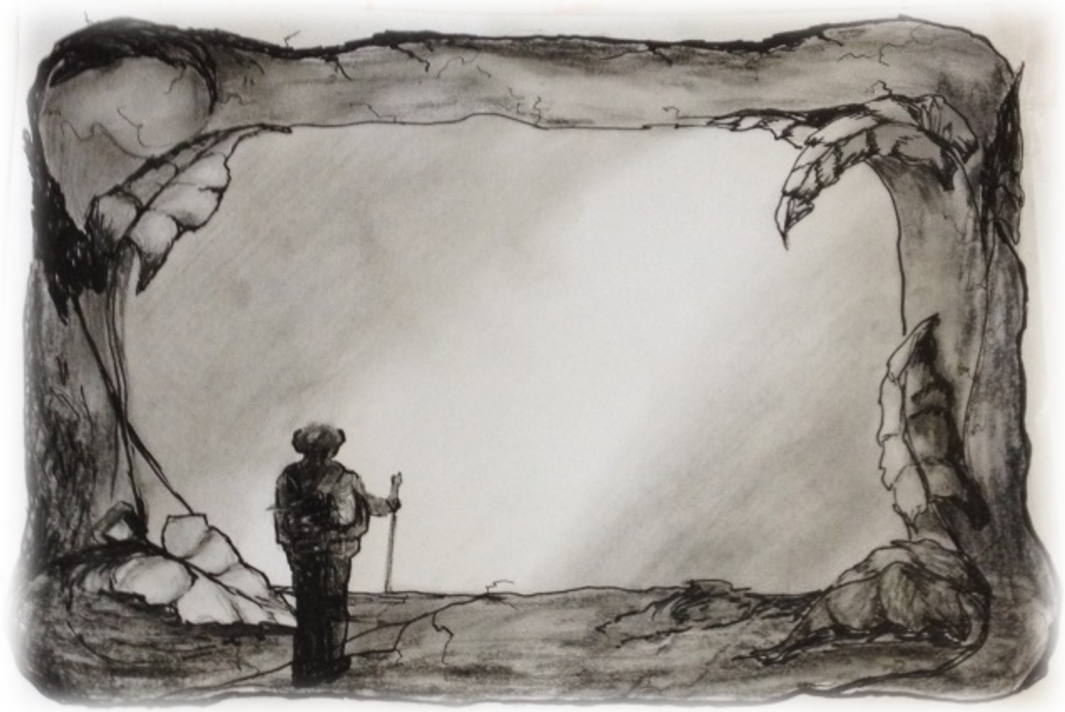
> "An epistemology of practice derived from positivist philosophy … [positing that] "practitioners are instrumental problem solvers who select technical means best suited to particular purposes. Rigorous professional practitioners solve well-formed instrumental problems by applying theory and technique derived from systematic, preferably scientific knowledge" (Schön, 1987, pp. 3,4).

Schön notes that this epistemology is not sufficient for situations that sit outside of "categories of existing theory and technique", requiring "a kind of improvisation, inventing and testing" (Schön, 1987, p. 5) devised by the professional to find a meaningful solution.

**Transformational learning** – "A type of learning that is founded in critical reflection and results in altering, reframing, or changing the learner's frame of reference" (Josten, 2011, p. 8).

**Verstehen –** "A practice of analyzing social action from the participants' point of view" (Tracy, 2010, p. 844).

# PREFACE



**Real reform is so badly needed – … we have restructured education so often without reaching that distant dream … - that we should be sending expeditionary parties down every trail we can find. (Palmer, 2017, p. 8)**

This study is an "expedition", purposed to explore ways to build capacity within teachers for deepened reflective practice, because, "… teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn …" (Palmer, 2017, p. 7).

As a practising teacher, my experience of a call to deepen 'reflective practice' would very often be attached to the burdening weight of added external requirements and associated with a sense of overwhelming guilt at not achieving all that society demands.

> We blame teachers for being unable to cure social ills that no one knows how to treat; we insist that they instantly adopt whatever "solution" has most recently been concocted by our national panacea machine: and in the process, we demoralise, even paralyze, the very teachers who could help us find our way. (Palmer, 2017, pp. 3-4)

The quest of this study is to discover ways to cultivate teachers' capacity to deepen their reflective practice with courage and stamina in a demanding educational landscape. “The pace of change has us snarled in complexities, confusions, and conflicts that will diminish us, or do us in, if we do not enlarge our capacity to teach and to learn” (Palmer, 2017, p. 3).

A “quest” to seek ways to enlarge capacity within the complexities of practice has required a research design that would be a good fit (Northcote, 2012). The individual and collective voices of teachers and school leaders needed to be heard and honoured in both methodology and reporting. The complexity of their situation needed to be acknowledged.

Laura Ellingson’s (2009) work on crystallisation within qualitative research offered a blend of methodology and reporting style to accomplish these needs.

> Crystallization combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts, building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers’ vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them. (Ellingson, 2009, p. 4)

This report integrates multiple genres of representation. There is no attempt to replace the logical progression of academic qualitative research theses. In Chapter One an introduction places the research questions within their context. Chapter Two is a Literature Review. Chapter Three describes the Methodology and Chapter Four moves on to Findings. Chapter Five provides a platform for Discussion and Chapter Six concludes the thesis with recommendations, acknowledgements of limitations, suggestions for further study, and concluding thoughts. However, within each chapter there are varied genres to “crystallise” or add richness through multiple lenses. Metaphors and allegories are intrinsic to this account.

Donald Schön, one of the seminal theorists within reflective practice literature, provides the foundation for the overarching allegory used throughout this thesis and alluded to in art, prose, poetry, and narrative. His allegory strikes deep into the experience of many teachers as they feel pressure from a range of stakeholders to ‘fix’ the complex needs of students and society with generalised and other-driven ‘solutions’ that do not bring about long-term or meaningful change.

> In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are

> confusing "messes" incapable of technical solution. The difficulty is that the problems of the high ground, however great their technical interest, are often relatively unimportant to clients or to the larger society, while in the swamp are the problems of the greatest human concern. Shall the practitioner stay on the high, hard ground where he can practice rigorously, as he understands rigor, but where he is constrained to deal with problems of relatively little social importance? Or shall he descend to the swamp where he can engage the most important and challenging problems if he is willing to forsake technical rigor? (Schön, 1983, p. 42)

Metaphors add light and insight to ideas and concepts (Carpenter, 2008, p. 274; Jensen, 2006). Schön's metaphor added light and understanding to many of my own teaching experiences. I have been both in the swamp and the high ground. Out of Schön's 'swamp' metaphor arose the 'Quest' allegory that accompanies the reader throughout the thesis. Allegories "offer a multi-layered truth that lies 'between the lines' within the often subconscious spaces of organizational life" (Kaarst-Brown, 2017, p. 298). I believe that the quest allegory adds layers of truth and richness to this crystallised report.

The 'Quest' allegory begins in a narrative form before Chapter One, continuing to dance lightly throughout each chapter in art, prose, and poetry. The allegory, deeply grounded within Schön's metaphors, was also shared with participants in both the initial and concluding group meetings. It adds coherence (Richardson, 1990) and a safe place for all participants and the reader to consider where they fit in the story (Kaarst-Brown, 2017). It is one of the crystal "lenses" through which we view this study to give a fuller, richer account.

> Literal, rationalist thought and language do not fully or accurately express the range of human behaviour and motivation, or even cognition. That then gives us not only the right, but the need and responsibility, sometimes, to express our research using metaphors. (O'Toole, 2010, p. 191)

Each chapter is prefaced with an allegorical vignette and a metaphoric picture. The core of each chapter is presented in familiar, though narrative, academic writing. A reflexive text, 'My Voice, My Footprints', precedes each chapter summary. These creative texts use a range of genres to act as additional lenses through which to "capture the essence" of each chapter's explorative focus and themes (O'Toole, 2010, p. 192).

Can such an account, a piece of academic writing intertwined with metaphor, allegory, narrative, and art, be judged in terms of quality in research? I believe so. The multiple lenses of crystallisation in qualitative research offer rich insights into the lived experience of teachers and school leaders. Sarah Tracy (2010) has suggested eight "Big Tent"

criteria for excellent qualitative research. Crystallisation speaks deeply into four of these criteria in particular: sincerity, credibility, resonance, and coherence.

The crystallised layout and structure of this thesis help to build sincerity through transparently offering a self-reflexive account, weaving my "reflexive considerations of self-as-instrument throughout the research report" (Tracy, 2010, p. 842). These elements also support greater credibility.

> Multiple types of data, research viewpoints, theoretical frames, and methods of analysis allow different facets of problems to be explored, increases scope, deepens understanding, and encourages consistent interpretation. (Tracy, 2010, p. 843)

This report has been structured to allow multiple voices, including the researcher's, to be identified and valued "to open up a more complex, in-depth, but still thoroughly partial, understanding of the issue" (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). My voice is heard but does not speak over the voices of the participants.

I also believe that this thesis structure creates an opportunity to create resonance and meaningful coherence through art and narrative, reflecting the complexity whilst engaging with the emotional elements of the ideas being explored (Tracy, 2010, p. 845). The allegory ties the report together whilst asking the reader to engage with both heart and head.

I ask that you, the reader, open your heart as well as your mind as you walk with me through this forest of ideas, stopping to enjoy the trees whilst not becoming lost in the forest.



**Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, … She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her.**

**Proverbs 3:13-15 ESV**

The Reader is invited to step into this crystallised qualitative research journey through the open door of allegory.

**Listen to my voice, follow my footprints, and enter… The Quest.**

*This is the tale of a worker in the province of Education and her adventures in the Land of Possibilities. We'll call her, Researcher.*

*Researcher had lived most of her life within the high walls of Technical Rationality (Schön, 1987). Of course, that isn't the name she used. To her, it was just, "School". Within the High Walls, there were systematic solutions to all problems. Of course, the very nature of the solutions meant that the problems also needed to be pre-packaged. The citizens felt safe in following the expertise of others, and if the "solutions" didn't work, … they just closed the doors of their practice and either gave up or persisted in doing the same thing… which of course produced the same inferior results.*

*Although she had spent odd times outside the walls, Researcher hadn't ventured far. In fact, she had spent such a long time within the walls that she didn't feel safe out of their*

*view. Although Researcher did not realise it, those walls had shaped her idea of School. They had shaped her, and she carried them deep within her soul.*

*One day, whilst in the library searching for documented and prescribed ways to improve her practice from those high in the walls of the city, she noticed a little-used shelf with a few scattered scrolls. She stooped down, blew away the dust and began to read.*

*A sense of excitement bubbled within as she read of adventures beyond the walls, well beyond the manicured gardens that surrounded the city. Her heart beat a little faster as she read of escapades filled with surprises and courage, always motivated by hope. Each tale was a quest for precious Jewels of Wisdom. It seemed that these Jewels offered new and innovative solutions to the problems of practice that no one would acknowledge within the walls.*

*Sitting in that dimly lit library, Researcher knew that her world would never be the same. The walls she carried within began to crumble, little by little, ever so slowly.*

*She knew the journey ahead would be challenging, so she found a friend with a similar desire to explore, and together they ventured beyond the city. They explored the lowlands, the forests and the swamps. Within the Swamps of Complex Problems (Schön, 1983), the two adventurers decided to dig. However, they had to remove their restrictive Coats of Assumptions. The Coats of Assumptions were hard to remove. They had buttons on the back that required another to undo. The two explorers needed to help each other. With newfound freedom and flexibility, they started to dig. Their hearts filled with hope as they sought the Jewels of Wisdom.*

*The sticky swamps were not comfortable. There were times when they found themselves sinking into the Mud of Messy Dilemmas. They pulled each other free and kept on seeking.*

*From time to time, Researcher and her friend saw the glitter of sunlight reflecting from a precious Jewel. With joy and satisfaction, they returned to "School", using their unique Jewels of Wisdom to solve problems and improve outcomes. Life in "School" would never be the same.*

*In the evenings, as Researcher sat looking out across the Land of Possibilities, her heart ached for her many friends and colleagues trapped within the walls. She wondered how she could get them outside to experience the exhilaration of opening their classroom doors, seeking Jewels of Wisdom, and experiencing the magic of deep change and better outcomes. One evening, she was lost in thought when an unfamiliar sound startled her.*

*It was the sound of the door to the city opening. This time, there was not one or two, but a whole Staff of Travellers hesitantly stepping through the door. Some looked fearful, others excited, some tired and still others reluctant. Yet here they were. Researcher knew what she had to do.*

*She sought out the Leader, "I see you're heading beyond the walls. I've had a few adventures myself. I've read scrolls that thrilled my heart and led me to dig in the swamps of the Jewel of Wisdom. I've even started to make some maps. Can I come along with you? Perhaps we can help each other."*

*Leader was pleased to have Researcher come along. "We haven't really got our plans together yet," he admitted, "But I know that our School needs Jewels of Wisdom. It is so hard to even step out through the door. Walk with us. We can seek together. Who knows what we might discover?"*

*Researcher began packing some backpacks with helpful tools… tools that she and her friend had found helpful. She really wanted to know if her tools and maps could help others safely leave the High Walls and adventure deep within the swamps.*

*Researcher did what she could to loosen the travellers' Coats of Assumptions, not a simple process by any means. Together the group dreamed and planned. They knew that the paths ahead would not be easy. They would record their journey, the hardships and the victories, the sticky mud, and the precious Jewels of Wisdom. Researcher renamed this Staff of Travellers, the Band of the Brave, though each knew in their own hearts the fears and concerns that remained.*

*It was to be a long journey, but deep within Researcher's heart was the hope that what they learned together might be of help to other Staff from "School" who might find themselves venturing beyond the Walls of Technical Rationalism, into the Land of Possibilities.*

*Researcher smiled to herself. The road ahead would be long and difficult, but it would be good.*

*"Mmm," she mused, "This adventure needs a name. Aah, the Quest of Reflective Practice. That will do."*

The Beginning.

## Leaving a Trail: Chapter Précis

This crystallised qualitative, constructivist case study explores ways to build capacity in teachers to deepen their reflective practice. This written report integrates the expected elements of academic qualitative dissertations with creative reflexive text, including allegory, metaphor, art, poetry, and narrative.

> Crystallization allows more freedom to portray accounts that reflect current sensibilities about the slippery nature of claiming knowledge without forcing us to give up systematic research methods. We read actively, as participants in the construction of meaning in the text, and we can read with and against expectations in the particular genres. Crystallization continually turns back upon itself, highlighting its own construction by showing that no one genre offers truth. … Crystallization enables researchers to push the envelope of the possible, particularly as regards to linking or integrating narrative/poetic/literary representations with grounded theory or other forms of systematic pattern finding. (Ellingson, 2009, pp. 15-16)

The Reader is invited to turn the pages of this explorative report, employing both mind and heart, logic and creativity, objectivity and subjectivity.

It is time now to look over the lie of the land before us, to get a sense of where we may be heading in this explorative journey.

# CHAPTER ONE
# THE LIE OF THE LAND: INTRODUCING TH STUDY AND ITS CONTEXT



***Here we stand in the shadow of the walls and look over the land…***

## 1.1 General Overview

In this opening chapter, we will consider the *lie of the land*, the current issues and realities of Australian education that undergird the intent of this qualitative research study to explore ways to build capacity in teachers to deepen their reflective practice.

As noted in the preface, this crystallised report integrates the traditional elements of academic qualitative dissertations with creative, reflexive text through a crystallised approach (Ellingson, 2009). The positioning of text support the reader to navigate this integrated report with anticipation and understanding. Each chapter begins with an allegoric opening text and artwork and ends with a reflexive creative text: Researcher: My Voice, My Footprints. The reader is invited to step into a journey inspired by Donald Schön's swamp metaphor.

The journey of this chapter takes the reader to a brief overview of the realities currently being faced in Australian education. The need for careful thought and innovative problem-solving is established and discussed as *reflective practice*. Barriers to such purpose

are noted from literature to ensure that the research premise and design *stand on the shoulders* of the theorists and researchers who have blazed the trail before.

This study explores elements of the phenomenon of reflective practice; hence some of the core ideas of John Dewey and Donald Schön provide a foundation for an emerging theoretical framework further developed in the Chapter Two Literature Review. The journey of Chapter One then moves to establish the research questions and contextualise the study.

## 1.2 The Lie of the Land: Current Issues in Australian Education – The Problem

Schools reflect societal beliefs and expectations. They prepare children to enter society with the skills, knowledge and attitudes that are generally regarded as essential for successful integration within the culture of their place and time. Many would also argue that there is an additional purpose of nurturing the holistic growth of each student. All such purposes for schools are social constructs. Although the need for ongoing reform has been evident to some degree in the past, until the 21st century schools have, to some extent, managed to gradually change and evolve to meet societal needs more closely (Kim et al., 2019; Reid & O'Donoghue, 2004).

However, currently there is an unprecedented rate of societal change. The world of children today is vastly different to the world their parents experienced. Schools are caught in this flux, with contradictory pushes and pulls from their many stakeholders (Kim et al., 2019; Scott & Armstrong, 2019). Forward planning is now a matter of thinking into a future as yet unrealised. Teachers are expected to meet more demands than ever before, including education for personal safety, health, and emotional and social well-being. Digital technology is being championed, with its curriculum being a changing target. Political and societal guilt trips are laid on the education system, and this filters through to the schools, and then the teachers. Expectations are high.

> [Teachers] must investigate rigorously what each student knows and what is holding them back. It means understanding what is working well in class and what needs to change. It means close collaboration with other teachers, sharing their observations and the evidence they have gathered, and asking for help to get a student who is stuck moving again. (Goss & Hunter, 2015)

In 2019, the Department of Education, Skills and Employment produced the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration which sets out a vision for Australian education that represented the views of all Australian Education Ministers.

> Our vision is for a world-class education system that encourages and supports every student to be the very best they can be, no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they may face. (Department of Education Skills and Employment, 2019, p. 2)

This vision statement then expands to encompass the complexity of what is being entrusted to educators, including offering equity and excellence in education through ensuring that all young people can access "structured play-based learning" in early childhood education, develop "strong literacy and numeracy skills", and "broad and deep knowledge across a range of curriculum areas". Educators are also tasked to ensure that students "thrive in a time of rapid social and technological change, and complex environmental, social and economic challenges", experience holistic well-being, and be given the tools to seek "trust and authenticity" whilst dealing with a world of "information abundance". Educators are expected to intentionally nurture mindsets of "flexibility, resilience, creativity …" and lifelong learning attitudes throughout students' educational experiences (Department of Education Skills and Employment, 2019, p. 2).

These are just some of the expectations of teachers in the current Australian educational context. With ranges of achievement within single classrooms often spreading "over five to eight year levels" (Goss et al., 2015, p. 1), teachers are faced with enormous challenges as they seek to provide equity and excellence for each student. Whilst educators have access to evidence-based research, resources, data and direction, a crowded curriculum (Cousins, 2006), changing technology, increasing societal expectations, high-stakes testing, and ever-changing government regulations leave many educators feeling overwhelmed in a demanding environment of compliance and complexity (Berry & Forgasz, 2018).

This complexity of demands requires ongoing pedagogical innovation and problem-solving. Finding new and more effective ways to meet ever-increasing and changing demands necessitates 'reflective practice', where teachers intentionally and reflectively consider what is being asked of them in light of the needs of their students and the situation they are working within, with the intention of improving practice and outcomes (Cornish & Jenkins, 2012; East, 2014; Glenn, 2011; Sellars, 2012; Ward & McCotter, 2004). The phenomenon of reflective practice is central to this qualitative constructivist case study.

Reflective practice is acknowledged as an essential skill for quality teaching, being core to professional improvement in Australia and around the world (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership; Banoobhai, 2012; Cornish & Jenkins, 2012; Scott & Armstrong, 2019; Sellars, 2012), and the continual quest for improving student outcomes

(Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2018; Hilton et al., 2013). It is regarded as a "meta-competency" (Collin & Karsenti, 2011, p. 571), foundational to the development of other teaching competencies.

However, this meta-competency is shrouded by a cloud of barriers, as identified through a preliminary literature review conducted in the lead-up to this research design. Barriers and supports for effective reflective practice were sought in a review of peer-reviewed literature between the years 2002 and 2014. The results of this review have been summarised in Table 1.

As noted in Table 1, effective implementation of reflective practice is often shackled by misunderstanding (Marshall, 2019; Nolan & Guo, 2022; Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014), fragmented approaches (Massingham, 2014) and the inertia of status quo, referring to the forces that resist questioning of current practice and inhibit the potential for consequential change (Amiripour et al., 2017; Reid & O'Donoghue, 2004). Conceptual understanding of reflective practice is often limited to retrospective evaluation (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014), an "introspective, after-the-fact description of teaching" (Ward & McCotter, 2004, p. 255). This view divorces the concept from future action and change, hindering the practitioner from experiencing the real strength and purpose of deep reflective practice. There is a danger that "… teachers will remain prisoners of their current conceptions of reflection" (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014, p. 392).

Table 1 also notes identified supports for reflective practice. There is a need for practitioners to understand the purpose and potential inherent in effective reflective practice (Runhaar et al., 2010; Thompson & Pascal, 2012). Reflective practice must be considered holistically and as an ongoing process integral to practice rather than an addition to practice (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006; Loughran, 2002). It should also be acknowledged that both individual and organisational factors impact reflective practice (Dimova & Loughran, 2009; Le Fevre, 2014). Teachers need to be supported and empowered to identify consequential, practice-based purposes and develop the attitudes and skills necessary for self-awareness and critical examination of beliefs and practices (Josten, 2011; Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014).

Listening for a whisper of wisdom amongst the cacophony of teachers' busy practice is no small task. There is a need to identify, acknowledge and reduce barriers, and construct intentional supports at both an individual and organisational level. This research study was designed to better understand how this might be enacted within a school setting.

**Table 1** *Identified supports and barriers to effective reflective practice 2002-2014*

| Barriers to reflective practice | Supports for reflective practice |
|---|---|
| **Misunderstanding**<br>o Lack of shared understanding of purpose (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014);<br>o Retrospective evaluative purpose (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014);<br>o Instrumental goals (Ward & McCotter, 2004);<br>o Masquerade of rationalisation (Loughran, 2002) | **Shared understanding**<br>o Practice-based problems (East, 2014);<br>o Purpose- in, on & for practice (Thompson & Pascal, 2012);<br>o Critical examination of larger context (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014)<br>o Goal orientation (Runhaar et al., 2010);<br>o Metacognitive awareness (Harnett, 2012) |
| **Fragmented approach**<br>o Episodic weakly connected professional development (Harnett, 2012);<br>o Lack of scaffolded support (Josten, 2011; Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014);<br>o Technical, mechanistic (Edwards & Thomas, 2010; Galea, 2012; Loughran, 2002)<br>o Descriptive (Hickson, 2011)<br>o Emphasis on documentation (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014)<br>o Irrelevant to practice (Parrish & Crookes, 2014) | **Holistic approach**<br>o Long term (Leeman & Wardekker, 2014; Massingham, 2014);<br>o Iterative framing, reframing (Loughran, 2002);<br>o Contextual (Parrish & Crookes, 2014);<br>o Connect reflection to existing school improvement initiatives (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006);<br>o Participative leadership (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014; Timperley et al., 2007);<br>o School culture that embraces inquiry (Le Fevre, 2014) |
| | **Organisational and individual factors**<br>o Scaffolded support within & external to school (Cornish & Jenkins, 2012);<br>o Model the process (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006)<br>o Varied strategies (Josten, 2011);<br>o Address depth & breadth critically (Thompson & Pascal, 2012);<br>o Harness language, meaning and narrative in meaning-making (Thompson & Pascal, 2012) |
| **The inertia of status quo**<br>o Risks (Le Fevre, 2014);<br>o Hidden assumptions (Harnett, 2012)<br>o Familiar framework (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014);<br>o Not relevant (Parrish & Crookes, 2014);<br>o The role of power (Thompson & Pascal, 2012),<br>o Top-down compliance (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014);<br>o Privacy (Le Fevre, 2014);<br>o Collective comfort (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014)<br>o Time (Le Fevre, 2014; Thompson & Pascal, 2012) | **Open-minded & empowered to change**<br>o Trust & support linked to responsibility (Dimova & Loughran, 2009);<br>o Scaffolded support within & external to school (Cornish & Jenkins, 2012);<br>o Question practice, in light of theory and varied perspectives (East, 2014);<br>o Address emotional & attitudinal dimension (Thompson & Pascal, 2012);<br>o Friendly critic external to school to help shed light & support the examination of beliefs and values (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014) |

## 1.3 The Discomfort of Reflective Practice – John Dewey and Donald Schön

Two theorists who have contributed a great deal to a shared understanding of the purpose and process of reflection and reflective practice are John Dewey and Donald Schön. Both theorists point out the discomfort involved in reflective practice.

Dewey described reflective thinking as moving beyond a "sequence of thoughts" to a "con-sequence", a point from which further thoughts can grow (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 2). He emphasised that the purpose for reflecting deeply is usually founded in difficulty and perplexity, resulting in an investigation through "suspended judgment" towards finding solutions (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 74). Dewey was at pains to point out that reflective thought is "troublesome", causing "mental uneasiness", requiring the thinker to overcome inertia (Reid & O'Donoghue, 2004), and be willing to work through doubt (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 9). Dewey's view of reflection existed within the complexity of problem-setting, purpose, rigour, attitude, and persistence. He described reflective thought as:

> Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends. (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 6).

Like Dewey, Donald Schön (1983; 1987) acknowledged the problematic and uncomfortable reality involved in reflective thinking. He used metaphor to explore the concept more deeply within the context of professional practice, giving the analogy of stepping into a "swamp", an uncomfortable and unpredictable problem, whereby one chooses to face a perplexity of practice, wading into it to seek solutions. He contrasted this courageous action with the easier action of many who choose to take the safer "high ground of technical rationalism" (Schön, 1987, p. 3). Dewey described this as "uncritical thinking" (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 13), which simply accepts the prevailing epistemology of practice or current theories without questioning, thereby avoiding the problems of greatest human concern (Schön, 1987). The acknowledged discomfort of reflective practice leads to a perception of 'risk' (Le Fevre, 2014).

## 1.4 *Seeking Jewels of Wisdom* – Purpose, Aims and Research Questions

Whilst reflective practice has been systemically recognised as an important feature of quality teaching in the Australian context, there is still much to learn about the strategies and processes needed for effective reflective practice and how to support such practices among teachers (Dinham et al., 2021, p. 445). Educators and educational leaders are asked to intentionally pause, reflect, devise solutions and then navigate considered and innovative

pathways of practice that lead towards improved student outcomes. These expectations are situated in educational environments crowded with societal expectations, systemic regulations, relentless change, and unexamined established practices. Teachers are working with this tension of push and pull on a daily basis (Scott & Armstrong, 2019, p. 123).

An overarching purpose of this study is to suggest recommendations for school leaders to consider when intentionally attempting to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. The phrase, 'deepened reflective practice,' refers to Donald Schön's swamp metaphor of digging deeply into the discomfort of messy problems. Digging deeply contrasts with surface and instrumental reflective practice that feels safer but lacks criticality and yields little impact on important issues. The term 'deepened' is an adjective describing a direction to reflective practice rather than a destination of practice.

The primary research question of this study asks, ***"How can school leaders build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice?"***

This study seeks to explore the lived experience of participants in one school's journey towards an intentional, critically reflective school-wide initiative to explore the interplay of barriers and supports that impact teacher capacity for deepening levels of reflective practice.

The secondary research questions support this exploration by capturing and analysing the lived experience of teachers, school leaders and an involved researcher. The questions ask:

Within the context of an intentional, critically reflective school-wide initiative:

- *What barriers and supports to teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice do teachers identify?*
- *What barriers and supports to teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice do school leaders identify?*
- *What barriers and supports to teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice does the researcher identify?*

The research was conducted within the context of one school setting over a period of fifteen months. During this time, an intentional school-wide initiative required teachers to deepen their reflective practice for a shared higher-order purpose involving student attitudes, engagement and values-rich character development. Data were collected throughout the study to capture the changing representations of school leaders, teachers, and my reflexive self over that time.

## 1.5 The Staff of Travellers – Case Study Context

To explore factors that may become barriers or supports for deepened reflective practice, this study required a school with leaders who were willing to commence a journey *beyond the walls* with their teachers, seeking to build their capacity for deepened reflective practice. Such a school was found. It is referred to by the "Faith School" pseudonym throughout this dissertation. Leaders and teachers gave informed consent for me to journey with them as a researcher and participant. In my research role, I interviewed teachers and school leaders to capture their perceptions of the barriers and supports to their deepening reflective practice. My role as a participant provided support in the form of negotiated and contextualised professional learning. This role also emerged to include the scaffolding of two-way communication between teachers and school leaders and the offering of mentoring and coaching, where required, to support the building of teacher capacity for the specific deepened reflective practice needed in their school-wide initiative.

Faith School is a small faith-based K-12 school located in rural Australia. The principal was questioning the current traditional practice of formal schooling within the context of Faith School. He wanted to lead his school towards deepened reflective practice and the potential for a significant transformation of practice. The principal named this critically reflective initiative, Harvest Project, linking the desired outcome of student character development with the outdoor, agricultural education he hoped to be pivotal in this transformation. He saw Harvest as a long-term project and looked for his teachers to be willing to be involved. He was keen to find ways to enable the teachers to reflect deeply and make substantial changes to their practice within the initiative of the Harvest Project.

In the instance of Harvest Project, deep reflective practice was a means to solving "messy" problems and improving student outcomes. The "messy" problems in this situation included student disengagement, disconnection between learning in theory and practice, and a perceived need for more meaningful faith and character development. There would be no 'one-size-fits-all solution' to this suite of interconnected problems. Appendix A offers a brief, time-bound description of the Harvest Project regarding its driving force and teachers' initial actions and reactions. The more nuanced and ongoing reactions are evident in the findings chapter of this study.

Over the course of this study, my personal and professional assumptions were to be challenged, as were the personal and professional assumptions of the teachers and school leaders. I was only on the journey with the school for a brief portion of their ongoing journey;

however, each participant impacted me in terms of my research, my own professional teacher identity and my personal growth. The research story that unfolds throughout this dissertation offers valuable insights to the wider educational community, not because of quantitative and measurable outcomes, but because each participant opened the door to their teacher self and allowed us to come in and learn and grow with them.

## 1.6 Researcher: My Voice, My Footprints

***The Reflective Practice Dilemma***

*Explicit teaching, that's the way*
*Make sure they know it all each day.*
*Get them thinking and finding out.*
*They need to know what life's really about.*

*Fix broken hearts and keep them safe.*
*Have them active but don't let them chafe.*
*Discussion's the go but keep the noise down.*
*Know adjectives, adverbs, and each type of noun.*

*Data's your friend, collect and dig deep.*
*Each child must improve on a line that is steep.*
*Network, research, professionally read.*
*Give feedback, advice, and all that they need.*

*There's family and health and balance to find.*
*Do more in less time. Be creative, don't mind.*
*Take time to question and ponder and think. …*

*And do it at recess while they're out for a drink!*

*K. Cameron, 2020*

*Looking out over the lie of the land, in the shadows of the high walls of Technical Rationality (Schön, 1987, p. 3) is a familiar place for me. You might say I have my name etched into a seat at the lookout. This quest is both professional and personal. I am a classroom teacher and have spent several years in administration, leading a small school. I*

*know the pressures from multiple stakeholders, the overwhelming tide of compliance, and the internal desire to "get it right" and truly make a difference in my students' lives.*

*I am aware of the mismatch between goals and achievements, the disappointment when my best efforts have not seemed enough, the juggling of demands and expectations … and the dropping of balls.*

### ***The Reflective Practice Dilemma – One Reflective Recess***

*Please note that the following memory is a reconstructed synthesis typical of many reflective moments throughout my teaching career. It is shared as a brief example of the dilemmas teachers face as they deal with relentless and time-consuming 'technical' demands from a range of stakeholders whilst recognising that problems of greater importance need more time and deeper reflection. Names have been changed and details adapted to protect individuals.*

*The recess bell rings, the air palpable with the gnawing of hungry tummies and explosive energy ready to be released in active play. I have a few precious minutes to breathe, prepare, … and reflect. My fingers clutch the cup, hot and inviting two hours ago.*

*I glance out the window and see Cheryl sitting alone, only a metre away from a giggling group of girls oblivious to her downcast expression. I wonder how best to help her. I look at the note she left on my desk the day before. A tear swells in the corner of my eye.*

*I set aside the cup and make my way to the door, brushing past Peter's desk. I notice his incomplete and error-filled work. Relentlessly moving forward to keep up with the new Math textbook was working for some students, but not Peter, … or Lucy for that matter. I need to find a way to discover the holes in their conceptual understanding. It takes time.*

*Thinking of time, national testing is looming. There is pressure to prepare the children for the test, but I know there are no quick fixes for Peter, or Lucy. For that matter…, I look around the classroom and consider the range of needs each desk represents. Is there ever a point to quick fixes?*

*With my hand on the door, my eye on Cheryl, and wondering how I can squeeze in some added time and a new approach to teaching division with decimals, Justin limps to the door, tearfully asking for an ice pack. He shows me his grazed knee. I tend his knee and listen to his heart. He's been having a tough week. … A patched knee and some gentle words send him back to his game.*

*I glance at the clock, … five minutes left. I remember with a start that my unit documentation must be uploaded before the staff meeting this afternoon, and I am on duty at lunchtime. I rush back to my computer, pull up the document and see that I haven't completed my unit reflection. I think back over the unit of work described on my screen, the outcomes*

*planned, the resources used, and the assessments completed. Did everything work out as I had planned? No. There were surprises along the way, some were good, others disappointing. As I grapple for the words to describe succinctly my reflective dance between teaching plans and responsive teaching… the bell rings.*

*I look out the window as the children make their way back to class. There was a flash of clarity in that moment. I don't teach units. I teach children, each unique and worthy of my deepest reflection. It is the accumulation of their learning stories, individual and interconnected, at times conflicting, filtered through factors beyond my control, that constitute my deepest reflections. I wonder how I can fit that in the document box.*

## 1.7 Leaving a Trail: Chapter Précis

This chapter has sought to *look out* over the current Australian educational context and notice the cumulative societal expectations, the complexities of practice, the rapid rate of change, and the growing compliance requirements that bombard educational leaders' and educators' work lives. Deep reflective practice is needed within this complex educational context to seek solutions to the evolving dilemmas and problems and potentiate transformation of practice and improved outcomes at individual, organisational and societal levels.

The primary research question of this study asks, "How can school leaders build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice?" and the secondary questions explore participants' lived experience of barriers and supports to deepened reflective practice in the context of one school's deep reflective initiative.

This chapter introduced two seminal theorists in the field of reflective practice, John Dewey and Donald Schön. Their work is foundational to this study and to the conceptual framework built in the literature review of Chapter Two.

*From looking out over the lie of the land, we must now step into the library … seeking extant theory and understandings of reflective practice to be able to recognise this phenomenon in its various facets and find the wisdom that is needed for the journey ahead.*

# CHAPTER TWO
# SEEKING WISDOM FROM THE SCROLLS: A LITERATURE REVIEW



***One day, she noticed a little-used shelf with a few scattered scrolls.***
***She stooped down, blew away the dust, and began to read.***

## 2.1 General Overview

This literature review investigates theory and research regarding the nature of reflective practice in education and the building of teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice, along with identified barriers and supports.

This chapter begins by sketching a landscape view of reflective practice contextualised in the field of education from current literature and the recommendations from which this research study was built. The concept of capacity building for reflective practice is then established from the literature, along with identified barriers. A conceptual framework is then developed from theory and literature to support a shared understanding of reflective practice and the varied facets of practice that impact it and are impacted by it. Finally, this framework of conceptual understanding is used to create the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice for use in the design and implementation of this research study.

## 2.2 Literature: The Current Landscape of Reflective Practice

It is well established that the complexity of the current educational context, "fraught with chaos, uncertainty, so-called common sense and challenges" (Cherrez & Jin, 2020, p. 62) poses a significant dilemma for school leaders and teachers. They face a formidable challenge in meeting the changing needs of their students. Such a dilemma requires teachers and school leaders to have the courage to "critically appraise their teaching practice, analyse educational settings and contexts, and reframe their actions" (Cherrez & Jin, 2020, p. 62) in order to create "optimal learning conditions for their learners" (Moayeri & Rahimiy, 2019) and outcomes that will benefit them in the present and into the future. Critically appraising practices with this intention is referred to in this study as reflective practice.

> Reflective practice is a twenty-first century imperative to mindfully and effectively negotiate the emerging landscapes through pausing, attending, revising, adopting and adapting new insights. (Ganly, 2018, p. 721)

Whilst widely acknowledged as an essential skill for teachers (Chen, 2023; Maksimović & Osmanović, 2019; Rigney et al., 2019), Griggs et al. (2018) suggest that the landscape of reflective practice across professions is "uneven and complex" (p. 1181), with many professionals reflecting at a simple level, falling short of the depth required to transform practice. In a scoping review of the role of reflective practice in the education systems of Malaysia and Australia, Dinham et al. (2021) observed that a number of researchers have reported the concept and skills of reflective practice to be "underdeveloped" (p. 445), with tensions between external requirements devoid of practice-based meaning and depth and the internalised dispositions of openness and responsibility that lead to "rich and meaningful reflective thinking" (p. 445). In their work on transformative learning, Taylor and Jarecke (2010) noted that the critical reflection that is at the heart of transformation remains "illusive" and "poorly defined" (p. 286), allowing the term to be prolifically used with no consensus of understanding. Goh (2019) suggests that the "lack of clarity" (p. 3) has led to mutations of understanding, reducing its potential significantly. In fact, Moayeri and Rahimiy (2019) suggest that shallow reflective practices can result in reinforcing "existing ideologies" (p. 129), rather than challenging them. Reflective practice can be "deemed to be a simple exercise in terms of reapproving, justifying, or rationalizing pre-recognized opinions" (p. 133). This certainly ticks a compliance box, but the dilemma still remains; the problems of navigating a changing world remain unresolved.

This research study is situated within this complicated landscape. Its purpose is to suggest recommendations for school leaders to consider when intentionally attempting to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. The term 'deepened' inferences a comparative move beyond the shallow reflections of "mechanistic practice" (Banoobhai, 2012, p. 175). Such reflections seek instrumental one-solution-fits-all answers to small problems rather than moving towards critical reflections that tackle issues of significance. The need for further research in this area has been noted by other researchers (Josten, 2011; Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014) .

In a qualitative study investigating "the relationship between teachers' reflective thinking and the development of their reflective practices", Monica Josten (2011) found that "participants who accessed their capacity to engage the full complexity of the reflective thinking process showed considerable growth toward the development of reflective teaching practice" (p. 3). Josten (2011) recommended a need for further study on the impact of a school environment on teacher reflections and practice (p. 299). She highlighted the need to implement change that could support teachers in being willing to take risks (p. 309).

Shabeeb and Akkary (2014) examined a professional development program intended to train teachers for reflective practice within one private Lebanese school. They found that there were differing perceptions of reflective practice between school administration and teachers and that these limited views impacted practice. The researchers recommended a need for in-depth studies examining scaffolding in promoting reflective practice (p. 395). They also recommended further examination of identified barriers and supports to reflective practice (p. 394).

Shabeeb and Akkary's recommendations have been incorporated into the research design of this study with the intention of contributing knowledge and understanding to the field of reflective practice within the educational context. The research question, "How can school leaders build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice?" is explored through the interplay of perceived barriers and supports that impact teacher capacity for deepening levels of reflective practice. Teachers and school leaders in Faith School shared their perceptions of one school initiative requiring deepened reflective practice over time. Participants were asked about their reflective practices and then invited to suggest how they could be supported to build their capacity for deepened reflective practice.

At this point, we enter the forest of complexity within the notion of reflective practice, seeking the trees that make it whole, for removing the trees weakens an understanding of the forest. In a similar way, we need to step into the concept of reflective practice with a

willingness to embrace complexity whilst seeking clarity. Before diving deep into building a shared conceptual understanding of reflective practice and the associated factors at play within the complexity of teaching and schools, we must first seek a literature-based understanding of the barriers and supports that have been identified to impact teacher capacity and what it might mean to 'build teacher capacity'.

## 2.3 Literature: Building Teacher Capacity

The term "capacity" implies space and potential. In this study, our focus on teachers' capacity is purposed towards building potential for engaging in deepened reflective practice. The inference is that the space is a prerequisite to the potential. In 2018, Turner, Lucas & Whitaker defined capacity as "the emotional intelligence to nimbly move between the functional and the relational of what is required in the moment to co-create the outcomes desired" (as cited in Lucas & Turner, 2023, p. 216) inferring the artistry of reflection-in-practice described by Schön (1987). Gahlsdorf Terrell and Sherman (2022) describe factors that impact the capacity for teachers' deep reflective practice, including a disposition towards metacognition and a situational and interpersonal normalising of dissonance. Mitchell and Sackney (2001), in "Building Capacity for a Learning Community", state that capacity building is achieved "through the interplay among personal abilities, interpersonal relationships, and organizational structures" (p. 3), seeking synergy between all three (p. 10). Capacity building is not a simple matter. Just as the problems schools face are entwined in complexity, so too is a teacher's capacity to question assumptions and practice and seek significant solutions with courage and skill.

Lucas and Turner (2023) note the fragility of a teacher's capacity for reflecting deeply, highlighting its sensitivity to the impacts of context, situation, and the depletion of personal energy stores. Capacity building, therefore, involves empowering teachers individually and collectively through a layered approach, emphasising some elements whilst seeding others to intentionally and strategically cultivate synergy and growth (Day, 2014). Mitchell and Sackney (2001) wisely remind those wishing to build capacity to attend to the growth and the pauses. Perceptive wisdom is required.

> Capacity builds not in a smooth, linear flow but in eddies and swells as well as in dips and depressions when no learning appears to be going on. The dips and depressions are opportunities to understand what individuals are trying to conserve, as this can give insights into why they do or do not embrace particular initiatives. (p. 10)

There is no one simple formula for building capacity. Each teacher, each educational context and each circumstance is different. The interplay of personal, collective and organisational capacity building requires a bespoke approach (Boud et al., 1985).

Individual capacity is heavily impacted by a teacher's attitudes, values and professional understanding (Sellars, 2012). Capacity building on an individual basis involves searching to discover gaps between espoused theories of action and actual theories-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1978). This is a confronting and difficult task requiring the vulnerability of receiving external perspectives and acting to reconcile the gaps. It requires "emotional and reflective maturity" (Lucas & Turner, 2023, p. 219). Seeking gaps between what one espouses as important and valued and what is evident in practice is a process of deconstruction (Sackney et al., 2005), which results in an uncomfortable disequilibrium (Gahlsdorf Terrell & Sherman, 2022). If gaps are discovered, the practitioner has the opportunity to reconstruct professional knowledge. Whilst intellectually and emotionally exhausting (Gahlsdorf Terrell & Sherman, 2022), the process of reconstructing can be transformational, both personally and professionally (Sackney et al., 2005). Building capacity for this confronting process requires interpersonal support.

Interpersonal capacity involves engaging in collaborative practices, requiring the development of relationships with a broad range of colleagues and reflective partners (Lucas & Turner, 2023; Sackney et al., 2005). In a study involving Australian tertiary students, Bullen and Roberts (2018) found that the capacity for critical reflection was cultivated when tutors built rapport with their students and created a sense of community in their classrooms. Interpersonal capacity is founded on relationships and teamwork, requiring the building of trust, the removal of fear, and the encouragement of questions (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). Interpersonal capacity empowers and expands individual capacity; however, both of these capacities are impacted either positively or negatively by the organisational capacity for deep reflective practice.

Organisational capacity involves both structure and culture: "Structural arrangements can open doors for teachers and break down walls between them or they can slam doors shut and keep people away from one another" (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001, p. 8). Helpful structures support "communities of reflection" (Rodgers, 2002b) and assist in prevailing over "concerns and tensions" (Ruge & Mackintosh, 2020, p. 169). In reflective communities, hierarchies are reduced, leaders facilitate, and teachers become involved in collegial leadership and mutual support (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). All in the community value both personal and collective learning (Sackney et al., 2005). Organisational capacity can be built through collaborative

inquiry, the checking of assumptions from a range of perspectives and an examination of the integrity between organisational espoused theories of action and organisational theories-in-use, in other words, checking whether what the organisation says they stand for and value aligns with others' experiences of what actually happens within the organisation (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Hutchinson, 2013).

Building teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice involves intentionally and intuitively building layers of capacity in all three domains, avoiding barriers, and selecting a range of supports that best meet the needs of the teachers, the organisation and the situations.

## 2.4 Literature: Barriers and Supports to Capacity Building

Barriers to building teacher capacity can be viewed within the interplay of personal, interpersonal and organisational arenas, with each bearing much influence on the other. The individual teacher brings with them a unique blend of experience, values, beliefs, skills, and attitudes. Each has a life and work narrative that needs to be listened to in order to build the appropriate support for moving past personal barriers (Pereira, 2011). Some may lack critical thinking skills, impacting their ability to question and examine personal, school-based and ethical issues (Otienoh, 2011). Others may have low professional self-efficacy, leaving them struggling with the confidence to contribute to teams and solve problems with others (Kucharczyk et al., 2019). For many teachers, unexamined beliefs, values and judgments become impediments (Briscoe, 2017) that can feel "comfortable" but actually mask personal and collective "cognitive entrenchment" (Gahlsdorf Terrell & Sherman, 2022, p. 245).

The complexity of interpersonal arenas within an educational organisation gives rise to many barriers to capacity building. One such barrier noted by Mitchell and Sackney (2001) is a culture of privacy and individualism. Closed doors, metaphorical and physical, stifle the potential for interpersonal capacity (Le Fevre, 2014). Unexamined assumptions underlying a culture of privacy can include a culture of distrust (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Without trust, interactions are guarded, collegial feedback may lack authenticity, assumptions and practices are not questioned, and only a limited range of perspectives will be sought, stifling the potential for collaborative reflective practice (Louizou, 2014).

Both personal and interpersonal capacities are impacted by organisational capacities. The demands of external and administrative accountability and associated compliance measures can reduce individual and collective capabilities for deep reflective practice (Ditchburn, 2015, p. 94; Šarić & Šteh, 2017). Reducing reflective practice to a "mere set of prescribed steps and techniques" (Šarić & Šteh, 2017, p. 80) is a recognised barrier to

organisational capacity for deep reflective practice. However, this does not imply the need for a *hands-off* approach. Bakkenes et al. (2010) collected data from 94 practising teachers in a longitudinal study seeking to understand how teachers learn. One of their findings indicated that teachers working in workplaces with no structures of support for deep reflective practice reported that when they questioned their own practice, they would experience negative emotions, leaving them unlikely to proceed to change their practice (p. 546). This contrasted with teachers in workplaces with organised collaborative support. Those teachers were happy to take risks through experimentation and were open to change with minimal negative emotions. It takes courage and intentionality, both personally, collaboratively, and organisationally, to build capacity for deep reflective practice.

Intentionality implies the need to carefully consider and implement support measures. For teachers to open the doors of their classrooms and allow others to see their practice and act as critical friends in the process of deep reflective practice, there needs to be a climate of psychological safety and trust (Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Lucas & Turner, 2023; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). Teachers need to be supported in an awareness of their capabilities (Rodgers & Laboskey, 2016) and acknowledged as agents of change (Ditchburn, 2015). Flexible structures or frameworks need to be in place to help teachers examine their own assumptions and then move beyond isolated episodes of individual reflection to an ongoing practice that includes questioning context and considering moral and ethical issues (Eschenbacher, 2020; Fox et al., 2019; Sweet et al., 2019). A culture of inquiry should be deliberately created that integrates collaboration, inquiry, and reflection (Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). The dissonance of open inquiry and suspended judgment needs to be normalised within the organisation (Gahlsdorf Terrell & Sherman, 2022).

Capacity building is core to the focus of this research study. There is a need to create a space within the complexity of teaching for deep reflective practice. As Mitchell and Sackney (2001) identified, this space is important on three levels, personal, interpersonal, and organisational.

Next, we will consider the nature of the deep reflective practice that is to fill that space by constructing a conceptual framework of reflective practice that considers the multiple dimensions of practice involved.

## 2.5 Literature: Constructing a Conceptual Framework from Theory and Research

Representing the process of reflective practice in a manner that reveals depth and breadth, artistry and rigour, part and whole, has occupied much thought and debate over the

last century. Some argue that the very act of defining and describing the concept of reflective practice with specific criteria has the potential to reduce it to a mechanistic practice (Edwards & Thomas, 2010). However, the purpose of this study is not to fragment and rationalise but rather to examine and describe the various facets of reflective practice within the complexities of school realities to build a respectful understanding of the wholeness of this concept in context.

### 2.5.1 Of Walls and Swamps: Theoretical Foundations

John Dewey brought the idea of reflective thinking to the field of education in the first half of the twentieth century (Dewey, 1910/1997, 1916; Dimova & Loughran, 2009). Others have continued to build theories and investigate the concept through research and observation (Brookfield, 2009, 2017; Josten, 2011; Liston & Zeichner, 1987; Mezirow, 2010; Rodgers, 2002a; Rodgers & Laboskey, 2016; Schön, 1987).

Dewey (1910/1997) highlighted many elements of the concept of reflection and reflective thinking. He noted the importance of developing an "attitude of suspended conclusion" and maintaining a stance of doubt "to carry on systemic and protracted inquiry" (p. 13). Dewey contrasted this rigorous process with what he called "uncritical thinking" (p. 13), referencing simply accepting the first solution offered.

Donald Schön contextualised reflection within the professions, adding the idea that reflection in and on practice is a core element of "professional artistry" (Schön, 1983). He suggested the need for a practice of reflection that went beyond technical know-how. His swamp metaphor, "where situations are confusing 'messes' incapable of technical solution", yet of "great human concern" (Schön, 1983, p. 42), aptly fits the current educational climate of constant flux, accruing expectations and diversity of student needs. Teachers are facing increasing practice dilemmas. According to Schön, there is a choice to be made.

> There are those who choose the swampy lowlands. They deliberately involve themselves in messy but crucially important problems and, when asked to describe their methods of inquiry, they speak of experience, trial and error, intuition, and muddling through.
>
> Other professionals opt for the high ground. Hungry for technical rigor, devoted to an image of solid professional competence, or fearful of entering a world in which they feel they do not know what they are doing, they choose to confine themselves to a narrowly technical practice. (Schön, 1983, p. 43)

With this metaphor, Schön was able to shed light on the deliberate nature of reflective practice and the discomfort that is involved when a professional person faces problems that are unpredictable and confusing. He conveyed the idea that discomfort can be the catalyst for positive change through the professional practitioner "improvising, inventing and testing, in the situation, strategies of her own" (Schön, 1987, p. 5). His metaphor also painted a picture of stark contrast to expose what does *not* constitute reflective practice, including paying attention to problems that are "relatively unimportant to individuals or society at large, … while in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern" (Schön, 1987, p. 3). This metaphor has proved to be helpful in identifying prevailing practices and attitudes that masquerade as reflective practice (Loughran, 2002) and lead to a sense of contentment with the status quo, thereby forming significant barriers to further development.

Both Dewey and Schön emphasised the discomfort involved in reflecting on difficult problems or dilemmas and, therefore, the great need for courage and persistence. Stephen Brookfield (2017) is a more recent theorist who has emphasised the need for teachers to become critically reflective, which he describes as "the habit of constantly trying to identify, and check, the assumptions that inform our actions as teachers" (pp. 4-5), to expose injustice and power imbalances that lie unexamined in the gaps between espoused theories and theories in action. Like Dewey and Schön, Brookfield (2017) is upfront that critical reflection is a risky endeavour involving "hard work, a long incremental haul" (p. 225), and exposing a teacher to personal and professional efficacy dilemmas. This has the potential to marginalise the teacher within their organisation (Brookfield, 2017). The idea of criticality in reflective practice deepens the purpose towards solving dilemmas and problems within moral and ethical societal *swamps*.

The term reflective practice is considered by many to be a "nebulous concept" (Parrish & Crookes, 2014, p. 265). Whilst noting that it is accepted as important, Fergusson et al. (2019) noted that "what it actually is and how it might be developed are more problematic" (p. 290). To gain a multidimensional understanding of reflective practice, this literature review integrates conceptual understandings from these theorists with research gained from two extensive literature searches, the first conducted in 2015, which provided the foundational conceptual framework for the design of this study, and the second conducted between 2020 and 2023, seeking to build further depth and understanding from peer-reviewed articles published between 2016 and 2023.

To ensure a shared understanding of the core terminology used in this dissertation, there is a need to define 'reflective practice' as it is used in the context of this research study.

### 2.5.2 The Quest of Reflective Practice: Seeking a Definition

"Reflection and practice are indivisible aspects of the same process" (Edwards & Thomas, 2010, p. 406). Reflective thought is applied to the practitioner's practice (Josten, 2011, p. 12), noting both an action and a context. Reflective practice is an "on-the-job performance resulting from using a reflective process for daily decision-making and problem-solving" (Larrivee, 2008a, p. 342). Teachers make decisions and solve problems seemingly consistently throughout their practice. It is important for this study that the concept of reflective practice under examination in this study be defined with greater clarity. A restricted understanding of reflective practice can limit its potential (Leering, 2019; Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014).

In order to design this research study and guide the literature review, a preliminary working definition for reflective practice was devised from theoretical understandings based on the writings of John Dewey, Donald Schön and Stephen Brookfield. This definition considered the dimensions of purpose, process, position (encompassing both situation and context), and perspectives. These conceptual dimensions will be used throughout this chapter to seek a richer understanding of reflective practice. Both Dewey and Schön noted that reflective thinking involves a strong purpose within the context of a worthwhile problem. As noted above, these theorists also emphasised the discomfort involved in the process and the need for deliberate persistence. The following preliminary definition for reflective practice was used to initially guide this study's research design and literature review.

> Reflective practice is a deliberate professional process that is embedded in action and purposed to seek insight that leads to the transformation of professional beliefs and behaviours, ultimately leading to improved outcomes. It involves questioning and analysing current assumptions and practice through theory and varied perspectives. (Brookfield, 2009; Dewey, 1910/1997; Josten, 2011; Rodgers, 2002a; Schön, 1983; Schön, 1987)

After data collection and initial analysis was completed, this defintion was reviewed. Ten definitions for reflective practice were selected from peer-reviewed literature between 2018 and 2023. Table 2 lists these definitions. Bolded phrases indicate elements of reflective practice that offered additional dimensions to the above definition.

**Table 2** *Definitions for Reflective Practice 2018-2023*

| **Reflective practice is:** |
|---|
| "… the process that a teacher uses to give thought to the way he or she teaches and how it benefits the learners. … it gives meaning to the thinking and creates the opportunity for teachers to develop a clear understanding of how they are supporting quality teaching and learning" (Connelly et al., 2020, p. 1). |
| "… a **cyclical** [emphasis added] process of deep reflection describing one's professional thinking as a pathway to improved teaching practices" (Damore & Rieckhoff, 2021, p. 52). |
| "… a deepened understanding of **how the past shapes, though not determines, the present, as well as its being informed by a future perspective, by a 'movement towards being'** [emphasis added]" (Kramer, 2018, p. 216). |
| "… a specific *learning mode* – **both individual and collective** [emphasis added] – that empowers learners to transform their situation" (Kramer, 2018, p. 211). |
| "…the ongoing, regular and persistent use of reflective tools to engage, **individually and collectively** [emphasis added]**,** in critical thinking about various aspects of practice. Practitioners should be able to **look back, but also be able to reflect on their immediate practice of the moment, and to project into the future** [emphasis added]. Reflection should encourage practitioners to problematise, confront and challenge, and should lead them to create plans for just action. By implementing these plans, practitioners hope to effect significant and meaningful change to the circumstances of people and situations closest to them" (Benade, 2018, p. 128). |
| "… the attentive consideration and critical questioning of what we do, what works and what does not work on **a personal** [emphasis added], theoretical and professional level" (Lubbe & Botha, 2020, p. 290). |
| "… a crucial skill and method that creates a learning situation and ensures a learning outcome which combines **previous experience, specific contexts** [emphasis added], and theory-guided practice" (Fergusson et al., 2019, p. 291). |
| "… a careful examination and bringing together of ideas to create new insight through ongoing **cycles of expression and re/evaluation** [emphasis added]" (Marshall, 2019, p. 411). |
| "… is bound up with the constant, careful consideration of practice in the light of knowledge and beliefs. The **complete cycle of reflection** [emphasis added] should then lead to clear, modified action" (Mohamed et al., 2022, p. 2). |
| "… the process whereby teachers analyse their teaching practice to improve or change it for better outcomes, which results in the development of qualified professionals." (Gudeta, 2022, p. 9) |

In terms of process, it was noted that reflective practice is often, though not always, considered a cyclic process (Damore & Rieckhoff, 2021; Marshall, 2019; Mohamed et al., 2022). Benade (2018) and Kramer (2018) also emphasised the importance of digging into important present problems through analysing assumptions and actions from the past with the purpose of creating a better future.

In terms of situation and perspectives, the definitions put forward by Benade (2018) and Kramer (2018) considered the role of both individual and collective reflective practice. The definitions of both Lubbe and Botha (2020) and Fergusson et al. (2019) also highlighted the personal nature of reflection, in addition to theoretical and professional perspectives.

In order to distance the focus of this study from a more surface-level technical reflective practice (Larrivee, 2008a; Schön, 1987; Ward & McCotter, 2004), and incorporate the additional highlighted nuances from the definitions listed in Table 2, the following extended descriptive definition for *deep reflective practice* was created.

> Deep reflective practice is a deliberate iterative professional process embedded in context and action and purposed towards seeking insight that leads to the transformation of beliefs and behaviours, ultimately leading to improved outcomes. It involves both individual and collective questioning and analysis of current assumptions and practices through theory and varied personal and professional perspectives, seeking understanding from both the past and the present to build a better future. (Benade, 2018; Brookfield, 2009; Damore & Rieckhoff, 2021; Dewey, 1910/1997; Fergusson et al., 2019; Josten, 2011; Kramer, 2018; Lubbe & Botha, 2020; Marshall, 2019; Mohamed et al., 2022; Rodgers, 2002a; Schön, 1983; Schön, 1987)

This study was built on the premise that deep reflective practice, as descriptively defined above, is a meta-competency essential for meeting the needs and complexities of 21st-century education. It is not a technical *pre-packaged* phenomenon, immediately recognised and easily enacted. We must look deeply to gain an understanding that will support the aim of this study, exploring ways to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. Using the four lenses of purpose, process, position, and perspectives, this literature review is purposed to investigate the concept of reflective practice with a *gentle untangling* of some of its complexity. It must be noted that these lenses are simply vantage points through which we will notice overlapping and interdependent elements of reflective practice. After defining and briefly exploring each lens, we will, by way of example, use each lens to notice elements of reflective practice in the context of one Australian research study conducted by Baxter et al. (2021) in which deep reflective practice was engaged in for a particular purpose

with a clear process that acknowledged contextual positioning and involved the seeking of additional perspectives.

I concur with Carol Rodgers (2002a) in her article, "Defining Reflection: Another Look at John Dewey and Reflective Thinking" when she states, "I acknowledge the risk inherent in parsing out elements of reflective practice. I do not seek to codify it or cement it or have it added to yet another list of standards to be met and tested" (Rodgers, 2002a, p. 844). My purpose is to build a multidimensional conceptual understanding so that we may recognise and respect reflective practice for its powerful potential within the messy and important dilemmas of teaching practice.

### 2.5.3 Towards a Conceptual Framework: The Lens of Purpose - Why

> Engaging in reflection in concert with experience and for a particular purpose provides the means by which learners transform the way they think about themselves, others, or society. (Taylor & Jarecke, 2010, p. 285)

The first lens considers what particular purposes might inspire the deliberate and difficult task of moving beyond the high grounds of technical rationality, where solutions for manageable problems are assured and plentiful, into the "swampy lowlands of messy, confusing problems" (Schön, 1987, p. 3). These "ill-defined, complex, value-laden and unique problems" (Rodgers & Laboskey, 2016, p. 82) cannot be categorised and neatly labelled. Donald Schön (1987) alludes to these problems in the "swamp" as being those "of greatest human concern" (1987, p. 3), yet they typically arise unannounced, often with an element of surprise. The need for reflective practice is born out of "perplexity, confusion or doubt" (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 12), and its purpose is to gain new insights (Cornish & Jenkins, 2012; Šarić & Šteh, 2017) or see things differently (Ganly, 2018), which may in turn lead to innovation (East, 2014; Larrivee, 2008b), improved outcomes (Belvis et al., 2013; Hoekstra & Korthagen, 2011; Josten, 2011; Sellars, 2012) and/or the transformation of beliefs or behaviours (Eschenbacher, 2020; Josten, 2011; Ward & McCotter, 2004).

When teachers deliberately face challenging problems within their practice, there is the potential to gain significant professional insight or wisdom (Dybicz, 2004; Thompson & West, 2013). Donald Schön (1987) referred to "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action" as two important ways that professionals gain fresh perspectives and useful knowledge, the first referring to the "on-the-spot" reflections that occur within the "crucible of action" (Dimova & Loughran, 2009, p. 208; Grimmett, 1988, p. 13), and the latter referring to intentional and systematic thinking back over experiences. Schön saw these as

essential elements of professional practice, purposed towards professional artistry and intuitive insight (Rodgers & Laboskey, 2016). However, insight and wisdom must be tested in action.

Innovation, improved outcomes, and transformation are the progeny of insight. Barbara Larivee (2008b) suggests that teaching devoid of reflective practice can become "a mechanical act" (p. 88), leading to boredom and burnout. The empowerment and freedom of breaking free from routines and habitual practice clear the way for insight and inspire novel ideas and solutions that can improve outcomes, bring about consequential change, and even prevent professional stagnation (Bassot, 2016, p. 2). "By taking control of their teaching lives, they become empowered decision makers who can then begin to act on their world in a way that can change it" (Larrivee, 2008b, p. 89). "Reflection-for-action" (Thompson & Pascal, 2012) is a term that pulls the purpose for reflective practice firmly into the present and future tense. It is also an integral feature of critical reflection (Hickson, 2011) in purposing to use insights gained through reflective practice to "effect significant and meaningful change" and "create plans for just action" in the future (Benade, 2018, p. 128).

Baxter et al. (2021) conducted a study to explore the experience of two Australian schools using critical reflection with the purpose of seeking insight into the messy problems they were facing in terms of challenging student behaviour and negative classroom climates (p. 501). They reported that new perspectives gave birth to outcomes of finding innovative strategies to meet their students' needs. This in turn brought about change to "their interactions with each other and their students" (p. 511), and a resultant positive change to school climate. This small study is one example through which we can use the lens of purpose to notice elements of reflective practice. These schools were facing troubling dilemmas of practice that were not responding to off-the-shelf technical solutions. Articulating purpose is one lens through which reflective practice can be viewed and enabled.

Understanding *why* teachers might be willing to reflect deeply leads us to look for some picture of *how* they might do so.

### 2.5.4 Towards a Conceptual Framework: The Lens of Process - How

In seeking a lens that focuses on how teachers practise reflectively to achieve a depth of purpose that leads to professional insight, innovation, improved outcomes, and transformation, we must also consider some warnings and cautions. John Loughran (2002) reminds us that "rationalization may masquerade as reflection" (p. 35). He defines rationalisation as "the dogged adherence to an approach almost despite the nature of the

practice setting because alternative ways of seeing are not [cannot] be apprehended" (p. 35). What may look like reflective practices may not be so. A related concept often disguised as reflective practices involves the increasing accountability measures intended to capture instrumental teaching skills through checklists of competencies (Dimova & Loughran, 2009, p. 216). These often belie genuine reflective practice.

According to Dewey (1910/1997), genuine reflection is a rigorous and systematic process involving "active, persistent and careful" inquiry (p. 6) that is organised, yet flexible enough to best achieve its purpose. "It is opposed both to a mechanical routine uniformity and to a grasshopper-like movement" (p. 40), jumping from one idea to another. Donald Schön (1987) also alerts us to the seeming incongruities inherent in the complex processes of reflective practice. He references both a dogged digging in the swampy lowlands of difficult problems (p. 3) and a sense of professional artistry, the seemingly effortless "competence by which practitioners actually handle indeterminate zones of practice" (p. 13). He explains the dichotomy of art and rigour:

> In the terrain of professional practice, applied science and research-based technique occupy a critically important though limited territory, bounded on several sides by artistry. There are an art of problem framing, an art of implementation and an art of improvisation – all necessary to mediate the use in practice of applied science and technique. (Schön, 1987, p. 13)

Disciplined, systematic, and persistent rigour (Rodgers & Laboskey, 2016) is both structured and flexible. The structure is a framework that allows space for the art. Reflective practice is "a descriptive notion – not a prescriptive one" (Clará, 2015, p. 261). This is an important reminder as we consider some of the elements of rigour. Rather than prescribing a solid structure of practice that dangerously merges into technical prescriptive methodologies, we seek to describe a range of structural elements utilised in a framework that can support the artistry of reflective practice (Schön, 1983), enhance reflective thinking and "facilitate independent and in-depth learning through inquiry" (Gupta et al., 2019, p. 41).

One commonly referenced structural element of reflective practice is that of a reflective cycle where "the end controls the process" (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 12), rather than the process being the controlling factor. Dewey (1910/1997) described some of the typical elements of this reflective cycle as being born out of a "felt difficulty" (p. 72), which is then located and defined within its context. Possible solutions are then sought with an attitude of "suspended judgment" (p. 74) and considered in light of reason, experience and ongoing observation. This then leads to experimentation and trialling of temporary conclusions.

Rodgers and Laboskey (2016) described this as a "spiralling process" (p. 73), a cycle "sandwiched by experience" and enacted in "recursive layers of observation, description, analysis and interpretation" (p. 75).

Moving from the implicit to the explicit, this intentional iterative approach holds much in common with action research (Hagevik et al., 2012; Patthey & Thomas-Spiegel, 2013; Sellars, 2012). Process terminology is common to both, including problem-setting; generating possible explanations; hypothesis creation; testing; evaluating, and moving to further reflections (Dimova & Loughran, 2009; Draper et al., 2011; Rodgers, 2002a; Taylor, 2010). There is a focus on producing a consequence of change (Dewey, 1910/1997; Sellars, 2012) in a "perpetual learning cycle" (Larrivee, 2008b, p. 88) whilst mindfully avoiding the mechanistic practice of implementing programs and complying with top-down directives without question (Antoniou & Kyriakids, 2011, p. 292; Banoobhai, 2012, p. 175). Such rigid structures remove the empowering breath of artistry and agency (Edwards & Thomas, 2010; Galea, 2012), leaving instead, lifeless edifices of instrumental technical problem-solving (Dimova & Loughran, 2009; Josten, 2011; Schön, 1987). To encourage rigour, ensure frameworks that provide space and promote an iterative process that is embedded in purpose and process, the literature review identified a number of scaffolds of support for reflective practice.

Such scaffolds are purposed to create opportunities for the living cycles of "loops and leaps" (Jay & Johnson, 2002, p. 80) inherent in reflective artistry. The commonality between these scaffolds is that they support agency and artistry, rather than replacing them with formulaic procedures. Facilitating (Marshall et al., 2022), mentoring (Betlem et al., 2019; Rawlings Smith, 2020; Tonna et al., 2017), coaching (Hanson & Hoyos, 2015; Houchens et al., 2012; Lucas & Turner, 2023), and critical friends (Behizadeh et al., 2019; Prinsloo-Marcus & Campbell, 2023; Sjögren & Kärner Köhler, 2021) are but four of many such scaffolds.

Marshall et al. (2022) conducted a literature synthesis to capture an understanding of the part facilitators can play in scaffolding reflective practice. This review crossed a range of professional practices, including education. A person given the role of facilitating reflective practices has the opportunity to build relationships that evoke trust (p. 486) and enable an environment that is safe, supportive and free of judgment (p. 487). Their work with teams of practitioners can also provide a safe space for collaborative sharing (p. 487). Facilitators are helpful in "clarifying roles and expectations" (p. 488), building skills and guidelines for

reflective dialogue (p. 489), modelling (p. 490), and supporting practitioners to seek a range of perspectives to enlarge their viewpoints (p. 491). Facilitation is often a short-term scaffold.

Mentoring is a purposeful, longer-term relationship generally recognised as a valuable scaffold that acts as a "catalyst for reflection" (Tonna et al., 2017, p. 210). It is described as "an egalitarian approach of sharing knowledge, working together and nurturing the whole person to improve practice" (Betlem et al., 2019, p. 328). Within the field of education, mentoring usually involves a mentee being paired with a more experienced mentor. The ongoing relationship involves conversations with the desired outcome of supporting the "mentees to improve their teaching performance by facilitating their discussion of the praxis from different perspectives" (Tonna et al., 2017, p. 210). The impact of this scaffold has been noted to vary according to the competencies and attitudes of the mentor (Bell et al., 2022; Nyanjom, 2020; Southcott et al., 2020) and whether it is conducted from a developmental or judgmental approach (Tonna et al., 2017).

Coaching is another relational scaffold used to support teachers and school leaders in their reflective practice (Bell et al., 2022). Coaching is often structured and time-bound with mutually agreed and specific boundaries of focus. The role of a coach is often viewed as a trainer in skill development, as opposed to a mentor's more relational and supportive role. Houchens et al. (2012) described "transformational coaching" as "helping the client broaden, deepen, or transform his or her interpretation of what is happening to improve effectiveness" (p. 144). Their study, examining the impact of coaching with principals, found that this scaffold improved their confidence in dealing with the specific problem they were considering. They "valued the structure, feedback, and reflective dimensions" of the coaching protocol (p. 135). This structured approach scaffolded their ability to reflect deeply on their particular dilemma of practice (p. 165).

Peer coaching differs in that peers guide and support each other "through reflection, active listening, and nonevaluative [*sic*] feedback" (Loman et al., 2020, p. 87). Similarly, the concept of critical friends (Blake & Gibson, 2021; Prinsloo-Marcus & Campbell, 2023) involves colleagues coming together in a relationship of trust and mutual respect to "ask provocative questions, while simultaneously offering a friendship-based critique of a person's practice" (Sjögren & Kärner Köhler, 2021, p. 40).

Returning to the example of the study conducted by Baxter et al. (2021), the lens of process highlights that this study used a collaborative scaffolding approach which they described as Reflective Circles. This form of scaffolding supported the teachers in reflecting deeply and seeking solutions for dealing positively with the challenging behaviours they were

experiencing in their classrooms and school contexts. This scaffold infused participatory action research with critical reflection (Southall, 2019). Three small groups were formed, two with teachers and one with school leaders from both schools. Each group was led by a facilitator. Group members responded to guiding questions online before meeting as a group. After each group member shared a little from their journal reflections, others in the group responded, "providing multiple perspectives and provoking deeper thinking" (Baxter et al., 2021, p. 505). The reflective circles met twice a term over one year. This process was rigorous, structured and cyclic, scaffolded by both the structure of the process and the facilitator of each group.

The lens of process notices a range of ways deep reflective practice can be implemented. Rather than seeking a rigid prescriptive methodology, this lens considers the foundational elements that support rigour in reflective practice, such as intentionality, frameworks, ongoing cycles or spirals, and scaffolds such as facilitation, mentoring, critical friends, and processes such as reflective circles. Artistry involves selecting the processes best suited to the problem and the situation.

Considering *how* reflective practice is conducted leads to an intrinsically connected element of *where* it is done.

### 2.5.5 Towards a Conceptual Framework: The Lens of Position - Where

Reflective practice is not conducted in a vacuum. It is positioned in a time and place, a context and situation. The third lens seeks to focus on understanding the metaphoric "swamp" (Schön, 1987) of complex practice. Reflective capacity, a concept core to this study, "is fragile and is sensitive to contextual and situational factors, which impact how much we can hold in our reflective awareness at a moment in time" (Lucas & Turner, 2023, p. 216). These factors are far-reaching in their impact on teachers' capacity to deepen their reflective practice.

Context matters (Bascia, 2014). Reflective practice "acts as an intermediary between the practitioner engaged in the activity and the context in which the activity occurs" (Goh, 2019, p. 5). This lens looks at the context, and the next looks at the practitioner, each impacting the other (Goh, 2019). Context includes the community of practice and the culture of often-unexamined beliefs, assumptions and practices collectively held. It also includes the climate of the workplace, noticeable through perceptions, feelings, and emotions. "School climate sets the tone for all the teaching and learning done in the school environment"

(Mousena & Raptis, 2021, p. 99). When we seek to understand reflective practice, we must consider both the people and the situations within which they are reflecting.

Deep reflection purposed to build knowledge and wisdom must be sought within the social context if it is to truly bring about transformed practice (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006; Edwards & Thomas, 2010; Hickson, 2011). In characterising John Dewey's concept of reflection, Carol Rodgers (2002a) distilled four essential criteria, with the first two emphasising the purpose of meaning-making and the systematic and rigorous ways of thinking needed, and the fourth focusing on essential attitudes. Dewey's third criteria, according to Rodgers, stated that "reflection needs to happen in community, in interaction with others" (p. 845). Whilst reflective practice can range from individual to collaborative in nature, a supportive community verifies the worth of an individual's experiences and viewpoints and offers additional perspectives (p. 857).

Shchedrovitsky, a Russian philosopher, conceptualised reflection as a "cooperative connection" expressed and deepened in communication (as cited in Dimova & Loughran, 2009, p. 211). Co-producing knowledge has the potential to produce fresh insights (Collin & Karsenti, 2011; Larrivee, 2008b; Nilsson, 2013). This happens in a community. Interaction and collaboration, including observations from a "critical friend" (Nilsson, 2013; Prinsloo-Marcus & Campbell, 2023), can support all aspects of the reflection cycle and blend both intra- and inter-personal reflections (Parsons & Stephenson, 2005) to see practice through new eyes (Marshall et al., 2022) and "enhance teaching" (Nel, 2021, p. 87).

> We need community, and we need diversity and belonging in community, in order to gain new perspectives and vantage points that are simply not possible when we operate in isolation. (Baer, 2022, p. 40)

A supportive community can foster reflective practice and encourage professional and personal growth, but an unsupportive environment hinders and obstructs both reflective thinking and improvement in teaching practices (Josten, 2011, p. 299). Moving from an unsupportive community to a supportive one requires a deliberate shift in culture.

School culture plays an important role in either fostering or hindering reflective practice (Day et al., 2007). Hall and Simeral (2017) suggest four positive cultural characteristics needed to build capacity for effective reflective practice:

1. Intentionally moving culture from compliance to commitment (p. 60).
2. Supporting both collective and individual reflective practice (p. 61).
3. Encouraging a culture that works from strengths and focuses on growth instead of a deficit culture, seeking to expose errors and failings (p. 61).

4. Weaving “reflection into every other initiative” (p. 62).

These suggestions bring to light some of the cultural elements that stifle reflective practice: compliance, isolation, lack of support, judgment approaches, and fragmented focus. When a school culture is non-threatening and focused on supporting teachers’ growth and development, and when reflective dialogue is promoted and prioritised, teachers will enter into the “spirit of sharing”, and a “culture of collaboration” will be fostered (Dogan et al., 2019, pp. 244-245). Such a culture is both impacted by and will impact the school climate.

Whilst difficult to sharply define, school climate refers to the way a school is experienced by those within its community: “It focuses on emotions and describes teachers’ interpersonal relationships” (Mousena & Raptis, 2021, p. 99). The school climate is influenced by interactions, the physical environment, student performance, perceptions of security, and levels of trust and respect (Mousena & Raptis, 2021, p. 101). Deep reflective practice exposes gaps between what a teacher believes in and what actually happens in their practice. As such, it is a risky business, leaving the teacher vulnerable. A safe school climate reduces that sense of vulnerability.

In a two-year case study, Deidre Le Fevre (2014) investigated factors that invoked a sense of risk in an educational setting, resulting in resistance to change, and inhibiting professional growth. Le Fevre (2014) identified the significant impact that “a culture of privacy”, “a fear of public failure”, and “a fear of losing control” (p. 61) has on the level of risk a teacher may perceive when asked to make changes. These fears need to be addressed in any attempt to build a positive school climate that promotes reflective practice. Teachers need to feel safe to have the courage to question their deepest assumptions and work with uncertainty within their school context (Hickson, 2011).

Such courage comes from a trusting school climate (Benade, 2018). This involves the development of trust between colleagues and a climate of trust within the institutional context (Belvis et al., 2013). Participative leadership styles help to engender trust (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014; Timperley et al., 2007), whereas the misuse of power (Thompson & Pascal, 2012) and a culture of top-down compliance diminish trust and exacerbate risk, thereby hindering deep reflective practice (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014). These are just a sample of the many contextual factors that impact reflective practice in schools.

Returning our attention to the study completed by Baxter et al. (2021), the ‘Position’ lens reveals that this study was situated in two regional Australian schools, both in low socio-economic areas, and both deemed socio-educationally disadvantaged. Both schools were dealing with challenging student behaviour that was not responding to teachers’

interventions. Staff had attended a disruptive pedagogies professional development day. A perceived need and an openness to learn led to these schools taking part in the study. The results opened windows into the context, culture and climate the teachers were initially experiencing. They had been working in silos, each so immersed in their own classroom difficulties and their individual attempts to meet the needs of their troubled students that they had little time or energy to care for their own or their colleague's needs. Reflective circles became a catalyst for a change in the culture and climate of the school. Teachers developed trust and felt safe to be open and vulnerable. They developed stronger collaborative bonds and self-awareness that brought change to the school climate. In this study, collaborative reflective practice positively impacted the community, culture and climate, resulting in changing attitudes and mindsets. The study showed that the flow of influence was seen to move in two directions, with the organisational and societal context impacting initially to impede reflective practice and then reflective practice eventually impacting the context and culture positively.

Goh (2019) turns to metaphor to express the importance of considering both the organisational context and the individual.

> Using the 'becoming' metaphor helps make clear that individual dispositions can influence learning and the practices within a context. On the other hand, the learning cultures and practices within a context are 'becoming', where individual and collective participation could reinforce existing practices or introduce new practices. (p. 11)

Considering *where* reflective practice is conducted involves far more than place and space. It includes the human arena in which reflective practice occurs. Our final lens delves deeper into this concept in terms of *who* is reflecting and *whose* perspectives are being considered when reflecting.

### 2.5.6 Towards a Conceptual Framework: The Lens of Perspective - Who

The fourth lens digs deeper into the situation by considering the attitudes and dispositions of the reflective practitioners that undergird their courage to critically examine deep-seated assumptions in the quest for insight and transformation of practice. The final Deweyan criteria for reflective practice, according to Carol Rodgers' (2002a), focuses on "attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and others" (p. 845). Reflecting on difficult problems situated in one's own practice is noted by both Dewey and Schön to be difficult and uncomfortable. It involves examining deeply held assumptions and

questioning established practices, which can challenge one's professional identity and expose both personal and professional vulnerabilities. Some attitudinal dispositions support such courage (Dewey, 1910/1997; Marshall et al., 2021). Rodgers identified four such attitudes from Dewey's work: "whole-heartedness, directness, open-mindedness, and responsibility" (Rodgers, 2002a, p. 858). Whilst terminology may change over time, these attitudes are also represented in current literature as providing "a psychological context in which deliberate reflection on one's experiences, assumptions and cognitive frames is perceived as valuable, thus, encouraging engagement with the process" (Marshall et al., 2021, p. 869; Šarić & Šteh, 2017).

Whole-heartedness is often evidenced by passion and enthusiasm that support forging forward and putting great effort into teaching. This is the attitude of visionaries. A whole-hearted teacher is eager to grow professionally and genuinely seeks solutions to problems (Marshall et al., 2021). Hope and optimism are elements of whole-heartedness. These are usually dependent on levels of trust (Benade, 2018). A whole-hearted attitude is vulnerable to discouragement and a breakdown in trust with the onslaught of demands, inflexible curriculum requirements, lack of time and the culture of isolation often reported in educational contexts (Benade, 2018; Rodgers, 2002a; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Initial resilience can weaken if not given the needed support. This can lead to frustration, acceptance of the status quo, and burnout (Rodgers, 2002a, p. 859).

> Constrained by organizational assumptions, people with visions for change expend their energies trying to persuade the authorities to see things another way. … But it often backfires: the authorities withhold their blessing, the visionaries feel betrayed, and an energy sink of resentment is all that remains. (Palmer, 2017, p. 171)

Directness is an attitude of confidence and self-efficacy. This attitude is based on trusting in "the validity of one's own experience without spending a lot of time worrying about the judgment of others" (Rodgers, 2002a, p. 860). Mastery and experience, peer modelling, verbal encouragement, collegial cooperation and opportunities for decision-making have all been found to support an attitude of self-efficacy (Cabaroglu, 2014; Duffin et al., 2012; Postholm, 2012; Poulou, 2007; Zimmerman, 1995). Hattie and Zierer (2018) describe this attitude as that of a "change agent" (p. 39).

Open-mindedness is an attitude that "facilitates a willingness to listen to others' perspectives" (Marshall et al., 2022, p. 491), holding personal opinions and perspectives lightly (Rodgers, 2002a, p. 861) and being prepared to input personal ideas and thoughts into

collaborative reflection (Marshall et al., 2021, p. 868). An open stance holds great potential for growth and action (Bassot, 2016). Jovanna Martínez Godínez (2022) conducted an investigation exploring reflective practice implementation in English language teaching in Mexico. Her findings highlight the value of an open-minded disposition.

> Overall, the findings of this investigation showed that teachers, who had the openness to challenge inconsistencies, gaps and at times fears in their teaching stances, beliefs and therefore practices, also had the willingness to carry out reflective actions that were guided by critical inquiry, collaboration with the researcher and modelled practices by other colleagues; enabling teacher effective engagement in reflective procedures as well as in personal continuous professional development processes. (Martínez Godínez, 2022, p. 88)

A sense of responsibility is the tie that binds the aforementioned attitudes to action, demanding that espoused theories align with theories of action (Rodgers, 2002a) and supporting the resilience needed to circumvent challenges (Farrell, 2019). Such attitudes, steeped in values and ethical considerations, inspire the courage to "be deeply critical of one's own assumptions and beliefs, and that one test these in public contexts, and in collaboration with others" (Benade, 2018, p. 128). In fact, a deeply felt sense of responsibility is at the heart of critical reflective practice. Only when teachers feel a strong responsibility to the wider community will they be willing to move beyond knowing and tackle the complex and changing needs within education and society with action (Banoobhai, 2012; Sellars, 2012). Chapman and Aspin (2013) advocate an approach that requires both educators and policymakers to be positive critics when considering current global challenges in education (p. 59). Such an approach, they argue, requires open minds, a willingness to question assumptions and truth, a sense of societal responsibility that demands democratic values, and a willingness to act on convictions. Such a disposition has the potential to bring about a "transformation of existing models and practices of education" (Chapman & Aspin, 2013, p. 60).

In *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher,* Brookfield (2017), defines critical reflection as "a process of intentional and continual scrutiny of the assumptions that inform your teaching practice" (p. 19). Teachers, in particular, are prone to professional and personal beliefs emanating from their long apprenticeship in schools throughout their childhood (Harnett, 2012). A resulting cognitive bias can produce a tendency to converge new information into existing hidden assumptions, maintaining established beliefs and behaviours. Once assumptions are made visible, teachers can consider varied perspectives and either

change, adapt or refresh current beliefs, understandings or values (Brookfield, 1995, 2017; Cornish & Jenkins, 2012; Hickson, 2011; Loughran, 2002). This takes courage, but it also takes a community.

Brookfield (2017) suggests four lenses through which a teacher can view these assumptions: "… students' eyes, colleagues' perceptions, personal experience, and theory" (p. 19). Brookfield argues that viewing one's practice through these varied viewpoints allows a teacher vantage points from which to notice and examine the assumptions that bear such a weight of hidden influence on practice. He describes the "discipline of critical reflection" as the "consistent and regular" scrutiny of teaching assumptions (p. 7).

The purpose of critically reflective thinking is to support teachers to act in an informed way so that practices intended to help students actually do so (Brookfield, 2017, p. 5). The ongoing rigorous scrutiny of deeply examining beliefs, assumptions and practices from the viewpoints of experience, students, colleagues and theory can lead to a culture of ongoing questioning of personal, group, and institutional assumptions, beliefs and practices (Antoniou & Kyriakids, 2011; Brookfield, 2017). Within such a culture there is a collective courage that values communal 'swamp' explorations and seeks consequential change.

Using the lens of Perspective to notice reflective practice in the study conducted by Baxter et al. (2021), we see an initial attitude of openness by the two school leaders, evident by their attendance at the professional development day and then as they expressed interest in trialling reflective circle practice in their schools. School staff indicated open-mindedness as they took part with the intention of changing practice. The reflective circle process involved individual journaling, collaborative perspective sharing, and reframing. Results indicated that the scaffolded collaborative process became a catalyst for attitudinal change. Participants built a level of trust, and collective courage became evident from that trust. Open-mindedness, both in terms of honestly sharing their reality and in a willingness to grow and change, permitted the examination of assumptions and values. Participants reported that "over time they felt an energy shift" (Baxter et al., 2021, p. 508), relieving stress and releasing a move towards wholeheartedness. At the end of the year, new perspectives and practices led to increased confidence, classroom climate improvement, collegial trust, and further ability to reflect critically. In this study, practitioner attitudes impacted reflective practice, and reflective practice impacted practitioners' attitudes. This study is a valuable exemplar in using the four lenses to notice the multiple dimensions of reflective practice. The positive outcomes of shifts in teacher attitudes and classroom climates also testify to the value of supported reflective practice in seeking innovative insights into messy problems.

Returning to the understanding that reflective practice occurs in the space between the practitioner and the context (Goh, 2019, p. 5), it is self-evident that both the teaching self and the teaching context bear much weight regarding the enabling or the hindering reflective practice (Baxter et al., 2021; Rodgers, 2002a). Courage is required to seek insight openly and collaboratively through questioning and analysing current assumptions and practices through perspective-sharing. Courage is needed for 'deepened reflective practice'. Next, we will seek to build a conceptual understanding of the intention behind the term 'deepened' in relation to reflective practice.

### 2.5.7 Towards a Conceptual Framework: Levels of Reflective Practice – Depth

This study is focused on exploring ways to build capacity in teachers to deepen their reflective practice; therefore, the conceptual framework needs to grapple with unpacking the metaphor of depth. It is a metaphor that evokes ideas of measurement or comparative description. Some researchers express differences in reflective practices in terms of 'types' such as reflection-in-practice (Anderson, 2019), reflection-on-practice (Schön, 1983), reflection-for-practice (Farrell et al., 2020), or reflection-on-the-future (Wilson, 2008). Some use a continuum (Grossman, 2009; Thorsen & DeVore, 2013) and others describe levels (Larrivee, 2008a; Ward & McCotter, 2004). All, however, focus on the quality of reflection rather than the quantity, inferring the premise that a change of quality impacts the quality of outcomes.

Edwards and Thomas (2010) suggest that any attempt to qualitatively describe reflective practice should begin with the premise that "a teacher is, by virtue of their initiation into a living practice of teaching, a thoughtful practitioner" (p. 407). These authors caution that the use of prescriptive language to assess and evaluate reflective practice gives more consuming power to technical rationalism. Any attempt to offer a language of qualitative comparison must acknowledge this danger and intentionally empower teachers to exercise their professional artistry (Schön, 1987) through self-directed reflective practice. This study seeks descriptive understandings of reflective practice rather than prescriptive processes devoid of context, removed from practice and ignoring the powerful impact of the practitioner.

A number of frameworks have been developed to contribute descriptive understandings of reflective practice in terms of levels and dimensions. Barbara Larrivee's "Tool for Assessing Development as a Reflective Practitioner" (2008a) was designed for self-assessment with a supportive facilitator to empower teachers to better utilise reflective

practice in their work. Ward and McCotter's "Reflection Rubric" (Ward & McCotter, 2004) was designed to help preservice teachers build their conceptual understanding of reflective practice. Both contribute to a qualitative understanding of 'depth' in terms of reflective practice.

After completing an extensive literature review, Barbara Larrivee (2008a) noted that whilst terminology varied, there was evidence that "reflection is generally viewed as an incremental process" (p. 342). The review revealed common understandings of three levels of reflection to which she added one. Acknowledging that teachers do not simply move through these levels in a linear fashion, she noted that "teachers may reflect at different levels simultaneously" (p. 344) within the complexity of practice. Though all levels are important and integral to practice, the qualitative differences indicate purposes that are "moving from trivial, to significant, to potentially profound" (p. 344). Larrivee believed that learning to discern these differences would allow teachers a sense of agency in developing their own reflective skills and strategies to better meet the needs within their practice.

John Ward and Suzanne McCotter (2004) analysed pre-service teacher reflections and examined a range of frameworks to develop a reflection rubric that "illuminates the dimensions and qualities of reflection" (p. 243). Their rubric has four levels that align closely with Larrivee's. Ward and McCotter also included three dimensions of reflective practice in their rubric. The three dimensions consider the focus of concerns, the process of inquiry, and the potential for change.

The levels in both frameworks are descriptive by nature. Larrivee's *pre-reflective* level refers to situations where teachers respond to problems of practice in a reactive way, with little ownership or sense of agency. Similarly, Ward and McCotter describe *routine* reflections that are not problem-focused, nor is there evidence of questioning or acknowledgement of complexity or responsibility. If problems are acknowledged, blame is deflected to students or others.

Next, Larrivee's (2008a) tool references *surface* reflections relating to technical or instrumental problem-solving. At this level, the teacher looks for external solutions and does not consider the "values, beliefs and assumptions that "lie beneath the surface'" (p. 343). Ward and McCotter use the term *technical* as the descriptor for this level, characterising it as potentiating only "narrow change or change without new insight" (Ward & McCotter, 2004, p. 252).

It is only when we reach the third level that the descriptions fulfil the brief of the definition of deep reflective practice established in Chapter One. Larrivee (2008a) uses the

term *pedagogical* to describe reflective practices where teachers take responsibility to align their espoused theories with what they actually practice in their classroom (p. 343). Ward and McCotter (2004) employ the term *dialogic,* extending the idea to note the importance of including the perspectives of others in an ongoing process of seeking new insights with "cycles of situated questions and action" (p. 250) both individually and collectively.

Larrivee's (2008a) final qualitative level is termed *critical* reflection. This terminology is commonly understood in the field of reflective practice to involve critical engagement with theory, research, and colleagues (Brookfield, 2017; Fox et al., 2019). It adds moral, social, ethical and political dimensions of concern to the teacher's reflective practice, involving deep questioning of personal, institutional and even societal assumptions:

> Reflection becomes critical when it is motivated by the desire to be just, fair and compassionate and when it questions the criteria, power dynamics and socio-political structures that frame our practice. (Ramirez & Allison-Roan, 2014, pp. 458-459)

Ward and McCotter (2004) label this deeply reflective level *transformative,* alluding to the ultimate goal of transforming one's practice and profoundly impacting student outcomes beyond the mandated curriculum to higher-order life-long outcomes. Reflective practice at this level requires courage and perseverance in the longer-term (Hoekstra & Korthagen, 2011), yet it has the potential to have the greatest impact on student learning and societal change (Brookfield, 2009, 2017; Gahlsdorf Terrell & Sherman, 2022; Moran & Gardner, 2007; Sellars, 2012).

These qualitative descriptors support an understanding of the qualities of reflection inferred in the *depth* terminology used throughout this study. Deepened reflective practice therefore refers to teachers' movement towards using pedagogical or dialogic reflection and critical or transformative reflection.

### 2.5.8 Towards a Conceptual Framework: The Four Lenses and Four Levels

Leshem and Trafford (2007) suggest two purposes for the development of a conceptual framework in a research study. The first is to clarify, in theory, the concept that is to be investigated. The second is to allow readers of the research to be clear about what the research intends to accomplish and how this is to happen (p. 97). Reflective practice is a complex concept, generally acclaimed as essential within professional practice, yet difficult to encapsulate and objectively and authentically observe. The four lenses of purpose, process,

position, and perspective offer lenses through which to notice both evidence and elements of reflective practice within the complexity of practice.

The view from each of the conceptual lenses supports Leshem and Trafford's first purpose by bringing into focus elements of practice that evidence, support, hinder, and masquerade as reflective practice. In terms of the second role, this research study is explorative and qualitative, purposed to suggest recommendations for school leaders to consider when intentionally attempting to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. It is therefore essential that readers of this research have a shared conceptual understanding of how these conceptual lenses are used in accomplishing the study's purpose. The four conceptual lenses open four vistas of practice within which school leaders might impact their teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice. They also offer avenues through which to examine and explore reflective practice within the messy entanglements of professional practice, specifically within a school context.

The four descriptive levels discussed above add focus to the conceptual view offered by each lens. Descriptions of general dimensions of practice in terms of qualitative depth support this study's exploration of how to build teacher capacity for *deepened* reflective practice. Together, the four lenses and the four levels add detail and texture to the descriptive definition of deep reflective practice established earlier in this chapter.

This conceptual framework has laid out important elements of reflective practice and clarified the relationships between these elements to support a shared understanding for the researcher, the participants and the reader (Robson, 2011, p. 523). To add further support in clarity and understanding, a model has been created to display the main tenets of the literature-based conceptual framework.

## 2.6 Developing the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice

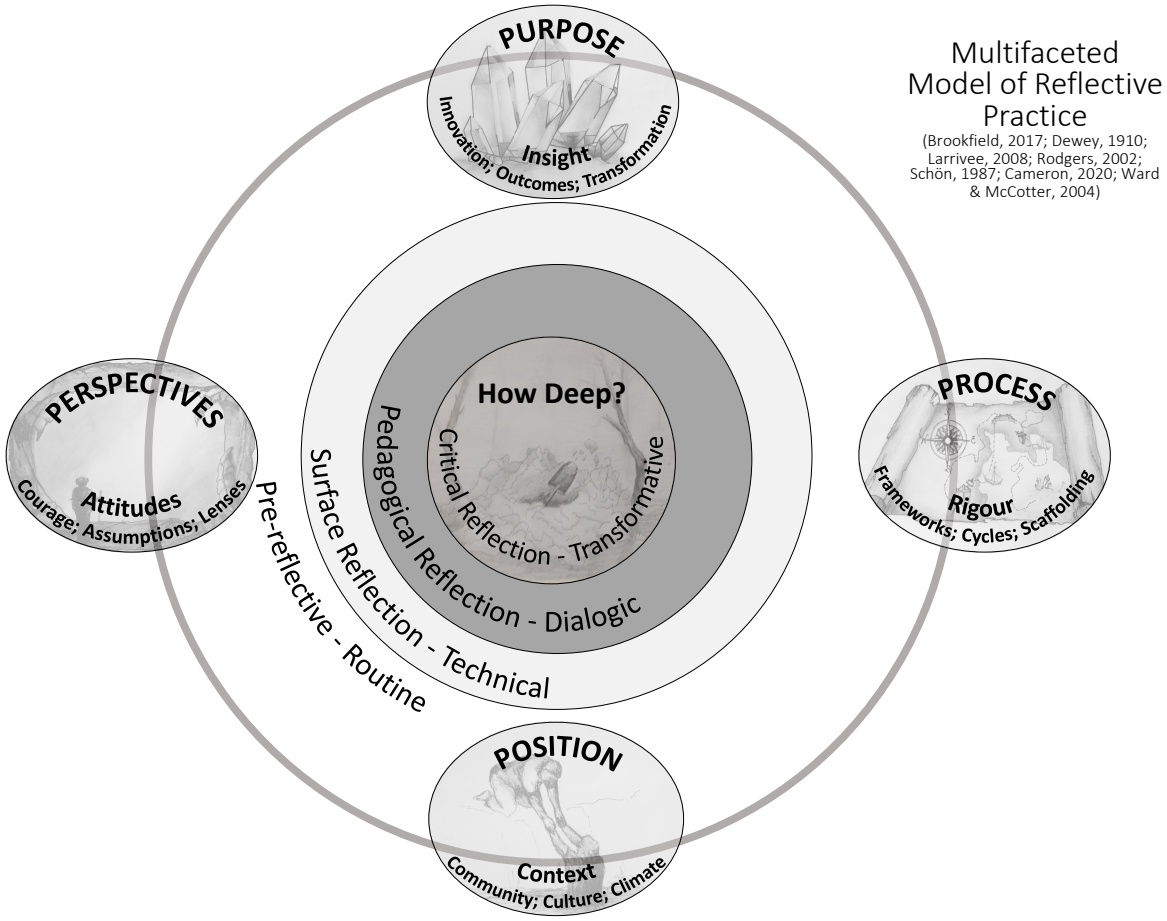
In qualitative research, "models are mainly used to help explain and understand the phenomenon of interest" (Robson, 2011, p. 528). The Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice was created from this chapter's conceptual framework to communicate the multidimensional scope of the four lenses and four levels of reflective practice discussed above. The process involved in the creation of the model involved much experimentation with paper and pencil. The lenses were inspired by the simple questions of Why, How, Where, and Who, questions that guided the literature review and the development of the descriptive definition. The concept of metaphoric lenses evolved over time spent with a heuristic process (Moustakas, 1990), beginning with immersion in the literature and moving

on to periods of trialling and the incubating of ideas, although the reality was not linear but more back and forth. Eventually, there were "aha" moments, or illumination (Moustakas, 1990), when the model started to take shape. The artwork developed in reflective conversation with the artist regarding the conceptual framework and the allegory of swamps and high ground were inspired by Schön.

This model was utilised throughout the research study to *notice* elements that impacted and gave evidence of reflective practice within the complexity of the school situation. The model infuses metaphor through artistic representations that allude to Schön's swamp metaphor, and the "quest" allegory presented throughout this thesis. Metaphors are used "because of their transparency and familiarity" (Plateel et al., 2010, p. 436), illuminating varied perspectives of this complex phenomenon without simplifying them to a level of lifeless unidimensional form.

Figure 1 displays the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice. The external circle represents the complexities of practice in their wholeness. The four ovals around the circle are the lenses through which we can view the wholeness of practice and notice elements that are evidence of reflective practice and elements that impact reflective practice. The model is intended to be a reminder that anything observed through one lens is only a part of the whole, with the likelihood of overlapping and interdependent elements. Each lens in the model has a title and specific elements of practice from the conceptual framework to pay attention to when seeking to observe the depth of reflective practice. The artistic representations are reminders of key ideas within each dimension of practice. As lenses, there is no inferencing of order. Each is simply a vantage point.

**Figure 1** *Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice*




The purpose lens seeks to observe why reflective practice is being employed. It focuses on the problems or perplexities that trigger teachers to question their practice and what they hope to achieve from their reflective practices. The visual representation of crystals offers a metaphorical prompt to consider both the varied facets of reflective practice and the satisfaction of seeking insight.

The process lens seeks to notice how teachers are reflecting, looking to observe elements of rigour that present as flexible frameworks, cycles, or scaffolds. The visual representation of the map displays four compass points representing the many and varied directions that can be taken when exploring the indeterminate zones of practice and assuming that in cases of deep reflective practice, these processes will be intentional and problem-focused.

The position lens seeks to understand the context by paying attention to the immediate circumstances and noticing the community the teacher or teachers work within. This lens seeks evidence of school culture and climate, looking for elements of context that support or

discourage depth in reflective practice. The picture reminds us that deep reflective practice requires interpersonal capacity developed in cultures of trust and communities of collective responsibility. Deep reflective practice is best developed with relationships of mutual dependence.

The perspective lens seeks to notice teachers' attitudes, observing for the dispositions of whole-heartedness, directness, open-mindedness, and responsibility that accompany deep reflective practices. This lens looks for evidence of the individual and collective courage that empowers teachers to dig deep and examine their assumptions, beliefs, and practices. It looks to find the range of perspectives that inform the teachers' reflective practice. The artwork depicts a traveller looking through a frame, not in a self-confirming mirror (Fox et al., 2019), but with a readiness to step beyond their present reality into a desired future.

The centre four levels of the model are displayed in concentric circles that deepen toward a central representation of digging in the "indeterminate, swampy zones of practice" to seek to understand and improve the important yet "confusing problems that defy technical solution" (Schön, 1987, p. 3). This element of the model is intended to draw attention to the two levels representing *deepened* reflective practice, a concept that is central to the purpose of this study, whilst honouring the reality that surface/technical and pre-reflective/routine reflective practice are also necessary elements of a busy and complex professional practice. Pre-reflective routine level sits outside the circles, indicating minimal questioning and engagement in reflection.

I created the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice to express the essence of the literature-based conceptual framework set out in this chapter. The dimensions of purpose, process, position and perspective have been used throughout this study as lenses in interviews and guides for observation to explore the perceived supports and barriers to reflective practice through the participants' voices. It was also used in the research design, as I sought to utilise each lens in my collection of data and consider what I might learn from these lenses in the processes of analysis. The model was also a valuable support for developing a shared understanding of reflective practice among the participants in interviews and group feedback sessions.

This literature review has dug deep into research and literature to build a conceptual understanding of reflective practice, building teacher capacity and the elements of practice that have been recognised as impacting a qualitative deepening of reflective practice.

## 2.7 Researcher: My Voice, My Footprints

***Dialectically Dialoguing with Dewey and Friends [Donald Schön and Stephen Brookfield]***

*I stood wearily by the kettle, making yet another cup of warm distraction. The steady hum of the refrigerator belied the complexity of ideas jumping to and fro in my mind.*

*The pallid kitchen walls faded into a blur, and I was aware of colour and shape, form and texture. I breathed in the fresh air, and the rich aroma of coffee flooded my senses. I was standing by a table in a busy outdoor café. As I stood there, trying to take in my new surroundings, a jumble of conversations buzzed around me. I listened with more care and heard voices that seemed familiar. My gaze rested on the table beside me.*

*"Ah Karyn, so glad you could make it," I heard with surprise. Somewhat numb with shock, I noticed an empty chair and a steaming coffee. Looking around the table, I knew this chair was for me. I was with friends. They were expecting me.*

*"John, Donald, Stephen, how kind of you."*

*I sat and listened as the conversation continued.*

*"As I was saying, reflecting is a quality of thinking. This is the bedrock of understanding that both of you are simply assuming. I don't think we can do that. We must look deeply into the very act of reflecting before we have the remotest chance of better outcomes." John's words slowly floated into our minds, finding a fertile place to rest.*

*Donald adjusted his seat and inhaled deeply. "Mmm, I hear you. I just feel that there are competing voices that shout so loud within professions. They drown out the reflective thinking you refer to. Professional people need to be able to discern these pseudo 'thoughts' from true reflection. Until these professionals …", he paused and looked at me. "Oh Karyn, as you have been so kind to join us, I will speak into your context, until these 'teachers' see the art, with its creativity, imagination and flowing possibilities, this art of reflecting in practice, there will simply be no desire to seek a deeper understanding of reflective thinking. Well, sorry John, I simply must call it 'reflective practice'. For me, the reflection without the practice simply doesn't engage deeply enough with the artistic aspect within … well, 'teaching' I guess, in this instance."*

*Stephen seemed a little impatient. "Look I have no argument with either of you. Donald, you are dead right. If teachers are going to have any chance of truly making a difference for their students and their society, they need to think for themselves. And John, that does take rigour – I have no argument about this. I can see that rigour and art can go*

*hand in hand, though Don, you do need to make that clearer. I think some teachers might settle for much less than you intend. They just don't take your 'swamp' metaphor as far as they need to."*

*Stephen continued. "John, I have taken your viewpoint that we should be mindful of reflecting in and with our community. I just don't think you are being heard. My shout-out to the current generation of teachers is exactly that. Teachers must question the foundations of the educational monolith that is taken for granted. How can we be satisfied with teaching, for example, 'reading' better when the society in which our students live is so filled with inequity and injustice? I just don't have the patience for this." His fingers fidgeted in frustration.*

*"Stephen, I have long battled the status quo." John responded calmly, "I wish we could snap our fingers and bring about change." A waiter hurried over to refill our cups at John's gesture. I was glad, I didn't want my cup to drain. These were precious minutes. "We must till the soil of the teachers' minds and hearts. A whole-hearted willingness to engage in the courage of deep reflection is an essential aspect that we cannot ignore. Both the intellect and the heart must be employed." John's measured response had us all nodding.*

*"Amen to that John. Do you not see this in my concept of artistry?" Donald looked for confirmation from one who had impacted his ideas so profoundly.*

*"Yes, Donald, it is there, but is it seen? We cannot assume things. There must be a certain directness, both in how we develop these attitudes in teachers, and then in how they employ their reflective thinking." John looked to Stephen. "I believe you are on the money here Stephen. You speak directly into the biggest issues. I applaud that, both in your writing and teaching."*

*Stephen looked intently at his cup. "It is one thing for me to be speaking and writing. It is just another academic exercise if there is no momentum for change. One teacher is not enough." He breathed in deeply. I hardly wanted to breathe. These men were wrestling within their own thinking, within their own hearts. There was both unity and singularity in the silence.*

*Donald cleared his throat. "… opening their minds, opening our minds, to consider more than what is required, … more than what is fed to us from the very society that we must question…"*

*Stephen finished Donald's sentence, "And a sense of responsibility, … and agency. … I believe this can happen gentlemen, … forgive me Karyn, lady and gentlemen." I looked around at these thinkers and realised that they had taken me into their awareness, into their*

*shared reflections. I felt so humbled. Stephen continued, "I believe this can happen, … however I also believe it will not happen… not without great intentionality."*

*I looked up and felt a little uneasy. Each of the men were looking at me.*

*The whistle of the kettle broke my reveille. I spooned the instant grounds into my cup, added the boiling water and went back to my writing. As I settled into the chair, the hum of the refrigerator had a new buzz, the smell of coffee a robust note.*

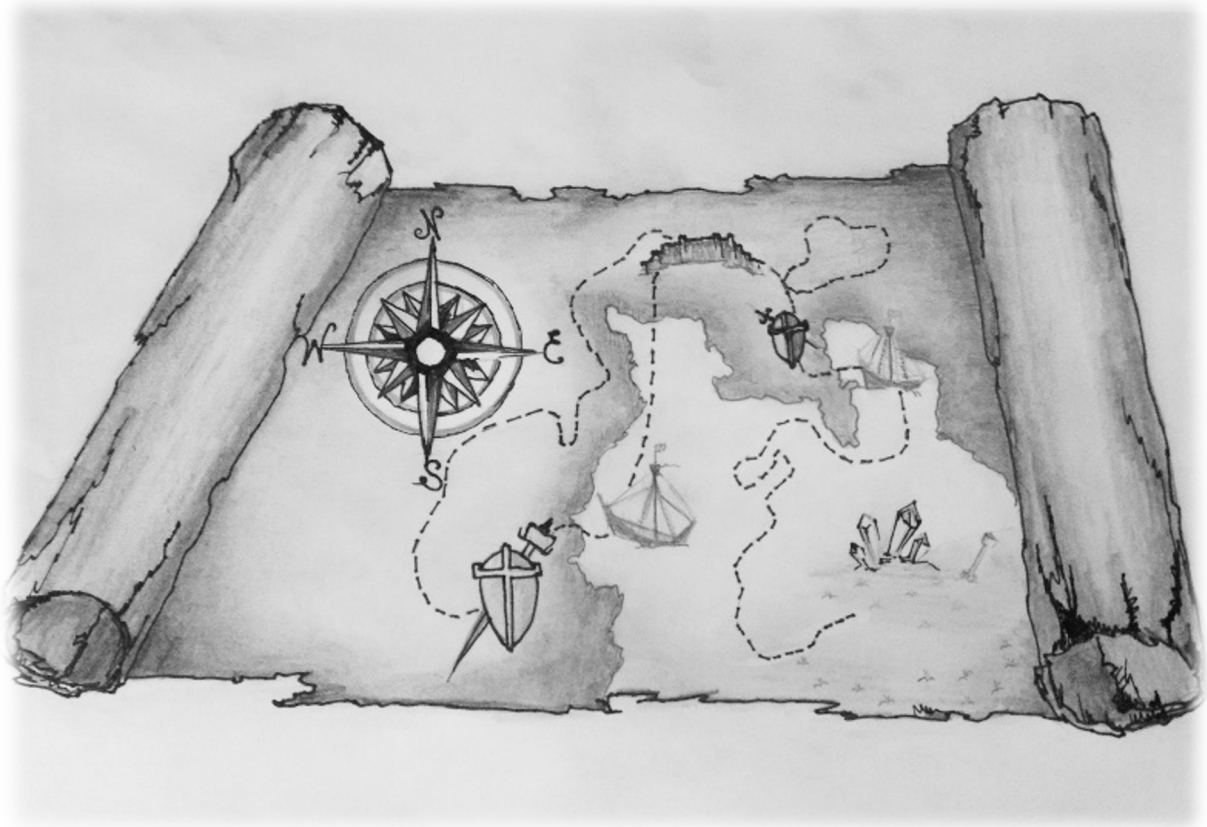
*Great intentionality… Yes.*

*I typed, 'Reflective practice has many facets. It wears faces that vary from heart to heart, yet one thing unites all – intentionality, great intentionality. Deep reflective practice happens on purpose, by purpose, for purpose.'*

## 2.8 Leaving a Trail: Chapter Précis

This chapter has intentionally built theoretical and literature-based conceptual understandings of all elements of the research questions, including the development of an original descriptive definition. It has explored depth and breadth dimensions to support a shared understanding of 'teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice'. These understandings, and the original Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice, which gives a succinct representation of them, inform every aspect of this study. Significant ideas from three respected theorists in the field of reflective practice were juxtaposed in a creative narrative reflection purposed to synthesise important elements of the theoretical foundations for the context of this study. Deep reflective practice is both the focus and the methodology of this research, as will be evidenced in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER THREE
# PLANNING THE JOURNEY: METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

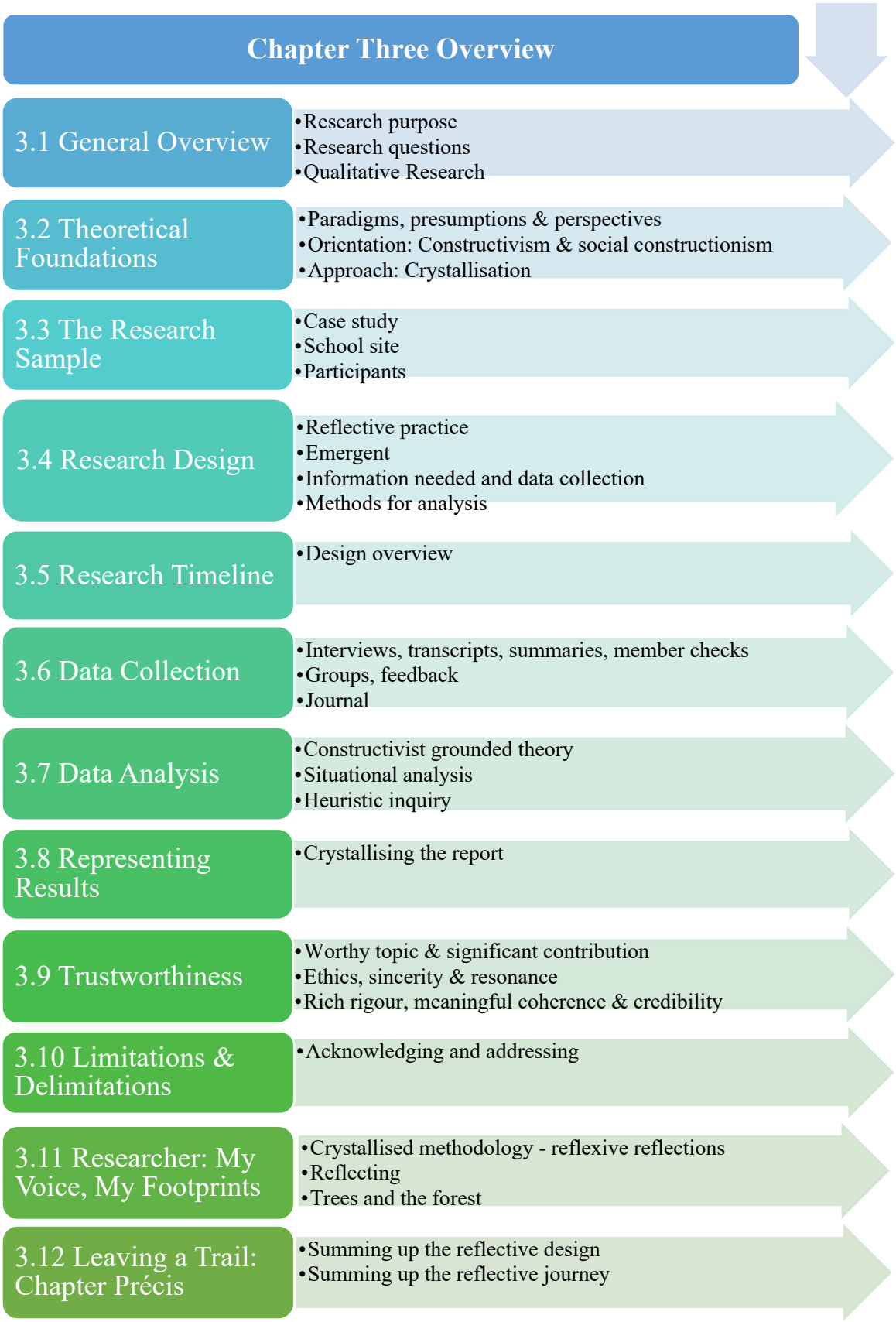


***This journey must be mapped in hope that others, perhaps even yourself, may find a path of reflective practice which leads to genuine wisdom and transformation of practice. Reflective Practice is not the jewel, it is the journey.***

## 3.1 General Overview

The purpose of this qualitative, constructivist case study is to suggest recommendations for school leaders to consider when intentionally attempting to build capacity for deepened reflective practice. As noted in the previous chapter, building capacity is expected to involve an interplay of personal, interpersonal, and organisational factors (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). To achieve the purpose of the study, the primary research question asks, "How can school leaders build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice?". Given the barriers to achieving this purpose exposed in the literature review of the previous chapters, the secondary research question asks the teacher participants, the school leader participants, and the researcher to identify the barriers and supports they perceived in their lived experience of a deeply reflective school initiative.

**Figure 2** *Methodology Chapter Layout*



This methodology chapter outlines the journey of designing and implementing this study in an attempt to find the best fit for exploring teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice, answering the research questions, and achieving the overall purpose of seeking recommendations for school leaders. Figure 2 lays out the structure of this chapter. The chapter begins with establishing and offering a rationale for the qualitative theoretical foundations of the study. It moves on to describe the research sample, the information needed, and the methods of data collection selected to answer the research questions. The chapter then takes a deep dive into the theory and rationale for the three chosen analysis methods, in order to better understand the multiple dimensions of impacts on both reflective practice and teacher capacity. Using the descriptive definition of reflective practice and the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice developed in Chapter Two, the research design process is described as a deeply reflective emergent venture deliberately setting out to achieve the research purpose. From this point in the chapter, there is a shift to describing the implementation of the data collection and analysis methodologies. Quality criteria are established and discussed. Limitations and delimitations are acknowledged, along with practices selected to address these matters. The final element of this chapter involves creative reflexive reflections on the research design process. For now, we must begin with an understanding of the theoretical foundations chosen to achieve this research study's purpose.

## 3.2 Theoretical Foundations

This study, its purpose, aims, and questions, required an exploration of participants' lived experiences in order to understand ways to impact those experiences positively and build teacher capacity to engage in deepened reflective practice. A qualitative inquiry approach was a good fit for the research design. A qualitative inquiry seeks qualitative or "data in the form of words" to attempt to understand "the meaning of human action" (Schwandt, 2015), which is inherent to this study. Qualitative inquiry requires a flexible approach to research design, seeking a good fit with the research purpose. Undergirding such choices were paradigms, philosophical assumptions and orientations, and research approaches that provided lenses of meaning and understanding to consider when designing this research inquiry.

### 3.2.1 Paradigms, Presumptions and Perspectives

A paradigm is a belief pattern through which we each view truth, knowledge, and reality. Within research, it becomes a lens through which all decisions are made regarding the inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 13). Paradigms, presumptions, and perspectives are sometimes in full view, at other times partially obscured or even out of sight; however, it is through these lenses that the researcher forms, plans, conducts, and represents an inquiry. To understand the undergirding paradigm is to understand the research better and discern its value.

This study lies within the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism has its historical roots in Germany as an argument against using the positivist aims and methods from natural science to study social phenomena (Schwandt, 1998). Rather than seeking scientific explanations, interpretivists within social sciences seek understanding or meaning from the perspective of those living out the experiences (Chowdhury, 2014; Oppong, 2014). This is referred to as *verstehen* and it is the means by which an inquirer comes to interpret human action (Patton, 2015, p. 56; Schwandt, 1998, p. 225).

Although there is a range of perspectives and presumptions within the interpretivist paradigm, there is general agreement that to gain understanding or interpret meaning within social domains, we must "draw from the well of our own humanity", which is distinguished by "our capacity for consciousness in relation to ourselves, others and the world" (Humphrey, 2013, p. 7). The qualitative researcher is often likened to a bricoleur, a skilled person who uses whatever is at hand to create or repair; or a maker of quilts, who "stitches, edits and puts slices of reality together" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5). An "interpretive bricoleur understands that research is an interactive process shaped by one's personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity and those of the people in the setting" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5). As the bricoleur, or quilt maker, of this research study, my interpretive paradigm created a framework or pattern that supported a dynamic quest for a *verstehen* of reflective practice and capacity building, as experienced within the professional lives of teachers within a defined context. Within that framework, there has been an imperative to understand and respect both my own beliefs, values, and assumptions, and those of the participants in this study.

Reflective practice is a complicated phenomenon with "multiple dimensions that interact" (Patton, 2015, p. 149). It cannot be separated from the context in which it occurs (Leigh & Bailey, 2013, p. 166). Similarly, teachers' capacity for reflective practice must also

be explored within context. This study was designed to interpret and better understand teacher capacity for reflective practice as lived out within the messiness, complexity and situated context of a school. This process of interpreting lived experience was further refined through the lens of constructivism.

### 3.2.2 Orientation: Constructivism and Social Constructionism

Constructivism provides more closely defined answers to the questions of ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. A constructivist perspective sees the human world as relative, with existence being an intra- and inter-personal constructed reality rather than an absolute and objective reality (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 39; Patton, 2015, p. 121). Truth is viewed as subjective, "a matter of shared meanings and consensus among a group of people" (Patton, 2015, p. 121). Knowledge is created, rather than discovered (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 40; Schwandt, 1998, p. 236), and co-constructed rather than an objective reality (Burr, 2015, p. 172; Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 103). Constructivist research methodology must therefore seek to disclose and understand those constructions. This is best achieved through the inquirer working closely with research participants, both to co-construct and to confront, compare and contrast varied constructions (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 40). The values of the inquirer, participants, and the context must be transparently disclosed (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 41) in order that the reader can attribute inherent value. The researcher seeks "to capture diverse understandings and multiple realities about people's definitions and experiences of a situation" (Patton, 2015, p. 122), and acknowledges that her or his own preconceptions and values will shape both the analysis and any findings identified within an inquiry (Charmaz, 2014, p. 13; Clarke et al., 2015, p. 26). Research takes place in the interactions between the researcher and participants, each shaped by the other (Ellingson, 2009, p. 32; Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 104). This was an important consideration in the research design of this study.

Social constructionism adds yet another layer of focus, giving greater credence to "the collective generation of meaning" than the "meaning-making activity of the individual mind" (Schwandt, 1998, p. 240). Reality is seen as "multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them" (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 102). Social constructionism defines things …

> … interpersonally and intersubjectively by people interacting in a network of relationships… Constructionists study the multiple realities constructed

> by different groups of people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with each other. (Patton, 2015, p. 121)

Using both a constructivist and a social constructionist lens to seek individual and collective experiences of reflective practice and capacity provided a greater opportunity to capture 'lived experience'. This study acknowledges that 'reality' lies within the perceptions of both individuals and groups. These varied perceptions result in real consequences (Patton, 2015, p. 127).

In this study, the multiple realities and networks of relationships sought were those of teachers, leaders, and the involved researcher. This study was designed to seek rich accounts of these realities and networks in the quest for a greater understanding of the barriers and supports to teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice within the lived experience of teaching practitioners.

Like a *bricolage, "*combining old things in new ways, including alternative and emergent forms of data collection and combining inquiry traditions" (Patton, 2015, p. 154), this study was designed to construct meaning in response to the research questions. The aim was to achieve *verstehen,* an empathetic understanding of lived experience (Turner, 2019), and then co-construct recommendations for other school leaders to consider. The introductory literature review revealed the multifaceted nature of both capacity building and reflective practice within professional contexts (Day, 2014; Josten, 2011; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001; Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014). Theorists and researchers have established an understanding that deep reflective practice involves examining and seeking meaning from both group and individual perspectives (Brookfield, 2017; Dewey, 1910/1997; Josten, 2011; Rodgers, 2002a). To capture *verstehen,* this study needed to embrace both individual and group constructions of meaning and experience, harnessing together the potential of both constructivist and social constructionist orientations. A multifaceted crystallised approach supported the role of *bricoleur* in carefully and creatively placing the pieces of the research design to achieve a good fit with the purpose of this study.

### 3.2.3 Approach: Crystallisation

In order to achieve *verstehen,* this study needed to employ multiple lenses for inquiry. Triangulation, "a research approach employing more than one perspective, theory, participant, method or analysis" (Robson, 2011, p. 534) added the "rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5) required. However, Richardson (2000b) has posited that the image of a triangle is too rigid and fixed a metaphor

to convey the essence of a multidimensional approach to qualitative research. She believes that the term assumes a single fixed point of focus, which does not fit a constructivist perspective of multiple realities and partial understandings. Richardson suggests instead the metaphor of a crystal which "combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach… What we see depends on our angle of repose" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963). Such an image better suits a constructivist inquiry, moving from an image of seeking a clearer vision of a single truth to seeking multiple ways to construct a "deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963). Such a creative venture requires the hands of the *bricoleur* or "maker of quilts" to seek out strategies and methods that capture the depth and breadth, movement, reflections, and refractions that may be inherent within a line of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5). The complexity and messiness of viewing reflective practice from the perspective of teachers and leaders within a school context demanded no less than such an approach for this study.

Laura Ellingson (2009) has added structure to Richardson's crystallisation concept in order to offer "a framework for qualitative research projects and a detailed set of recommended practices" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 4) that offers a deepened understanding of the complexity of lived experience. She has developed a continuum of qualitative methods and genres ranging from artistic impressionism through to middle-ground approaches and on towards scientific realism. The use of a continuum is intended to resist viewing these varied methods as dichotomies and to encourage the idea that combining varied methods and genres across the continuum has the potential to achieve deepened understanding. Ellingson challenges researchers to see the beauty and benefit of using varied methods and forms of representation.

> While disciplinary and professional conventions remain dominant forces, the success of some work that moves around, beyond, through, and alongside traditional work always benefits the field, because it reminds us of the constructed nature of all such norms and practices. (Ellingson, 2009, p. 16)

I chose the crystallisation approach for this inquiry because I wanted to build "a rich and openly partial account" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 4) of reflective practice and teacher capacity within one school context. I sought multiple viewpoints within the complexities of practice, in order to produce a deeper and richer account of lived experience through multiple voices

and realities, including my reflexive self. Ellingson (2014) has posed five principles for crystallisation. I will expand on each as they relate to this inquiry.

The first principle alludes to the depth, detail and nuances of understanding planned within the research design and data collection. Knowledge of a specific phenomenon is constructed through "generating a deepened, complex interpretation" (Ellingson, 2014, p. 444). Rich, thick descriptions, situated within the complexities of a school, offered valuable opportunities to explore teacher capacity and reflective practice and to co-construct interpretations and understandings from this range of perspectives over the course of the inquiry.

Secondly, crystallisation employs differing forms of analysis across the continuum of qualitative methods. This allows data to be analysed through varied lenses, affording greater opportunities to view a phenomenon from multiple perspectives (Ellingson, 2014, p. 444). In this study, participant interviews were analysed with constructivist grounded theory and situational analysis, complementary methods from the middle ground on Ellingson's continuum. In addition, the interview transcriptions and the researcher's memos and reflective observations were analysed through heuristic narrative methods (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019), which are positioned towards the impressionist end of the continuum. Each form of analysis offered unique "angles of repose" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963), or viewpoints through which nuances of understanding and meaning were gained.

The third tenet of crystallisation put forth by Ellingson (2014, p. 445) is that more than one genre be used to represent the findings. This "juxtaposition of genres" (Ellingson, 2014, p. 446) allows for the *bricoleur* to add colour and texture, warp and weft, with the purpose of drawing the reader into a deeper connection with the findings. A multi-genre report builds on formal report writing, allowing varied expressions of ideas to enhance *verstehen.* In this research report, allegory, narrative, poetry and visual arts bring added dimensions to deepen understanding and build engagement with the reader. Allegory sets the scene in the preface and steps along with the reader throughout the report, accompanied by graphics to keep the reader engaged and connected with the themes of each chapter. Narrative and poetry have been woven into the fabric of the report, expressing the research journey in my reflexive voice at the conclusion of each chapter.

The fourth principle of a crystallised account is to "feature a significant degree of reflexive consideration of the researcher's self" (Ellingson, 2014, p. 446). Throughout the report, overt attempts have been made to make clear my footprints along the journey's paths, and my fingerprints amongst the co-constructions of knowledge. My voice is the storyteller,

creating a narrative within each chapter, yet deliberately hushed to allow the participants to be clearly heard.

Finally, crystallisation "embraces, reveals, and even celebrates knowledge as inevitably situated, partial, constructed, multiple, and embodied" (Ellingson, 2014, p. 446). This research study is a qualitative, constructivist case study, exploring teacher capacity for reflective practice with leaders and teachers in one school. The research findings are acknowledged to be social constructions. There are no claims of generalisability (Burr, 2015, p. 177; Patton, 2015, p. 122). Rather, the final recommendations are offered to other schools, other leadership teams, other teachers, and even other policymakers, who may find within this study's deep yet partial account, points of resonance and connection, extrapolating meaning beyond this one school with suggestions for applications in similar contexts (Patton, 2002, p. 584).

Ellingson (2009) elaborated on two ways that a crystallised account can be presented, either an integrated or a dendritic report. Dendritic crystallisation reports express the varied genres in a series of different texts, often including varied single-genre reports aimed at reaching different audiences. An integrated crystallised report combines multi-genre texts within one coherent representation. The genres are either woven or layered within the text or patched when "larger pieces of two or more genres are juxtaposed in a clearly demarcated sequence" (p. 13). I chose to present this thesis as an intentionally integrated report. The varied voices and lenses used within this inquiry are "patched" and clearly differentiated, allowing the predictable report genre to provide a familiar structure and rhythm and adding the genres of narrative, poetry and allegory to build engagement and offer alternate "angles of repose" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963) and greater depth of understanding. There has been an intentional sense of creating a gallery with a familiar layout whilst allowing the reader to sit in varied places to view the artworks. The allegory and graphics are positioned like picture lights, shining a soft light on the concepts and ideas of each chapter.

The interpretivist paradigm seeks understanding through the perspectives of lived experience. A constructivist perspective sees knowledge as constructed and co-constructed; therefore, constructivist research methodologies seek understanding through interactions. A social constructionist orientation adds additional focus to collective constructions of meaning. In this research design, crystallisation has offered the *bricoleur* an approach to qualitative research that engages multiple methods of inquiry and reporting to seek a good fit for research purposes with rigour, reflexivity, creativity and criticality.

## 3.3 The Research Sample

With philosophical underpinnings broadly brushed across the design, the next consideration for this research study involved selecting the research sample. The research question indicated a need for opportunities for deep reflective practice and for school leaders and teachers to be involved as participants. The conceptual framework developed in the literature review supported the need for conducting the research in the context of a functioning school. A purposive sample was required. As the logistic considerations of limited time and resources negated opportunities for a comparative study, a single case study was the framework of context.

### 3.3.1 Case Study

A single case study allowed for the rich data required to dig deeply into one social context within which teachers enacted their capacity to reflect. Case studies involve a "sample of one", providing an opportunity to "understand a phenomenon in depth and comprehensively" (Easton, 2010, p. 119). Case studies are conducted within the complexity of context, allowing researchers to "tease out and disentangle factors and relationships" (Easton, 2010, p. 119) so as to "generate knowledge of the particular" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 28). In a case study, multiple sources of data are collected and dealt with iteratively, "moving back and forth between the diverse stages of the research project" (Easton, 2010, p. 119). This study purposed to explore barriers and supports for teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice within the complexity of a school context. Choosing to use a case study allowed for multiple perspectives to be sought within one social context, giving voice and credence to the individuals and the social interconnectedness that make up a school. With this decision made, there was a need to select a suitable school site for the purposes of this research: "Purposeful selection is a strategy for accessing appropriate data that fit the purpose of the study, the resources available, the questions being asked, and the constraints and challenges being faced" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 148). The selection of such a site was important for the quality of the study.

### 3.3.2 Context: School Site

Finding a school willing to take part in this study was crucial in the design phase of this research. Deepening reflective practice needed to be a focus for the school leadership

team, along with a preparedness to allow me to conduct rounds of interviews with teachers and leaders over the course of multiple visits.

With these needs in mind, the choice of a particular school site for this research was purposive. One purposeful consideration involved seeking a school in a different geographical area from my workplace to support bracketing in data collection and analysis. Quite incidentally, I heard of a rural school principal in a different state than my own who had approached his staff about a project that would require significant critical reflection purposed toward a transformation of practice. It was a small rural faith-based K-12 school with around 20 teaching staff. The pseudonym used for the school throughout this report is 'Faith School'. The leadership team included the principal and respective heads of the primary and secondary campuses. Student numbers were below 250.

I approached the principal of the school in October 2015, explaining the purpose and scope of the proposed study. I asked him if he would be interested in allowing me to accompany the school as they began to work towards this significant and deeply reflective initiative. I shared the allegory included in the preface of this report as a basis for a conversation about reflective practice. He took my proposal to his leadership team and then invited me to come to the school in November 2015 to present the allegory and share the nature and scope of the study with the staff. At that meeting, I was given permission to lead an impromptu focus group to ascertain a general idea of the collective attitudes to the school initiative.

All teachers were given the opportunity to participate in the research. To achieve the study's purpose in terms of suggesting recommendations that might be extrapolated for value in similar contexts, it was important to gather data from as many teachers as possible. Teachers were informed that participation would be voluntary and would involve up to four interviews with the option of stepping out of the study at any time. I was also asked to support the initiative by offering contextualised professional learning.

### 3.3.3 Participants

All leaders and teachers were invited to take part in this study. Most teachers accepted the role of participant, with one declining due to impending retirement. The two chaplains also declined. Table 3 gives an overview of the participants listed under their pseudonyms. To protect participants' anonymity, the demographic information of gender and experience is listed in terms of a range rather than being specified for each participant. As referenced in Table 3, there was a cross-section of gender and years of experience. Of interest to this study,

6 of the 20 participants were taking on significant role changes within the year of data collection. This was a significant factor for some in terms of their perceptions of capacity for deepened reflective practice.

**Table 3** *Participant Overview*

| **Participant Overview [Pseudonyms]** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Pseudonym** | **Role** | **Deidentified range of Demographic Info** |
| **School Leadership Team - 3** | | **20 Participants - gender**<br>11 females<br>9 males<br>**Range of experience**<br>Graduate – 1 Participant<br>1-5 years – 5 Participants<br>5-10 years - 5 Participants<br>10 + years - 9 Participants<br>**Note**<br>6 participants reported significant role changes during the data collection period.<br>2 of these were new to the school in 2016. |
| Patrick SL | Principal | |
| Mary SL | School Leader | |
| Ryan SL | School leader | |
| **Teachers – Primary - 6** | | |
| Cara | Primary Teacher | |
| Jackie | Primary Teacher | |
| Mandy | Primary Teacher | |
| Kerry | Primary Teacher | |
| Rebecca | Primary Teacher | |
| Kacey | Primary Teacher | |
| **Teachers – Secondary - 11** | | |
| Kelly | Secondary Teacher | |
| Kayla | Secondary Teacher | |
| George | Secondary Teacher | |
| Carl | Secondary Teacher | |
| Blake | Secondary Teacher | |
| Robin | Secondary Teacher | |
| Van | Secondary Teacher | |
| Kysha | Secondary Teacher | |
| Miguel | Secondary Teacher | |
| Shaun | Secondary Teacher | |
| Zane | Secondary Teacher | |

As the secondary research questions specified, I was also a participant in this study. Though not included in the table above, my roles involved data collection and supporting contextualised professional learning.

## 3.4 Research Design

In designing this research as an interpretivist qualitative study with constructivist and social constructionist orientations and a crystallised approach, there was a need for flexibility and an openness to emergent considerations. Careful *methodological bricolage* considerations supported the resulting deep and rich account of participants' lived experiences. The intent was to co-construct valuable meaning to support achieving the research's purpose, meaning that was worthy of potential extrapolation by other school leaders facing a similar dilemma (Patton, 2002).

### 3.4.1 Research Design: Emergent Design

Flexibility infers an ongoing openness within the rigour of a careful research design to select, adapt, and adjust elements of the design as the needs arise. Flexibility demands that the researcher act as a *bricoleur* in selecting a combination of methodological approaches to meet the specific needs and purposes of the research (Pratt et al., 2022). Great care in the initial research design must be matched with an ongoing awareness and willingness to make adjustments and adaptations throughout the course of the study as the need arises (Robson, 2011). Flexibility extends to emergent research design, a concept in keeping with the constructionist epistemology.

Emergent design is responsive to contextual realities to rigorously achieve the research purpose whilst being "attuned to the needs of the research context" (Given, 2016). This study required such contextual flexibility. The initial careful research design had valuable strength and structure, but also the room to flexibly negotiate a school's complex and changing social world, adapting here and there, whilst keeping a steady focus on the intended purpose.

> Designs have consequences. Your design will determine what you learn. Your design will accompany you as a fellow traveller throughout your inquiry. You'll think you understand it well at the beginning, but as the design unfolds, becomes data, guides analysis, and turns into findings, you'll find that you've come a long way together, and that you've changed, and developed and learned together. (Patton, 2015, p. 244)

The flexible design of this study was able to respond to the changing needs of the school. The *research design was indeed a fellow traveller*, and there were times of frustration and discouragement, yet *we did journey together, and we both were changed*. Situational needs arose that required purposeful flexibility within the research design. The need for flexible responses emerged in subtle and surprising twists and turns. These adjustments and adaptations are noted in the second half of this chapter in the description and discussion of the actualities and specificities of the actual research journey.

One emergent concept that built its own momentum of understanding was the integral relationship between the phenomenon being studied and the process by which it was studied. Deep reflective practice was woven throughout every element of this study.

### 3.4.2 Research Design: Reflective Practice

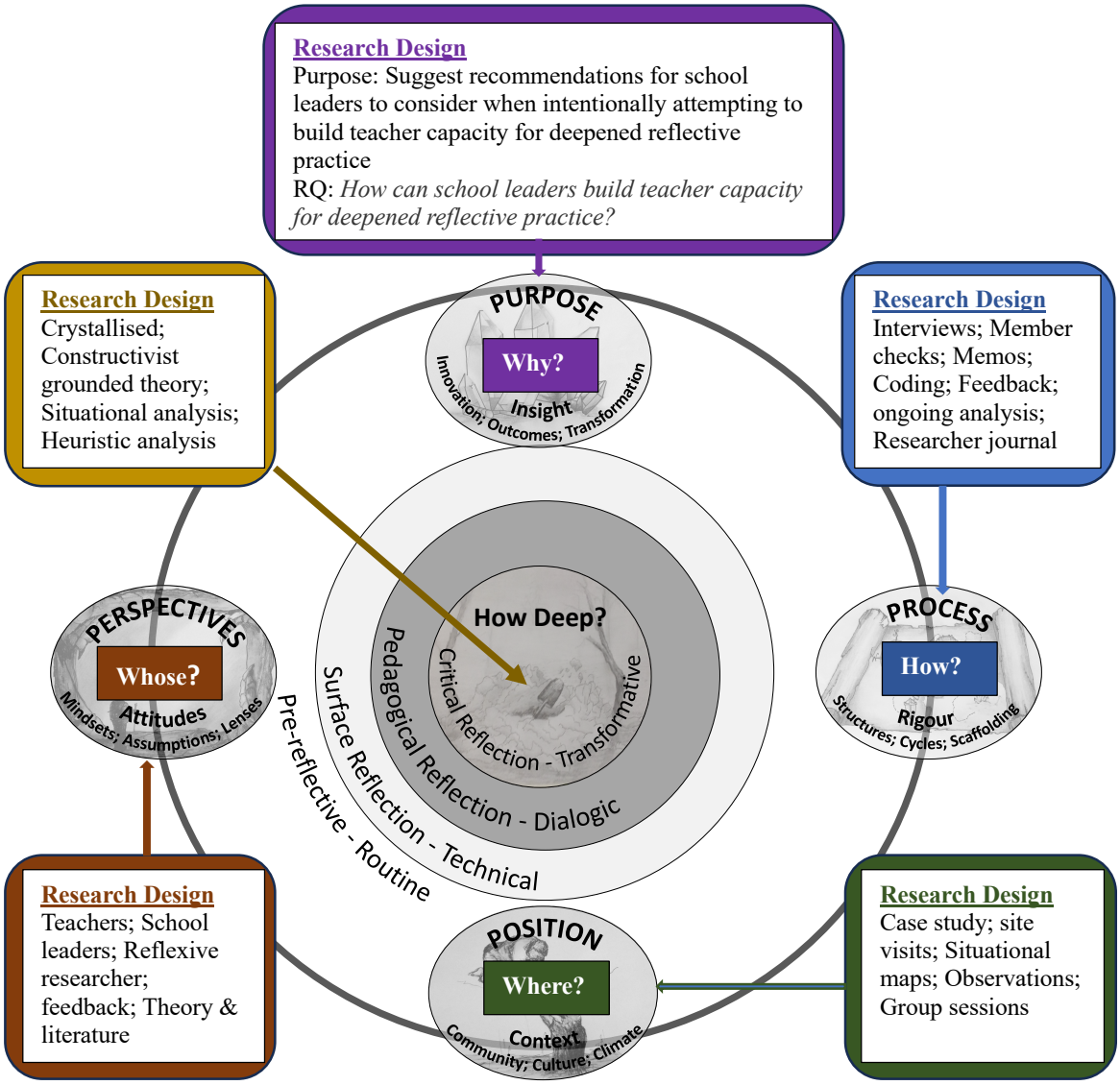
The research design demanded deep reflective practice on the part of the researcher, the *methodological bricoleur* (Pratt et al., 2022). Therefore, it was influenced by the theoretical understanding developed throughout the preliminary literature review. Figure 3 indicates the elements of the literature-based descriptive definition and the facets of the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice that impacted the research design.

As noted in Chapter Two, the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice (Figure 1) was designed to make visible some of the factors of impact for reflective practice in the complexities of a school context. Its development was purposed to support shared understanding and offer lenses through which to notice reflective practice in context. It was used as a resource in the development of the initial research design and in guiding the adaptations and adjustments that emerged throughout the study.

*Purpose, Process, Position and Perspective* were intentionally built into the research design, with elements of the descriptive definition informing considerations of what would be needed to achieve the deeply reflective purpose of this study. Figure 3 uses colour to indicate these relationships. This research design required deep reflective practice on the part of the *methodological bricoleur* (Pratt et al., 2022).

The research design moved from the purpose of the study to establishing a purposeful pathway of specific methodological procedures for achieving that purpose. Elements of the design needed to include the data required and how it should be collected, the methods and procedures for both analysing and synthesising that data and interpreting and reporting the results. It was a plan for moving from a proposed purpose to achieving that purpose. Both the substance and collection of data were pivotal considerations.

**Figure 3** *Research Design, Definition & Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice*




**Deep reflective practice is a deliberate iterative professional process embedded in context and action and purposed towards seeking insight that leads to the transformation of beliefs and behaviours, ultimately leading to improved outcomes. It involves both individual and collective questioning and analysis of current assumptions and practices through theory and varied personal and professional perspectives, seeking understanding from both the past and the present to build a better future.**

### 3.4.3 Research Design: Information Needed and Data Collection Methods

The *methodological bricolage* (Pratt et al., 2022) of this research design required initial consideration of what information would need to be provided and how it would be collected in order to achieve the stated purpose and provide deep and rich responses to the research questions. Data needed to be gathered within the broad categories of "contextual, perceptual, demographic and theoretical" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 149) information. Table 4 offers an overview of the information required as data and the methods of collection selected.

Table 4 indicates that there were three forms of data collection in the research design, each with specific functions that needed to work in concert with each other to support a multi-layered and rich data collection with "a unified purpose" (Billups, 2021b, p. 4). These three data collection methodologies were used throughout this study. The secondary research questions sought the participants' perceptions based on their lived experience; therefore, interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method, supported by the research journal and theoretical literature reviews.

Interviews are "purposeful conversations" that seek rich data and reveal "perspectives, experiences, feelings, and stories" (Billups, 2021a, p. 1) in order to support the research purpose and build meaning for answering the research questions. Interviews involve meaningful one-to-one interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee, creating a relationship where each influences the other. Within such a relationship, there is an ethical responsibility for the interviewer to report with accuracy and protect the interviewees from harm (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Reporting with accuracy and integrity requires the interviewer to be self-aware regarding their own personal assumptions and biases, with a willingness to bracket these in a form of "suspense" in order to seek an understanding of the assumptions and beliefs of the interviewees (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

There is much time and energy involved in using interviews as a data collection method. The organisation for ensuring "arrangements, permissions, confirmations, timetables, recording, note-taking, transcriptions" (Robson, 2011, p. 282) and the follow-up processes within a school context is a complex process.

There are a range of interview styles available to the qualitative researcher. In this study, a semi-structured style was selected to support opportunities for gathering rich data. Semi-structured interviews employ an interview guide with topics, issues and even potential sequences of questions, with the flexibility and freedom to adapt the wording and sequencing

in order to better engage with the flow, adapt to responses and follow interesting turns in conversation, in order to obtain richness and depth in the data (Billups, 2021a; Robson, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). A semi-structured interview has the feel of a conversation, yet the researcher purposefully guides that conversation to seek rich data (Billups, 2021a).

**Table 4** *Overview of Information Needed and Suitable Data Collection Methods*

| **Overview of Information Needed**<br>**Purpose:** To suggest recommendations for school leaders to consider when intentionally attempting to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice.<br>**Primary research question:** How can school leaders build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice?<br>**Secondary research question:** What barriers and supports to teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice do teachers, school leaders and the researcher identify? | |
|---|---|
| **Information Needed** | **Data Collection Methods** |
| **Theoretical**<br>Definitions; theoretical & conceptual understandings of reflective practice, capacity & methodologies; relevant research literature | **Literature Review**: Conceptual, theoretical and research-based understanding of reflective practice, teacher capacity, interpretive paradigms, crystallised approach, research methodologies, analysis methods. Expanded theoretical and research-based understandings to support findings interpretations, conclusions and recommendations. |
| **Demographic**<br>Participant – positions, experience, capacity factors | **Interviews:** Initial interviews capturing information on experiences, attitudes, capacity, and reflective practice |
| **Contextual**<br>Situational – human, non-human, political, economic, temporal spatial; social; cultural; issues of concern | **Interviews:** Multiple interviews to capture contextual features and changing situations that impact the capacity for reflective practice.<br>**Researcher's journal:** The researcher's engagement in interviews, participation in group activities, informal conversations and observations would lead to a growing understanding of contextual and situational factors to be recorded in researcher journals. |
| **Perceptual**<br>A rich account of 'lived experience'; individual and collective beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, ideas, and opinions | **Interviews:** Multiple interviews to capture changing or reinforced perceptions regarding lived experience of initiative, and capacity for deepened reflective practice. Regular member checks to validate data.<br>**Researcher's journal:** The researcher's engagement in interviews, participation in group activities, informal conversations and observations would lead to a growing understanding of both individual and collective perceptual understandings to be recorded as memos in researcher journals. |

The advantages of using multiple semi-structured interviews in this research design include the opportunity to gather extensive and detailed information with opportunities for follow-up questions both within the interview and in subsequent interviews (Charmaz, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Such flexibility and freedom require the researcher to have "a high

tolerance for uncertainty" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) whilst retaining a certainty of purpose. Empathy and rapport are essential, whilst emotions and personal biases need to be mindfully bracketed (Robson, 2011).

Interviews are also a valuable method of data collection when seeking both individual and collective cultural understanding, as in this study. They offer an opportunity to deduce elements of culture by deeply listening to multiple individual participants' descriptions of ordinary events and noticing and synthesising attitudes, assumptions, things said, and things not said (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In a school setting, and with a purpose that included the need to understand both individual and group perceptions, this was an important design feature that had a flow-on impact on the design of the methods for analysis.

This research study also needed to capture additional information through the observations, participative actions, and reflexive reflections of the researcher. The researcher's journal was used to record these observations and reflections in order to add depth and detail to the interviews (Billups, 2021a) and to support the bracketing of the researcher's biases and personal assumptions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The observations and reflections recorded in the researcher's journal involved reflexive reflections on group activities, including informal conversations, professional learning opportunities, involvement in staff meetings, and focus groups with the school leaders.

To capture the information needed for this study, it was evident that multiple site visits and rounds of interviews would support a richer collection of data. They would offer opportunities to observe and listen for development and changes in attitudes and perspectives over time. The research design included pauses between visits that allowed for a rhythm of transcribing, summarising, initial and ongoing analysis, member checks and group feedback. The gaps between the visits provided the opportunity to add reflections and memos to the researcher's journal and develop a reflexive awareness of biases and conflicting assumptions that needed to be held in suspension at the next visit (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The review of literature needed for theoretical information also required a purposeful rhythm over the course of the study. The initial literature review involved building a theoretical and conceptual understanding of reflective practice and capacity building. There was also a need for deep immersion in methodological understandings to create a research design that would fit the research purpose and questions. These were both requirements of the dissertation process and imperative for the research design. Once data collection began, the review of literature was paused to allow full attention to the participants' voices and gain depth of understanding of the context and situation. When findings were established through

a triangulation of analysis, literature was once more sought to support interpretation, discussion, and the formation of conclusions and recommendations. The design of this rhythm was purposed to allow literature to inspire and be the source of "creative associations, critical reflections, and multiple lenses" (Thornberg, 2012, p. 249), whilst safeguarding against the potential for it to overshadow and prejudice the analysis of data. Thornberg suggests that researchers should adopt a stance of constant reflexivity and the practice of ongoing reflective memoing:

> … to explicitly compare and contrast multiple theories and extant concepts with each other and with data and substantive concepts, to uphold a theoretical agnosticism, to stay grounded, and to document all these ongoing processes for further analysis and conceptualisation, especially when comparing memos with memos, and writing memos about memos. (Thornberg, 2012, pp. 254-255)

The research design for this study included an intentional rhythm of data collection, including interviews, observations, and reflexive reflections recorded in a researcher's journal. It also included purposeful yet intermittent reviews of theory and research literature.

Designing the collection of data was the first step. The next was to seek to interpret that data with a bespoke *bricolage* of analysis methods selected with care and intention to support the research purpose and answer the research questions.

### 3.4.4 Research Design: Methods for Analysis

The decision was made for multiple semi-structured interviews to be conducted over an extended period of time. These would be the primary source of data, supported by the researcher's journal containing observations, reflections, and memos. The next consideration in the research design was to carefully select the analysis methods. The analysis methods were chosen to operate as multiple lenses in order to enrich understanding (Ellingson, 2009), answer the research questions, and achieve the study's purpose.

Three complimentary methods of analysis were selected to seek a rigorous and deeply reflective process that:

- considered purpose, process, position, and perspective;
- enabled discovery of themes and theories;
- sought a depth of understanding of context; and
- delved into the richness of individual perspectives and experience.

### *Constructivist Grounded Theory*

Grounded Theory, as an approach to discover "theory from data systematically obtained from social research" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 2), has had ongoing revisions and quite distinct versions put forth since Glaser and Strauss (1967) published, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research* (Charmaz, 2014; Clarke et al., 2015; Thornberg, 2012). Each version identifies with the purpose of creating theory from data; however, there are consequential differences in process, paradigms, and assumptions between them.

Grounded theory has provided an essential viewpoint in this crystallised report. It is a structured and purposeful method for seeking meaning from data. Grounded theory strategies add rigour through systematic analysis of data, providing an essential element of the *bricolage* of this inquiry.

> Grounded theory involves taking comparisons from data and reaching up to construct abstractions and simultaneously reaching down to tie these abstractions to data. It means learning about the specific and the general – and seeing what is new in them – then exploring their links to larger issues or creating larger unrecognized issues in entirety. … Grounded theory methods can provide a route to see beyond the obvious and a path to reach imaginative interpretations. (Charmaz, 2014, p. 321)

The version of grounded theory that aligned most closely with the purpose and principles of this study was the constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014, 2017). Although strongly linked to grounded theory's historical roots (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), this version of grounded theory, put forward by Kathy Charmaz (2014), has an intentional constructivist approach, acknowledging "subjectivity and the researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of data" along with the importance of "social contexts, interaction, sharing viewpoints, and interpretive understandings" (p. 14). These considerations matched well with the purpose of exploring teacher capacity for reflective practice within a school context. The research purpose and questions required an analysis method that acknowledged all participants' importance and role in constructing meaning. There was also a need to acknowledge and accommodate a reflective stance for my role as both researcher and participant (Charmaz, 2017).

Constructivist grounded theory provided a valuable element to the crystallised triangulation of analysis, supporting this interpretive qualitative study's purpose of "entering research participants' worlds" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 33). The participants' world in this study was one functioning school. This research design, carefully put together as a *methodological*

*bricolage* (Pratt et al., 2022), sought to combine analysis methods to give a deeper account of the participants' world. There was a need to add an analysis method that supported the development of a rich account of the participants' world in terms of their context and their situations.

### *Situational Analysis*

Situational analysis, a version of which was developed by Adele Clark (2005) for use in the context of research, builds on constructivist grounded theory to gain a deeper understanding of the situation of inquiry (Clarke et al., 2015). Through the creation of three forms of maps, the researcher is enabled to explore broad elements of the situation along with the connections, relations and power dynamics that have influence on the phenomenon being studied (Clarke, 2010). This was important in this study.

The maps developed in this type of analysis lay out various situational elements in diagrammatic form, indicating both the range and the relationships between the elements. They are created throughout the life of a study for varied purposes, supporting a deep situational understanding and prompting an ongoing analysis of relationships between the situational elements. The initial situational map visually displays a comprehensive range of elements evident within the situation of context, both human and non-human. As a study continues, modifications are made to this initial map, and more focus is given to elements that impact the focus of the study. Ongoing comparative analysis then continues.

The second type of map focuses on the social situation. Information is drawn from an ongoing analysis of the situational maps and themes emerging through the coding of interviews. Social spheres and power arenas indicate the "collective actors" (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 229) in a situation, including those ignored or silent, and even those that may not have been physically present yet who appear to have some influence (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 16) within the scope of the research question. The social maps acknowledge the profound impact of the social context and power relationships upon individual attitudes and behaviours in light of the research question.

The final layer of mapping proposed within the scope of situational analysis focuses on ideas, opinions and attitudes. The positional maps lay out the range of positions taken within the situation on relevant issues to the study (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 230). Analysis of both the 'situation' and the 'social worlds' leads to the consideration of discourses impacting the issue under investigation. These maps represent a "range of *discursive* positions on key issues" (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 134) without being concerned with who takes the positions

being considered. The maps visually display the range of positions, including contradictory, complex and even missing positions (Clarke, 2010), bringing light to perspectives and commitments, showing "who cares about what" (Clarke, 2010, p. 871) and what they want to do about it.

The maps and the analytic memos provoked by them: "make the invisible and the inchoate social features of a situation more visible. They note key elements and their interrelations, social worlds and arenas in which the phenomenon is embedded, and the discursive positions taken and not taken on key issues" (Clarke, 2010, p. 874). Making situational maps supported the purpose of this study, particularly in grappling with the complexity of situational impacts on teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice.

Constructivist grounded theory sought meaning in the totality of the data. Situational analysis added depth, texture and detail in support of understanding participants' lived experiences. A further analysis method was needed to dive more deeply into the lived experience of each individual participant. My experience as both a teacher and a school leader led me to consider that the capacity for deepened reflective practice might vary between individuals. I believed it likely that there would be a consequential story to be told in that space.

### *Heuristic Inquiry*

Heuristic inquiry is a method of analysis within the social constructionist inquiry framework that seeks an understanding of the wholeness of the individual:

> It refers to a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9)

Heuristic inquiry shines focused attention on the "personal experience and insights of the researcher" (Patton, 2015, p. 118) as the researcher embarks on a "shared journey" with the participants, seeking discovery and insight together (Sultan, 2019). It involves a demanding, iterative and deeply reflective process: "This requires a passionate, disciplined commitment to remain with a question intensely and continuously until it is illuminated or answered" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15).

There are essential phases within a heuristic inquiry (Hiles, 2008), ensuring systematic, transparent and rigorous attention and focus from the beginning of the study

through to the final validation of the meaning created. These phases are not linear. There is much circuitous looping between phases. There is a general movement from the initial engagement into an ongoing immersion in the phenomenon. There are consolidation periods where ideas incubate, emerge and take root. Insight and emotional engagement between the researcher and the participant, who is in fact a co-researcher, lead to new discoveries and understanding. Explication then deepens and clarifies the new ideas, leading to integration and a creative synthesis: "The researcher may explore any creative means that feels appropriate – for example, art, poetry, music, metaphor, and so on as well as description and narrative – in order to convey the purest essence of the phenomenon to the world" (Hiles, 2008, p. 391). There are elements in heuristic inquiry of playing with ideas and concepts, internalising them and allowing a creative response to incubate and finally "hatch" into creative insight.

This analysis method was a good fit for a crystallised research design purposed to understand teacher capacity, a personal and individual concept with additional collective elements. Heuristic inquiry "emphasises meanings and knowing through personal experience; it exemplifies and places at the fore the way in which the researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 2015, p. 119). It is considered most valuable in studies where the researcher has a personal and intense experience with the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1990). Heuristic inquiry was a good fit for this study. As the researcher, I was deeply invested in finding ways to support teachers and build their capacity. My personal experience as a teacher, only too aware of my own limited capacity to deepen my reflective practice, and as a school leader seeking ways to support teachers, gave me an intense connection with the purpose of this study. In this report, heuristic inquiry allowed me a voice – a space for introspection, personal insights and reflections on the phenomenon of capacity and reflective practice, whilst honouring the individual voices of participants. Heuristic inquiry involved interaction, engagement and the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and the participants. I believed this was essential when seeking rich accounts of lived experience in this study. It offered a valued facet of the crystallised *bricolage of methodology* (Pratt et al., 2022).

### *Multiple Lenses of Analysis*

Constructivist Grounded Theory, Heuristic Inquiry and Situational Analysis were selected to act as the specific lenses through which the interview and researcher journal data were viewed in this research design. Each was to contribute to an interwoven layering of data

analysis *(Stewart & Harwood, 2017, p. 13)*. This combination of analysis methods sought both breadth of understanding through the coding of all interviews to explore *a forest view* and depth through heuristic analysis at the individual level, *seeking a tree perspective*. Situational analysis offered a deeper understanding of the context that impacts *both forest and trees*. Together they offered rigour and balance, honesty and transparency in order to generate a deep and complex interpretation (Ellingson, 2014, p. 444). Each was a valuable analytic tool, but the greater strength intended in this research design involved the blending of all three, adding a symbiotic wholeness to the analysis. The research design intention was for each to intrinsically deepen the other in a process of constant comparison until findings clearly emerged. Together these multiple lenses of analysis were designed to result in "a comprehensive depiction of the core or dominant themes" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31).

## 3.5 Research Timeline

Once the ideological and methodological underpinnings for this research were set in place and permissions sought and granted, a timeline was created, as displayed in Figure 4.

**Figure 4** *Research Timeline*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Stage One: Development**<br>(2015: Jan – Oct) | • Literature review;<br>• Literature-derived definition for reflective practice;<br>• Development of conceptual framework and Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice;<br>• Development and presentation of proposal.<br>• Ethics approval granted |
| **Stage Two: Site Selection & Professional Learning Design**<br>**2 site visits: 2 days**<br>(2015: Nov-Dec) | • Consent from principal and participants<br>• Information session; allegory one; reflective practice intro<br>• Initial focus group - responding to Harvest Project;<br>• Met with leaders and collectively design initial contextual professional learning (PL);<br>• Situational analysis - initial map. |
| **Stage Three: PL and Data Collection**<br>**1 site visit: 3 days**<br>(2016: Term 1) | • PL- Understanding reflective practice<br>• PL - Harvest Project purpose - Character development;<br>• First interviews (teachers and leaders); group participation & observation; situational analysis mapping; transcriptions, summaries, member checks<br>• Emailed group feedback |
| **Stage Four: Feedback; PL & Data Collection**<br>**1 site visit: 2 days**<br>(2016: Term 2) | • Second interviews (teachers and leaders); group participation & observation; situational analysis mapping; transcriptions, summaries, member checks<br>• Deidentified group feedback leaders & teachers<br>• Emailed group feedback |
| **Stage Five: Focussed Planning Group; & Feedback**<br>**1 site visit: 2 days**<br>(2016: Term 3) | • Two day group planning - Harvest Project pathways;<br>• Feedback to staff. |
| **Stage Six: PL & Data Collection**<br>**1 site visit: 2 days**<br>(2016: Term 4) | • Third interviews (teachers and leaders); group participation & observation; situational analysis mapping; transcriptions, summaries, member checks<br>• PL - Perspectives on character development and nature;<br>• Emailed individual & group feedback. |
| **Stage Seven – Final Feedback**<br>**2 site visits: 3 days**<br>(2017: Term 1) | • Fourth interviews (teachers and leaders); group participation & observation<br>• Admin visit - feedback; resources for PL support;<br>• Teacher group feedback; preliminary co-constructed recommendations; allegory two. |
| **Stage Eight - Data Analysis; Results**<br>(2017 - 2023) | • Collate data (2017);<br>• Ongoing analysis - CGT, SA, HI (2017 - 2021);<br>• Findings; interpretation with literature and theory;<br>• Final recommendations;<br>• Write thesis - Publish December 2023. |

*Note:* PL-Professional Learning; CGT-Constructivist Grounded Theory; SA-Situational Analysis; HI-Heuristic Inquiry

This timeline displays the major stages of the study. There were some adaptations and adjustments due to contextual realities; however, the eight stages of this study remained essentially consistent. Each stage stepped on from the previous one, creating a useful pathway that allowed for flexibility and contextualisation.

Within the development phase of the research project, an ongoing literature review supported the development of the conceptual framework and the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice as reported in Chapter Two of this report. Throughout the preparation of the proposal, I had an opportunity to pilot the model in an ongoing contextualised professional learning program within my own school setting. This provided useful feedback and considerations which informed the design of the study. The first stage of this research design also involved a deep dive into theory and research literature. Once ethics approval was granted (Appendix C), I was able to move to Stage Two.

The second stage involved sourcing a school site to be used as the case study for the proposed research. As discussed above, Faith School (pseudonym) was selected, and I met with the school principal and a leadership team. They gave initial consent for me to address the staff. I shared the initial allegory, as represented in the Preface, to support a shared understanding and ongoing discussion of the intention, purpose and structure of the research project and its relationship to the concept of deep reflective practice. I explained the proposed study and distributed the Information Sheet (see Appendix D), inviting all teachers to individually consider becoming involved as participants. The principal informed the teachers that their involvement was totally voluntary. I made it clear to all potential participants that they could exit their involvement at any time. Consent Sheets (Appendices E-G) were distributed to all school leaders and teachers. The principal invited me to lead an informal focus group with the teachers to ascertain initial reactions to the proposed school-wide initiative, that came to be known as ‘Harvest Project’. This was my first collection of data (see Appendix H). Teachers broke into groups with butcher's paper and recorded group brainstorms of excitement and concerns about the initiative.

The principal spoke with me and made plans for my return in January where he requested that I lead out in contextualised professional learning within topics that supported discussion and theoretical bases for the school initiative. I requested that I might add to that an introductory session on reflective practice. This was agreed. In addition to conducting interviews with consenting teachers and school leaders, Stage Two provided data for the creation of an initial situational analysis map. The focus group alerted me to a range of positions regarding the initiative, and I had the opportunity to feed back that range of

positions in a deidentified format to the school leaders and teachers, beginning the rhythm of data collection, initial analysis and member checking that would permeate the study.

Stages Three to Seven describe the major emphases of each site visit. Stage Five emerged from a collective sense in the Stage Four deidentified group feedback that teachers wanted a clearer understanding of what was being asked of them in the school initiative. I was asked to lead a focused two days of brainstorming and planning involving a group of teachers and school leaders. Whilst not a focus group as understood in qualitative research, these two days provided many opportunities for observation, reflection and memo-making. Stage Seven was also an emergent addition to the original research design. Interruptions and situational realities impacted the original intentions of the school leaders. In discussion, I offered to continue supporting them into the early stages of the following year by creating resources. On my final site visit, I met with the principal. I also had the opportunity to conduct some final interviews to understand any changes in attitudes or perspectives on personal capacity changes that may have been evident in the new school year. I was given the opportunity to speak at both the secondary and the primary staff meetings. These meetings offered an opportunity for a final member check as I shared reflections on my journey with the school in the form of a sequel allegory (Appendix I). I also shared the preliminary co-constructed recommendations for similar schools that came out of the early stages of analysis (Appendix J). I then thanked the teachers and leaders for allowing me to journey with them.

Stage Eight comprised a lengthy analysis journey, impacted heavily by both personal and professional circumstances, including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially, the data was analysed with constructivist grounded theory, then analysis moved into an extended process of heuristic analysis. Situational maps were created throughout the period of analysis. A heuristic process included both inductive and abductive reasoning, where the researcher inferences understanding of puzzling problems as a form of hypothesis involving an "imaginative leap" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 341) which is then tested with the data. Constant comparisons between the varied analysis results and original interview transcripts resulted in crystallised findings that encompassed the breadth of constructivist grounded theory and the depth of heuristic inquiry with both being enhanced by being grounded in situational understanding. An extensive literature search then supported the final analytic stage of interpretive theorising and the forming of conclusions and recommendations.

## 3.6 Data Collection

Data was collected through interviews and supported by the reflexive reflections in the research journal, and at the appropriate time, a refreshed and focused literature review. These data were purposed to provide a multidimensional bank of information for analysis to achieve the purpose of the study and answer the research questions. As the focus of the research question was on teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice and seeking participants' perspectives on their lived experience, the data was prioritised to ensure that the voices of the participants were clearly heard. Multiple interviews offered opportunities to clarify and build a depth of understanding and to track any changes in attitudes and perspectives. Fifty-five semi-structured interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed and summarised. There were twenty participants, consisting of teachers and school leaders. Participants were involved in between one and four interviews. The two teachers that had only one interview did have a second informal conversation with the researcher which was recorded as notes in the research journal.

There was a lot of data to manage. Table 5 shows an audit of the interview data. The key at the top indicates the information included in this table. Interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes. An interview guide was used with flexibility for each round of interviews (see Appendix K for an example interview guide).

The interviews were recorded and transcribed (see examples in Appendices L & M). Each transcription was then summarised, with the main ideas grouped according to themes covered in the interview. Each participant was emailed this individual detailed summary, with a message of thanks and an acknowledgement of both the strengths and main ideas from the interview. In Stages Four and Six, group feedback was also attached (see examples Appendices N-P) expanding the member checking on a collective level (Robson, 2011). Participants were then asked to read their individual summary and confirm whether or not the summary reflected their intentions and either agree for it to be shared in a de-identified format, request it to be removed from the research or ask for amendments to be made. I received confirmatory feedback on all but two occasions. On one occasion, there was a request not to use one section of an interview as the participant felt it was too personal to share. On another occasion, a participant requested for an addition to be made because of subsequent reflections on the topic discussed. Both amendments were made, and the relevant participants were asked to check once more. After receiving feedback from each participant, I

used the confirmed data to create a group feedback presentation, shared with the leadership team and the staff as a group.

**Table 5** *Audit of Interview Data*

**Data Audit**

| **Key** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✔ = Semi-structured interview<br>T = Transcription<br>S = Summary (*with Member check reply*)<br>M = Informal conversation (*notes & memos*)<br>*= no recording, notes taken | | | Gr = Group meeting: planning pathways (*notes taken*)<br># = November 15 Focus Group<br>^ = Final group feedback<br>SL = School Leaders | | |
| **Site Visit → Participants** | **January** | **May** | **September Group *** | **October** | **March 2017** |
| Kacey # | ✔ T S | | | ✔ T S | ✔ T ^ |
| Cara # | ✔ T S | ✔ T SM | | ✔ T S | ✔ T ^ |
| Jackie | ✔ T S | ✔ T S | | ✔ T S | ^ |
| Mandy # | ✔ T SM | ✔ T SM | | | ✔ T email ^ |
| Kerry P # | ✔ T S | ✔ T S | | ✔ T S | ✔ T ^ |
| Rebecca P | ✔ T S | | M | ✔ T S | ^ |
| Blake | ✔ T S | ✔ T S | Gr * | | ✔ T |
| Carl # | ✔ T SM | ✔ T S | | ✔ T S | |
| George # | ✔ T S | | | ✔ T S | ✔ * |
| Kysha # | ✔ T S | | | ✔ T S | ^ |
| Kelly # | ✔ T S | ✔ T S | | ✔ T S | ^ |
| Van # | ✔ T S | ✔ T S | Gr * | ✔ T S | ^ |
| Robin # | ✔ T S | ✔ T S | | | ^ |
| Kayla # | M | ✔ T S | | ✔ T SM | |
| Shaun # | | M | | ✔ T SM | ^ |
| Zane | | | | ✔ T SM | ✔ T ^ |
| Miguel # | | ✔ T S | | M | ^ |
| Mary SL | | ✔ T SM | Gr * M | ✔ T SM | ✔ T S Gr^ |
| Patrick SL # | ✔ T SM | ✔ T SM | Gr * M | ✔ T SM | ✔ T S Gr^ |
| Ryan SL # | ✔ T S | ✔ T S | Gr * M | ✔ T SM | ✔ T S Gr^ |

Approved transcripts and summaries were then uploaded to NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package, for an ongoing iterative process of coding and categorising. Interview recordings were stored on an external drive with a backup stored in a separate locked area. In addition to the transcripts, narrative tables for each participant were established in my research journal. These were used in the process of heuristic inquiry. Over the course of the interviews, a detailed narrative profile began to emerge for each participant (see Appendix Q: excerpt from one narrative profile). This rigorous process supported the co-

construction of knowledge, aided in enhancing trustworthiness and clarification, and set up the crystallised analysis process (Charmaz, 2014; Tracy, 2010).

Throughout Stages Three to Seven, the ongoing data collection and analysis also fed into the development of situational analysis maps (see Appendix R: Situational map: Human and Non-Human Elements), supporting a deeper understanding of the context and the elements of reflective practice within that context (Clarke et al., 2015). These were useful tools of analysis. Reflexive feedback, observations, and a growing bank of memos (see Appendix S: Memo bank titles, November 2019) added to a rich account of the journey recorded in the research journal, building deeper and "thicker" representations of the participants' lived experience (Moustakas, 1990), of the reflective Harvest Project, and teachers' perceptions of their capacity for deep reflective practice.

The research journal was kept throughout all stages of this study. This extensive journal included both 'on-the-spot' reflections, descriptions of events and personal reactions, as well as thoughtful ruminations and ideas that "incubated" over time (Hiles, 2008) (see excerpts in Appendix T).

Once all data were collected and the research journey moved into Stage Eight, a deep immersion in triangulated analysis began.

## 3.7 Data Analysis

Preparing the data for analysis included allocating pseudonyms for each participant and attaching them to the data appropriately. Interview transcripts and summaries were uploaded to NVivo for the coding process involved in constructivist grounded theory. Narrative profiles were updated for the heuristic inquiry analysis, and the initial messy situational maps were ordered and further informed by the interview summaries and the researcher's journal. The three analysis pathways provided important facets of understanding that began as separate entities. Eventually, an extensive process of constant comparison (Charmaz, 2014) resulted in a holistic and nuanced set of findings that provided a response to the research questions with a wholeness necessary for school leaders to consider when intentionally attempting to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. However, it was important to conduct the bulk of the analysis process one analysis pathway at a time.

### 3.7.1 Grounded Theory Analysis: Coding, Memos and Categories

Constructivist grounded theory was chosen to "enter the participants' world" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 33) and seeking abstract conceptual understanding through a careful and

rigorous process of analysis involving coding, the writing of memos and constant comparison between codes, categories, and the raw data. The interview transcriptions and summaries were uploaded to NVivo. An extensive iterative process of coding began, "creating codes to explicate how people enact or respond to events, what meanings they hold, and how and why these actions and meanings evolved" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 113). Each line of data was coded with gerunds, or action words leading the code, such as 'avoiding involvement' or 'lacking confidence'. Memos were added to NVivo and later to the research journal as the rounds of coding continued to become more focused. These systematic, iterative rounds of memo-making, focused coding, and extensive comparison of data (Charmaz, 2014) resulted in a range of code hierarchies and a deep exploration of categories and meaning. Appendix U shows a hierarchy with focused codes exploring attitudes, barriers, supports, contextual features, leadership issues, dilemmas, emerging theories, Harvest Project-specific responses, and understanding and experience with reflective practice. Appendix V shows focused coding in terms of four categories– identifying 'push-forward' forces, identifying 'pull-back forces'; responding personally, and leading a 'push' to deepen reflective practice. The focused codes, *in vivo* codes (Appendix S), selected categories and nodal hierarchies continued to be worked through in a process of constant comparison until a point of temporary saturation was achieved. Once the other forms of analysis were completed to a similar level, the research would once again be brought together in wholeness as the final findings. This rigorous process involved a deep immersion into the data as a whole. It opened up a rich understanding of the participants' lived experience that moved beyond the sum of separate interviews and supported a holistic understanding of teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. The voices of the participants, when heard together, created a rich harmony of understanding that was important in achieving the purpose of this qualitative constructivist research study. Constructivist grounded theory became the warp of the fabric of this study, providing strength and a framework from which to weave the weft of heuristic analysis. Situational analysis added nuance and texture to both.

### 3.7.2 Situational Analysis: Mapping the Situation

The situational analysis used data from interview transcripts and the observations and reflexive reflections recorded in the researcher's journal to examine the "situation of the inquiry" as a "key unit of analysis" (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 12). The process of analysis involved the construction of maps to represent this situational data and support both the grounded theory and heuristic analyses.

Within the context of this study, the maps that were created and the subsequent analysis exposed a range of important situational elements impacting teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice. The maps explored the complexities of the school, identified varied stakeholders and their commitments, and made clear a range of positions held. These maps added context, depth and detail to the *bricolage of methodology,* and revealed the complexity of the situation faced by both teachers and school leaders.

The process of mapmaking moved from an initial messy situational map (Appendix W) to more ordered table-based situational maps describing the many situational elements that impacted the teachers' lived experience of the deeply reflective initiative of Harvest Project (Appendices X, Y, Z, AA, BB). The social worlds and arenas of the teachers and school leaders were then diagrammatically mapped, indicating the intense complexity of the world of Faith School (Appendix CC). The final maps created involved sifting through the data to explore the range of positions taken on issues related to reflective practice using the lenses of Purpose, Process, Position and Perspective (Appendices DD, EE, FF, GG). The process of mapping supported added clarity and understanding of the situation and the impact the situation had on teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice. Schools are complex situations. The inherent complexities impact each teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice.

The creation of situational analysis maps from observations and interview data, supported and illuminated the analysis of constructivist grounded theory and heuristic inquiry. This was enabled through the ongoing process of constant comparison of both data and analysis.

### 3.7.3 Heuristic Inquiry: Seeking Understanding Through Narrative

Heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) provided the third analytic tool used to seek a rich and deep understanding of the research phenomenon. This analysis process became very personal. I immersed myself deeply in the data pertaining to each participant. To better seek each teacher's story of their reflective practice, their lived experience of this school initiative, and their responses to the research questions; the interviews, transcript summaries, communication notes from the research journal, and individual portrait tables were analysed, one participant at a time.

Some exemplary portraits were created to more deeply express in narrative form, the information contained in the narrative tables (see example Appendix HH). In moving forward in the heuristic process, I consciously bracketed my own assumptions and beliefs, allowing

each participant's voice to speak clearly through the data. As each individual story was considered, short individual depictions were formulated to capture the essence of each participant's lived experience and their perspectives on the research questions (see example Appendix II). Excerpts from these individual depictions are shared in Chapter Four.

Once this lengthy process was completed, I perused the depictions and listened deeply to the chorus of voices: "At some point an illumination will occur that facilitates the understanding and explication of essential qualities and themes" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 50). I made detailed notes and memos to record the themes and understandings that had emerged from this process (Appendix JJ).

### 3.7.4 Answering the Research Questions

After progressing each line of analysis to a point that brought some light to the research questions, there was a need to bring them together to produce one set of findings. The analytical question then asked, 'What has each of these separate forms of analysis contributed towards answering the research questions?' and then, 'How can they contribute to a holistic response?'

Constructivist grounded theory had brought to light collective themes and categories that represented rich layers of meaning that would be the foundation of a collective response to the research questions. The participants had a collective sense that leadership was integral to their capacity for reflective practice; however, within that consensus, there were valuable shades and ranges of understanding. For some, it was the passion and energy they longed for, for others, the clear process and pathways for moving forward; whilst still others noted the complexities and pressure of the leadership role that needed to be addressed. This was reflected across the categories and offered both breadth and depth of meaning.

Situational analysis exposed the complexity of the situation of the school, unique yet familiar in its complexity. External pressures and the social worlds were seen to significantly impact teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice. Positional maps exposed a wide range of differences among the teachers' experiences, motivation, understanding and expectations of reflective practice. With the purpose of this study to provide recommendations for school leaders, it was important to acknowledge that range of positions and not just seek the middle ground.

Heuristic inquiry brought to light the individuality of each teacher's mindsets, traits, personal and professional experiences, and hidden assumptions. Clearly, there could be no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to capacity building. It became evident that any school leader

wishing to build capacity for deepened reflective practice would need to be digging in the swamp rather than reaching for a pre-packaged solution. There was also a range of overarching goals for each teacher, and these appeared to work like a focusing lens on their reflective practice. The idea of a 'deepened' reflective practice looked different for each teacher, calling into question judgments based solely on observation or external appraisal. Putting individuals together into a collective deepening reflective practice would need to be premised on allowing each teacher to contribute from their strength and individuality, rather than seeking a uniformity of contribution.

The process of constant comparison, moving back and forth between the results of each line of analysis, the original transcripts, and the research journal, pulling things into a cohesive whole, was also a heuristic process. The aim was to gather the viewpoints of each form of analysis to support greater *verstehen*, seeking an empathetic understanding of the participants' lived experiences and perspectives in order to achieve the research purpose and answer the research questions.

This final heuristic process began with immersion in the wholeness of the analytic expressions followed by a period of incubation (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019), moving from inductive reasoning to abductive reasoning, entertaining all plausible interpretations, then seeking "an imaginative leap" to bring these results "together in a novel way" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 341). This rigorous yet creative process produced the findings in Chapter Four.

## 3.8 Crystallising the Report

The crystallised approach adopted in this research design supported the *bricolage of methodology* (Pratt et al., 2022) selected to best capture *verstehen*, a deep understanding of the lived experience of the participants, answer the research questions, and achieve the research design. Using the systematic, rigorous, and thoughtful processes of constructivist grounded theory, situational analysis and heuristic analysis, resulted in a crystallised triangulation, allowing the voices of all participants, teachers, school leaders and the researcher, to be heard, at times in chorus and at other times as solos, from a deep understanding of their context and situation. Systematic inductive analysis provided opportunities for abductive illumination and insight. In practical terms, this process was challenging and time-consuming. Bringing the three methods of analysis together was not a simple matter. However, it was important for the purpose of this study. School leaders must make their decisions within the complexities of context and situation, and they must consider the group and the individuals, as do teachers within their classroom teaching. During periods

of incubation, I took opportunities to speak with colleagues and school leaders to support the wrestle for wholeness in the findings. Whilst a complex journey, it has been valuable. I believe that the process of crystallised triangulation, as uniquely played out in this research study, has resulted in producing significant results for the purpose of suggesting recommendations for school leaders in similar contexts to consider.

Reporting this research has also been conducted with a crystallised approach. As an integrated report, multiple genres have been employed to offer varying views of common themes. This crystallised dissertation has been designed to allow each genre to "speak on its own and in harmony … with its neighboring representations" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 111). The visual and narrative allegoric chapter beginnings are placed to build resonance, cohesion and engagement for the reader, opening the possibility for multiple ways of knowing. 'My Voice, My Footprints' allows the researcher's voice to be heard, offering creative and reflexive reflections throughout the report without speaking over the voices of the participants. The approach of crystallisation was chosen to enhance this research study's ability to achieve its purpose in a trustworthy manner. It has reached beyond the templates of one-size-fits-all qualitative methodologies and offered a research and reporting design that has supported the "foundational assumptions of qualitative research- diversity of methods, agency and voice of the researcher, and creativity of design" (Pratt et al., 2022, p. 235) while remaining true to the study's purpose and offering partial yet significant answers to the research questions.

## 3.9 Trustworthiness: Quality Criteria

My interest in reflective practice predates this qualitative study. I have long held a passion for improving student outcomes and enabling teachers to be thoughtful, innovative, and critical thinkers. It is, therefore, important to me that this research design, its implementation, and the results and discussion be of a good quality, to allow for the potential that there may be some intrinsic value beyond my own growth and experience. I have looked to literature, learning and peer support to include elements and procedures that support such quality. I have needed markers along the way to help me reflect and judge this emerging design. Like so many of my generation, I had inculcated a gold-standard sense of research that held positivist, quantitative methods and results to be the benchmark (Northcote, 2012). The flexible, emergent design and procedures of qualitative research could never be judged according to those standards, yet it is acknowledged that a shared understanding of quality is essential to supporting qualitative research.

Beyond the understandable divide between quantitative and qualitative research, and the obvious need for differing quality markers for each, there are many "tribes" within the qualitative "camp". There are a number of opinions and variations of criteria that point to quality within a qualitative research inquiry (Santiago-Delefosse et al., 2015), and most are stipulated within the narrow confines of the many specific ideas, worldviews, paradigms, and frameworks held within the different tribes of qualitative research. Within these more specific lists of criteria; however, there are commonalities (Creswell, 2007; Morrow, 2005; Northcote, 2012). I have chosen to adopt Sarah Tracy's eight "Big Tent" criteria for judging quality in qualitative research. Tracy developed these criteria in terms broad enough to encompass a wide range of qualitative frameworks. She termed her criteria, "Big-Tent", in response to a call from Denzin (2008) for the differing interpretive communities to dialogue and communicate. Rather than defensively argue variances in qualitative ideology, he called for new strategies and new tactics to "form interactive networks" (p. 322) within the interpretive research community: "We must expand the size of our tent, indeed we need a bigger tent!" (p. 321).

Tracy's eight criteria are an attempt to answer this call and find "universal hallmarks for high quality qualitative methods across paradigms" (Tracy, 2010, p. 837) that will find their place under the larger tent and assist researchers and readers to recognise quality and communicate within an increasingly wide range of qualitative traditions. The criteria include: "(a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c)sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence" (Tracy, 2010, p. 839). Each of these criteria are addressed below within the design and implementation of this study.

### 3.9.1 Criteria for Quality: Worthy Topic and Significant Contribution

"Good qualitative research is relevant, timely, significant, interesting, or evocative" (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). Reflective practice is an essential aspect of teaching. It is core to ongoing professional learning, and necessary for the development of improved outcomes for students (Banoobhai, 2012; Sellars, 2012). This study sought rich, deep and situated understandings of reflective practice, including barriers and potential supports. This is a worthy topic with the intention of seeking fresh perspectives and extending current thinking. In the 21st century, with a phenomenal rate of change, it is increasingly important that educational outcomes meet the changing needs of students and the society in which they live. Fresh perspectives on enabling deeper reflective practice are worth seeking.

It is a point of quality that the research will contribute to our understanding of social life (Richardson, 2000a), "bring clarity to confusion, make visible what is hidden or inappropriately ignored, and generate a sense of insight and deepened understanding" (Tracy, 1995, p. 209). This study contributes a partial, though significant addition to current understandings of barriers and supports for reflective practice by giving voice to those implicitly involved in its use within a school context and listening to both the individual teachers and their collective understandings. This study sheds some light, or lights, on a contemporary problem (Tracy, 2010, p. 846), finding effective ways to enable teachers to deepen their reflective practice and impact transformational change. The findings of this study have the potential to be a "catalyst for action" (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 108) that is sorely needed in the context of the Australian and global arena of education.

### 3.9.2 Criteria for Quality: Sincerity, Resonance and Ethics

Sincerity, resonance and ethics are important elements of integrity in research. Sincerity is evident in a study when there is transparency, reflexive honesty and authenticity (Morrow, 2005; Tracy, 2010). Such sincerity is achieved by being honest and clear about researcher perspectives and through being respectful and transparent in depicting the perspectives of participants (Patton, 2015, p. 684). This research study was carefully designed to identify the researcher's voice throughout the report. The report format has given dedicated space for leadership, teacher and researcher voices to be heard. Participants were given several opportunities to clarify, change or even remove data to ensure their perspective was sincerely respected and accurately represented.

Resonance refers "to research's ability to meaningfully reverberate and affect an audience" (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). Several features within this study have been intended to deepen resonance and impact each reader. One element has been the intentional use of aesthetics. This study's artworks, narratives, poems and metaphors reflect my deepened sense of personal knowing and experience. They have also been designed to be points of connection with the reader. Bringing a range of participant voices to the fore also has the potential to connect with various readers. They may find that their own voice and experience is represented through those of others. Such points of commonality and representation have been intentionally included to allow the reader to extrapolate meaning and understanding for their own context (Patton, 2015, p. 685).

Ethics is an important point of integrity in a quality research study. Representing and honouring multiple voices, self-reflexivity, and giving opportunity for participants to check

representations made on their behalf are all ethical features of this study (Tracy, 2010, p. 846). Procedural ethics was achieved through a process of application (see Appendix B: Ethics Application), gaining ethics approval (see Appendix C: Ethics Approval) before commencing the research and following clearly set out ethical procedures such as declaring relationships with any participants, gaining signed consent and ensuring that all participants were clearly informed that they could exit from the study at any time (Tracy, 2010, p. 847).

As described above, there was a rigorous rhythm of both individual and group member-checking with the opportunity for participants to withdraw or amend data. Feedback was sought to ensure that the group data reflected the participants' range of ideas, experiences and opinions. School leaders were given de-identified feedback on the data, building trust and supporting a flow of communication between participants in addition to communication with the researcher. Building trust and transparency was intentional.

Both situational and relational ethics demanded that the specific circumstances within the context of the study, including the impact of the research on individuals and groups within the school context, were considered and respected. The long-term nature of this project, including the multiple interviews and conversations with participants, offered significant insight into this human context. It was important that confidence was kept, identities protected and yet voices heard, both as a group and individually. This ethical consideration continues to be of importance beyond data collection and has impacted how results have been shared (Tracy, 2010, p. 847). The multi-genre and multiple-voice nature of this crystallised account supports quality ethical standards and research integrity (Ellingson, 2009).

### 3.9.3 Criteria for Quality: Rich Rigour, Meaningful Coherence and Credibility

"High-quality qualitative research is marked by … descriptions and explanations that are rich … generous, and unstinting" (Tracy, 2010, p. 841). The process of the study needed to be "logical, traceable, and documented" (Patton, 2015, p. 685). In-depth information about the process, along with a transparent system of member-checking were important aspects of this dependable qualitative research (Burr, 2015, p. 178). The research design in this study has been clearly and systematically explained within this chapter. There is both breadth and depth of data and analysis. All interview transcripts were summarised and returned to the participants for member checking, and all participant feedback was acted upon in a timely manner. This process was rigorous, engendering the development of trust between the researcher and the individual participants. The rigour continued beyond the period of data

collection into the extensive and rigorous triangulated analysis which led to the findings in the first instance and then to the interpretive theorising of Chapter Five.

Meaningful coherence involves answering the questions: "Is the research measuring what we want it to?" (Winter, 2000, p. 10). Do the methods and representations fit well with the theories and paradigms chosen? Do the data, findings and interpretations gel with each other? (Patton, 2015, p. 685) Is there a sense of agreement between methods and processes, results and discussion? (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 108) These are criteria best judged by the reader, yet they have been implicitly considered and reported throughout the design and final reporting of this qualitative constructivist case study.

The purpose of studying a deep account of varied perspectives and experiences of reflective practice within a real and complex school situation required multiple lenses to be used, both in terms of data collection and methods of analysis. The layout of this report, and the multiple genres employed were purposed to enhance coherence and add quality to the account.

*"*Credibilit*y* refers to the trustworthiness, verisimilitude, and plausibility of the research findings" (Tracy, 2010, p. 842). The rich and thick descriptions in this report support credibility. There has been a clear intention to seek to understand reflective practice through the point of view of participants.

Another element of credibility has been the crystallised approach taken. The multi-faceted form of triangulation adopted within this study allowed participants' voices to be heard from varied perspectives. The integrated report style has used a range of perspectives to better communicate the ideas within this study. "Creative arts is one lens through which to view the world; analytical/science is another. We see better with two lenses. We see best with both lenses focused and magnified" (Richardson, 2000a, p. 254). Both lenses have been employed within this study with the intention of building credibility and deepening understanding.

There has been considered effort in this research design and implementation to achieve quality and trustworthiness. In the spirit of this, there must be a clear understanding of the limitations and delimitations of this study.

## 3.10 Limitations and Delimitations: Acknowledging and Addressing

This research study has been designed to seek rich accounts of participants' lived experience of a school initiative and their perspectives on the barriers and supports to teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice. The paradigmatic and methodological

choices made have associated limitations that must be acknowledged and addressed. In addition, there has also needed to be some boundaries or delimitations put in place to enhance feasibility and support quality and integrity within the study.

Choosing three analysis methods to complement each other and offer multidimensional perspectives added levels of complexity to the design that impacted the researcher and the reader. The "ambiguity and blurred lines that accompany flexibility and emergent design" allow for "creativity and experimentation" to dig deep and seek innovative solutions (Billups, 2021b, p. 9). This is both a benefit and a limitation. The use of semi-structured interviews with the flexibility to follow the flow of conversations and adapt on an individual basis can result in a lack of standardisation and complexity in analysis. To address this limitation, this study has employed individual and group member checks as a balance to ensure that representations have remained faithful to participants' perspectives.

There are also limitations involved in collecting data through interviews. The impact of the "contingencies of the interview situation" (Robson, 2011, p. 279), "observer effects" (Billups, 2021a), and participants offering surface or safe responses (Robson, 2011, p. 282) have been somewhat addressed through the building of trust, multiple interviews over time, multiple participants and the constant comparison between analysis methods to capture the essence of lived experience from the combination of observation, interviews and reflexive reflections.

There were pragmatic delimitations involved in this study. The timing of site visits was constrained by my teaching load as well as the needs of Faith School. It was not possible to interview every teacher at every site visit, due to timetable issues, sickness, and absences. Addressing these limitations involved capitalising on the strengths of flexible interviews, allowing me to catch up on missing data noted from the previous interview.

Although I originally planned to conduct formal focus groups with the teachers, the school's timetable did not allow for this. To address this limitation, I used the group situations that I was involved in to support informal observations.

One purposeful delimitation involved the bracketing of my voice, beliefs and assumptions in this study when dealing with data, analysis and reporting. The process of bracketing involved recording and sharing my reflexive reflections in the boundaries of turn-taking in conversations, in addition to the recording my observations and reflections and memos in the researcher's journal. My voice has also been separate yet heard in the creative expressions at the end of each chapter of this report. My voice and my footprints are evident, but they are designed to be circumspect and respectful of the participants and the reader.

### 3.11 Researcher: My Voice, My Footprints

*One of the early complexities involved in designing this was that I needed to build my own capacity for, and engagement in, deepened reflective practices to seek a greater understanding of teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice. I was seeking a research design that could attempt to tease apart elements of the complex wholes of both reflective practice and teacher capacity, to catch a glimpse, a glimmer, a glow of capacity growth and engagement in deepening reflective practice. I was seeking to 'see' reflective practice, through lenses 'of' reflective practice, to notice 'capacity' through my own struggle for capacity. This was not a simple task, but it was profoundly important.*

***Reflecting***

*Reflecting*
*Reflecting on reflecting*
*Reflecting on reflecting through reflecting*

*Reflective practice*
*Practicing reflective practice*
*Reflecting on practising reflective practice*

*Deeper*
*Digging deeper*
*Covered in the dust of reflections*

*Messy*
*Oh so messy*
*Looking for light in the dark.*

*I needed to be able to see the whole picture and the parts, the forest and the trees, to navigate a worthy research design.*

***Trees and the Forest***

*Need a map,*
*A plan, a path to seek.*
*A way to find*
*Understanding with creative technique.*

*Thick underbrush,*
*Scratching at my mind, at my heart.*
*Tree to tree,*
*Perspectives limited, lost in the part.*

*Need another angle,*
*A look from somewhere high.*
*A forest view,*
*To see the whole, the wonder and the why.*

*Seeking a design*
*In the forest, through the trees, seeing all*
*Crystallised lenses,*
*Seeking treasure in the forest, beyond the wall.*

## 3.12 Leaving a Trail: Chapter Précis

This chapter has carefully laid out the choices and pathways of the research design. Interpretive paradigms and a constructivist orientation approached through qualitative crystallisation led to the selection of a *methodological bricolage* (Pratt et al., 2022) designed to meet the study's purpose and answer the research questions. This research study was conducted in one Australian rural K-12 school. Voluntary participants included all school leaders and most teachers in this school. Data were collected from multiple interviews with participants over a fifteen-month period. The researcher also kept a journal to record observations, informal conversations, reflexive reflections and memos. A crystallised triangulation of analysis methods was purposively selected to deeply acknowledge context whilst encompassing both a breadth of understanding from multiple participants and a depth of understanding coming from deep engagement with each individual participant. Constructivist grounded theory provided a method for deeply engaging with the data as a whole, seeking the themes and emerging theories from the participants' collective voices. Situational analysis offered multiple opportunities and lenses through which to understand the situational elements that impacted teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice. Finally,

heuristic inquiry supported the development of a rich account of each participant's lived experiences and perspectives on the research focus.

The research design and its implementation of data collection and triangulated analysis resulted in a deep engagement of understanding regarding teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice within the context of busy schools. The findings offer "thoroughly partial" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963) and valuable answers to the research questions and support the purpose of suggesting recommendations for school leaders to consider when intentionally attempting to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice.

# CHAPTER FOUR
# ON DISCOVERING PITFALLS AND GLIMMERS: FINDINGS



***This journey seemed to start and stop, move forward, and backtrack. The weather of interruptions impacted each step of the way. Together we discovered pitfalls and fears that seemed insurmountable, yet there were also glimmers of hope that promised a way forward, together. The glimmers shone from the journey, not the destination. As the light grew, we saw a path ahead, a pathway that gives direction and shape to our quest.***

## 4.1 General Overview

This chapter reports on the findings that emerged from the crystallised analysis of data collected throughout this inquiry. We are now poised to listen to the voices of our participants and through their responses, both collectively and individually, answer the research questions that guided the data collection and prominently feature in this chapter.

The secondary research questions asked the teachers, school leaders and researcher to identify the barriers and supports to teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice within the context of an intentional, critically reflective school-wide initiative. As we listen to the participants' voices responding to these questions, we will discover that their experiences

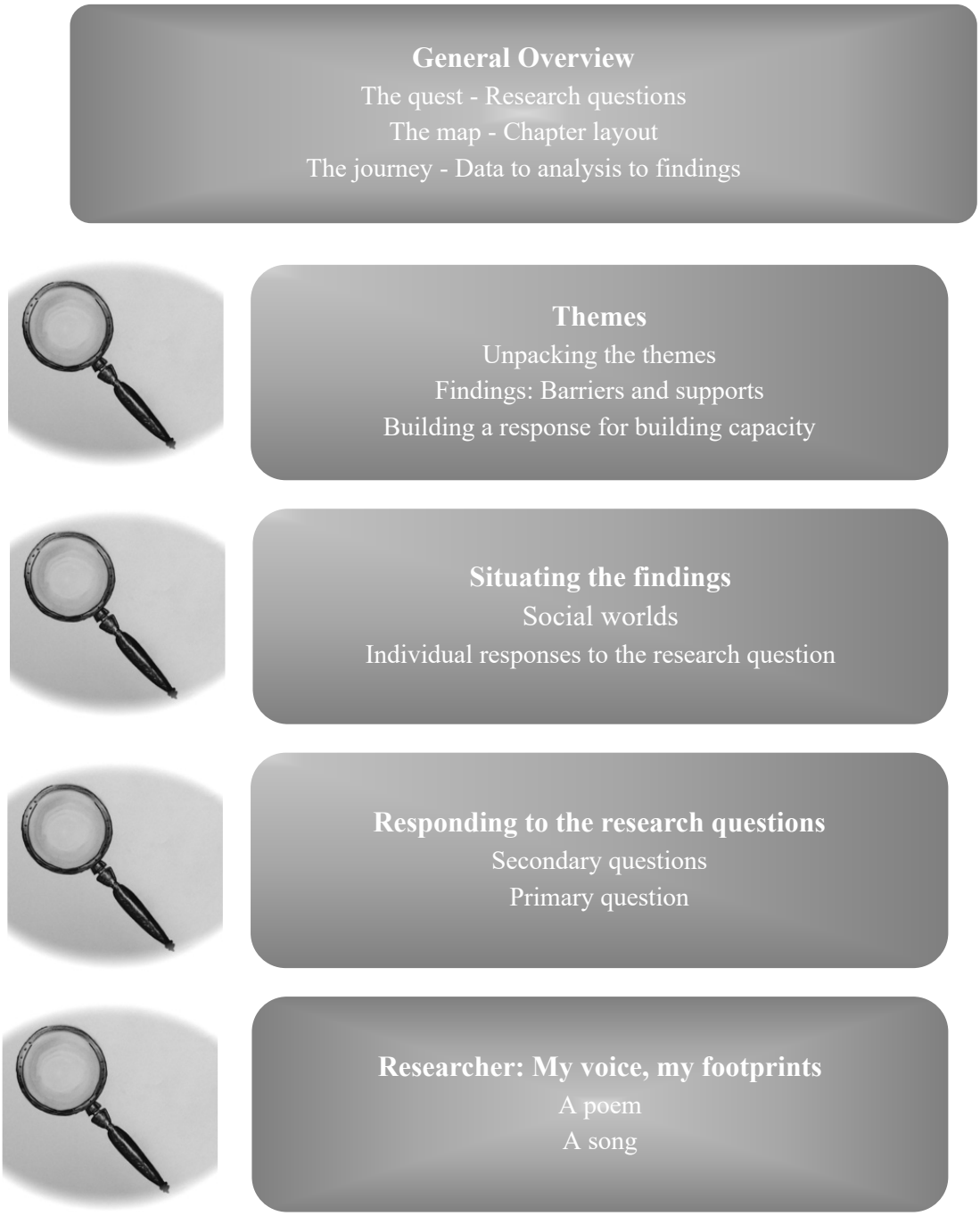
offer valuable insights towards the ultimate quest of this research study, the primary research question: "How can school leaders build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice?".

Throughout the inquiry, the participants shared their lived experiences individually and in groups, through conversations and interviews. Their accounts provided valuable, ongoing, and deepening data that contributed to a meaningful exploration of the research questions. This chapter lays out these findings in an integrated crystallised report, synthesising the results of situational analysis, constructivist grounded theory and heuristic analysis and presenting the findings with evidence and examples, narrative and diagrams.

The layout of this chapter, as displayed in Figure 5, is intended to present the findings of the triangulated data analysis in a manner that honours the voices of the participants, offering both 'forest' and 'tree' perspectives in seeking answers to the research questions. The integrated reporting style presents partial responses to the research questions through a deep investigation of nine overlapping and interdependent themes followed by heuristically-derived participant responses to the primary research question.

Section 4.2 introduces the thematic findings of this study. Sections 4.3 to 4.11 delve into each emerging theme, acknowledging reported barriers, and offering an in-depth, evidenced explication for each support finding. Section 4.12 addresses situational elements that impact reflective practice and introduces each participant with a brief overview of their story, and then a heuristically derived response from each of them in response to the research question. Section 4.13 summarises the participants' declared barriers and supports, and presents the findings as a complex web of support. Section 4.14 offers a creative synthesis of the findings expressed as readers' theatre. The chapter is then concluded in section 4.15 with a chapter summary.

**Figure 5** *Findings Chapter Layout*




This chapter continues reporting on the journey from data to analysis to findings. Chapter 3 offered a comprehensive presentation of the research design and methodology. The reader is reminded that this research was conducted over a fifteen-month period in which the school leaders and teachers at Faith School were involved in the early stages of a school-wide initiative, called the Harvest Project. 'Harvest' required teachers to deepen their reflective practice by calling question to their current teaching practice with an open mind for potential transformational change. The overarching purpose of Harvest was to support values-rich

'character development' for their students. Data were collected over that time through interviews conducted in four of the seven visits to the school. The researcher was a co-participant in this study, facilitating the initiative through individual support and group professional development sessions and conducting semi-structured interviews.

Data collected included transcripts of interviews conducted on four of the school visits, member-checked interview summaries (generated from the interview analyses), and the researcher's journal of observations, reflexive reflections and memos. The analysis process began with creating transcripts and detailed summaries of the recorded interview, followed by an ongoing rhythm of both individual and group member-checking. This ongoing process supported the building of deep and rich accounts of participants' experiences of the school initiative and capturing a focused view of the phenomena under study, the capacity for deepened reflective practice and the participants' perceptions of barriers and supports for such.

**Table 6** *Themes - Barriers and Supports*

| **Themes – Barriers and Supports to Deepened Reflective Practice** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Themes** | **Barriers** | **Supports** |
| **Leadership** | ○ Leadership issues | ○ Lead intentionally |
| **Space** | ○ No time, personal or professional space | ○ Create space |
| **Support** | ○ Lacking support | ○ Give support |
| **Perspectives** | ○ Limited perspectives | ○ Broaden perspectives |
| **Focus** | ○ Scattered focus | ○ Synergise focus |
| **Pathways** | ○ Lack of structure and direction | ○ Create pathways |
| **Collaboration** | ○ Limited collaboration | ○ Cultivate collaboration |
| **Momentum** | ○ Inertia | ○ Build momentum |
| **External Arenas** | ○ External pressure and distractions | ○ Engage external support |

Nine themes emerged as arenas of impact on teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice. Within each theme, participants reported barriers and suggested supports, as briefly summarised in Table 6 above. The nine support findings are responses to the primary research question.

## 4.2 Themes - Overview

In the following chapter section, each of the nine themes is unpacked with a general description of the theme, followed by a table of summarised barriers, and then a full explication (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 30-31), drawing together both barriers and supports, as identified by the participants. Each finding offers a partial 'support' response to the primary research question, derived from an interpretive summation of the data presented. This is also expressed in a cumulative diagrammatic form at the end of each thematic section.

Analytical commentary integrates representative evidence and verbatim quotes to exemplify the collective perspectives that emerged from the coding process of constructivist grounded theory, then cross-checked against the individual profiles developed through narrative analysis. Less common viewpoints are included in the explication, ensuring that all voices are heard. Verbatim quotes included within the analytical commentary are italicised to honour the participants' voices whilst maintaining an acceptable flow of readability.

The secondary research questions group the participants into three categories: teachers, school leaders and the researcher. I have included my own observations, as 'the researcher' participant, in the first person. I have prioritised the voices of the other participants, both as a collective and as individuals, including my reflexive observations only in instances where they provide variation or supplementary evidence. The barriers and supports that stood out most significantly to me personally are briefly described later in the chapter.

All teacher and leader viewpoints are acknowledged under pseudonyms. School leaders are distinguished with 'SL' following their respective pseudonyms. I have not used a pseudonym for myself. Participants reference me as 'Karyn' in verbatim quotes.

The diagrams provided at the end of each finding explication are purposed to display an intentional growing structure of partial responses to the primary research question. The diagram displays the interdependent and interconnected nature of each finding, noting the 'parts' in a growing sense of the 'whole'.

This is the 'forest' viewpoint of the participants' experience of an intentional school-wide initiative to deepen their reflective practice, offering collective perspectives.

## 4.3 Theme One: Leadership

All participants spoke on the theme of leadership, indicating that effective leadership is vital for the success of any school-wide, deeply reflective initiative. Leadership issues were also reported as significant barriers to teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. This

first theme looks at how leaders lead, rather than the specific actions they take. All subsequent themes expand on arenas of action for school leaders.

### 4.3.1 Barrier Finding: Leadership Issues

Table 7 summarises the leadership issues noted by participants as barriers to teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. Most of the reported barriers were seen to inhibit teacher capacity in their current experience of the Harvest Project, or similar experienced initiatives. In brief, participants noted that no one appeared to be 'driving' the initiative or ensuring accountability, that vision was shared with little reference to teaching practicalities, that small school realities including poor staff retention, restricted potential. It appeared that balance between passion and compassion, autonomy and dependence, vision and process was difficult for leaders to achieve.

**Table 7** *Barriers - Leadership Issues*

| Barrier Theme - **Leadership Issues** | **Prim. Tchrs** | **Sec. Tchrs** | **School Admin** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ No one to passionately drive the initiative and ensure things are done properly | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ No one following up to ensure steps and 'hold the stick' | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Big picture vision not clear or inclusive of practical realities | ✘ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Overloaded leaders | ✘ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Too dependent on Principal | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ No leadership with process and collaboration | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Small School – staff retention – onflow of consistent change | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Protecting might inhibit passion | ✘ | ✘ | ✔ |
| ○ Limiting what can be changed | ✘ | ✘ | ✔ |
| ○ Quantifying what must be changed | ✘ | ✘ | ✔ |

### 4.3.2 Support Finding: Lead Intentionally

When asked to suggest ways leaders might support deepened reflective practice, some participants offered support suggestions from personal experiences, whilst others made suggestions of ways to avoid or minimise negative leadership issues. Many suggested both.

All participants sought intentional leadership, expecting school leaders to 'drive' school-wide initiatives. Most participants also indicated that although vision and energetic passion were important, this would also need to be tempered with wisdom and understanding.

When speaking of Harvest Project, Cara was emphatic that it needed to be *"deliberately done, … intentional"* (May 2016). This sense of deliberate *"top-down"* (Miguel, May 2016) leadership was often couched in terms of force and momentum, such as *"driving"* the initiative, and direction coming "*forcefully from administration"* (Kysha, Oct 2016). Blake (Jan 2016) spoke of "*taking active steps"* and making *"conscious decisions to try to change".* Participants also wanted to see school leaders demonstrate a sense of ownership for an initiative: "*It needs to be their baby, to keep driving it"* (Kacey, Oct 2016). There was a strong sense of the need for both intention and ownership in the teacher participants' responses.

Patrick SL (Oct 2016) understood this need also, from a leadership point of view: *"Any initiative that's right outside the box is going to need to be led."* His view, and that of the other leaders, was that the more you might ask of the teachers, the more a leader must intentionally give themselves.

Both teachers and school leaders noted the need for intentional leadership to harness energy and passion in order to promote big-picture thinking and vision.

### *Lead with Vision and Passion.*

The importance of intentional vision and energetic passion was evident as Kerry shared her appreciation of Patrick SL's leadership approach. *"Oh… he is a driver and … he has vision, and he motivates people to actually … get on board. … He is a big plan sort of person… and he has … vision for … the future" (Jan 2016).* Many participants spoke of the value of 'big picture' visioning and initial motivation skills as positive leadership traits. As Kacey (Oct 2016) put it: *"Someone very passionate about it needs to be on top of it".* The teacher participants could see that the busyness and distractions of school life would need energetic and passionate leaders. Van (Jan 2016) described this sentiment clearly: *"We need to have heroes, … who jump up and down and motivate and lead out*". Vision needed to be accompanied by ongoing passion and focused energy.

Leadership participants resonated with the teachers' viewpoint regarding the need for both vision and focused energy. Mary SL (March 2017) spoke of the need for leaders to have passion and vision before asking the same of the teachers: *"There is a clear need to ignite teacher passion and enthusiasm for Harvest goals to be achieved".* When I commented to Ryan SL, *"So you're going to make this happen, aren't you,"* he replied with energy and positivity, *"Yep … Well,* ***we're*** *going to make things happen".* He paused and noted: *"… This*

*is a process"* (Oct 2016). Ryan SL alluded to the need to work together over time and be prepared for a longer-term approach than an initiating vision and passion might maintain.

### *Lead with a Tempered Approach.*

Most teachers identified that passionate vision must be coupled with a tempered approach, balancing compassionate wisdom and strong organisational process skills.

Leaders would need to temper their approach to meet a range of needs when presenting teachers with a catalyst for deepened reflective practice, as exampled with Harvest. Robin (Jan 2016) described two types of teachers, one group would say: *"'This is exciting and … we will change the world'. …. They are the 'big ideas' people and the people that are just enthusiastic about everything, which is fantastic. You need them on staff to … energise."* She then described the 'other group', the one she personally related to. This group asks, "The idea … can take us to a really good place, but how will it work on a practical level? … What kind of structure will we have to bring to it? … How will it actually work?" Leaders would need to continue to excite the passion of the first group, whilst providing the structure and pace needed for the second group.

There was a consensus from the teachers that bringing a big-picture vision to life often requires others to flesh it out in practical sense-making. Carl (Oct 2016) noted: *"Look, when you get people who are visionary, they need people around them who can then put it together so that everyone else can make sense of where they're at".* He noted, *"Some people have the talent of being able to do that whole thing …",* but, he noted, others need people around to keep the balance workable. He was alluding to a potential need for: "*a collaboration of effort"* between visionaries and those who are: "*great at the step-by-step stuff. Between those two types of people is the only way it's going to work"* (Van, Jan 2016). A common theme amongst the teachers was that a tempered approach to leadership would need a team.

Although participants could see the benefit of including teachers with a gift for the "*step-by-step"*, there was a reluctance by those identified as capable of such traits to step into shared leadership roles. Most felt that they did not have the capacity to offer the needed energy when they were already overloaded and weary. *"Like where would I find just any of the motivation … I just feel like I'm surviving every year" (Kysha, Oct 2016).* Robin (Jan 2016) explained that in a small school, *"… people have to take on a lot of extra things".* She saw the need: *"I think that it would be good if there was someone that was passionate about it, to take it on and to take that process".* She paused for a moment, then went on, *"That's the*

*thing, there's not anyone that's willing to, … and it's a sad thing".* Teachers could see the need for a balanced leadership team but felt that load issues would remain a barrier.

Teachers voiced the need for leaders to understand that workload impacted their capacity for involvement in an initiative involving deepened reflective practice. They expressed that leaders must temper their approach by balancing the need for teacher buy-in and ownership at an "*everyone kind of level*" (Robin, Jan 2016), without adding a sense of burden to teachers' already full loads. Robin noted that leaders would need to be mindful not to present the initiative as *"… another thing you have to check off your list of a hundred things to do today",* yet at the same time, that a leader *"… does need to be someone that keeps reminding, because otherwise you just forget".* Robin described the dual roles required for leaders: *"It's that balance between, it needs to be something we are all excited about, but there also needs to be someone who keeps reminding us that there is something that we are excited about*" (Jan 2016). Many teachers could see that leading a deeply reflective school-wide initiative would require an intentional, and often precarious, balancing act.

School leaders were under no allusions regarding the difficulties of leading with a tempered approach. Mary SL gave an example of such complexities. Her tempering included attempting to ease loads and give positive experiences in practically achieving goals together before slowly opening potentialities for deeper reflective practice. "*I've planted the seed only with the teachers, and I was aiming towards next year …"* (Oct 2016). She had carefully thought out a way to include teachers in a small project aligned with Harvest, focusing on the broad goals of character development. Mary attempted to balance Patrick SL's strong vision with a carefully tempered step-by-step approach:

> *I think if we can lighten their burden, … there's only so many hours in a day and only so much we can do. So, I think just trying to work towards, maybe, lightening loads in a way that is manageable, still meeting requirements, and then work towards... replacing them.* (Mary SL, Oct 2016)

However, reflecting over the year in October, she reported with a tone of disappointment: *"It looks like I've done nothing"* (Mary SL, Oct 2016). Mary SL felt that her measured and tempered approach was not engendering energy: *"The passion's not there, I suppose, when you do it that way"* (Oct 2016). Mary's leadership experience highlights the tension of holding the energy and passion of vision, whilst counterbalancing to support and meet teachers' needs and acknowledge their situational realities.

Acknowledging practical realities requires wise leadership and tempering expectations with compassionate support. Ryan SL (Jan 2016) reflected on past experiences:

"*I've seen a lot of great ideas being thrust upon people".* He paused, *"And that never works. … I've seen good ideas that have not had adequate support"*. He continued that if leaders *"… increase … people's workload without … any payoff, … it falls flat".* Because of this, he was very intentional in balancing passion with compassion: *"I think … as long as it is not adding to their workload … and it's always in areas that they are interested in and … it doesn't feel like work, I think they'll still be interested"* (Jan 2016). Situational realities such as workload and teacher interests, need to be considered when wishing to build capacity for deepened reflective practice, increase professional satisfaction, and improved outcomes. Intentional, tempered leadership was seen as important by all participants.

### 4.3.3 Building a Response to the Research Question

All participants could see that a call for teachers to deepen their reflective practice would need leadership that harnessed the energy of passionate vision with an intentionally tempered approach.

The support finding within the theme of leadership offers the following partial response to the primary research question:

> School leaders need to intentionally lead with vision and passion, whilst tempering their approach to consider the well-being of their teachers and the realities of their school situation. This may require a leadership team.

This finding, as expressed in Figure 6, was seen to be foundational to all others.

**Figure 6** *Support Finding One - Lead Intentionally*

vision & passion - **LEAD INTENTIONALLY -** a tempered approach

## 4.4 Theme Two: Space

All participants noted that 'space', or having 'sufficient room' in their practice, greatly impacted teachers' capacity to dig deep, question and explore with a willingness for transformation. Such 'space' referenced temporal time, along with 'head-space', a personal capacity to think with positivity, criticality and creativity, and 'professional space', involving skill development, student-centred care, professional self-efficacy and a willingness to question assumptions and broaden perspectives.

### 4.4.1 Barrier Finding: No Time, Personal or Professional Space

Table 8 summarises the 'space' barriers identified by participants. In brief, most participants reported being too busy, and many felt overloaded. Calls for deepened reflective practice resulted in various emotional responses, impacting teachers personally, both physically and emotionally, and professionally, in terms of attitudes and opportunities. The elements of risk involved in asking big questions and seeking new solutions, coupled with a sense of isolation, reduced teachers' willingness to be open-minded and willing to deepen their reflective practice. The perception of limited professional space for research, skill development, of change exacerbated this barrier.

**Table 8** *Barriers - No Time, Personal or Professional Space*

| Barrier Theme - **No time, personal or professional space** | **Prim. Tchrs** | **Sec. Tchrs** | **School Admin** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ Leaders are too busy to take this on | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ There is not enough time or space to add the reflection and changes to current workload | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Everyone is too busy | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Teachers are tired, with no energy | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ It doesn't feel safe | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Negative emotions cross from personal to professional | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Professional load is too filled with lists to do | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Professional space in staff meetings filled with the mundane and happenstance. | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Timing of staff meetings – too tired, not sharp | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Unable to master professional skills due to too much role change | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Frustration when busyness detracts from higher goals | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Sense of overload and survival mentality | ✘ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Risk of burnout and loss of professional 'joy' | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Teachers are protective of their workspace | ✘ | ✘ | ✔ |

### 4.4.2 Support Finding: Create Space

With teachers reporting insufficient 'space' in their 'busy' professional lives, be that time, personal or professional space, many suggested that if more were to be expected of them, as in the instance of Harvest, leaders would need to 'create that space'.

Most participants overtly expressed a sense of overwhelming busyness in their lived experience as teachers at Faith School. This was reported to crowd out much of their capacity

for deepened reflective practice. The busyness was overtly articulated in terms of time, although there were many indications that emotional and professional overloading also perpetuated this lack of capacity. Some participants focused on the limitations of the busyness, and others suggested ways to ameliorate the problem.

There was a sense of relentless rush: *"Go, go, go"* (Blake, Jan 2016), leaving some teachers reporting chronic tiredness. This emotional and physical overload impacted teachers' responses to initiatives and calls for deepened reflective practice, such as Harvest.
Even Blake, who was a teacher described by a school leader as having: "*childlike enthusiasm, and … boundless energy*" (Patrick SL, Oct 2016), articulated that busyness and tiredness impacted his *"frame of mind"* (Blake, Jan 2016) during staff meetings. He described his constant need for: *"fitting and jamming"* more and more into his teaching program. *"This is not what I want to be doing right now",* were the thoughts he shared about some staff meetings, due to feeling a lack of both personal and professional space. Teacher participants expressed dissatisfaction at such a lack of space.

The school leadership participants also described the load issues of busyness and an ensuing lack of time, both in terms of understanding the plight of their teachers, but also in their own roles. Patrick SL's statement (Jan 2016) indicates his belief that a lack of time and an overload of responsibilities impact the emotional and professional capacity for deepened reflective practice:

> *But time is our biggest enemy. … We just seem to be so busy. … We just seem to be running from one bushfire to the next. … I hate life that way. I'm just doing everything on the back foot.*

The participants in this study were clear on this matter. Space is needed for teachers to have the capacity to move beyond their current workload and deepen their reflective practice.

### *Create Time Space.*

Most participants, when asked about their capacity for deepening reflective practice, noted the need for time. Kacey (Oct 2016) stated it in terms of expectation. *"I guess I'm expecting time to be given to us to do it."* There was a strong sense amongst the teacher participants that there was an onus on school leaders to create this needed time-space if they were to increase their expectations. In May (2016), as Cara and I discussed barriers to deep reflective practice, she returned to the time issue: "*It really boils down to the time thing*

*again. … You'd have to be given time"* (May 2016). In October (2016) Cara, representative of most teachers, reiterated the need for: *"… some deeper planning time."*

Staff meetings were often discussed when considering creating the time-space needed for teachers to reflect deeply. Robin (Jan 2016) noted that: *"if you don't make time for it … it just doesn't happen".* She described the realities of dealing with the *"urgent things"* and finding the time gone, and herself *"collapsing in a heap"* at the end of a staff meeting.

Many teacher participants referred to staff meetings as contributing to the time problem rather than being a potential solution for building teacher capacity. Kayla's thoughts resonated with many others. "*Often [in] our staff meetings, the time goes pretty quickly on not much … which is easy to happen"* (Oct 2016). Shaun (Oct 2016) described many staff meetings as *"talkfests",* where: "*the time to do all that stuff doesn't actually happen*". Kelly (Oct 2016) described a common practice of bringing up issues in staff meetings that require deep reflection: *"They've been presented … without any time. … It just 'psh', it goes off".* Van (Jan 2016) noted that a solution would need to be very intentional: "*If we … dedicated some real time, meeting-wise, to it and then structured those meetings, we would do a lot better perhaps than if we just let it [happen]"*.

Another time issue arose when teachers spoke of the need for teachers with organisational abilities to be involved in the leadership team. Many felt this to be important as noted in the leadership theme. However, a lack of time was seen to be one of the significant barriers for teachers' willingness and capacity to fill such roles. Robin (Jan 2016) suggested: "*I think we probably need to make time for the 'doers'. … There needs to be space and time for them to actually put some things in place so that it's successful."*

The school leader participants were also mindful of time issues, both for their teachers and in their own work. *"I think,* [the] *time factor is an issue for us"* (Mary SL, May 2016). Ryan SL could see the problems involved with overloading teachers' time: "*I'm not going to increase the hours, you know. If we give tasks, I want to give time"* (Jan 2016). He believed he could not expect anything more from his teachers without the creation of time-space. Mary SL (Oct 2016) was working intentionally to improve time use in staff meetings. She claimed a regular time each week, giving her: "*ownership of that time",* to intentionally change staff meeting practices and allow for opportunities for deepened reflective practice.

Time, however, was not the only space issue evident for teachers.

### *Create Personal Space.*

Further analysis uncovered a broader 'space' barrier to deepening reflective practice. There was a perceived lack of personal space, evidenced through discouraging, and at times debilitating, emotional responses to a call for deepened reflective practice. Figure 7 shows a word cloud displaying the range of emotions expressed in interviews when discussing reactions to Harvest. In the diagram, emotive words are displayed with varying size and intensity ibe their own, or other

**Figure 7**




P to feelings of exciteme n a sense of fear or ri what you do leaves many teachers uncomfortable: "*Well, it's not a safe thing, because all the teachers are very comfortable with teaching to the syllabus."* In his observation of colleagues, Van (Jan 2016) explained that a sense of overload impacted a teacher's courage. *"You've got to go for*

*the safe options, … a teacher can't give or do everything."* He added: *"But they can do something".* Van could see a way forward by assuaging the fear and reducing the risk.

Some responses indicated very little capacity for the courage and mindset required in deepening reflective practice. George (Jan 2016) spoke of the personal impact of his sense of overload: *"I'd say survival has been the key."* In October (2016) he was still: *"… Just trying to survive".* Kysha (May 2016) described the impact of annual changes in teaching roles as being on a *"treadmill of survival",* where she felt *"really tired".* Carla (May 2016) spoke of her heavy load in planning and meeting her students' needs, as *"emotionally tiring".* Carl (Jan 2016) spoke of teachers who: "*came into the staff room crying from their classes"* and others who would say to him: *"I've had enough",* due to classroom issues. He went on: *"Towards the end of last year, a number of us felt burnt out."* Whatever the catalyst for the negative emotions, it was clear that some teachers' lived experience reduced their personal capacity for joy in their work and left them with little enthusiasm, courage or capacity to dig more deeply in reflective practice.

School leader participants were aware of the personal toll of an increase in expectations on busy teachers. Patrick SL (Oct 2016) respected the need for teachers to protect their workspace: *"People are rightly protective of their workspace… people are already doing big hours and so they are protective of anything that they feel might make it even more so and impact their personal life."*

Mary SL (Oct 2016) was attempting to lighten loads through intentional use of staff meeting time. She wanted staff meetings to be a time to complete tasks.

> *It's done on my time. It's not hanging over their heads, you know, tonight, and then they do something else, and so, tomorrow night, still all there, … so it was just done … And they're not big, but some of these little jobs become big in your mind when you've got a few things to be completed.*

Mary SL was intentionally attempting to create emotional space for her teachers. Kysha (Oct 2016) noted her appreciation: *"… [Mary] really likes to keep tabs on how people are tracking, and, for example today, I'm doing my new scheme teacher portfolio, and she's given me some time to do that, like she's aware. … She's totally making a difference."*

Kysha (Oct 2016) then described how she perceived the load of the leadership role impacting Mary: *"She is constantly working, constantly … wakes up really early… so that could be the breaking point for her, that would not be fair". "Breaking point"* is a negative emotional space recognised and experienced by both teachers and leaders. Patrick SL (May 2016) reflected: *"I'm at breaking point … We're thinking about yesterday and I said it's just*

*robbing the school of a leader, [who] can dream for the school and start putting processes in place to make it happen, to change direction."* Any answer to our research question must consider the impact of heavy workloads and lack of time for both teachers and school leaders.

The boundary between personal and professional appears highly permeable. When personal space is overloaded and negative emotions crowd, it becomes difficult for teachers and school leaders to gain satisfaction professionally, creating a downward loop in both spaces. Any push for building teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice must consider teachers' personal well-being as intrinsic to their professional capacity.

### *Create Professional Space.*

Many participants identified that busyness and an overwhelming workload impacted their professional capabilities as well as their emotional well-being. This highlights another space dimension requiring consideration, the creation of professional space.

Asking teachers to deeply reflect, question and transform their practice whilst fulfilling a demanding teaching role was described as: *"You're trying to fly the plane while you're trying to build the plane, and I think that's exactly how it feels"* (Kayla, Jan 2016). Kayla's metaphor conveys a sense of the ridiculous. Who would do that? Kayla and other participants felt that this was being asked of them.

Teachers perceived that a lack of time and relentless demands left them with no choice but to give only cursory attention to many aspects of their work. A lived experience of: *"... being busy ... and just ... 'That's just going to have to do' and 'move on to the next thing'"* (Kacey, Jan 2016), leaves many teachers professionally dissatisfied. Mandy (Jan 2016) expanded:

> *In the busyness of it, ... your day-to-day work, getting through each lesson that you have to get through, you don't always, very often, get the chance to spend the time on ... improving like you would wish you could for the kids, [pause] so they are engaged.*

Such responses present an important consideration for school leaders. As they 'temper their approach' and seek ways to build teacher capacity, they need to ensure professional space that allows teachers to do more than a *"half-hearted job"* (Kerry, May 2016).

From Kysha's (May 2016) perspective, building professional capacity for deepened reflective practice would require giving her permission to step off the *"survival treadmill"* for a time. She felt the need to 'stop flying the plane' and deeply engage in 'building the plane', through an extended time out of the classroom to develop *"curriculum ... or mapping*

*outcomes, and establishing, like a well-oiled …"* program of work. She craved time to reflect deeply, plan and then engage in transformed practices.

Many teachers spoke of the frustration of interruptions and distractions that would eat into their time and impact their professional lives. *"It's not that they are not engaged. They're just trying to work out, … in the busyness of everything else, 'How's this going to fit in?'"* (Carl Jan 2016). Carl noted that within the constant bombardment of professional expectations, a call to deepen reflective practice can feel like: *"We are going to take some more time off you".* This left Carl and many other teachers wondering: *"Where are we going to find the time to complete our curriculum?"*

Constant role changes added to professional loads, leaving teachers with reduced capacity for deepened reflective practice. George (Jan 2016) explained that he: *"held off",* feeling the need for additional support, *"a little more direction"*. This was evident as I spoke to many of the teachers. What was being proposed with Harvest, aligned with their higher order goals and would normally excite them, but their professional capacity was being taxed at a premium, with many reporting too many changes to their teaching roles and no added time for planning.

Several participants mentioned that timing was important when calling for deepened reflective practice. Many felt they had very little capacity during their teaching terms. Blake (Jan 2016) suggested that it would be: "… *more impacting … or at least more accessible to my mind"* if he was asked to deeply reflect at times other than: *"in the middle of the week"* or *"at the end of a massive day".* He appreciated opportunities for deep collegial reflection before the school year starts or once the students have finished for the year.

Curriculum requirements were also regarded as stultifying barriers to asking the deep questions and considering transformation change. Both teachers and school leaders reported that the mandated curriculum was: *"content-heavy"* (Patrick SL 2016), leaving teachers professionally stifled in terms of meeting higher-order student needs. Building capacity for deepened reflective practice would involve creating professional space.

### 4.4.3 Building a Response to the Research Question

Most participants reported a reduced capacity for deepened reflective practice due to a lack of time, leaving many overwhelmed, both personally and professionally.

Hence this finding offers an additional partial response to the primary research question:

> Leaders need to create space in the busy worlds of their teachers, time space, personal space, and professional space.

As Figure 8 indicates, intentional leaders need to balance their passion with compassion and create the space needed for teachers to deeply reflect. The creation of time may be considered a structural timetable matter. However, personal and professional space requires the integration of relational concerns. This leads to the third theme of support.

**Figure 8** *Support Finding Two - Create Space*




## 4.5 Theme Three: Support

Whilst the call to 'create space' seemed at first to primarily indicate a need for increased time allocations, the data indicated deeper and broader 'space' needs, encompassing both the personal and professional realms. When considering how to fill the 'space', the theme of 'support', both relational and professional arose as an arena impacting teacher mindsets and efficacy.

Participants' perceptions of support were seen to influence a teacher's capacity for deepened reflective practice.

### 4.5.1 Barrier Finding: Lacking Support

Table 9 summarises the main ideas expressed as barriers within the theme of 'support'. It should be noted that the teachers at Faith School did not accuse their leadership teams of a lack of care. The general feeling was that everyone was doing their best, with leaders and teachers all overloaded. The situational reality of small schools seemed largely to be

accepted. Many teachers did note that external systems' lack of understanding and support gave the individual school little recourse for significant change.

**Table 9** *Barriers - Lacking Support*

| Barrier Theme - **Lacking support** | **Prim. Tchrs** | **Sec. Tchrs** | **School Admin** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ Small schools – loads and too much change, crossing disciplines and stages is daunting | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Small schools – feeling isolated with little support to tackle big ideas | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Small schools – limited finances and resources | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Small schools – limited personnel | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Staff meetings introduce big ideas but don't support the practicalities | ✔ | ✘ | ✔ |
| ○ Attempts to think deeply and make transformational changes are not encouraged | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Training for change is not given | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ No support for documentation or aligning outcomes with changes | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Limited support for discipline and student engagement. | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Limited support for attaining big picture goals | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Deepened reflective practice whilst overloaded with teaching, how? | ✘ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Limited support for varied teacher needs | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ We are asking teachers to think outside the box | ✘ | ✘ | ✔ |

Participants reported several 'small school' barriers including a sense of isolation both within and beyond the school, limited finances and resources, limited personnel, both in terms of numbers and skills, and the added load of continual changes to teaching roles. In their experiences of deeply reflective initiatives, teachers felt unsupported with the practicalities of their roles, citing the need for additional training, assistance with documentation, support with classroom discipline, and ongoing help relating big picture goals to practical classroom needs. For many teachers, though not all, being asked to think outside the box, left them feeling exposed and vulnerable. Others reported the need for support to move from deepened reflective practice to the making of significant changes.

### 4.5.2 Support Finding: Give Support

Some participants offered suggestions of ways school leaders might give support. Other supports became evident as barriers were exposed. In essence, the support theme is a call for school leaders to know their teachers well enough to acknowledge their situational realities, understand the constraints and hindrances that hold them back, and then give the appropriate support when needed.

Ryan SL (Jan 2016) captured the overall concept of the need to support teachers when embarking on deeply reflective initiatives: *"I've seen good ideas that have not had adequate support … and it falls flat"*. However, the participants' responses and the researcher's observations revealed that *"adequate support"* cannot be predetermined or generalised. It must be tailored to the needs of the teachers and the school. Participants' responses revealed a range of arenas within which they thought support could help. Elements of support noted included listening, resourcing, protecting, and making support practical to classroom needs.

Without such support, the building of teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice and any potential transformational change is under serious challenge. Offering such support is dependent upon school leaders knowing their teachers, alluding to the need for leaders to 'listen'.

#### *Give Support – Listen.*

Listening both creates and requires space, a reminder of the interdependencies between findings. Listening opens the way for school leaders to convey value and honour to teachers, support well-being and release personal space. It also helps leaders understand the specific types of ongoing *"adequate support"* required by teachers.

The interviews over the course of the study provided a flow of feedback that built trust. I was privileged to catch a growing glimpse of each teacher-self. As I listened to teachers' professional stories, goals and passions, excitements and concerns, strengths and challenges, the unique value of each teacher was unveiled to me. I observed that teachers, like students, flourish best with support that meets their unique requirements.

Several teachers spoke directly about the valued support of mentors as they listened and offered practical support. Kayla (Jan 2016) attributed her confidence and positive attitude to accessing support to her experience of good mentors early in her career. *"I'm willing to give things a go and … if I need help, then I think that I can … ask for it. That's because I've been supported in that way … Yeah, I had awesome mentors."*

Some teachers identified that their stage of teaching impacted their capacity for deepened reflective practice. Some new teachers felt that this was an advantage when considering new ideas. Kacey (Oct 2016) felt that she would be more open to questioning and change because: *"I haven't been a teacher so long that I have really set ways yet".*

Some more experienced teachers acknowledged the difficulty in changing established routines and ways of teaching *"It's hard, it's difficult to change something that you have been working through and doing year after year after year"* (Kerry, Jan 2016). Kerry suggested the need for a listening ear and non-judgmental support to face that difficulty. Conversely, there were experienced teachers that felt the need for innovative and critical thinking to keep their practice fresh and interesting.

Some teachers felt the need to be heard and given feedback, to think critically with someone that could give input. Rebecca (Jan 2016) expressed this as: *" wanting that feedback ... saying, 'Hey, this is what I did, this is what I think I should do instead. What do you think about that?'".* Teachers expressed a range of ways that leaders could help them in their professional roles, some of those ways were at variance with others. Leaders needed to listen to each teacher in order to differentiate and tailor a useful support package for each teacher.

This was also evident when it came to needs arising from personal interests, traits, experiences, confidence, and over-arching goals. Getting to know individual teachers through listening opens an understanding of effective avenues for support. Jackie (2016), for example, would engage best by supporting her creativity. *"I think what I love is being creative ... and ... not so much theory. ... I love to do that kind of side of school."* For Cara (Jan 2016), it was being: *"welcome to make your own changes in your classroom. ... Autonomy ... [for] what you're teaching and how you teach.* **...** *I like that."*

Mandy (Jan 2016) tended to be self-critical and hesitant to impinge on her colleagues for support. She felt isolated without someone to: "*sort of throw ideas across and ... bounce different suggestions around with"*. Offering Mandy a listening ear opened an opportunity for her stated need for: *"... calling upon ... experienced teachers".*

Listening revealed several teachers struggling with programming and documentation. *"The roadblock is paperwork*" (Blake May 2016). Adequate support for some included help with: *"... programming. ... It's about the bookwork"* (Kerry, Oct 2016). Kerry added the need for collegial: "… *planning time. ... If you're left on your own, and I tend to question myself all the time, ... it becomes a bit too much and complicated, and so ... [it's] in the hard basket" (Kerry, Oct 2016).*

Listening revealed assumptions, perspectives, and experiences with teaching in a small school that acted as barriers to reflective practice. Robin (Jan 2016) described her reality as needing to: "*… spin your own wheels a lot".* This was a situational reality for many teachers. Listening allows leaders to be aware of the issues and find ways to help.

Listening also allows leaders to note discouragement and negative emotional responses. Carl (Jan 2016) had listened to several discouraged colleagues who needed support with: *"… some consistency and some structure … in particular in terms of discipline"*. Listening reveals the needs of individual teachers.

Mary SL (Oct 2016) understood the need for school leaders to listen to teachers. She believed that she needed to *"… start at the teacher level"* to support a positive mindset towards reflective questioning and willingness to change. Patrick SL (Jan 2016) also expressed a desire to meet the teachers' individual needs through listening: *"So, we are learning, all learning*".

Not all teachers reveal their unique needs in group situations. Some need to be heard individually. I noted one such teacher who:

> *… was afraid to change, but after talking, it was very clear that she was afraid to change because she took the role of guiding children so seriously. She thought she could never take a risk… You learn a lot by listening and observing; she probably wouldn't say that.* (Researcher Journal, Oct 2016)

To offer adequate support, school leaders must find ways to effectively listen to their teachers. However, simply listening is not all that is required. It is the foundation for action. Cara (Jan 2016), like several other participants, was confident that she would be listened to if she were to speak to school leaders about concerns. "*Oh, you definitely get listened to, but whether … or not, it comes to fruition, I don't know"*. Cara was not as confident that any action would follow the listening.

### *Give Support – Resource.*

One regularly identified area of needed support was in providing resources. A commonly cited barrier was in being asked to reflect deeply with no guarantee of appropriate resources. This dampened enthusiasm for deep reflection that might lead to change. "*We are limited because we're in a little school and … resources are [limited]… but we make do"* (Mandy, Jan 2016). Making do was a frequent reality and an attitudinal barrier for many teachers.

Many teachers spoke of a lack of funding, adding to the list of barriers that make it difficult to get excited about deep reflective practice with the potential for transformation. *"Budgets make it hard"* (Carl, Jan 2016). Carl was the only teacher in his department and needed to do a great deal of work outside school hours. *"There's a lot of extra paperwork. … Holidays? I don't get away because I'm suddenly trying to catch up on … bits and pieces. That's the struggle we have in this department… So, it's time, it's money."*

Teachers felt that the lack of resources held them back. ***"****Probably the biggest barrier to any sort of change is finances … the financing inhibits you"* (Cara, Jan 2016). In contrast, some teachers described their perceptions of other highly resourced schools inspiring enthusiasm and active engagement. Shaun (Oct 2016) compared that situation with Faith School's Harvest initiative. *"We still don't know how it's going to look … resources wise, … and so, I'm all for it … but I think there's a few other steps that we need to put in place".* Shaun wanted to get excited, but was holding back, waiting for confidence that necessary resources would be allocated.

Not all teachers were waiting for the allocation of resources. Some were happy to reflect deeply and look for solutions and innovations within the school's limited means. These teachers, though a minority, had an attitude of: *"It totally can be done"* (Van Oct 2016).

The school leadership participants acknowledged resourcing to be problematic. *"We are under-resourced in so many ways"* (Patrick SL, Jan 2016). *"Money is a biggie. You know time is something that you could always have more of, but money is definitely a potential factor that's going to hold us back"* (Ryan SL, Oct 2016*).*

Many participants felt that a lack of resources was a barrier to deepened reflective practice. The idea of adequate support includes resourcing, yet it reaches beyond simply providing funds and materials.

### *Give Support – Protect.*

Some participants were struggling with a lack of personal and professional resources. Their workload consumed the energy and professional self-efficacy needed to deepen their reflective practice. Effective support would involve protecting them from reaching this point. Some of the participants described their experiences of ongoing change that had become both personally and professionally debilitating. Kysha (May 2016) described her situational reality: *"I have been in teaching for four years and every year I have a new loading, new … classes, and I never feel like I'm mastering anything. … I just don't know how much energy*

*output I still have".* This was impacting Kysha both personally and professionally. Kysha was not alone in this regard: *"Sometimes you just don't get things developed as much as you want"* (George, Jan 2016). Not being given the opportunity to reflectively and iteratively 'master' teaching roles greatly limited some teachers' attitudes towards deep reflective practice. There appeared to be a need for school leaders to protect their teachers from too much change and an overload of roles.

Another perceived load barrier involved a multiplicity of expectations and requirements from many stakeholders. Cara (May 2016) described this in terms of pressure:

> *When our last accreditation came, we had heavy pressure, given great big fat checklists and all that sort of thing to follow through, and that really damaged some staff. … And now … we seem to be … going back to the same sort of pressure we had then.*

She spoke of external agencies: *"… breathing down your neck. If you take one step wrong, you're going to be obliterated"* (May 2016). Such a feeling of pressure was evidently debilitating for some teachers. It appeared to inhibit capacity. Adequate support from school leaders would involve seeking ways to protect teachers from such pressure and overload.

School leaders at Faith School could see the need to protect the teachers. Mary SL intentionally sought ways to ease loads, give positive experiences in practically achieving goals together, and slowly open potentialities for deeper reflective practice. *"I've planted the seed only with the teachers"* (Oct 2016). She attempted to protect teachers by taking small steps. She did not share the next step with teachers until she felt they were ready:

> *I've felt the need to almost simplify the requirements that are placed on teachers or ease their burden. To streamline that stuff that has to be done … because I think if we can lighten their burden, … all of us get to the point where, … there's only so many hours in a day and only so much we can do. So, … lightening loads in a way that is manageable, still meeting requirements.* (Oct 2016)

Giving support through listening, resourcing, and protecting were common themes amongst the participants. Core to each of these elements of leadership support is an acknowledgement and respect for the practicalities inherent in each teachers' professional role.

### *Give Support – Keep It Practical.*

Many teachers expressed the need for support to be practically useful within their current teaching role. Miguel's (Oct 2016) apprehensions about Harvest were about how. He

needed the practical questions answered: *"Although I am fully supportive of such a valuable education experience, I am a little apprehensive of how to implement the program fully into my existing program and required outcomes …".* Likewise, Kacey (Oct 2016) wanted to move quickly from *"the bigger picture meetings"* to "*… more practical meetings".* Although teachers respected the need for vision, as evidenced earlier in this chapter, many wanted to get to practicalities sooner rather than later.

Kelly (Jan 2016) expressed the need for any deeply reflective initiative to be useful to her current teaching context: *"Well, I'm a Maths Teacher, so I like to make things … useful. There's this grandiose scheme, and here's teachers thinking, 'I'm already overworked. How am I going to fit that in?'"* As I spoke with teachers about Harvest, their responses were usually contextualised to their current class.

There was also a strong message that expectations of teachers are achievable. When this is not the case, "*it makes people so frozen with fear that they don't try anything. … I'm just going to stop doing this and do something else".* According to Kelly, the cost of not keeping things achievable and practical can lead to a fear that inhibits reflective thinking and transformation. Adequate support needed to be practical to teachers' current class context.

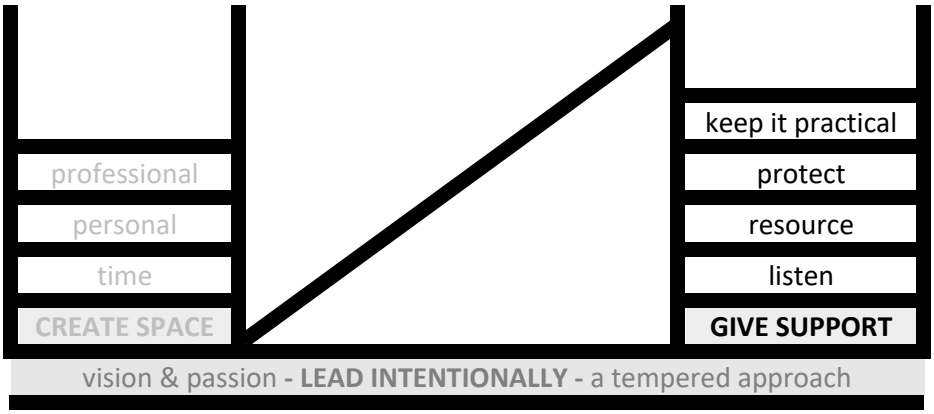
### 4.5.3 Building a Response to the Research Question

In seeking to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice, intentional school leaders need to offer the support that teachers identify as needed. Findings within this theme add an additional partial response to the primary research question:

> Leaders need to give support by listening, resourcing, and protecting their teachers whilst keeping things practical in acknowledgement of the complexity of demands within the teaching role.

Figure 9 displays this finding with a strong link to creating space, indicating interdependency. Giving support tailored to individual needs is one practical manifestation of a tempered approach to leading. The next theme requires both space and a supportive environment.

**Figure 9** *Support Finding Three - Give Support*




## 4.6 Theme Four: Perspectives

As discussed in Chapter Two, an important element of deepened reflective practice involves seeking a range of perspectives to gain a richer understanding of the issue being critically considered. In the early interviews, I questioned teachers about their current reflective practices. In addition to their own experiences and observations, teachers' perspective-taking involved seeking colleagues' perspectives, external networking through visiting other schools, reading and research, external professional development and seeking parents' and students' perspectives. Each teacher differed in their personal mix of influential perspective-taking. The results in this section give evidence of a range of practices amongst participants. The question this theme asks is, 'How might school leaders extend the range of perspectives taken to support deepened reflective practice?'.

### 4.6.1 Barrier Findings: Limited Perspectives

Table 10 summarises the barriers to deepened reflective practice due to limited perspective-taking. Isolation, an inability to contextualise, and limited opportunities narrowed the range of perspectives sought. Situational differences with models from other schools impacted the effectiveness of external perspective-taking.

**Table 10** *Barriers - Limited Perspectives*

| Barrier Theme - **Limited perspectives** | **Prim. Tchrs** | **Sec. Tchrs** | **School Admin** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ Limited opportunities for networking with other teachers and schools. | ✔ | ✘ | ✘ |
| ○ Copying another school could be a disaster due to differences in student population and other situational realities. | ✔ | ✘ | ✔ |
| ○ Not feeling as though there is enough information | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Student and parent perspectives are not prioritised | ✘ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Big ideas are put into the too hard basket | ✘ | ✘ | ✔ |
| ○ The perspective of teachers' core roles and experience is not considered. | ✘ | ✘ | ✔ |

Lack of time and limited support were the most cited barriers to the use of broadening perspectives as a tool of deepened reflective practice. These limitations lead to a *too hard* mindset. The explication below focuses on the participants' viewpoints regarding the types of perspectives currently sought and not sought, and the ramifications for school leaders wishing to build capacity for deepened reflective practice.

### 4.6.2 Support Finding: Broaden Perspectives

Most participants recognised that extending a teacher's range of considered viewpoints offers the potential to act both as a catalyst and a tool for deepened reflective practice. Within this theme, we consider participants' suggestions of support measures to broaden perspective-taking.

On a collective level, participants' responses indicated a range of perspective lenses that were sought to support their reflective practice. That range included the lenses of colleagues, networking through visiting other schools, professional reading and research, professional development, and parental and student perspectives. On an individual teacher level, the lenses were generally selected on the basis of the particular issue in reflective focus. There was little evidence of most teachers intentionally gathering a range of perspectives as a regular and ongoing reflective tool.

Teachers were looking for intentional support from leaders in regard to perspective seeking. One suggestion for building teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice was that school leaders model deepened reflective practice, themselves seeking broader perspectives and being open to questioning their own practice. Kelly (Oct 2016) expressed this clearly, noting the flow of influence from leaders to teachers to students:

> *There could be a lot of reflective practice that could take place…. Up the tree as well. … If you get the idea that the people above you are looking and thinking … To me, that puts more on to me. … If they're looking to change and improve, I could take suggestions. … I can do the same things and then … hopefully the flow-on would be to the students.*

Participants noted the importance of school leaders drawing perspectives from a range of sources as both a catalyst and a tool for deepened reflective practice. This would then act as a model and an invitation for collaborative reflective practice.

### *Broadening Perspectives – Colleagues.*

One perspective lens often cited amongst teacher participants was that of their colleagues – both individually and collaboratively. This perspective was seen to be a valuable yet limited resource in their small school situation. The benefit of accessing collegial perspectives was seen to expand their own limited understandings. After hearing focussed group feedback from the September planning meetings, Kacey (Oct 2016) commented:

> *Yes, I have been on a journey of understanding, … I'm continuing to be reminded it's bigger than what I think it [Harvest Project] is. … when you think outdoor learning and getting your hands dirty kind of stuff. It's not just about that, but it's about character development. … In our staff meetings last week … we were discussing what dreams we had, … It was another reminder that … it's bigger than that.*

Whilst most teachers commented on the value of collegial sharing, they also noted the limitations of their small school:

> *We don't tap into [it] enough because of the size of our school and because we … get caught up, but it is quite enriching in our professional life to have someone say, 'Hey I did this, it worked really well.' …it makes me think … 'What could I do?' And then it becomes quite rich because then you do something and tell other people about it and then someone else will try something else.* (Kelly, Oct 2016)

Mandy (Jan 2016) felt these limitations in her own practice. She believed that gaining a colleague's perspectives and suggestions was very helpful, but time constraints and busyness were barriers. She described feeling: *"mostly on your own in the stage that you're in. You can feel a little bit isolated".*

The perspectives of colleagues were seen to be of value to most participants; however there was little evidence that these were utilised as a support for deepening reflective practice within the boundaries of their small school.

### *Broadening Perspectives – Visiting Other Schools.*

Moving beyond the school to collegial sharing with other schools was a useful reflective tool mentioned several times by participants. Kerry (Jan 2016) spoke of a school visit that built her professional self-confidence and offered fresh perspectives that impacted her teaching:

> *It was such an eye-opener. It was fantastic … it reinforced that I was doing the right things and that I … could see that I was keeping up with some of their great teaching practices. But I also came back refreshed and renewed a bit, with more ideas that I could use from them in my classroom.*

There were also cautions expressed regarding school visits. Some participants found it discouraging to see highly resourced schools implementing programs that they could not find a way to translate into their own small school situation. After one such visit, Jackie (May 2016) reflected: *"So my thoughts on it are, 'So that's great, but there's absolutely no chance of us achieving that here'".* She could see that student demographics and variations in the size and location of a school greatly impacted the practicalities and outcomes of school initiatives.

Most teachers had a keen sense to work with tried and tested models. Cara (May 2016) expressed the fear of working on something untried and untested: *"being the guinea pigs, and the initiators".* She noted that the school she visited had successfully built their innovative program from what they had learnt from other schools. In October, Cara revisited this metaphor: *"I feel like we're the guinea pigs so to speak and knowing where to start and making sure we do things properly, … so that it's not just a … fling, if you like"* (Oct 2016). She was not comfortable with trying and testing. Shaun (Oct 2016) asked, *"Why re-invent the wheel when people have already done it?"* From many participants' viewpoints, seeing other schools successfully implement change would relieve some of the fear and risk involved.

School leaders were aware that what might work in one school may not be appropriate or possible in their situation. Mary SL (Oct 2016) reflected: *"Probably my concern there is that … they've* [other school] *had all the funding, … all the bells and whistles… and to be able to mentally bring that back to doing it here without those …".* Mary believed this had the potential to turn the initial enthusiasm into apathy rather than problem-solving. She felt it might be seen as an all-or-nothing scenario.

Whilst in no way pulling back from seeking other schools' perspectives, Van (Oct 2016) noted a similar concern with colleagues who baulked at situating an initiative with

flexibility and a positive willingness to trial and test. He was frustrated with the mindset of not being able to tackle something without full resourcing or a completely externally derived model:

> *But my bet, the majority of people aren't going to do a blessed thing unless they get some training … there's no training available for this sort of stuff. You just read about it, learn about it, try it out, test it out.*

This flexible, innovative viewpoint, with an open mind towards deeply reflective situated practice, was a minority viewpoint amongst teacher participants.

All participants saw great value in reaching beyond their school to visit other schools and see other teachers' practices. Some were seeking confidence and feedback on their own practice, others were seeking tried and true solutions for common problems, and others saw such visits and networking as a catalyst for their own deep and ongoing reflective practice. Some could see both benefits and drawbacks, with a willingness to harness the benefits and take cautionary action to circumvent the drawbacks.

### *Broadening Perspectives – Reading and Research.*

Another useful 'perspective lens' referred to by participants was reading and research, which was used both as a catalyst and a tool for deepened reflective practice.

Many teachers described instances where the school leader's research had become the catalyst of school-wide initiatives requiring deepened reflective practice. Kacey (Oct 2016) described a typical scenario of a catalyst for collective reflective practice and change: "*We'd been asked to look at some research, and the research was basically saying there's a crisis with boys and education"*. Patrick SL spoke at length of books and podcasts that had become the catalyst for his own deepened reflective practice, which in turn he shared with his teachers. In one instance Ryan SL recounted, *"So there was a book that really got everyone thinking. Patrick delivered it in audio form to all of the staff and … asked that we read".* The whole staff then met and wrestled with the ideas, eventually spawning a school-wide change. It appeared that it was usually the principal that was seeking the broadened perspectives from reading and research, and then engaging the teachers. There was a sense of a top-down hierarchy in terms of deep reflective practice in many instances.

In other reported instances, particular problems, situations, or student needs were the catalyst, with reading and research used as a tool of deepened reflective practice. Rebecca (Jan 2016) described the research she did as a reflective tool following the catalyst of one

student's behaviours and eventual diagnosis. She shared: *"So I … analysed the way that I was teaching him and realized that I had to make changes. so … I went and researched …and then I put into place strategies."* She described her appreciation of her school leader's support in this process: *"He was really positive, and he was really helpful and so I really appreciated that".* This is an example of tailored, practical support for the broadening of perspectives and deepening of reflections firmly situated in practice.

In terms of encouraging teachers to use reading and research as a catalyst for ongoing deepened reflective practice, Kayla (Jan 2016) offered an example of an intentional support initiative she had experienced:

> *So, we had a PD breakfast where we would have a reading. … [A teacher] put on breakfast for us, and we had a reading that we … pre-read … and then …discussed it … over breakfast. … It was really good … We would kind of share ideas.*

This innovative initiative broadened both collegial and theoretical perspectives. When asked if this PD led to actual changes in her teaching, Kayla replied: *"I know it did for me personally. … We just … kept the conversation going. … As a really young teacher, I really loved learning from just the little things people would say here and there"* (Jan 2016).

Participants affirmed the importance of reading and research. Lack of time resulted in many teachers relying on their leaders to initiate reading and research and give guidance and direction.

### *Broadening Perspectives – Professional Development.*

External professional development (PD) was mentioned often as teacher participants spoke of their reflective practice and professional growth. In some instances, PD was clearly a catalyst for deepened reflective practice, and at other times chosen as a tool to support reflective practice.

As a catalyst, teachers would describe trialling and using innovations or ideas after attending a PD. Blake (Jan 2016) described this process:

> *I went to a PD, to Bill Rogers and Behaviour Management … and coming back from that I … just tried new things that I hadn't tried before and there was a lot of changes that I put in place that year … Some of them I haven't kept, some of them I have.*

Some teachers described significant mindset changes, indicating deepened reflective practice, with the PD spawning further perspective-taking and leading to transformation. Shaun's (Oct 2016) described his experience:

> *I've changed my teaching practice … Teaching used to be, … 'I've got to get what I know into the kids' heads'. … You know, … fill them up. … I know now from my PDs and my reading … and the longer I've taught, that teaching … is … that we're facilitators. … We still teach them but they're going away and independently researching.*

Once again, limitations due to situational factors such as school size, location and financial constraints were seen by several teachers to reduce their access to external professional learning which they referred to as PD. Mandy (Jan 2016) commented: *"We're just a little bit restricted … [The] school is aware that we would benefit from … PDs and … experiences like that to improve upon our practice."* She didn't want to waste the school's money by making a poor choice of PD: *"So I just don't. I don't reach out for a PD in case I choose one that's not going to be beneficial".* Mandy suggested that she needed support in selecting beneficial PD options, a useful suggestion for intentional leaders.

The consensus among participants was that PD broadened teachers' perspectives and supported deepened reflection.

### *Broadening Perspectives – Parents and Students.*

The perspectives of parents and students were noted to be important by several participants.

Most teachers inferred the importance of student feedback, regularly reflecting on student engagement, attitudes, and outcomes. This was the basis of many teachers' ongoing reflective practice. Robin used a structured and intentional process to capture students' viewpoints as a tool for deepened reflection:

> *I like to do student surveys for each of my classes that I teach … getting the students to reflect on what they thought about the different topics, whether they enjoyed them, whether they … maybe found them challenging. What they think … could be done better … So, I'm hearing their feedback, and then I like to … think about what I can do better next time.* (Jan 2016)

In terms of Harvest, teachers noted that students were not yet involved in the reflections and change process. Cara (May 2016) simply noted, *"You need student buy-in".* Kelly (Jan 2016) expressed the limitations of not seeking student perspectives:

> *I think it will continue to be a struggle because … while it is that our staff are passionate about something, you are not going to gain traction with the students, … It has to become something that students own, to really believe in. … It seems to me that it's still mainly the staff that are passionate … We haven't yet got a vehicle that really gets the students as excited.*

Patrick SL (May 2016) noted the difference in outcomes between teachers who thought deeply about student perspectives, investing in relationships through listening and respecting, and those who did not. He suggested that teachers who achieve improved student outcomes, *"do that through a relationship"*. He spoke of the negative impact of those who did not build student relationships through perspective-sharing (March 2017).

Similarly, teachers noted the need to involve parents in the collaborative reflections and the potential for change with Harvest. Kelly noted some of the difficulties in accessing parent perspectives. She spoke of the families that don't give feedback or attend parent information forums, adding that: *"It's hard to get traction"* (Jan 2016) when parents are not on board with school initiatives. Revisiting this topic in October (2016), Kerry reiterated the need: "*We really need to … [be] asking parents … for their advice"*.

The deepening of reflective practice through the broadening of perspectives, including those of students and parents, reading and research, PD, and in-and-out-of-school collegial sharing, was valued by participants, though not actualised in an intentional gathering of such perspectives with one focus area.

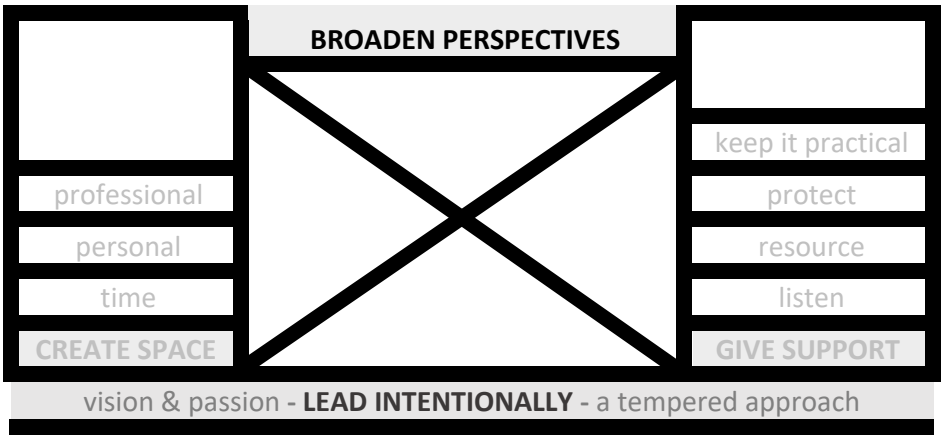
### 4.6.3 Building a Response to the Research Question

In building a partial, though helpful, response to the research question, the support findings within this theme suggest that school leaders create spaces for perspective gathering and give support for teachers to access and utilise a greater range of viewpoints to build their capacity for deepened reflective practice. A brief summation of the data offersthe following partial response to the primary research question:

> School leaders need to help broaden the perspectives of their teachers, supporting them to look at the reflective focal point through varied lenses, including students, colleagues, parents, and theoretical knowledge.

Figure 10 displays this in a diagram that acknowledges the foundation of the preceding support findings.

**Figure 10** *Support Finding Four - Broaden Perspectives*




## 4.7 Theme Five: Focus

*Focus* emerged as a consequential theme throughout the deepening analysis process. Focus issues were seen as barriers to deepened reflective practice. Intentional leaders need to consider what focus expectations they have on their teachers, and mindfully create space and support mechanisms to utilise focus as a support for building capacity for deepened reflective practice.

### 4.7.1 Barrier Finding: Scattered Focus

It became apparent during the research study that teachers felt strong expectations from others to attend to multiple areas of focus at the same time. This scattered focus limited their capacity for deepened reflective practice. Table 11 summarises the varied barrier statements illustrating this. Scattered focus was evident in responses from both teachers and school leaders.

**Table 11** *Barriers – Scattered Focus*

| Barrier Theme - **Scattered focus** | **Prim. Tchrs** | **Sec. Tchrs** | **School Admin** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ Jumping from one new idea to another. | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Juggling too many focus areas, dissatisfaction of not achieving | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Discipline issues detract from deepened reflective practice | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ "Fitting and jamming" into overloaded teaching schedule. | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Sense of fracture – everyone having different goals and roles – feels like tug-of-war. | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Always evaluating, never changing | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Compliance-driven checklists | ✘ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Change that pretends to be transformation. | ✘ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Dealing with 'bushfires', one crisis to the next | ✘ | ✘ | ✔ |
| ○ Short term perspective – without ongoing evaluation | ✘ | ✘ | ✔ |

It was evident, both through observation and participant responses, that the 'busyness' participants reported, went beyond a linear addition of activities and expectations. Lists seemed endless, yet there was no option of moving through the lists, one focus at a time. School focus arenas and interruptions added to the complexities inherent in the teaching role. This created both personal and professional overloading, increasing the need for space and support. Without intervention, many teachers felt limited to surface reflections, with several acknowledging an on-flowing compliance mindset, greatly reducing opportunities for significantly improving student outcomes.

### 4.7.2 Support Finding: Synergise Focus

In recognition of the barriers created by scattered focus, the support findings suggest there is a need to synergise focus in order to create the needed space for teachers to reflect deeply.

Many teachers expressed the reality of having multiple points of focus demanded of them. One element of this reality was dealing with urgent things that would arise that cause the frequent interruptions teachers and leaders so regularly experience. Kelly (Jan 2016) described it as: *"Just dealing with the spot fires, and you figure, 'oh, I'm not getting where I want to go'"*. She expanded: *"Half the time, I just feel like I'm chasing my tail in everything I do because … you're doing this, and … you just run from one thing to another"*. Scattered focus arising from interruptions was reported by many participants.

Another aspect of scattered focus involved multiple school expectations. Referencing the problem of hampered reflective practice, Kerry (Jan 2016) reflected that: *"the problem stems from busyness".* Kelly (Jan 2016) explained further: *"We tilt from one thing to another".* Moving from one focus to another or one school initiative to another, was reported as common in the lived experience of participants. Whilst teachers saw value in each initiative or focus the school leaders proposed, the overload of focal points left teachers with a compliance mindset of: *"just something else we've got to do"* (Cara, May 2016).

Commenting on the Harvest Project initiative, teachers identified two other current school improvement focus areas with both overlapping and additional focal points. Kysha (Oct 2016) described the impact on teachers: *"I think that we have a lot going on in the sense that we have SIAS, we have QASF, and then we have Harvest."* There was a sense of overload and competing foci: *"They are seen as separate. ... every one [of them] has different main objectives."* Kysha then added, *"They overlap, but they don't. ... and it's just like you're over it at the end of having to do these extracurricular things".* From many teachers' perspectives, the net result was increased workload, continually evaluating, identifying failures, yet with no opportunity for actual change. *"Nothing's really changing. You're doing this ..., and you're just evaluating yourself. ..., but you actually don't have the time then to [make the changes]"* (Kysha, Oct 2016).

Going through such a process seemed to act a little like a masquerade of action, devoid of purpose and impact. Van (Jan 2016) alluded to the resulting compliance mindset as he concluded: *"The thing is, we tick all these things off, but there is nothing in place at all to actually improve any of these things".* Ticking boxes was a commonly used metaphor for a compliance mindset that appeared to be at total odds with deepened reflective practice. Kelly (Jan 2016) expressed the disconnect between reflective practice and a compliance attitude when she described a common occurrence in staff meetings: *"There's a big sigh. ... people are just like, 'Oh here we go'... wanting to not ... spend time reflecting but rather push on ... and get through the copious jobs that everybody has."*

Cara reflected many teachers' reactions in feeling those administrative pushes for deepening their reflective practice using mandated reflective tools: *"It's just something else we've got to do"* (Cara May 2016). Even useful reflective tools can become a barrier to reflective practice when they are added to a long list of boxes to be ticked.

Disconnected focal points were seen as both a distraction and a barrier to deep reflective practice. Many participants saw Harvest as a point of focus that competed with other administrative expectations. Van (May 2016) grappled with synergising Harvest's focus

with the school's current mission and vision. There was a sense of energy in his voice as a synergistic pathway unfolded for him:

> *I know what I think… I would go even simpler … and say, … our school mission is to grow in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men. Four key areas. Harvest is the practical and targeted means of achieving this. … None of the Harvest projects should be by yourself. It should all be in community. … Because that's what differentiates it from what we are already doing, basically.*

Van believed that finding such points of synergy had the potential to bring focal points together rather than fuel the scattered busyness of most teachers.

The problems of scattered attention were very evident in the data. However, explicit suggestions for creating an alternative synergy were limited. The next finding builds some structure to supporting synergy, but also requires a synergistic mindset.

### 4.7.3 Building a Response to the Research Question

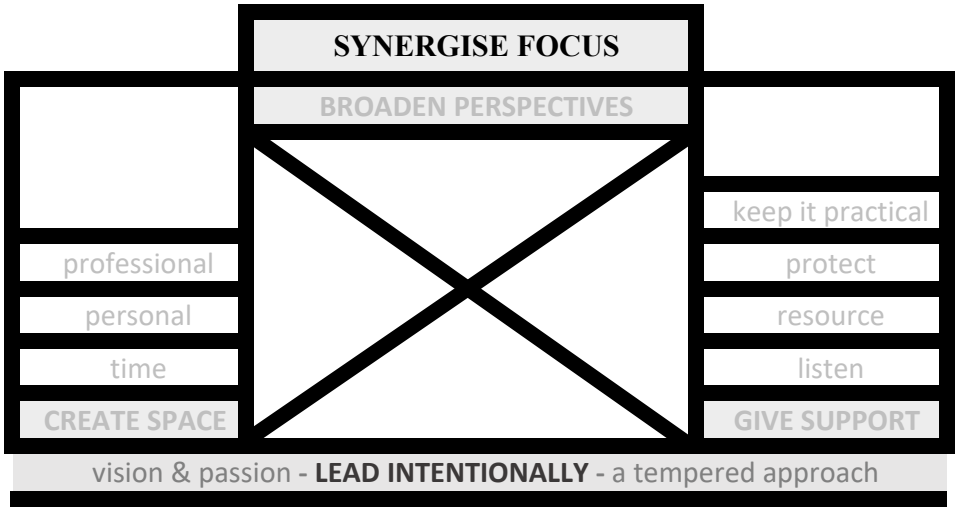
The data within this theme suggests an additional partial response to the primary research question:

> It is important that significant effort is put into synergising focal points of deepened reflective practice to allow for the time, depth and processes required and to avoid the death knell of compliance attitudes.

To build capacity for deepened reflective practice, school leaders need to seek ways to synergise focal points for their teachers, with an intention to reduce the scattered focus that results in shallow reflective practices.

Figure 11 places the support finding of synergistic focus closely connected to the support finding of broadening perspectives. When seeking to broaden perspectives, school leaders must protect teachers from scattered focus by seeking synergy. Such intentional support has the potential to create space for teachers to deepen their reflective practice.

**Figure 11** *Support Finding Five - Synergise Focus*




## 4.8 Theme Six: Pathways

*Pathways* arose as a significant theme from the first round of interviews. All participants spoke into this theme in some manner. The pathways theme encompasses the procedural elements of a deeply reflective school initiative such as Harvest. This speaks into how participants believed Harvest, or other school-wide initiatives requiring deep reflective practice, should be planned and enacted to achieve effective results. There was a general acknowledgement that clearly defined pathways need to be evident to all participants – bringing a strong thread of communication within the theme. The pathways theme includes the ideas of frameworks, cycles, processes, procedures, steps, and direction for collective reflective practice. Both *journey* and *structure* metaphors were evident in participant responses within this theme. There was a collective sense that the quality of planning indicated within this theme impacted teachers' capacity in terms of feeling safe to take risks and in ensuring useful results.

### 4.8.1 Barrier Finding: Lack of Structure and Direction

Participants identified effective pathways and processes as lacking in their lived experience of Harvest and other school-wide reflective initiatives, as displayed in Table 12. Responses indicated a lack of structure and direction that impacted participants' perception of their capacity to become involved in deep reflective practice. Some of the deficit was attributed to a lack of clear process or organisational planning, and some was attributed to a

lack of communication. It was evident to many participants, both leaders and teachers, that this lack of structure and direction could bring results devoid of the overarching purpose.

The barriers within each theme often overlapped and accentuated the impact of other barriers. Within the pathways theme, the barrier of a perceived lack of structure and direction left teachers without a clear and shared understanding of where they were heading or how they would get there. Ideas were left dangling with no connection to the practicalities teachers faced daily in their roles. This, in turn, added to teachers' sense of scattered focus, depleting both emotional resilience and professional efficacy.

**Table 12** *Barriers – Lack of Structure and Direction*

| Barrier Theme - **Lack of structure and direction** | **Prim. Tchrs** | **Sec. Tchrs** | **School Admin** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ No clear, shared understanding | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Ideas divorced from practicalities | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ No framework, masterplan or model to allow small contributions to big picture goals | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ No clear process | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Risk of losing deep purpose in change process | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Lack of communication | ✘ | ✔ | ✔ |

### 4.8.2 Support Finding: Create Pathways

Acknowledging their perceptions of a lack of structure and direction, participants identified that to build their capacity for deep reflective practice in a school-wide initiative, school leaders would need to *create pathways* to clearly show where the initiative was heading and how leaders planned to get there.

All participants indicated the need for the creation of clear pathways and processes that would ensure and protect a shared purpose and purposeful rigour. This support finding predominantly arose from participants' suggestions for what they saw as gaps in their lived experience of Harvest over the course of the data collection period.

The metaphoric language of journey was commonly used amongst participants. Van (Jan 2016) used the term *"road map"* to describe the intentional pathways most participants felt were needed if they were to invest themselves in a significant school-wide initiative*: "We talk about the goal and how fantastic the goal is, but there is no road map on how to get there. You know, if there is no step-by-step method of how to get there, you always fear the journey."* Kysha (May 2016) spoke of the need to create: "*some very manageable … paths"*.

The concept of a roadmap with identified pathways was seen as a necessary tool to dispel fear by reducing the overwhelming load of dealing with the whole journey while implementing each step. Intentional and shared pathways would allow teachers to focus on the practicalities of the present without losing sight of the purpose.

The lack of clearly understood processes and pathways with Harvest raised initial resistance from many teachers. Van (Jan 2016) acknowledged the value of the overarching goals but noted that this was not enough: *"We do need to work out, 'Okay what is this actually going to look like?', as a step-by-step process to get there."* Within the support finding of the need to create pathways, participants suggested important elements of the structure and direction they perceived as important for Harvest and other collective reflective practices.

### *Create Pathways Through a Shared Purpose.*

To create a shared pathway, one must first ensure a shared understanding of the destination. Many teachers felt that this was lacking in their lived experience of the Harvest Project initiative. In January, Van reflected on most participants' lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Harvest: *"I don't ... know that if you ask somebody, 'What is the Harvest Project?', I don't think too many of us would actually have a clear perception of what it's going to be."* In October (2016), George described the sense of shared purpose as: *"... very muddy waters".* Zane reported that he still did not have a clear understanding. This left him feeling uninvolved: *"It sounded all pretty good, but I didn't understand it"* (Zane Oct 2016).

With no clarity of purpose, teacher participants could see that there was little chance the initiative would realise the overarching goals. Cara (Oct 2016) reflected: "*You can't go selling it to someone else when you don't know what you are buying".* Rebecca (Jan 2016) believed the school could only achieve the goals of Harvest:

> *... as long as everyone stays on the same page and realizes the benefits of it. If you get people that will do it because it's what's being done, but they are not that passionate about it, and they are not really that engaged with it, it won't work.*

Many teacher participants noted that if teachers were to work through change without a deep and shared sense of the purpose, due to communication, compliance or complacency, the ultimate purpose would not be achieved.

School leaders also noted that teachers did not yet have a shared sense of purpose. When I asked Patrick SL (Oct 2016) whether he felt teachers were fully engaged and

understanding with the purpose of Harvest, he thought for a moment and responded: *"Not a hundred per cent"*. He was aware that the waters were still muddy.

There was a consensus amongst participants that the ultimate purpose of a deeply reflective initiative must be commonly understood by all involved. Such a shared understanding would provide both destination and direction for the pathways.

### *Create Pathways with a Framework.*

The need for a *roadmap* was also expressed in building metaphors. Many participants indicated a need for structure in moving forward, often referenced as a *"framework*" or a *"master plan"*. School leader participants saw the need: *"There's been a lot of talk of a master plan. I think that's … a priority"* (Ryan SL, Jan 2106). Whilst acknowledged as a priority by all participants, a range of interruptions and distractions delayed the formation of a shared framework for moving forward with Harvest.

Teachers were in consensus that the lack of a framework left them feeling unsafe. In January (2016), Kelly described the situation as having: *"diversity of thought with no organisation or structure*". In October (2016) she continued to note this lack of structure: *"I haven't seen any, there's been no structure"*. Kelly (Oct 2016) concluded: *"Most people like a bit of structure to work with. It makes us feel a little bit safe"*. Carl (Jan 2016) spoke of *"ideas floating"*, with nowhere to become embedded, concluding: "*Master plans need to be put into place"*. Without such structure: "*It is really hard to conceptualise… We hear it, we think we know what's being said, but maybe that's not the case"* (Miguel, May 2016). Structure was seen to be important for teachers to feel safe and confident in their involvement in the deep reflective practice needed with the initiative.

Structural framework was seen to create a safe space for teachers to contribute towards the initiative. *"And so there probably needs to be a … bit more broader thing of … 'these are the principles … and this is where we're feeding into it'"* (George, Jan 2016). Kerry (May 2016) unpacked this idea further:

> *I would love for us to sit down as a staff and say, 'Alright, this is what Kerry wants to do, and this is what Cara wants to do, this is what Mandy wants to do. What are we going to do to achieve these goals these teachers have? Are you, do you want to do the same thing? Is that part of your goal? And let's do a time frame.'*

A framework would allow many teachers to contribute towards a bigger picture, without feeling the weight of the entire initiative resting on their shoulders.

Both journey and structure metaphors were employed in acknowledging the need for the school leaders to be proactive in procedural planning to give teachers: *"some idea of where you are going, of where you'd like to go. … And, perhaps more importantly, outline how you are going to enable the staff to keep moving"* (Cara, Oct 2016). Roadmaps, pathways, frameworks … all provide a sense of safety with a clear purposeful direction and goal.

### *Create Pathways and Strong Processes.*

Teacher participants also noted that procedural planning needed to consider how the journey takes place, or the specific processes involved in moving or building. Teachers called for clear, detailed, and shared processes. Deepened reflective practice calls for exploratory thinking into new spaces. Teachers at Faith School were looking for clearly laid out processes that would allow them the professional space and courage to embark on such a journey. They were looking for: "*a lot more specific direction in… what needs to be done and how individual people can help out"* (Blake, Jan 2016). Kacey (Jan 2016) noted, *"It's all very, very, grand planning at this stage and getting down to the practical logistics of it is a whole different scenario"*. Having both a framework and a clear plan for practical processes would allow teachers to step into the big picture with confidence and a sense of safety.

From the perspective of the teacher participants, a lack of clear process and procedural planning left the big-picture vision detached from practicalities. Kelly (Oct 2016) suggested to school leaders: *"Once you've got your big ideas, what are some ways you can see putting this [into action]?... How would that be used as a part of … the structure?"*. Jackie (Oct 2016) needed the *"nuts and bolts"* taken care of: *"[It] can be daunting … having to change things, … sort of stepping out into the unknown. … I think I need more information. I think I need more nuts and bolts first."* It was the lack of process that many participants felt was reducing their capacity to get involved with Harvest Project and limiting the potential for moving ahead.

One element of process alluded to by some teachers involved an ongoing cycle of: *"evaluation and improvement … rather than simply moving from one new [focus] to another* (Kerry, 2017). George described this in his own reflective practice: *"Taking time out to evaluate … and actually analyse and just see how … it worked, how has it not worked, what's gone well, has it been engaging?"* (Jan 2016). Kacey (Oct 2016) could see that a deeply reflective focus needed to be: *"properly evaluated … [with] time to develop*". This ongoing cyclic process was noted for its importance, but also its absence in some school initiatives.

Mary SL (May 2016) reflected on the need for such procedural rigour within the school's processes: *"We do need to sit down and do reflective practice … and do some critical thinking."* Patrick SL (Oct 2016) was heading a pilot program. He described the planning and the ongoing evaluation involved: *"We think that about 90% of what we've learnt this year will stick for next year".* Both quantifiable successes and problems that had arisen were seen by him to inform ongoing actions over time. The bigger picture that involved all teachers; however, did not appear to have such a clear framework or process, leaving most teachers hesitant to engage is deep reflective practice and be involved in planning towards implementation in their teaching contexts.

The call for due process was clear. Participants needed to know how school leaders intended teachers to move from vision to practice. They needed to understand the process.

### *Create Pathways and Communicate.*

Participants indicated that communication is essential to shared purpose, creating and using frameworks, and helping all to understand process. Effective communication was reported by a majority of teachers to be lacking with Harvest.

Lack of communication left many teachers feeling disconnected. Jackie (May 2016) recalled some general discussions but stated, *"We haven't heard a lot. … We've heard the name thrown around, but that's about it".* When I asked her if Harvest was a school-wide initiative, she responded quickly: *"Probably. … We ought to have a heads up to know where we should be aiming for, or the goals".* Jackie was typical of many teachers. She appeared to be waiting for clear communication about purpose, direction, and process before committing herself to any form of involvement.

Communication that does not connect with teachers' practical realities was also evident to be problematic. In September, leaders met with a small group of *"process-type teachers"* (Ryan, Jan 2016), recognised for an ability to break ideas into achievable steps, to flesh out a framework and plan practical processes and procedures. This planning group reported back to the staff in a special September staff meeting. Despite this, when interviewing teacher participants in October, many continued to feel out of the loop of communication and understanding. Cara (Oct 2016) did not feel that things were clearly communicated or followed up: *"We had a big meeting … and they talked about, oh, who was it? … I can't remember. You know, talking and seeing where things were going, but we haven't heard any more on that yet."* Cara did not feel drawn into understanding. Kacey (Oct 2016) also relegated what she had heard to forgettable talk, devoid of immediate practical

repercussions: **"***Refresh my memory, I remember it happening, but I can't remember what they… I remember them being quite specific, but just jog my memory."* I reminded her of a few aspects of the presentation: *"Yeah, that was certainly helpful, but isn't it interesting, that that was not that long ago and yet … I still forget it; do you know what I mean? Because, not being implemented yet, … it's still ideas".* Shaun (Oct 2016) summed it up: *"… I feel staff don't know where we are at and where we are going".* There was an attempt to communicate, yet without follow up or connection to practical implementation, it all seemed to be forgettable talk, leaving teachers disconnected.

Mary SL, on the other hand, had grown in understanding by taking part in the September meetings. She stepped into a leadership position over the course of 2016. In the first half of the year, she, like most teachers, had no clear understanding of Harvest. After taking part in the September focus group, things changed significantly for Mary:

> *I think those two days we spent together were a real eye-opener. It was very productive. I don't think I understood what was trying to be achieved with Harvest until those meetings. So, just understanding it, I guess, got me on board because it wasn't what I was imagining in my mind.* (Mary SL, Oct 2016)

Mary SL reflected on her journey of understanding, *"I look back and think, 'How did I miss that?' … I'm not real great when things are big and vague" (Oct 2016).*

Patrick SL had felt that things were being clearly communicated. In May (2016), he shared: *"We've taken the opportunity to update staff twice this year on the Harvest Project".* He expected this to be enough. In October (2016), Ryan SL reflected: *"I don't think that it's super clear",* then in reference to teachers' perceptions from the September feedback he added: *"I think that people will think that it is just Project-based Learning"*, alluding to pedagogical change, rather than the overarching goals. It became evident to school leaders that communication would need to be ongoing and suited to the teachers' needs.

Both Mary SL and Ryan SL were grappling to find a communication method that would bring teachers into the centre of the initiative, feeling empowered without being overwhelmed. Mary SL (Oct 2016) suggested potential value in creating a visual display to support the big goals behind the Harvest initiative: *"You could have posters … just sitting on the corner of your desk."* Ryan SL (Oct 2016) believed the Primary teachers would respond well to ongoing practical staff meetings centred around purpose whilst creating a living roadmap of specific plans and processes.

School leaders noted the risk of assuming that teachers feel involved and connected to both the purpose and the action and were looking for effective modes of communication. The need for effective communication was evident through a demonstrated lack and the flow-on of disconnection that teachers reported. School leaders were grappling to find improved and effective means of communication.

### *Create Pathways and Protect the Purpose.*

One element of considerable concern for both teachers and school leaders, in terms of both procedural planning and communication, was the need to keep all elements of process intentionally centred on the overarching goals and purpose. In January (2016), Rebecca noted how easily change could become devoid of purpose:

> *If you are not thinking … of it holistically and thinking of how this is going to be a whole school program, I think you run the risk of it becoming just like, "Oh, we are just going out to the garden to dig some weeds".*

In October (2016), George expressed disappointment at how things were turning out with his part in the pilot program: *"It's going terrible. … I know I'm nowhere near doing what I need to be doing in that area … There's nothing different about our garden program as opposed to any other school".* For George, the nitty gritty of change seemed to have overtaken, leaving results devoid of the original purpose. Similarly, Kacey (Oct 2016) explained a common experience: *"There's so many other 't's to cross and 'i's to dot that we will just sort of grab here and grab there to try to make it".* She was alluding to change devoid of its central purpose: *"I'm just a very practical person, so I'm sure it's meant to be part of the bigger picture".* Big picture purpose was often lost amongst the busyness of teaching. Van (Oct 2016) explained: "*There would be lots of ways to pretend that we're doing [the initiative]"*. Change can masquerade as transformation yet be missing the heartbeat of purpose. For Van, that meant that: "*Somebody's got to be holding the stick"* (Oct 2016), referring to the need for intentional leaders to hold teachers accountable to purpose.

The need for purpose to be closely enveloped in reflective practice became increasingly evident over the course of the research timeframe. My observations led to a concern that purpose could be eclipsed by the many layers of considerations involved in pedagogical change. In October (2016), I asked participants to suggest ways they might *"keep the main thing the main thing"*, holding purpose central in both reflective thinking and resulting changes to practice. Teachers were clear that it would need to be intentional and

built into planned processes. Kerry (Oct 2016) responded: *"I think we just need to keep it in the forefront of whatever we're doing".*

Some participants suggested visible reminders. Jackie (Oct 2016) answered: *"I need to see it. I need to sort of have it in my face all the time. ..., something big and bold on the wall."* Cara (Oct 2016) suggested mind maps: *"Some sort of a mind map. ..., so, when you put your idea down in the centre, you can go off to each one".* Blake (March 2017) suggested an infographic that indicated how each component of the initiative would help to achieve the overarching goal, without overwhelming teachers.

School leader participants were also aware that achieving an ultimate purpose could be overshadowed by busyness and the details of the change process. Patrick SL (Oct 2016) noted that an attitude of compliance would be quick to rob an initiative of its original purpose:

> *I think one of the challenges ... is that we have a mentality amongst teachers who are so heavily compliance-oriented, ... Having said that, we do need to have more things in place, so that we can demonstrate to parents and teachers, that this is where we are going, and this is what we want to achieve.*

School leaders and teachers recognised that there was a need for a widely communicated pathway of process intrinsically and overtly embedded in purpose.

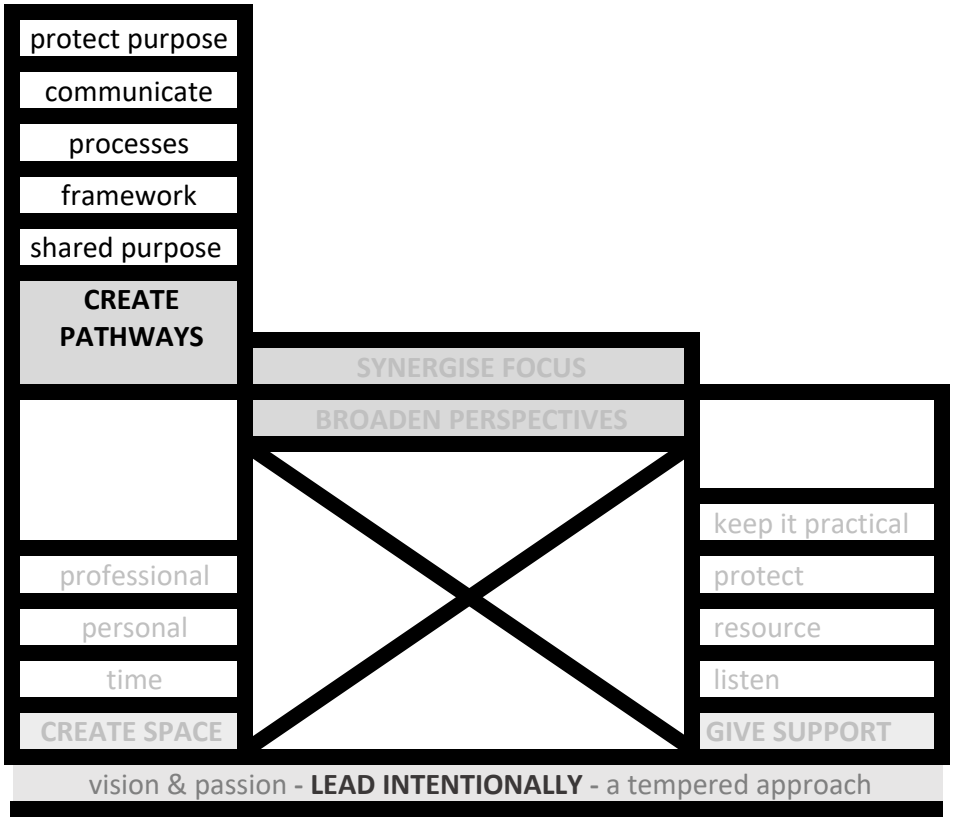
### 4.8.3 Building a Response to the Research Question

Intentional leaders need to create both space and directional pathways with clear purpose-driven processes to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. Clearly communicated and purpose-embedded processes are needed as structural support for teachers. Supporting synergised focus requires such rigour. A summation of the data suggests the following partial response to the primary research question:

> You need to create pathways that clearly lead in the direction of purpose. This purpose must be shared and understood by all concerned. Frameworks should be formed that allow teachers to see the big picture whilst working within the small parts. Processes must be clearly planned, adding the details of rigour within the common framework. Communication is vital, both in supporting and protecting overarching goals and purposes.

Figure 12 depicts in diagrammatic form both the thematic findings and the way they interact and build from the other findings. The next theme adds a relational element to both the perceived barriers and supports for deep reflective practice.

**Figure 12** *Support Finding Six - Create Pathways*




## 4.9 Theme Seven: Collaboration

The collaboration theme was strongly represented throughout the interviews. This theme incorporates who is involved in deeply reflective practice at the heart of a school-wide initiative such as Harvest.

### 4.9.1 Barrier Finding: Limited Collaboration

Most, but not all, participants referenced limited collaboration as a barrier to deepened reflective practice in the context of the Harvest Project. Table 13 summarises the major barriers mentioned. Insufficient time and opportunity, problems with effective teamwork, and not all teachers being involved, are three of the common elements of collaboration noticed as barriers. School leaders noted barriers that highlighted teacher attitudes and collaborative skills. Primary teachers did not feel a sense of teamwork across the two campuses but were

happy to work within their own primary team. They also mentioned the problems that arise when not all teachers are involved. Secondary teachers perceived many barriers, yet the majority believed that school-wide transformation would not be possible without effective and inclusive collaboration.

**Table 13** *Barriers - Limited Collaboration*

| Barrier Theme – **Limited collaboration** | **Prim. Tchrs** | **Sec. Tchrs** | **School Admin** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ Lack of time for collaborative planning. | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Everyone is not on-board. | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Not enough teachers involved. | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ People being involved with no passion for students or overall goal (compliance) won't get results. | ✔ | ✘ | ✔ |
| ○ Gap between Secondary Teachers and Primary teachers. | ✔ | ✘ | ✘ |
| ○ Staff not working as a team. | ✘ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Small school – not enough personnel. | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Lack of acknowledgement of a range of ways to work collaboratively | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Staff Meetings – ineffective collaborative time, 'talkfests'. | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Potential to seek collective comfort rather than inspire collective deepened reflective practice | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Collaborative risks – working with people who don't pull their weight or work differently | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Comfortable to leave to others to do | ✘ | ✔ | ✔ |

### 4.9.2 Support Finding: Cultivate Collaboration

Participants indicated that school leaders would need to cultivate effective collaboration to achieve the purpose of Harvest and other school-wide deeply reflective initiatives.

Most participants indicated a need for collaborative effort to achieve school-wide purposes, particularly as they commented on their lived experience of the Harvest initiative. Some also highlighted cautions and concerns, both in personal terms and in terms of the potential for transformation of practice.

Many participants indicated that effective collaboration would relieve individual teachers from feeling overwhelmed by the weight of the entire initiative. Kysha (May 2016) described both the benefit of collaboration and the impact of a lack of collaboration:

> *So, if … everybody worked together and had … a shared idea of where they're going, and you just found ways to do what you're already doing … just a little bit more focused … That's not you on your own, it's a whole process. … Doing it with each other is really important. It stops you drowning. … We've got to stay well.*

There was a strong sense amongst participants that feeling overwhelmed led to avoidance or overload, which Kysha described as *"drowning"*. Participants indicated that collaboration, done well, could alleviate such a feeling, with each person simply contributing their small part to the overall goals. Jackie (May 2016) summed up this support finding simply: *"I think if you're doing it all together, it's easier"*.

Many participants reported working alone as a barrier to school-wide transformation. Jackie (May 2016) expanded this idea by describing a sense of isolation within a group: *"If you're doing it on your own, you feel like you're totally on your own. And those people that aren't involved don't sort of want to know anything about it. Because it's just more work for them"*. Several participants admitted that they would feel a sense of relief when someone else was asked to be involved in an initiative. This adds to the sense of isolation in working alone. Involving everyone ensures a weight distribution in terms of effort and removes the added social isolation involved when those around avoid you.

Both the value of teamwork and the importance of involving everyone were strong elements of the support finding within the theme of collaboration. Inherent in all support suggestions is the need for intentional leaders to cultivate collaboration, providing the structural and relationship support needed. It must be noted that some participants also expressed caution and concern with both involving all teachers and teamwork.

### *Cultivate Collaboration with Teamwork.*

Most participants acknowledged that teamwork would be needed for Harvest, or similar school-wide initiatives, to be effective. Rebecca (Jan 2016) reflected the generally positive vibe for collaborative, reflective practice amongst the primary teachers: *"I think we've got a fairly good team here"*. Kacey (Jan 2016) gave her reasons for a similar positive response: *"because … you've got the enthusiasm, and you want to learn and bounce off each other"*. Whilst primary teachers did report regularly feeling isolated and needing to: *"fend for yourself" (*Kerry, Jan 2016), when given the opportunity to work in a team, most felt it would be better to meet and find solutions as a team. However, there were cautions expressed

regarding teamwork and "busyness" was at the top of the list: *"You know, everyone is so busy, so you just feel like, 'Oh, I'll just do it myself'" (*Kerry, Jan 2016).

Some primary teachers felt more optimistic about positive results when working as a team within the primary school, rather than a truly schoolwide approach.

> *I think there's been a bit of a divide between the primary school and the high school, and I have to wonder how involved they really want to be over this side of the pond. I tend to find that that's a thing, and I don't know how much integration you will get between the primary and the high school.* (Rebecca, Jan 2016)

The secondary teachers expressed their own concerns about teamwork. Carl (May 2016) reflected: *"Here, in the High School, we're just not a team".* He went on to cite several examples that indicated a lack of team mentality amongst his colleagues. He found it easier to work alone: "*I just live in my own little world here"* (May 2016). Several other teachers described their personal cautions regarding working collaboratively, although most believed it was essential to achieve the desired outcomes. Robin (Oct 2016) described her mixed feelings:

> *I like the idea, but as with many things, I'm a little bit frightened about how it's going to look when we actually get to doing it. Because I think, probably, I like to do things my own way a bit, and so there's that kind of apprehension, but I do think it can be very valuable … and I think it could be exciting. I don't feel excited yet. But I do, I want to… [laughter] but I'm still a bit cautious about it.*

Robin was cautious about losing her autonomy. Cara (Jan 2016) had similar concerns: *"Yeah, … I'm sort of not 100% sure yet whether it needs to be … an organized whole school approach totally".* Like Robin, Cara valued her autonomy and enjoyed innovating but was not confident that the "team" approach would achieve the best results. There was a sense that it might be too much bother for little gain. However, Cara could see that working as a team had the potential to reduce the feeling of isolation reported by many participants. *"Doing it as a whole school thing might help to build the … togetherness of the school. Because they're all working toward the same goal"* (May 2016).

Whilst an effective team utilises individual strengths and supports weaknesses, some participants felt that in a small school this would be difficult to achieve. Carl (Oct 2016) spoke of this, noting the differences between teachers in terms of *"work ethic and direction".*

He ended his thoughts with a hanging question: *"The problem with a small school is, who are you happy to tee up with?"*

School leaders were aware of such concerns, indicating that cultivating healthy teamwork would take a deliberate process. Mary SL (Oct 2016) was trying to find ways to build and model effective teamwork and collaboration in her intentional use of staff meeting time: *"... to make staff meeting a little bit of a model of working together ... because I think we need that to lift each other up".* She believed that better results would eventuate: *"if we're not all working parallel. We need to start working to help each other."* She continued to explain her direction: *"And so, for me, working collaboratively is really the starting point."*

Although cautions were expressed, most participants acknowledged that working collaboratively, was necessary to achieve school-wide results. Most also acknowledged that this was not yet a reality, nor did they expect it to be easy to cultivate collaborative teamwork.

### *Cultivate Collaboration and Involve All.*

Most participants emphasised the need to involve all teachers if school leaders were seeking school-wide results. Some cautions were added.

It should be noted that the *muddy waters* of Harvest, during this research study, had only a small number of teachers involved in the pilot project, whilst attempting to engage all teachers in deepened reflective practice for future involvement. In October (2016) Robin shared her observations about teacher involvement:

> *Well, I think in a lot of ways, we're still kind of more, moving through it individually. I know that they have been doing things, and I'm interested to hear what they're doing, but it hasn't necessarily impacted my classroom. It's a little bit easier to say, 'Oh well that's that'. And so, I think that's comfortable.*

Being *comfortable* was not a launching pad for deepened reflective practice. In January, Robin (Jan 2016) had indicated that if transformation was the goal: *"it needs to be embraced by everyone".*

As trust was developed, several participants described their own sense of relief when not asked to be involved. Jackie's (May 2016) description was typical: *"I've actually sat in staff meetings, but to be honest .... that's not where my focus was. I'm thinking, 'I don't have to worry about any of this because it doesn't involve me'."* She didn't want to feel that she would be the only one: *"putting yourself out there"* and admitted that it was easier to allow

others to be the ones involved. However, this resulted in feeling disconnected. Van (Jan 2016) described a sense of relief and pulling back from involvement when someone else was given the role of piloting the Harvest subject: *"… I felt the relief. It's like, oh, thank goodness I don't have to worry about Harvest. That's now on their shoulders. I will concentrate on my subjects."* Although Blake (Jan 2016) was willing to be involved: *"As much as I'm given direction on how I can contribute … will be how much mind space it takes up. … I'd be willing to do things. But at this point there hasn't been talk of specific roles …"*. Whilst Blake kept his positive attitude towards Harvest, it was not taking up his *'mind-space'*. Other teachers' responses indicated that they were no longer listening. There was a sense of disconnect from deep reflection if there was no involvement in the initiative.

In her shift to leadership, Mary SL (May 2016) reflected on her first response to the initiative in her teacher role: *"Yeah, probably it was going to be somebody else, which, now that I've moved into admin, was not good, but I didn't have a real positive attitude towards it. I'll be honest with you."* She could see that not being directly involved in some way allowed Harvest to become: *"… someone else's issue"*.

As I spoke with the leadership team in March 2017, one leader observed: *"Teachers are either all in or all out"*. They believed all teachers would need to be involved to achieve the overarching goals of Harvest. This left them with a dilemma. There was a long discussion on the impact of each teacher's attitude on the result of any school-wide initiative. They noted that change implemented without deep reflection, a passion for the ultimate purpose, or the energy required will only give surface results. They spoke of a: *"a vicious circle. When teachers are tired, they protect their time, get results which discourage them, and then the lack of rewards from teaching continues in a downward loop."* The meeting concluded with a hanging question: *"How do you break the cycle of a downward loop of tired, protective, overwhelmed teacher attitudes?"* Underlying this question, though very much inferred, was another question. "How do you involve all in healthy collaborative reflective practice, when some teachers feel they have nothing to give, and no personal or professional space to contribute to a team?" Such was the dilemma faced by the school leaders at Faith School.

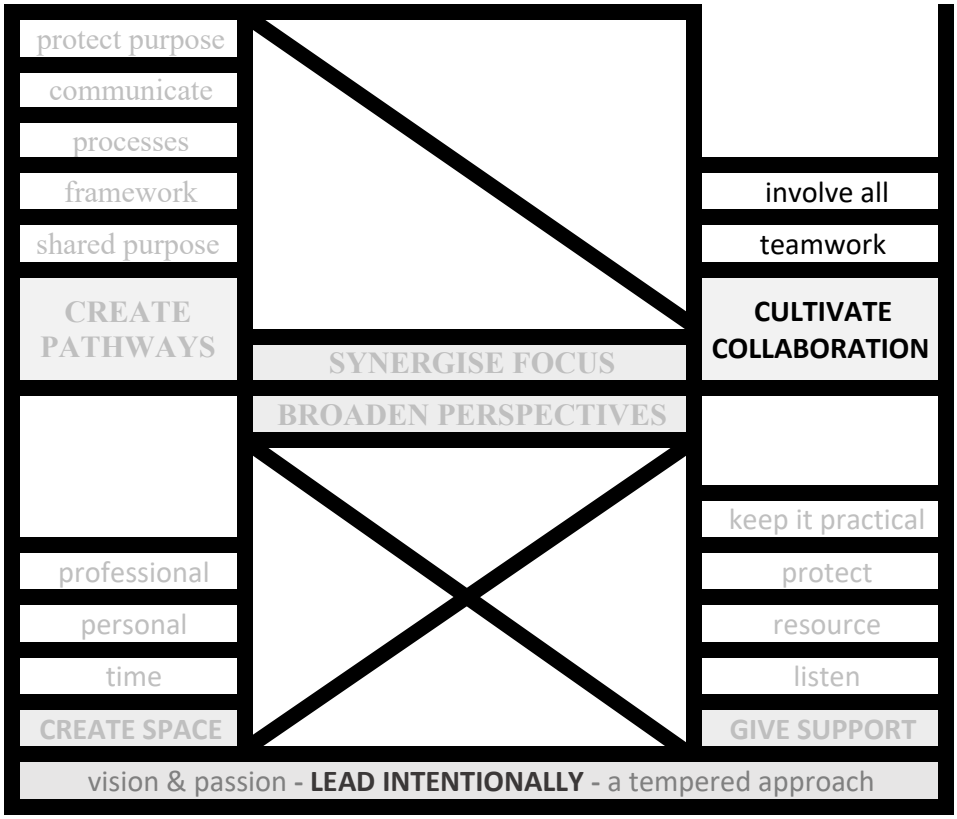
### 4.9.3 Building a response to the research question

This findings in this theme offer yet another partial response to the primary research question:

> A culture of collaboration enhances the journey of leading teachers through the pathways and processes. This culture will be developed through ongoing teamwork experiences, involving all teachers in some consequential way that best uses teachers' strengths.

To build capacity for deeply reflective practice, intentional school leaders need to cultivate collaboration. However, the hanging questions of both teachers and school leaders indicate that creating space and giving tailored support is prerequisite to effective collaboration. This is evident in the growing scaffold of findings in Figure 13.

**Figure 13** *Support Finding Seven - Cultivate Collaboration*




The findings described to this point are both structural and relational, interdependent, and overlapping. They offer suggestions for school leaders in preparation for a school-wide deeply reflective initiative. The next theme speaks into the space of action.

## 4.10 Theme Eight: Momentum

The theme of *momentum* comprises findings to do with action or inaction. Metaphors of push/pull forces and the language of inertia and momentum were plentiful throughout the interviews. Participants were interested in when and how to move the Harvest initiative.

### 4.10.1 Barrier Finding: Inertia

The barriers within this theme are grouped under the metaphor *inertia,* referencing the scientific observation that if an object is at rest or moving at a constant speed in a straight line, it will continue to do so unless a force is applied (*Law of Inertia*). The lived experience of participants at Faith School was described as constant busyness. Participants could see that moving from thoughts to purpose-driven action would need an applied force or intentional intervention. The specific barriers reported by participants, displayed in Table 14, included not starting or knowing when or how to start, the problem with starting then stopping, moving either too fast or too slow, and concerns about direction. It was noted that the initiative had no momentum of its own. It had not yet established its own inertia, still relying on school leaders' interventions.

**Table 14** *Barriers - Inertia Theme*

| Barrier Theme - **Inertia** | **Prim. Tchrs** | **Sec. Tchrs** | **School Admin** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ Not starting | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Not knowing where or how to start | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Started then stopped | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Moving too slowly | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Moving too fast | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ No sense of small step movement | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Uncertain of direction | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Not having own inertia to continue without leader's passion | ✘ | ✘ | ✔ |
| ○ Steps too big | ✘ | ✘ | ✔ |
| ○ No visible difference | ✘ | ✘ | ✔ |

### 4.10.2 Support Finding: Build Momentum.

Participants' suggestions for building the collective capacity for deepened reflective practice, in a school-wide initiative such as Harvest, emerged in response to the noted barrier of inertia. The support finding indicate that school leaders need to build momentum with wisdom and intention.

Most participants indicated that both *starting* and *keeping moving* with Harvest would require great intention. When asked to offer recommendations for another school considering a deeply reflective initiative, Cara (Oct 2016) noted the need for direction and momentum:

> *Have some idea of where you are going, of where you'd like to go. It doesn't have to be complete … And, perhaps more importantly, outline how you are going to enable the staff to keep moving. And then once you've enabled the staff, you've got to start talking about enabling the whole school community.*

There was a strong sense amongst many teacher participants that there was no movement with Harvest. The initial excitement had passed, and it felt to many that they were stuck in *"a rut"* (Cara May 2016), going nowhere. In October (2016) I asked Kerry if anything had changed. She thought for a moment, then shook her head: *"Um, well, look, … not really. I don't think so, … we are all doing our own things".* Several participants felt that Harvest needed a push-start.

### *Build Momentum – Make a Start.*

Patrick SL had intended the pilot subject to be the *start* needed for Harvest to move forward. This was not the perspective of most participants. Because so few were involved with the pilot, the rest were left with talk and no action. This frustrated some teachers. Shaun (Oct 2016) felt the need for action: *"I feel like we're just talking and talking and talking. There are no shovels in the ground. I'm a doer, like, let's get in and do this"*. Shaun felt that where there was no action, there could be no momentum. In January, Kerry (Jan 2016) indicated a similar concern: *"They will just be ideas, because … we've had ideas before, and they just get shelved".* Her use of the term, "*shelved*", was devoid of action. In May (2016) she reiterated the point: *"[I'd] love movement … You just need to get it up and running".* Previous experience of *ideas getting shelved* and *talkfests* that didn't bring action, left some teachers reluctant to engage in deepened reflective practice.

Whilst teachers saw that some action was necessary, this did not equate to a need to hurry. In terms of how to start, most teachers believed a measured approach was needed. Van (Jan 2016) suggested: *"I do think we need to start slowly",* adding: *"Maybe it will take a little bit of time to get traction".* Harvest was understood to be a long-term project; however *no action* needed to change to *slow action*.

School leaders were also mindful of the need to start and the need for measured movement. In January (2016), Patrick SL reflected: *"We're just shaping up on the starting grid. That's where I think we are".* Recognising the long-term nature of Harvest, he added: *"I'm very happy to be careful. To be considered but keep moving forward".* However, he believed that starting some action was important: *"We have to start. We actually have to*

*start, like we've got to get past talk and start".* He was mindful of past experiences of ideas not being enacted: *"We get out the butchers' paper, and we do all this stuff and then you never hear of it again"*. His discouragement was evident in May (2016): *"We are nowhere, nowhere … well, I think we could have been further if we'd have had more time".* Patrick felt that an effective start had not eventuated because of the constant interruptions and distractions so familiar in schools.

Mary SL (Oct 2016) found the September meetings clarified Harvests' potential for her: "*I feel that now I can … start something".* She was mindful, however, that once she started, she needed to keep up some momentum: *"With the starting and stopping, like here's the new idea we're going to do it, and then, you fall off, … I don't know".* She was concerned that this could be a problem that impacted teachers' attitudes and willingness to be involved with deep reflection. Once started, Mary believed that the initiative needed to keep moving. In March 2017, Mary noted that although a cascade of interruptions and distractions had slowed things down, a start had been made. She had engaged positive teachers in a small Harvest initiative, intending that: *"the passion of the few",* would help: *"others catch the vision".* This was Mary's considered and intentional start.

### *Build Momentum - Take Small Steps.*

There was a consensus amongst participants that momentum should be built with small achievable steps. Participants believed taking small, deliberate steps forward could avoid major barriers. Blake (Jan 2016) had a very positive attitude to the deep reflective nature of Harvest: *"I'm really wanting to see it move forward and do whatever I can to help, … the process".* However, he acknowledged that tackling too big a task at the beginning could overwhelm teachers and become a barrier. His advice was to break it down: "*I think just having little chunks of time, like just work on one task*." When dreaming big, he could see that changes would need to be *"little bit by little bit".* Similarly, Kysha (May 2016) could see that Harvest was overwhelming in its entirety. She believed that school leaders should work with teachers to: *"just figure out a way to implement something that's very easy. … I'd rather do something small".* Kerry (Oct 2016) explained: *"You can't do so much all in one hit, because everyone will feel quite overloaded, and overwhelmed".* Robin (Jan 2016) explained that experiencing small successes can create the space for further involvement:

> *… Small steps, so that they can feel like dipping your toe into the river. 'Oh, okay it's not freezing or it's not frying hot or... maybe we can do this'. Just a little bit of reassurance.*

In Robin's own deepened reflective practice in regard to the Harvest goals, there was clear evidence of her taking intentionally incremental steps in both planning and implementing changes in her practice: *"And I want to do a little bit with them, I did a little bit with my class last year, but a little bit more about the science of the benefits of spending time in nature"* (May 2016). In October (2016) she spoke of the school-wide Harvest journey:

> *We've sort of waded a little bit, but we haven't started to swim. We've sort of dipped our toes in, and then we've kind of gotten up to our ankles, but we haven't really worked out how it will work practically.*

A start had been made, small steps taken, yet Robin and other teachers felt there was no common direction, no *"roadmap"* (Van, Jan 2016) tightly aligned with purpose. Cara (May 2016) observed: *"We haven't really got any process for the big picture. ... some people would have tried a few things".* There needed to be a sequence of steps planned. Otherwise: "*It would be easy to lose momentum ... you know, the wheels turned once and then… they're in a rut".* Many teachers were waiting for clearly laid out direction and pace: ***"****I'd want to know very clearly ... what the steps are"* (Jackie, May 2016).

School leaders knew that Harvest would need intentional intervention to provide the push/pull forces needed. In October (2016) Patrick SL shared his own concerns: *"This is the terrible reality. I know it is still at the point where it doesn't have its own inertia. It's still relying on my passion and enthusiasm for it".* Ryan SL was cautiously pushing forward with the primary school. In January (2016) he expressed his plans to get moving as a primary team: "*So we're doing baby steps",* and in October (2016) he reflected: "*I think we're at a point now where, certainly on this side (primary), we're excited. The momentum's there".* Ryan was ready to celebrate the baby steps forward.

### *Build Momentum –Celebrate the Small Successes.*

The value of celebrating the small steps taken was noted by several participants as supporting ongoing momentum. In March (2017) Kerry explained that when she had made small changes in her own teaching with success: *"It makes me a braver teacher".* Cara (March 2017) also believed that "*success breeds success".* She described the motivation provided when she saw her students enjoying new ways of doing things. This gave a *"great sense of reward",* encouraging her *"to make further changes".* In terms of Harvest, and other school-wide deeply reflective initiatives, Blake (Jan 2016) suggested: *"Just having little mini*

*successes like ticking off the planting of the trees … and the whole staff can see that. … I think little successes like that will give it momentum".*

As I reflected with the school leaders in March (2017), our discussion led to the maxim, *"Change builds change, and momentum is built".* Small deliberate steps, following a *"roadmap"* to reach a common destination, are needed to build momentum.

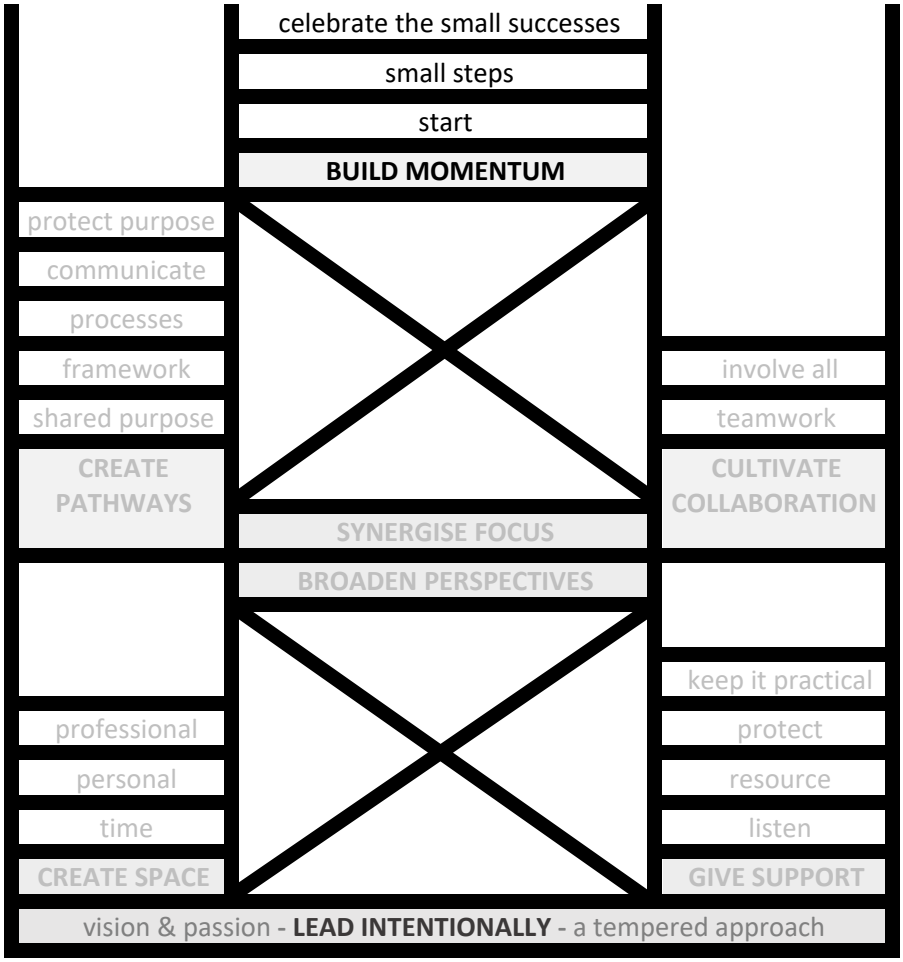
### 4.10.3 Building a Response to the Research Question

The momentum theme emerged in response to building a collective capacity for deepened reflective practice in the context of a school-wide initiative. The support finding within this theme calls for school leaders to build momentum through deliberate yet tempered leadership that connects ideas to actions, gets started and progresses with small steps that are mapped towards a purpose-driven direction. Each step builds a sense of success and encourages continued momentum. Stated in summary form this theme adds another partial response to the primary research question:

> Leaders must build momentum when working together on a shared journey of deepening reflective practice. Starting is very important. Ideas left hanging without action lead to cynicism and a culture of avoiding big issues. Steps must be small enough to achieve without overburdening teachers yet significant enough to celebrate.

Figure 14 displays this finding securely positioned on the structural findings of creating space and pathways, and the relational findings of giving support and cultivating collaboration.

**Figure 14** *Support Finding Eight - Build Momentum*




The final theme acknowledges the situational barriers impacting school leaders in the early stages of building momentum.

## 4.11 Theme Nine: External Arenas

The complex social world of Faith School includes many external arenas such as government regulatory bodies, system regulatory bodies, Independent Schools Association, legislative bodies, and faith-based organisations. In addition, there are local communities, parents, other schools, and social, political, educational, and faith-based discourses. The data suggests that these external arenas impact teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice.

### 4.11.1 Barrier Finding: External Pressures and Distractions

Participants indicated that external pressures and distractions impacted their capacity for deepened reflective practice. Table 15 presents some of the external barriers noted by

participants. Pressure and restrictions from governing bodies, without accompanying support, were reported to leave teachers with little professional space for deepened reflective practice. Similarly, the constant bombardment of interruptions from various external arenas added to the scattered focus and time paucity reported by teachers and school leaders alike.

**Table 15** *Barriers - External Pressures and Distractions*

| Barrier Theme – **External pressure and distractions** | **Prim. Tchrs** | **Sec. Tchrs** | **School Admin** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ Heavy pressure from government curriculum authorities. | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| ○ Lack of external support | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ No freedom from external agencies to enact on deep reflective practice. | ✔ | ✘ | ✘ |
| ○ Constant interruptions (spot fires) from both within and without the school. | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |
| ○ Little evidence of deepened reflective practice from external systems. | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |

### 4.11.2 Support Finding: Engage External Support

Whilst acknowledging the pushes and pulls from external stakeholders and societal expectations, participants reported that engaging support from external arenas would have value when building teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice. This support finding was seen as a useful scaffold for such an initiative in the early stages.

The participants at Faith School recounted some positive experiences in accessing external support. Many described the supportive and encouraging role played by an external facilitator of a recent school improvement initiative. Accessing such external support was seen by many participants as an effective scaffold for deepened reflective practice. Kacey (Jan 2016) described some elements she appreciated with an external facilitator:

> *We went through the talk, and we had goals set and then we developed concrete things that address that. … He actually offered to the whole staff to come and observe classes and give ideas, … and he pointed me to some research to look into.*

Several teachers reported that this external facilitator was making *"a big difference"* (Kacey, Jan 2016). The external facilitator offered support to both school leaders and teachers, assisting with communication and the formation of goals. Structures were being built for the continuation of the initiative beyond his involvement.

A similar external role emerged in this study, through my involvement in the process of interviews, feedback and contextualised professional development through the course of this study. As trust was developed, the interviews merged into professional and deeply reflective conversations, with many opportunities for encouragement, the sharing of ideas and experiences, and collaborative, forward-focused reflection. Participants reported valuing the deidentified feedback loop provided between the leadership team and teachers. The conversations also became catalysts for broadening perspectives, resource development and opportunities for listening and growing. Relationships of mutual respect and understanding were built, with opportunities for mentoring and coaching in some cases. I discussed the potential for such an external support role with the participants.

Most participants believed that an external facilitator of deepened reflective practice could be a useful scaffold, supporting the building of both the individual and group capacity needed to support deepened reflective practice with Harvest. Some believed it was essential: *"I reckon it's needed, 'cause I don't see it otherwise happening"* (Kysha, Oct 2016).

The collective of responses revealed potential for an external facilitator to support leadership in the structural and relational support findings explained above.

### *External Support for Intentional Leaders.*

In acknowledging the need for intentional leadership, several participants suggested that an external facilitator could support leaders in driving an initiative. Kacey noted in October (2016) that when there was no external presence at the school, the initiative appeared to stop moving: "*Where is there someone driving the process, here on the ground, when you're not here?"* She felt that having external support: "*has really helped".* She noted the value of giving support to leaders as they set up processes and procedures, making the transitions "*more manageable*". With the acknowledged pressures from multiple stakeholders, it was helpful to have someone external to the school to add support.

However, both leaders and teachers acknowledged that an external facilitator should not be the *"driver*" of change or reflective initiatives. Rather, they saw the role as supporting the creation of space and pathways that would assist school leaders to "*drive"*. Kelly (Oct 2016) suggested that an external facilitator would need to take the time to listen and understand the school's worldview to be able to get the balance right between 'driving' and 'supporting'. She cautioned, *"I think that someone who came in and just tried to impose their structure and all their ideas… would be an epic fail … And would completely be at odds with the process".*

School leaders also acknowledged the value of an external facilitator willing to listen, encourage and collaboratively reflect. Mary SL (May 2016) found that having an external person with whom she could honestly converse regarding her leadership role in a mentoring capacity, had helped her: *"I'm sitting and thinking that you've done it all before me, I need help. … I am just overwhelmed"*. Mary was also grateful for the deidentified feedback from teachers that she used to inform her leadership. This strengthened her intentionally tempered approach to leadership. Ryan SL (Oct 2016) noted the value of receiving non-judgmental feedback that became important reminders of purpose. The facilitator role highlighted a need that helped him to decide that: *"every second staff meeting will be a Harvest planning meeting"*. School leaders found value in having external support as they navigated 'tempered leadership' of the Harvest initiative.

### *External Support for Creating Space.*

Several participants regarded the interviews throughout this research study as safe reflective spaces. The listening, questioning, and perspective sharing, akin to a mentoring role had the additional benefit of being fed back to the leadership team deidentified. Teachers' voices were heard in a safe space, by an external person not caught up in the power dynamics or busyness of the school, creating both space and opportunity for ideas to be passed on to school leaders.

In October (2016) Kerry reflected that an external facilitator had been able to *"extract stuff from us that we probably would not have been thinking about [with] these processes and what we were doing beforehand*". She believed that it would be important "*to have someone you're comfortable sharing with, even if you don't feel like you're doing the right thing and admitting that"* (Kerry, Oct 2016). Accessing external support had the potential to create a safe space for capacity building.

### *External Support for Giving Support.*

The deep listening involved in the interview process of this study revealed needs for support that could be fed back to school leaders. There were times when the conversational interviews actually became the needed support. In one instance, for example, the professional conversations provoked by the interviews built the teacher's confidence and self-efficacy enough to overcome the fear of moving from reflection to transformation of practice. This teacher exhibited courage and purpose in deep reflective practice, which resulted in creative and innovative outcomes. The teacher reported feeling *"enthused and inspired to make steps*

*towards working out how to incorporate the Harvest activities to encourage character development".*

Non-judgmental support was noted by a number of teachers to be a valuable element of an effective external facilitator. Kelly (Oct 2016) saw the value for the school: *"to get a bit of outside support that's not judgmental and really is in keeping with this focus and ethos, in how the school operates and … someone who is teaching regularly".* Mary SL (Oct 2016) emphasised the value of trust and the potential for an external facilitator to build relationships and provide: *"a safe haven for people to actually speak their mind".* She believed that this helped: *"build confidence".* She added:

> *Sometimes, somebody new allows people to … vent their thoughts and feelings, which can be quite therapeutic sometimes, … sometimes they don't want anything fixed, but they are able to vent … in a safe place.*

Several teachers noted the potential for an external facilitator to ask questions that prompt deeply reflective thinking. *"Somebody has to keep asking those questions"* (Kerry Oct 2016). As principal, Patrick SL (Jan 2016) noted the value of external support in terms of being: *"able to draw out of us, make us ask questions or ask questions in helping us define what we want to achieve".* From my observations and experience in such an external support role, I also could see the value of first listening, and then supporting deep questioning to assist leaders and teachers in their deepening reflective practice.

### *External Support for Broadening Perspectives.*

Several participants expressed the additional value of having external input for broadening their perspective base. Carl (Oct 2016) explained the additional benefit:

> *The advantage of having someone outside the school is that they are able to see it from a totally different perspective. Someone inside the school will then sometimes feel threatened by either who they've got to talk to or what they've got to talk about.*

Kelly (Oct 2016) believed that an external facilitator could connect teachers to a wider range of perspectives. She made the following suggestions for this role: *'Maybe if they sent out once a term, 'These are some articles that have really inspired us' … Or [offering suggestions], 'Where you're at, … look I've done some of this.' 'How can I assist you?'"* Kelly could see the value in extending teachers' perspectives.

Bringing in an external perspective was generally seen by both teachers and leaders to be of potential benefit. From her leadership viewpoint, Mary SL (Oct 2016) commented on the value of: *" fresh eyes". She explained: "Sometimes, somebody coming in will just ... a few words, can make you have your eyes opened up and you can see it from a different angle".* Mary (Oct 2016) described such a role as being a *"facilitator of ideas"*. She explained:

> *We get so snowed under with the nitty gritty of the day-to-day runnings ... that ... doesn't always provide the platform you need for creativity. Sometimes a facilitator could actually say, 'Have you thought about this? Could that work in your school?'*

As I engaged in such an external support role, I had many opportunities to support the broadening of perspectives with teachers and leaders. I could see the potential for building capacity by connecting theory to practice and supporting deep perspective digging and mutual sharing.

### *External Support to Synergise Focus.*

When asked about the potential role of an external facilitator for building capacity for deep engagement in a reflective initiative such as Harvest, some suggested that such a role could support clarifying focus. Carl (Oct 2016) suggested that an external facilitator could synergise elements of vision: "*into something so that we can start seeing it".* Miguel (Oct 2016) believed this would then become a useful scaffold for teachers trying to: *"navigate and implement the program in our subject areas".*

School leaders saw the need for external support in synergising focus. Leaders were aware of the busyness and interruptions that impacted leadership, scattered their focus, and left many good ideas unrealised. Ryan SL (Oct 2016) explained: *"Because an idea, especially one that was theoretical and big at the start, it's so easy to put in the too hard basket when you've got a million and one things to do".* Patrick SL (Oct 2016) saw the potential for an external facilitator to help the school *"define"* the focus, supporting all to synergise their efforts towards a shared goal.

### *External Support to Create Pathways.*

Many participants felt that the role of an external facilitator increased accountability within a school initiative. Jackie (Oct 2016) reflected the need for: *"keeping us accountable".* In March (2017) both Kacey and Blake reported that the repeated interviews involved in this

research study supported personal accountability for them as classroom teachers, whilst also bringing structure to the overall initiative. Kerry (Jan 2016) expanded on the benefit and the process: *"To be accountable, … check in and refresh. Remind us of what we've done before".* She believed external support meant that she was not left *"to fumble through"* on her own.

Ryan SL (Oct 2016) suggested that an external support person acts as "*a change consultant"*. He suggested that someone taking on this role offered great value to a school-wide initiative through: *"I think, regular checks, regular accountability checks".* He saw an external person supporting rigorous processes through non-judgmental accountability. External support such as this, Mary SL (Oct 2016) stated, could: *"value-add to the small schools and give structure".*

### *External Support to Cultivate Collaboration.*

Accessing external support allows school leaders to see some of their established practices through fresh eyes. One such school practice discussed with leaders related to staff meetings. In May (2016) I had the opportunity to feedback teacher perspectives regarding staff meetings and collaboration to the leadership team:

> *Staff meetings are …, filled with isolated items, getting through things, not a hotbed for reflection and positive moving, and, when it comes to the Harvest, the teachers have actually got some ideas for that. Collaboration was a big one. Everybody was bringing up something to do with collaboration. I felt as though there was a strong message that if we are going to ask these big questions and face the scary prospect of changing the way we do things, we must do it together. It needs to be, "Let's work on this together". It's safer, I guess.* (Karyn, research journal, May 2016)

In the same interview, I shared more ideas on collaboration, gathered from teachers and perspectives from theory and personal experience. The value of such a discussion reinforced a growing sense between us that there is valuable potential in accessing external support that could safely conduit external, theoretical, and teacher perspectives. In my final visit in March 2017, both the Primary and Secondary leaders were trialling ways to cultivate collaboration with their staff through making changes in how staff meetings were planned and conducted. An external facilitator offered additional perspectives on processes and procedures for collaborative reflective practice, but it would be the school leaders' roles to know their teachers and context well enough to select and implement changes.

#### *External Support to Build Momentum.*

Several participants indicated that an external facilitator could impact momentum. Kelly (Oct 2016) reflected: *"I do believe that an external person changes the dynamic and adds some momentum".* She went on to make specific suggestions for how she saw this working, then concluded: *"You need somebody that can move us or help us to move forward. Encouraging us to move forward. … it's a great way to be moving forward, but it's helping us to have accountability".*

Discussions with school leaders regarding the role of an external facilitator made it clear that momentum would need to come from within the school. However, external support was seen to add some *push* forces, asking questions like: *"What's the next step?"* (Karyn to Mary SL, May 2016). Not being caught up in the everyday interruptions and situational realities allows an external facilitator to remind, prompt and support leaders and teachers. This then assists in the building of momentum and avoiding the *ruts* of inaction.

### 4.11.3 Building a Response to the Research Question

Each support finding has contributed a partial response to the primary research question. Within the theme of external arenas, data indicated that there are many unhelpful barriers to capacity building from interruptions and external pressures. Findings also indicated potential value in engaging support from external arenas to act as a scaffold in building teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice within the context a school-wide initiative such as Harvest.

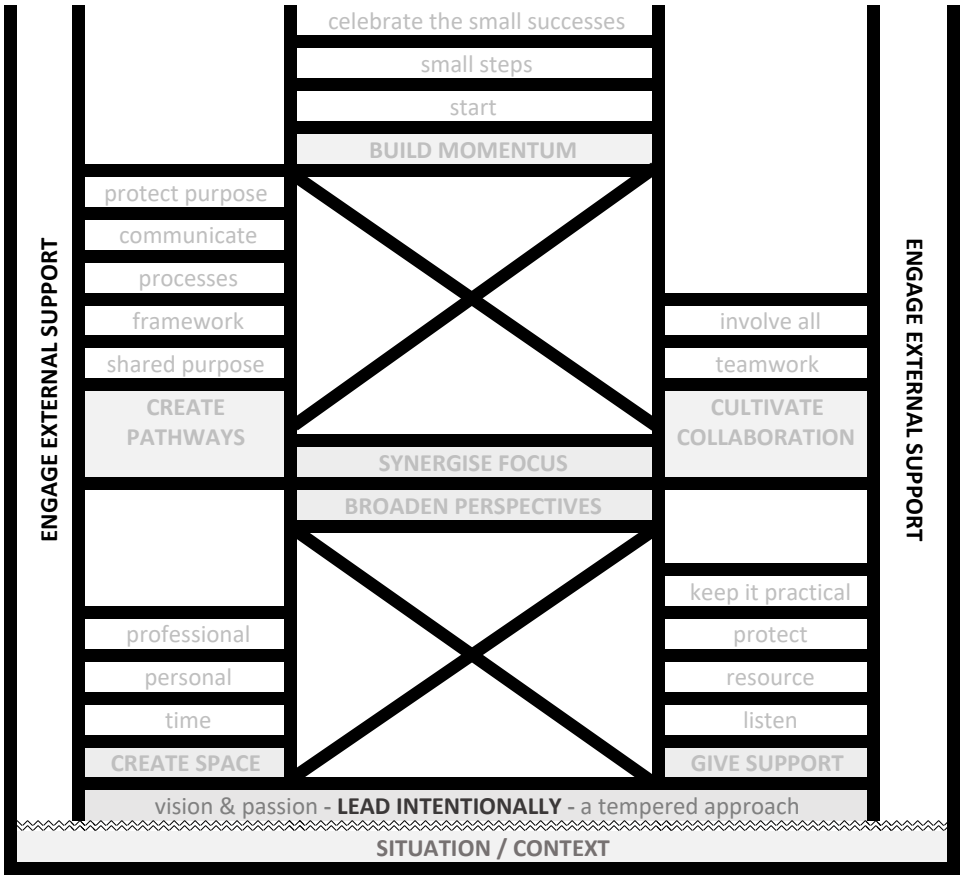
In building a narrative data-based response to the primary research question, this theme offers a capstone, recognising the identified barriers and offering an external scaffold to supplement the summation of the other findings:

> In the world of schools and teaching, interruptions, workloads, and fragmented responsibilities become major distractors and inhibitors of deepened reflective practice. Engaging external support offers a scaffold for intentionally leading the building of teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. As with all scaffolds, this support is given for a time and purpose, with the intention of removing it, leaving a framework for ongoing reflective practice within the school.

Figure 15 displays this support finding strongly connected to intentional leadership. This support finding is also shown as an external scaffold for the other support findings,

indicating the potential for external facilitation to intentionally scaffold support in a limited yet profound way across the themes.

**Figure 15** *Support Finding Nine – Engage External Support*




"*So … the idea of scaffolding is that eventually, you leave"* (Mary SL, May 2016). All participants could see that once the internal structure is functioning, the external scaffold would no longer be needed.

## 4.12 Situating the Findings: The Place and the People

The above findings put forward an interconnected and interdependent grouping of participants' collective perceptions of the barriers and supports for deepened reflective practice. These findings were born out of the participants' lived experience of Harvest and similar school-wide initiatives within the situational realities of Faith School, involving both human and non-human elements (see Appendix R). Participants' experience of Harvest and their perceived capacity for deepened reflective practice were impacted by non-human elements such as geographical location, school history, the social demographics of the local

community, and current school facilities, along with the complexities of the many human elements that comprised their social worlds.

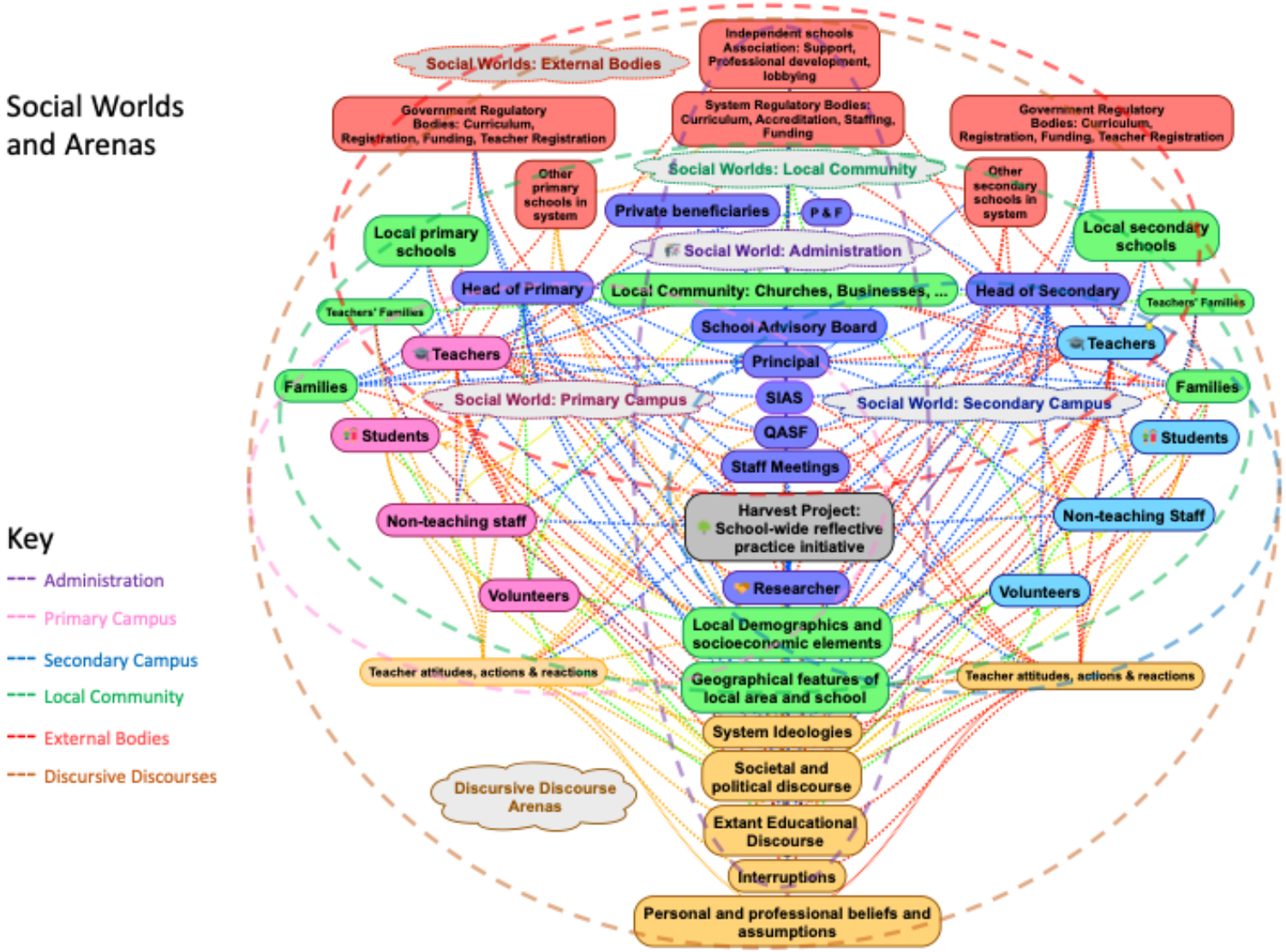
### 4.12.1 Situating the Findings: Social Worlds and Arenas of Faith School

Situational analysis of the data, and the associated map-making described in Chapter Three, supported a deeper understanding of the complexity of situational and social impacts on teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice. The human elements of influence and impact were examined in terms of social worlds and social arenas of influence. Social worlds were recognised and grouped by their collective "commitment to social action in … the arena of concern" (Clarke, 2019, p. 19). Figure 16 offers a simplified representation of the major social worlds and arenas that were reported and observed to impact the participants at Faith School in terms of the phenomenon of reflective practice. The major social worlds of Faith School included the school administration, the primary and secondary campuses, the local community, and external bodies. These social worlds were intrinsically connected. At times they pulled in different directions, greatly impeding teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice.

The arenas displayed in Figure 16 "represent areas of debate and contestation" (Grzanka, 2021, p. 324). Each were noted to be "of sustained interest and concern that brings multiple social worlds together over time" (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 174). Various discursive discourses at the time of the research study were seen to influence reflective practice at Faith School. These included system ideologies such as the foundational ideologies underpinning Harvest; societal and political discourses such as the Gonski Review Report; NAPLAN and the My School website; and extant educational discourses in the field of education at the time, including STEM and Project-based learning.

The discourse of *interruptions* was noted as another arena of impact: "*Just dealing with the spot fires"* (Kelly, Jan 2016) and "*running from one bush fire to the next"* (Patrick SL, Jan 2016). Relentless interruptions were observed in the complex social worlds of Faith School. Any response to the research question must acknowledge and seek solutions within the situational realities of the school.

**Figure 16** *The Social Worlds and Arenas of Faith School – A Situational Map*



Also consequential were the discourses emanating from the personal and professional experiences, beliefs and assumptions of each teacher and school leader navigating between and within the mix of social worlds observed at Faith School. It is to this situational reality that we now turn.

### 4.12.2 Situating the Findings: The Individual Participants

For the purposes of heuristic analysis, raw data were parsed into narrative files for each participant, gathering individual accounts of their lived experience, including experiences, goals, and current reflective practices. In essence, as a researcher, I sought to understand the personal elements involved in building capacity for deepened reflective practice. Over the course of multiple interviews, the individuality of each participant's story became increasingly evident. The heuristic process involved iterative cycles of immersion in transcripts, summaries and my observations and reflections on interactions with each participant. This process allowed the space needed to incubate understanding until breakthroughs of illumination brought glimmers of meaning and awareness (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 28-30). I discovered that each participant had a unique story, including their own school story, overarching goals for their students, and personal and professional experiences. Each participant's story, set in this school situation, impacted their capacity for deepened reflective practice.

From this extensive process, an individual depiction was created for each participant in order to capture the *verstehen,* the empathetic understanding of the lived experience of each participant in regard to their perceptions of capacity for deepened reflective practice. In the tables below [Tables 16-18], I have placed excerpts from the individual depictions into tables. The first column gives a brief overview of the participant's story. In the second column, I have presented, in the first person, an individual response to the primary research question. This response was derived heuristically from the complete data set, including recordings, transcriptions, summaries, and my interactions and observations. Intentionally bracketing my own voice and story, I immersed myself in one participant's data at a time, internally listening for the participant's voice. Once I could hear only that participant's voice in my thinking, I then posed the primary research question to this synthesis of data. The responses reflect what I *heard* from this process. Whilst verbatim quotes are noted in italics, all opinions, ideas, and attitudes were strongly evident in the individual's data set. In response to the secondary research question, I have grouped the participants as teachers, with

primary and secondary separated. Within each table, participants are introduced in alphabetical order.

**Table 16** *Individual Primary Teacher Responses to the Research Question*

| **Answering the research question – Individuals: PRIMARY TEACHERS** | |
|---|---|
| ***"How could school leaders build your capacity for deepened reflective practice?"*** | |
| **Getting to know the participants** | **Answering the question (first person)** |
| **Cara** | |
| Cara is an experienced teacher who is constantly learning and looking for ways to engage her students. Her overarching goals for students are that they love learning. To achieve that, she is continually seeking ways to differentiate, enhance student engagement and find innovative ways to connect learning with each student's needs. | Honour my time by creating space in my busy role for this. I want to reflect deeply, but I need to know that I will be given the resources I need to make the changes that I believe are important.<br>I really love PD, but I want it to be practical, giving me ideas and skills that I can use with my class, because that is where my energy must go. |
| **Jackie** | |
| Jackie is an experienced teacher. Her top goals vary according to the age group she teaches, but character and values are always important. She is a creative person, and this is evident in her teaching.<br>Jackie had a negative experience in her own childhood school experience.<br>This influences her strong desire to make thing interesting and enjoyable for her students. | I need to understand where you want my head to go. Come and chat with me. Don't just give me a big picture, *I need more nuts and bolts first, more training*. Time needs to be allocated and the goals and steps made very clear. *I need to see it*, I need to … *have it in my face all the time … something big and bold on the wall*.<br>I'm not so much a theory person, but if you can convince me that I can meet my outcomes and that my students will be engaged, I will get involved.<br>Also, *I think if you're doing it all together, it's easier.* I wouldn't want to be the only one putting myself out there. |
| **Kacey** | |
| Kacey is a recent graduate. She has children at the school. She feels as though this time of her career is an *enthusiastic stage*, not set in her ways and *pretty willing to take risks.*<br>Kacey wants *school to be fun* for her students. Her biggest goal is that her students continue to grow a *more beautiful picture of God* throughout the time spent in her class. | I like to reflect and would be happy to deepen my reflective practice, but it is a matter of time. *I would expect to be given time for this.*<br>I believe that PDs get me thinking deeply. I have also enjoyed the professional conversations we shared during the interviews. Having someone to give ideas and suggestions for my class really helps. I think regular check-ins like those would be very helpful. They keep you accountable.<br>So, visit me, talk with me, and support my growth, with one focus at a time. Continue to remind me about our deeper purpose. |

| Answering the research question – Individuals: PRIMARY TEACHERS<br>*"How could school leaders build your capacity for deepened reflective practice?"* | |
|---|---|
| **Getting to know the participants** | **Answering the question (first person)** |
| **Kerry** | |
| Kerry is an experienced teacher, having taught for 15 years in this small school. She is aware of the busyness and isolation involved in working in a small school, as *people are flat out doing their own things.*<br>She wants her students to grow their love for God and build their self-esteem and confidence. | Carve out some special time for reflective practice. I would love someone to come regularly and say, *"Come and sit down. We're going to reflect on what you are doing in the classroom".*<br>I also think that visiting other schools helps me to see other teachers in action. I can feel quite isolated here.<br>For me, working together feels safer, I don't feel confident to just step out there and try new things on my own.<br>I do have a strong sense of purpose, but I feel that we need to find a way to stop and reflect together without the push of our never-ending lists.<br>We need to feel supported, for me this would mean to get some help with documentation. It would be different things for other teachers. |
| **Mandy** | |
| Mandy is a quietly spoken teacher with a child at the school.<br>She can be hesitant to take risks and innovate because of her desire to achieve the best outcomes for her students.<br>Mandy feels that she still has much to learn, finding it easy to be self-critical.<br>She described the struggle of deep reflection: "*It does weigh on your heart and you stress".*<br>She appreciates her colleagues' skills and willingness to help, though she rarely reaches out for collegial support because of their busyness. She says little in staff meetings. … … If she shares her ideas and there is no response, she is quick to retreat. | I want to be the best teacher I can be for my students.<br>Each one is precious, so if you want to support me in reflecting more deeply, then please, engage with me in my core goals.<br>Take the time and make the space to walk beside me. Talk with me. Guide me. Hear my fears and support my growth. You will find that I am most willing. |
| **Rebecca** | |
| Rebecca recently graduated from teaching, though she has worked at the school as an education assistant. Her passion is for students to love learning, be engaged and see the relevance in what they are learning. | To build my capacity for deepened reflective practice, listen to my passions. Give me feedback and support me to bring all that I can to my students.<br>Believe me, I do ask the big questions, but if there is no one to help me make the changes, what can I do? *One person can't do it all.* |

| Answering the research question – Individuals: PRIMARY TEACHERS | |
|---|---|
| ***"How could school leaders build your capacity for deepened reflective practice?"*** | |
| **Getting to know the participants** | **Answering the question (first person)** |
| [Rebecca contd.]<br>She was inspired by a teacher in her own school experience who took the time to get to know each student. This teacher made radical changes to meet Rebecca's personal learning needs. This changed Rebecca's world and continues to impact her teaching. | |

**Table 17** *Individual Secondary Teacher Responses to Research Question*

| **Answering the research question – Individuals: SECONDARY TEACHERS** | |
|---|---|
| ***"How could school leaders build your capacity for deepened reflective practice?"*** | |
| **Getting to know the participants** | **Answering the question (first person)** |
| **Blake** | |
| Blake is both a chaplain and teacher at Faith School. This mix works well for him as he is passionate about growing kids in character and spirituality.<br>In his own schooling, there was a strong academic push, but even though it was a faith-based school, spiritual development took the back seat. His response: "*Well, I try to do the opposite of that*." | Show me how it fits with my big goals because I will always be up to finding better ways to make them happen.<br>*We need a bunch of time. Also, y*ou do need to tackle it in times when I have the mind space, not so much in the middle of a busy week.<br>Another thing, I know from experience, a mentor can make a big difference in supporting me to move from my reflections to practice.<br>I would also appreciate support with documentation. I know I'm not the only one who feels like the paperwork is a major roadblock to making big changes. |
| **Carl** | |
| Carl is a highly experienced teacher who has taught in a range of schools, some highly resourced and some, like Faith School, small with limited resources.<br>As the only teacher in his department, Carl's workload is high, yet he is internally driven to continually improve the students' experience in his subject area. He described his current teaching experience: *"I just live in my own little world here*. … *I'm going flat out*, … … and …, *I'm knackered*."<br>His overarching goals for his students are to challenge their thinking and excite their enthusiasm. He also has a strong desire to encourage his students *to have a deeper understanding of their Saviour*. | I've always *got a couple of things stewing in the back of my mind*. I have my own *vision* of where I want to go with my teaching. I don't need help with that.<br>You need to know your teachers and notice those who are on the edge of *burn out*. Pushing for change at the expense of teacher well-being will never work.<br>The big thing for me would be to establish right from the start that change won't be an add-on to what we're already doing.<br>I believe there should be support from the system. Someone from up the tree should be helping to *manage the process*. |
| **George** | |
| George is a mature teacher who expresses a deep faith and strong convictions. He has found transitioning between state curriculums demanding. He described his current teaching reality as: *"just trying to survive"*.<br>George constantly thinks about things that need to change but he rarely documents his reflections. He believes there simply isn't enough time. George feels discouraged at times, when his teaching experience doesn't live up to his high aspirations. He believes there just isn't enough time. | I already question much that we do as a school. Questioning and looking to find ways to do it well is a big deal to me but getting down to the *nitty gritty* and actually making the changes is a different matter.<br>Time is a big issue. It seems like there is always so much change, new subjects to teach and new year levels. I'd need time.<br>I like to bounce ideas around with someone who is on the same page as me. That would help.<br>I need a full masterplan drawn up so that every little thing that happens fits into the big picture. I don't want to be wasting time. |

| Answering the research question – Individuals: SECONDARY TEACHERS | |
|---|---|
| ***"How could school leaders build your capacity for deepened reflective practice?"*** | |
| **Getting to know the participants** | **Answering the question (first person)** |
| **Kayla** | |
| This is Kayla's second teaching position. As her first year at Faith School, Kayla is *scrambling to settle*. At her last school she was encouraged to choose three things as her big goals for the year. She has chosen to continue those three goals in this new teaching position. *Kindness, thinking and effort* are the big goals she is willing to reflect most deeply about in this first year at Faith School. | In the past I have appreciated things like regular *PD breakfasts,* where we pre-read a specific reading and discussed it over breakfast. *That was really good. We kept the conversations going* and that definitely led to a deepened reflective practice for me.<br>I believe that time, care, and support in professional development are essential.<br>I like working in a team of teachers who are thinking and talking, reading and growing together. |
| **Kelly** | |
| Kelly is a highly experienced senior teacher at Faith School. She has some leadership roles involving curriculum in the secondary school. Kelly is passionate about her subject area. Her overarching goals are for students to become active and engaged learners and thinkers. She would also like to help her students look at life through a Christian filter. | I believe that a call to deepen reflective practice involves planning to move from thinking to actual change. I would like leaders to attach practical, achievable steps to the big-picture visions they have. I am a thinker, but if you lay a big one on me without a clear process from the start, I find myself in a whirlwind of emotions, vacillating from excitement to guilt to fear. That is not helpful. |
| **Kysha** | |
| Kysha has taught at Faith School for four years. Each year she has been given a changed loading and new classes. She describes her teaching reality: *"I never feel like I am mastering anything ….* I feel as though I'm *on this treadmill of survival"*. She is feeling constantly tired which is sapping the joy from her teaching.<br>Kysha reports starting her career as a passionate *idealist*. She believed she could do anything. She is currently struggling to have either the personal or professional space for deepened reflective practice. | You would need to protect me from too much change in my roles. If I am not given the opportunity to master what I am currently doing, how would I have the space or energy to tackle anything else?<br>To reignite my passions and allow me to engage in deepened reflective practice, I would love to be able to step away from the school for a time and *be part of a think tank* or for a time be involved in *just developing curriculum or mapping outcomes and establishing a well-oiled* framework for the school to use. |
| **Miguel** | |
| Miguel is an experienced teacher. He has changed roles many times in this school, but it doesn't worry him because of his diverse background in teaching.<br>Miguel's greater purpose in teaching, in addition to and through curriculum, is to better prepare his students for life.<br>He wants his students to learn how to *work as a team to solve problems.* He wants them to learn to respect and value other people's ideas. | I need school leaders to first acknowledge the reality of the curriculum requirements I must cover. Then we need to find models and solutions that others have created to tackle the issue at hand, so that we can question, trial and assess their value.<br>I am a critical thinker.<br>I am continually looking for ways to link the curriculum to relevant real-life issues. Support me in that. |

| Answering the research question – Individuals: SECONDARY TEACHERS | |
|---|---|
| ***"How could school leaders build your capacity for deepened reflective practice?"*** | |
| **Getting to know the participants** | **Answering the question (first person)** |
| **Robin** | |
| Robin is an experienced teacher at Faith School. She finds the school to be *a very nurturing environment* with *a lot of collegiality*.<br>Being a small school, she has found that teachers *just get in and help* each other.<br>Her teaching role has been stable, leaving her able to continually try to improve her students' learning experiences. She takes student 'voice' seriously, surveying them each year and acting on their feedback.<br>Her overarching goals for her students are for them *to be analytical and critical thinkers*.<br>She also supports her students see the school's Christian values as leading to *the best kind of life* they *can possibly have*. | My students are my focus, so link the purpose of the deepened reflections with my goals for my students.<br>I need to see how things work on a practical level. Honour that.<br>Lead with vision and passion, but also be *a little bit more process driven*, paying attention to the *how*, whilst continually reminding us of the *why*. |
| **Shaun** | |
| Shaun is an experienced senior teacher with administrative experience. His greatest passion for his students is for them to love learning. In terms of reflective practice, he has made significant pedagogical changes over the years, now seeing his teaching role as being a facilitator of learning, rather than filling students with information. | If school leaders really want me to deepen my reflective practice, I need them to *drive* the process, and get involved.<br>Come with me to other schools so that we can see what they are doing, and then be prepared to allocate the financial and time resources that we need to make things happen. |
| **Van** | |
| Van is an experienced senior teacher at Faith School. He is also involved in mentoring young teachers and other leadership roles. He sees himself as a *"process"* person.<br>School *wasn't a fun time* for Van. He eventually learnt that if he tried harder, he could do very well at things that he cared about. This impacts his own teaching significantly. He is intentional to support students' enthusiasm and willingness to *have a crack at things*.<br>Van takes this mindset into his reflective practice and improving his teaching skills. He likes to continue to tweak and improve with time. He is patient, willing to make changes intentionally and steadily, over time.<br>He likes to see his projects through, rather than chopping and changing focus. | To build capacity for me, I would need to be given the space to stick with a project without being interrupted by new projects being thrust on me. I need to be able to trial, evaluate, tweak, and keep that cycle looping until I'm happy with the results. Just moving from one idea to the next, without that follow-through space leaves me very frustrated. |

| Answering the research question – Individuals: SECONDARY TEACHERS | |
|---|---|
| ***"How could school leaders build your capacity for deepened reflective practice?"*** | |
| **Getting to know the participants** | **Answering the question (first person)** |
| **Zane** | |
| This is Zane's first year of teaching. He has a rural background and enjoys teaching in a small rural school.<br>Zane believes being open to deep reflective practice is easier for him because he is not yet set in his ways. As a graduate teacher, he reports questioning what he is doing all the time.<br>He reflected on his year: "T*here's been a lot of stuff that has worked and a lot of stuff that hasn't worked*. So, I'm already *thinking about what I could do differently next year"*. | I think that providing a good mentor is number one in terms of supporting me to think deeply about what I'm doing and look for ways to improve.<br>I have an *excellent* mentor, and I can talk to him about anything, small stuff about classroom management and the bigger, deeper things too. I think my mentor knows me well enough to take me on that deeply reflective journey. |

**Table 18** *Individual School Leader Responses to Research Question*

| **Answering the research question – Individuals: SCHOOL LEADERS** | |
|---|---|
| ***"How could school leaders build teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice?"*** | |
| **Getting to know the participants** | **Answering the question (first person)** |
| **Mary SL** | |
| Mary recently stepped into the role of Head of Secondary. She is an experienced teacher who has taught at Faith School and has her own children at the school.<br>This gives Mary the opportunity to navigate leadership with multiple perspectives in mind. She is a critical thinker, empathising with both teachers and parents. | As a critical thinker myself, *I want to solve the problems* before *I come on board* to a new initiative. *I'm not real great when things are big and vague*. For this reason, I want to make things clear and practical for my teachers.<br>As a school leader, I put myself into the shoes of my teachers and I'm constantly wondering how to support them with reflecting deeply, or at least moving them in that direction. I want to be sensitive to the load they have and acknowledge the complexities and requirements they face in their teaching role. |
| **Patrick SL** | |
| Patrick is the Principal at Faith School. His own negative school experience inspires him with empathy for both students and teachers. Building relationships with both teachers and students is of great importance to his leadership. He has deep faith convictions that are the foundation for his passions.<br>This gives direction to his leadership and deep reflective practice. | As a school leader, I am keen to learn how best to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. In my leadership role, I can feel stifled and overwhelmed by expectations put on me from systems and other stakeholders. I understand the need to be heard and valued.<br>I think it is important that teachers are included in the visioning and the planning. I want them to know that they are heard and valued.<br>Although often not in my control, I know my teachers would find time, finances, and resources helpful as they move from their reflective practice to transformative change. |
| **Ryan SL** | |
| Ryan is an experienced secondary teacher in his second year as Head of Primary. He enjoys the challenge of leadership. His own school experience impact his teaching and leading. He expressed his greatest passion for teaching as: "*It's all about relationships. That's always been my focus, so I think if you nail that,* there will be *mutual respect* and the students *will try for you*." He believes that this is true also for leading teachers. | *I've seen a lot of great ideas being thrust on people. And that never works. I've seen good ideas that have not had adequate support* and they have fallen flat. Therefore, teachers need to be involved in every step, from the conception of an idea to its implementation, and they need to do that as a team.<br>We, need to give teachers the support they need, be it finances, resources, training, a listening ear, suggestions, or encouragement. Support will look different at different times for different teachers. To support the teachers means we must know them well. |

In response to the third secondary research question, I have offered my responses, as the researcher in Table 19. I have introduced myself in the prologue of this dissertation. I have reported the major barriers and supports that stood out to me as an observer.

**Table 19** *Researcher Responses to Research Questions*

| **Answering the research question – Individuals: RESEARCHER** | |
|---|---|
| ***"How could school leaders build teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice?"*** | |
| **Observed Barriers and Supports** | **Answering the question (first person)** |
| Karyn | |
| My time at Faith School helped me better understand two barriers in particular. Scattered focus, too much change or too short a change cycle, will likely result in a compliance mentality of ticking off boxes and feeling the frustration of busyness that does not support my students' outcomes. I also came to understand that a lack of intentional processes to protect deep purpose had the potential to bring about change devoid of transformation.<br>Two support measures took my attention. I saw the potential in listening deeply to each teacher, to support their reflective practice better. I was surprised to discover the potential benefit of accessing an external facilitator whilst establishing a culture of deepened reflective practice. | I personally see myself as a deeply reflective teacher, however my capacity to deeply reflect and bring about transformational change needs the support of school leaders.<br>I would ask to be allowed to have one major focus at a time, with opportunity for iterative cycles of trials, evaluations, and improvement. This would involve protecting me from scattered focus. |

This heuristic process added an important element to the quest, highlighting the unique impact of each participant's lived experience on their reflective practice. School leaders need to get to know teachers deeply, acknowledge their situational realities and engage their goals and interests to better support their capacity for deepened reflective practice. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Situational realities and the individual stories of each teacher have a significant impact on the capacity for deepened reflective practice.

## 4.13 Responding to the Research Questions – In Summary

The above findings and evidence emerged from constructivist grounded theory analysis with richness and detail added through heuristic and situational analysis. Seeking both collective and individual perspectives and grounding them in situational reality has offered both a forest and tree viewpoint of the phenomenon of reflective practice.

We now seek to summarise answers to the research questions.

### 4.13.1 The Secondary Questions

The secondary research questions sought to identify participants' perspectives on the barriers and supports for deepened reflective practice within the context of their lived experience of Harvest. The three participant groups: teachers; school leaders; and the researcher, identified barriers and supports. These are summarised in Table 20.

Whilst each element impacted individual participants to a greater or lesser degree, there was no clear demarcation of difference between the participant groups. In many cases, barriers were reported from direct experience, whilst support measures were suggested to either reduce or remove the barriers' impact. Such suggestions emanated from lived experience, identifying professional and personal needs on both a collective and individual level.

**Table 20** *Summary of Participants' Identified Barriers and Supports*

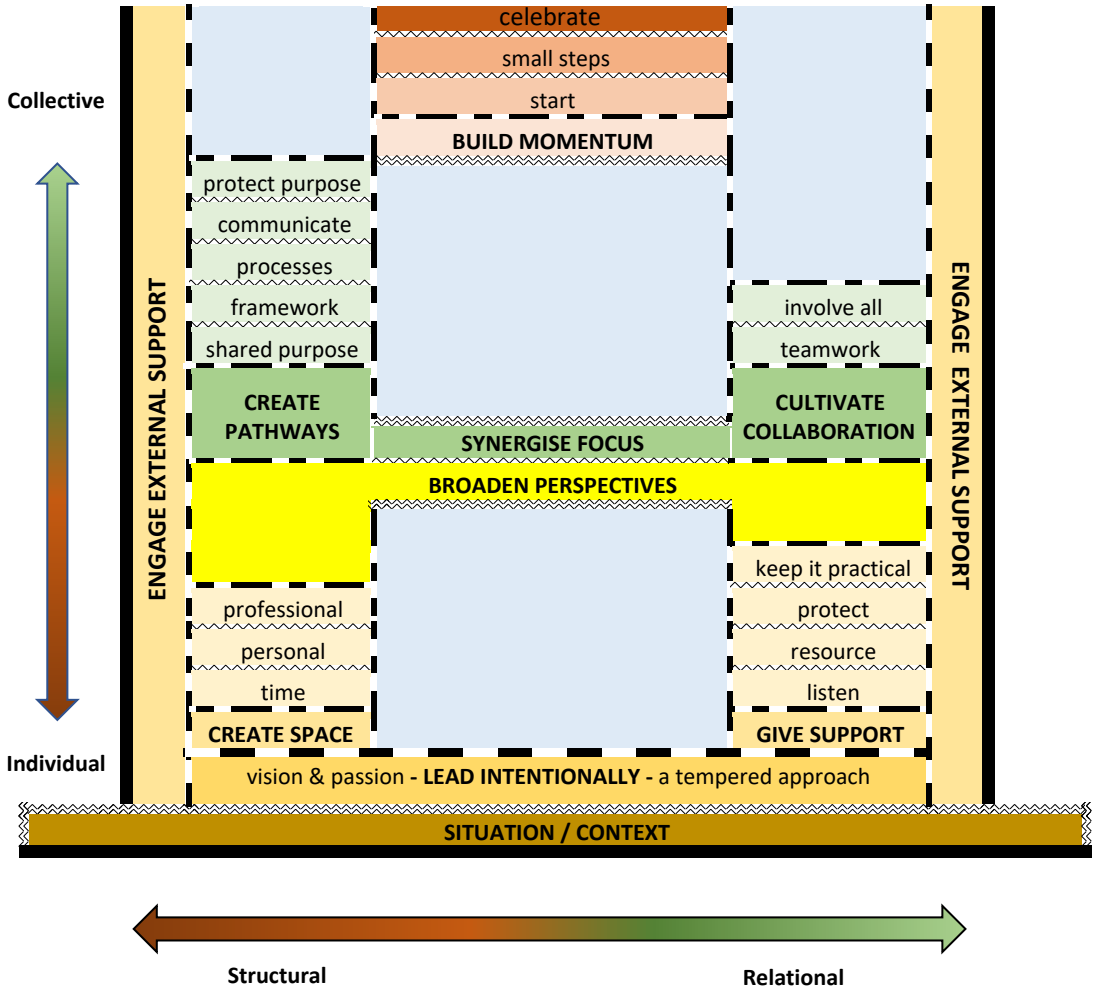
| Summary of Participants' Identified Barriers and Supports | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Theme** | **Barriers** | **Supports** |
| **Leadership** | **Leadership issues**<br>o No one *driving*<br>o Vision without practicalities<br>o Small school realities<br>o Balance issues | **Lead Intentionally**<br>o Vision & passion<br>o Tempered approach |
| **Space** | **No time, personal or professional space**<br>o No time<br>o Too busy; overloaded, tired<br>o Negative emotional responses; risky<br>o Professionally limited | **Create Space**<br>o Time<br>o Personal<br>o Professional |
| **Support** | **Lacking support**<br>o Isolated<br>o Limited finances & resources<br>o Needing load protection<br>o Needing practical support | **Give Support**<br>o Listen<br>o Resource<br>o Protect<br>o Keep things practical |
| **Perspectives** | **Limited perspectives**<br>o Limited networking opportunities<br>o Situational differences with models<br>o Narrow range of perspectives<br>o *Too hard* mentality | **Broaden Perspectives**<br>o Colleagues, visiting other schools<br>o Reading and research<br>o Professional development<br>o Parents and students |
| **Focus** | **Scattered focus**<br>o One idea/crisis after another/interruptions<br>o Overloaded<br>o Compliance-driven checklists<br>o Evaluating but not changing | **Synergise Focus** |
| **Pathways** | **Lack of structure and direction**<br>o Lacking shared purpose<br>o No framework or roadmap<br>o Lacking clear process<br>o Poor communication<br>o Risk of change without purpose | **Create Pathways**<br>o Shared purpose<br>o Frameworks<br>o Processes<br>o Communication<br>o Protect purpose |
| **Collaboration** | **Limited collaboration**<br>o Not working as a team<br>o Insufficient/ineffective collaboration<br>o Not all involved<br>o Leaving to others<br>o Collaborative risks | **Cultivate Collaboration**<br>o Teamwork<br>o Involve all |
| **Momentum** | **Inertia**<br>o Not started/started then stopped<br>o Too slow/too fast<br>o Uncertain direction/no change | **Build Momentum**<br>o Start<br>o Small steps<br>o Celebrate |
| **External Arenas** | **External pressure & distractions**<br>o Pressure from external authorities<br>o Restricted by external authorities<br>o Frequent interruptions | **Engage External Support**<br>o Support leaders<br>o Support teachers<br>o Support process |

### 4.13.2 The Primary Research Question

Identifying barriers and supports from the participants' experience of a school-wide, deeply reflective initiative supported the quest of the primary research question: *"How can school leaders build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice?"*.

Appendix KK lists each of the support finding descriptions as an extended collective response to the primary research question. Considered in their wholeness, the overarching finding from the data is that school leaders should create a dynamic and multidimensional web of support to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. Figure 17 displays this overarching finding to convey both wholeness and part, bringing attention to the

*m*



The diagram displays this dynamic web of support with details from the findings within the nine themes. The diagram also acknowledges the situational analysis. The support findings sit on the grounding of situation, filtering into all aspects of school life, including teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. This is indicated by permeable lines. Broken lines convey the sense of interconnectedness, interdependence, and fluidity between each of the findings. The internal cross supports are solid, indicating the strength of establishing the whole and balancing support. Colour signifies the move from individual to collective support. The colour of soils is used to show foundational individual support. The yellow of the sun indicates the additional light gained through perspective building, and the green shades of growth are used for the collective support measures of pathways, synergy, and collaboration. Momentum is displayed as an open-ended culmination of action. Blue spaces represent the air of the possibility and flexibility needed for leaders to build this dynamic web of support. Accessing external support surrounds the structure, in the colour of leadership, indicating the potential for external scaffolding whilst leaders grapple with initially building the structure of support. The diagram balances the findings related to *structural* support with the findings related to *relational* support and those that involve both.

The overarching finding of this research study suggests that school leaders need to consider the multiple dimensions of individual and collective focus and structural and relational measures as they construct a context-specific web of support to build the capacity for teachers to deepen their reflective practice.

## 4.14 Researcher: My Voice, My Footprints

*In closing, I offer a creative synthesis of these findings in the form of readers' theatre.*

*As you read, listen for the voices, the participants in chorus and solo. I am the narrator.*

**THE FINDINGS – Narrator**

This chapter uncovered a scaffold of help,
with findings general and broad
It then moved deep to listen to each,
individuals were underscored.
So, scaffold we must, and frameworks be built
to support deepened reflection.
Yet, in placing the details within the frame,
we take note of each application.
Each teacher reflecting has a new tale
that needs to be noticed and heard.
It is they who bring life to the plans and the actions
that impact each student's world.
So, listen we must, to the participants' song
for building capacity robust.
In chorus and solo, their lyrics call out.
These words with you they entrust.

**THE FINDINGS – Participants' Voices**

*Chorus – All*

**The call is there from those above to deepen our reflections.**
**Hear our voices; come by our side, there will be no objections.**

***Verse 1 - Lead Intentionally***

*(Kerry) A big plan sort of leader with vision and a heart,*
*(Spitzner & Meixner) Intentional, deliberate, who knows the way to start.*
*(Carl) Please put it all together now so that it is clear,*
*(Robin) A champion with process skills to take away the fear.*

*Chorus - All*

**You need to lead with passion and care. It will take your greatest intention,**
**To temper your leading and lift us in ways of release and intervention.**

***Verse 2 - Create Space***

*(Kelly)* *I feel quite a failure without any time, it leaves me struggling with guilt.*
*(Jackie)* *How do you fit everything in? We're simply starting to wilt.*
*(Mandy)* *The busyness of our day-to-day world leaves no time for improvement.*
*(Kysha)* *The treadmill just keeps rolling along so where can I find the inducement?*

*Chorus – All*

**We need the creation of space in our world of continual go, go, go,**
**Time from the clock and space in our heart, professional space for good flow.**

***Verse 3 - Give Support***

*(Mandy)* *I'm reluctant at times, I don't want to fail. Listen away my fear.*
*(Blake & Gibson)* *It's the bookwork that holds lots of us back, assist us in that sphere.*
*(Kysha)* *There's too much change, I can't get ahead, remove this complication.*
*(Rebecca)* *I'm wanting some feedback to learn and share in professional conversations.*

*Chorus – All*

**There's a wide range of support that is needed. Listen and act on this message.**
**Resources, mentors, know-how, protection will offer the desirable leverage.**

***Verse 4 - Broaden Perspectives***

*(Shaun)* *The wheel's been invented so look outside and learn from those around.*
*(Robin)* *Student feedback opens my eyes and new ideas abound.*
*(George)* *I'm reading a list of books with a filter, looking for confirmation.*
*(Van)* *I seek new ways, for better results, I enjoy innovation.*

*Chorus – All*

**To open our eyes, our hearts, and our minds, expose us to broader perspectives.**
**Students, parents, colleagues and theory support us to be deeply reflective.**

***Verse 5 - Synergise Focus***

*(Van)* *We tick all the boxes without much thought. Our attention is far too scattered.*
*(Kacey)* *You can't do it all, so we need to take care to choose the goals that most matter.*
*(Kysha)* *There's many ideas, do this or do that, point us in one direction.*
*(Karyn)* *Look over your goals, consider them well to find the points of connection.*

*Chorus – All*

**Focus the lens and find synergy to attend to the questions of merit.**
**Avoid overload through focused attention to give our very best effort.**

***Verse 6 - Create Pathways***

*(George)* *The waters are muddy; we aren't agreed on what it's all about.*
*(Van)* *It's a roadmap we need with the paths all marked out if it's going to have any clout.*
*(Kacey)* *Grand planning with no practicality appears to be naïve.*
*(Shaun)* *There's no strategic plan to see, no process to achieve.*

*Chorus – All*

**We must know how to get to the end, so pathways you need to create.**
**With the purpose and framework all understood, confusion's sure to abate.**

***Verse 7 - Cultivate Collaboration***

*(Kysha)* *The teachers need to get together to plan in preparation.*
*(Kayla)* *You kinda really need each other to reach the destination.*
*(Jackie)* *Doing it all together feels a safer way to dream.*
*(Rebecca)* *One person on their own can't win; you need a bigger team.*

*Chorus – All*

**Together we achieve much more than teachers in isolation,**
**So involve everyone in flexible teams and nurture collaboration.**

***Verse 8 - Build Momentum***

*(Cara & Van)* *The wheels turned once now we're stuck in a rut. We're caught in complacency.*
*(Shaun)* *Talkfests behind, shovels in the ground. Let's move ahead courageously.*
*(Kerry)* *I want to see movement, don't put it on the shelf, or we won't end up anywhere.*
*(Robin)* *Toes in the water, small steps to take, little by little, with care.*

*Chorus – All*

**Inertia is rife, so momentum will need a push to get started and go,**
**Then steadily move one step at a time, keep moving, yet happily slow.**

***Verse 9 - Access External Support***

(Kysha) We need a person from without to keep this thing alive.
(Kelly) A catalyst to push the change, with passion, skill and drive.
(Kerry) To encourage, question, facilitate; to give us some directions.
(Miguel) Someone extra to come along and support our deep reflections.

*Chorus – All*

**The framework we need to deeply reflect, is complex of that we do know,**
**So scaffold with help from outside the school, fresh eyes and support to bestow.**

*A Reprise - All*

**The call is there from those above to deepen our reflection.**
**Hear our voices, come by our side, there will be no objection.**

## 4.15 Leaving a Trail: Chapter Précis

This chapter has reported findings from data collected over a 17-month period and analysed over an extended timeframe in response to a research question that asked how school leaders might build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. Secondary questions sought participant viewpoints on the barriers and supports for deepened reflective practice within the context of a school-wide initiative.

The findings highlighted the need for intentional leadership to provide a bespoke and multidimensional web of support for teachers to build their capacity for deepened reflective practice and the potential transformational change that might better meet the needs of

students. This would include both individual and collective support, and both structural and relational elements, with the intention of bringing a momentum of change. External scaffolding was deemed to be a helpful measure whilst establishing such a dynamic web of support.

The next chapter builds from these findings to consider their significance in the field of reflective practice in schools, and their contribution to a deeper understanding and improved practice of building teacher capacity for reflective practice.

# CHAPTER FIVE
# REFLECTING ON THE JOURNEY: DISCUSSION



***It was my turn to dig. I must dig deep into all I had seen and heard on the journey. The jewels I discovered were of great value. I held each one up to the light of wisdom from others. Turning them around and looking intently, I noticed many familiar features … and some that were not so familiar.***

## 5.1 Chapter Overview

The purpose of this interpretive qualitative case study was to suggest recommendations for school leaders to consider when intentionally attempting to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. The first section of this chapter sets out to interpret the findings of Chapter Four within the context of theory and literature. The primary research question spoke to that purpose by asking how school leaders might build teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice, and the secondary questions paved the way by seeking participants' lived experiences and perspectives on the barriers and supports for deepened reflective practice. The findings indicated the need for a holistic approach to building such capacity. These findings emerged from a crystallised form of triangulated

analysis, using constructivist grounded theory in concert with both situated and heuristic analysis. This interpretive discussion offers insights and theory in order to answer the research questions and achieve the purpose of this study.

The second section of this chapter then moves to an interpretive discussion focused on four elements of this research: crystallisation, models, metaphors and descriptive definition. Each was used within this study to see, say, show, and report this qualitative research from multiple viewpoints. The discussion interprets the contribution each made within this study to provide a thick and rich account of participants' perceptions regarding capacity building for deep reflective practice and offers insights into their potential further use in schools and educational research.

The chapter closes with a creative narrative sequel to Chapter Two's "Dialectical Dialogue with Dewey and Friends".

Please note that in this discussion chapter, verbatim quotes from participants are denoted with the use of quotation marks and italics. They have been selected as representative comments and have not identified by pseudonym.

## 5.2 Interpreting the Findings – Seeking Insight in the Murky Swamp

To preface the interpretive discussion that follows, it is essential to clarify the expectations from this crystallised qualitative study. This study was not conducted to provide a positivist form of generalised theory that applies in all situations (Ellingson, 2009; Patton, 2015; Robson, 2011). It was conducted with a constructivist orientation to provide a rich account of the participants' construction of meaning and interpretation of actions. There is an understanding that the theory derived is an interpretation dependent "on the researcher's view" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 239). However, this is not a limitation. The crystallised research design was carefully constructed to "offer rich descriptions, theoretical insights, and pragmatic implications" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 184) for school leaders and educators in similar situations. It is for the reader to decide the veracity of the results for their unique context. The partial nature of the results and offered theories are to be seen "as additional points of view or facets of a crystal" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 87).

This study offers a unique perspective on building capacity for deepened reflective practice. It is a rich case study of one school, involving all teachers but one and all school leaders. The researcher had valuable opportunities to observe individuals and groups and participate in extensive reflective dialogue through several site visits and multiple interviews. Thorough member-checking on both an individual and group level and a crystallised

triangulation of analysis supported this multi-perspectival study to provide a rich account of the participants' perspectives of their lived experiences. "The qualitative researcher studies the stories of others in order to find meaning … which is then conveyed to a wider audience" (Stewart & Harwood, 2017, p. 14). There was much meaning to be discovered in this study. This chapter offers interpretive theorising of that meaning in an attempt to "provide interpretive *frames* through which to view realities" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 232), realities that will be familiar though not identical for many working within the field of education.

The combination of constructivist grounded theory, situational analysis and heuristic inquiry offered many opportunities for theories to "flash illuminating insights and make sense of murky musings and knotty problems" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 233), of which there are many in every school situation. In this study, the complexities of context and teacher capacity interacted with matching levels of complexity within the concept of the phenomenon of reflective practice. The purpose of this chapter is to move *beyond the forest floor* of description to seek *a canopy view* to share with other educators and school leaders. The insights and theories in this chapter are offered with the understanding that the readers will discern the transferability of these interpreted results and theories for their situations and circumstances (Polit & Beck, 2010). By describing a rich account of the particularities of this case study in Chapter Four, the reader is in a position to extrapolate the insights and theories from this chapter that illuminate elements of their own practice (Patton, 2002).

## 5.3 Purpose: Capacity Building

By focusing on teachers' self-declared capacity for deepened reflective practice, this study offers a unique perspective within the field of reflective practice in education. The primary research question asked how school leaders might build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. As noted in Chapter Two, capacity speaks of potential. In this study, the focus is on teachers' *potential* to engage in deepened reflective practice. This indicates a focus on a latent sense of possibility for moving towards deep questioning of practice and perspective-taking. There is also the inference of 'important' purposes that cannot be achieved with instrumental measures and rigorous processes that lead to insight and improved outcomes. The results of this study have confirmed the premise that a teacher's capacity involves both personal, interpersonal and organisational capacities through the viewpoints of practising educators (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). The findings from the secondary research questions have noted a range of barriers and support measures across the domains of personal, interpersonal and organisational arenas that the participants perceived as

impacting teacher capacity for deep reflective practice in their lived experience of a contextualised school-wide initiative. It is to these factors that the results speak.

Capacity allows for the air of possibility. The results of this study uncovered stifling layers of intertwined contextual factors that worked in concert to reduce capacity. These barriers must be acknowledged, firstly in their singularity and then in their complexity.

## 5.4 Acknowledging the Barriers

By listening to a range of teachers over time and within the complexity of practice, this study has been able to represent a detailed and holistic account of the barriers to teachers' reflective practice, adding to current understandings by considering them as interconnected and interdependent contextual impacts. Shabeeb and Akkary (2014) recommended that further study be done to examine barriers and supports that impact teachers' learning and reflective practice. This study sheds additional light on this question within an Australian K-12 rural school context. Table 20, in Chapter Four, summarises the barriers to teacher capacity for deep reflective practice reported by participants in this study. They are organised around nine themes that emerged from the data. In the following section of this chapter, insights and interpretive theories built from the data and juxtaposed with literature, emphasise some of the significant *capacity busters* among these barriers with the view to extrapolate meaning that may have value for other school leaders and educational workers.

### 5.4.1 Time – A Scarce Resource

The findings of this study indicate that time was considered by teachers to be a significant barrier to teacher capacity for any additional expectations, including a call to deepen their reflective practice. Time constraints were noted by all participants in this study. Many other research studies have noted the time constraints in that impact deepened reflective practice whilst teachers are engaging in the complexities and demands of their role (Cherrez & Jin, 2020; Holmes, 2016; Thomson, 2019; Yanow, 2009). Aas and Paulsen (2019) observed:

> Change processes that influence the school organization take time, and neither the principals nor the teachers have sufficient time to prioritize change efforts when they also have to continue to teach and run the school with no changes in their previous obligations. (p. 549)

The question asked by one of the teachers in this study resonates with teachers beyond the confines of Faith School, *"Where are we going to find the time?"* Teachers are looking to school leaders to support them in answering that question.

### 5.4.2 Physical and Emotional Depletion – Beyond the Clock

Whilst teachers' words spoke of time in this study, it was clear to the observer that there was a lack of energy and motivation that cut far deeper than unfinished to-do lists and the unrelenting ticking of the clock. With commonly heard descriptions of *"busyness",* being *"overloaded",* and being *"really tired",* the workload was leaving teachers physically and emotionally depleted. The teachers in this study attributed much of the overwhelming nature of their workload to teaching in a small rural school. Feeling left to fend for themselves, overburdened, drowning in documentation, and working with little sense of appreciation, left a number of the teachers in this study with limited emotional capacity for engaging in deep reflective practice. In an Australian study on early career teachers in rural schools, Willis et al. (2017) cited many similar small school realities to those noted by participants in this study, including intense workloads, limited networks, a sense of overload and reduced "avenues of support" (p. 803). The combination of workload, lack of support, and isolation leaves teachers emotionally, physically, and professionally depleted. However, these sentiments are not peculiar to small schools. A study of Icelandic teachers from various school sizes reported that teachers felt "like hamsters on wheels" (Svanbjörnsdóttir et al., 2016, p. 103) with little time or energy for reflective practice. Taylor et al. (2019) found these same issues stifling teachers' capacity to become active change agents within their schools. Their study involved five school districts in a north-eastern state of the USA. A sense of overload and lack of support are capacity barriers that cut across school contexts.

In this study, emotional depletion was evident in words, silence, frustration, and disengagement. Some teachers were able to express what many others were feeling, *"I'm just trying to survive"*. This leaves a perception of little to no capacity for deep reflective practice. When describing her observations of a group of teachers in Canada, Lisa Wright (2009) observed attitudes of "hopelessness and mindlessness" that teachers "attributed to excessive workloads and minimal discretionary decision-making" (Wright, 2009, p. 261). These attitudes, very similar to some of the teachers at Faith School, left teachers immobilised. Attitudes like these result in a culture of *impossibility* rather than *possibility*.

In the experience of some teachers in this study, emotional reactions were intensified by the belief that they would not be given the support they needed if they were to engage

deeply and see a need for change. Some teachers felt that their teaching challenges and situations were not acknowledged in the school initiative. Once again, such reactions have been noted in other educational contexts. Farrell (2022) noted an emotional trajectory from enthusiasm to panic to frustration and anger as they perceived a lack of support from colleagues and administrators in a case study tracking three novice ESL teachers from before they started teaching to twelve weeks into their first teaching role. Finally, the participants in Farrell's study expressed boredom, having shut down their interest and openness to growth and professional efficacy. Shutting down and taking on a *survival mindset* is a result of both physical and emotional depletion. Time scarcity is involved, but it does not tell the whole story. The result is disengagement with very little capacity for deep reflective practice. As one participant from Faith School commented, *"Where would I find the motivation?"*. There is nothing left in the tank.

### 5.4.3 Reduced Professional Efficacy – Deficit Orientations

A related capacity issue amongst some of the teachers at Faith School was an observable limited sense of professional efficacy. Some teachers did not believe there was hope of effective change, and this reduced their willingness to dig deeply into the swamps of difficult practice-based problems (Schön, 1987). Contributing factors varied from personal traits to negative interpersonal and organisational experiences, time issues, physical and emotional depletion, and perceived skill deficits.

Interestingly, the novice teachers in this school were not among the teachers who indicated limited efficacy. The novice teachers attributed their confidence to the support of their mentors. Reduced professional efficacy may build because of a lack of time and ongoing emotional and physical depletion. As one participant commented after describing the professional toll of constantly changing roles, *"I'm not a perfecter of anything"*. As such, this teacher felt little professional efficacy and no capacity to engage in deepened reflective practice. In a study exploring contextual constraints and enabling factors for professional efficacy amongst Australian primary school teachers, Ryan et al. (2021) found that time was cited by all teachers as a constraint, along with a lack of specific skill-based support. Whilst a range of interconnected factors impact reduced efficacy, the impact on capacity is substantial.

Some of the impacts on professional efficacy observed at Faith School were evident at an organisational level. A *deficit* mindset was evident across many of the teachers, often attributed to the size and location of the school, yet there were familiar echoes of broader deficit orientations noticeable across schools in Australia and globally (Scott & Armstrong,

2019; Tonna et al., 2017). Blake and Gibson (2021) observed that when teachers experience "feelings of insecurity, discomfort, and fear of exposing inadequacies" (p. 137), they are unlikely to engage in deep reflective practice, reverting instead to surface-level polite professional conversations that do not lead to new learning. School leaders need to be aware of such a mindset and its limiting impact on teachers' capacity teachers for deepened reflective practice.

### 5.4.4 Focus Fatigue – Scattered Attention

This study found that when teachers and school leaders are continuously called to give attention to a multiplicity of focus areas, it results in scattered attention and fragmented episodes of reflective practice. This was noted to result in *focus fatigue*, an original term used in this study, alluding to the limited emotional and psychological capacity for deep reflective practice at an individual, group and organisational level. As noted in Chapter One, fragmented, episodic reflective practice lacks depth and is most commonly associated with instrumental goals rather than the seeking of transformation (Edwards & Thomas, 2010; Galea, 2012; Harnett, 2012). Multiple school-based initiatives, unexpected crises, and an array of interruptions were observed and reported by teachers and leaders. As one participant described, *"We tilt from one thing to another … like you're working on the thing that has demanded your attention the most … and you figure, 'Oh, I'm not getting where I want to go"*". In this study, the resulting focus fatigue was noted to limit capacity even for teachers who desire deep reflectivity.

Scattered focus can also lead to cynicism, as evidenced among several of the teachers at Faith School. The resultant focus fatigue impacts efficacy, attitudes and capacity. Mitchell and Sackney (2011) have described a similar reality among many schools as they embark on "yet another initiative" that is likely to lead to unsatisfactory results and perpetuate the status quo (p. 20). As one participant described in a study on organisational change conducted by Nutt and Keville (2016), "Everybody is so busy, you kind of frantically go from one thing to the next, and there isn't any time for thinking anymore" (p. 5). Nolan and Guo (2022) reported the discomfort of Australian early childhood teachers constantly facing "competing practical and learning priorities" (Nolan & Guo, 2022, p. 244). No time for thinking means no capacity for deep reflective practice.

Scattered focus leads to emotional and physical depletion, an example of the deep entanglement between the barriers. One participant in this study shared stories of teachers who had left teaching due to burnout. This teacher reported that the evidence of burnout

began as physical and emotional depletion and resulted in a cascade of reduced efficacy. Whilst burnout develops over time and arises from a range of work-related stresses, it is indicated by "a perceived imbalance between the demands of the environment and the work-related capabilities necessary to meet these demands" (Dexter & Wall, 2021, p. 754). There was evidence of such perceived imbalances at Faith School. It would be wise for leaders to look for these imbalances in their school environments for the sake of the teachers and the students (Varol et al., 2021) and work to address them in order to build capacity.

Scattered focus, even when the focal points are deep and meaningful, disallows the space required for inquiring with depth and following the rigour of iterative inquiry and perspective-seeking inherent in deep reflective practice. This was evident at Faith School in the instance of three loosely connected school improvement initiatives. Each initiative intended for teachers to engage in deep reflective practice. Each were operating concurrently. In the multiplicity of focus; however, all were in danger of being enacted upon as compliance measures, greatly reducing the potential to initiate transformation. Multiple deeply reflective focal points act as a "reflective practice overload" (Leering, 2019, p. 441), reducing rather than building reflective capacity (Sperandio & Kong, 2018). This can result in surface changes which "are merely symbolic" (Palumbo & Manna, 2019, p. 746) and devoid of the original deep purpose. The imbalance of personal capacity and demands, along with the associated complexity of accumulating competing areas of mandated focus, lead to a "loss of agency" and a splintering of any collective sense of responsibility (Edwards-Groves, 2013, p. 17). This, in turn, impacts interpersonal and organisational capacity. Focus fatigue is a significant issue infrequently addressed at the school level or in educational or reflective practice research.

### 5.4.5 Compliance - Ticking the Boxes

The findings of this study bring to light some of the barriers to reflective practice, such as competing initiatives, emotional depletion, and professional inefficacy. These often result in moving the focus from deep reflective practice to more surface-level reflections, often referred to by participants in this study as acts of compliance. As one participant aptly expressed in tones of great frustration, "*The thing is, we tick all these things off, but there is nothing in place at all to actually improve any of these things"*. Adding to the workload with little perceivable benefit to teachers or students, actions relegated to *compliance* lead to attitudes of cynicism, reduced efficacy and limited capacity. In an examination of the notion of compliance in the context of public service in Sweden, Paulsen (2017) describes

compliance as an "absence of reflexivity" and a lack of "critical questioning", resulting in what he labels "functional stupidity" (p. 205). He notes the impact of compliance as impacting any workplace where "there is clear conflict between the individual will and the demands of power and where the individual chooses to comply" (p. 205). His description indicates the endpoint on the trajectory of a compliance mindset, be it at an individual, group or organisational level. Participants in this study recognised that compliance tasks were inhibiting their capacity for reflective practice. Compliance moves in the opposite direction to deep reflective practice. It is important that school leaders recognise this and find ways to build capacity and offer opportunities for teachers to engage in professionally satisfying and meaningful reflective practice.

### 5.4.6 External Pressures – Marginalising and Prescribing

One commonly cited source of the overwhelm of compliance among this study's participants was the pressure from systems and government authorities external to the school. This was seen as "squeezing" out the air of possibility, limiting their autonomy and adding to their load. This is not particular to one rural Australian school. Benade (2016) noted the "constraints and pressures put on teachers to relate learning to the narrow curriculum and its familiar pedagogies" (Benade, 2016, p. 144; Ryan et al., 2021). Many of the teachers in this study felt such constraints and could not see an option to move beyond the barriers of these external expectations. They felt their own perspectives were marginalised. Berry and Forgasz (2018), from Monash University, noted this in their work on Australian teacher education. Government educational policy directives tend to push "instrumentalist-technicist discourses" (p. 242), rather than engage educators in dialogue and deep reflection. There seemed to be no option for many of the teachers in this study but to "retreat to the safer ground" (Benade, 2016, p. 144) of compliance and instrumental goals. As in this study, many teachers feel that the deeper issues of their concern are beyond their reach of influence. School leaders must acknowledge compliance requirements from governments and educational systems without allowing the "external expectations" to burden their teachers or hijack their enthusiasm (Mitchell & Sackney, 2016, p. 860). Consistently attending to relentlessly imposed directives in a mindset of compliance (Berry & Forgasz, 2018), can inhibit the potential for a deeply reflective practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Thelin, 2020).

Reflective practice can become entangled in external accountability measures, as evident in the multiple school improvement processes within Faith School. In Australia, reflective practices are expected for appraisal procedures and standards-based career

advancement. However, Choy et al. (2021) found that such expectations do not necessarily equate with deep reflective practice. As one participant in this study observed, *"There would be lots of ways to pretend that we're doing that".* Dinham et al. (2021) reported that there is little evidence that such expectations in Australia have achieved the desired effects of transformation of practice and improved outcomes. Other literature notes the negative impact of the overreach of politics entangled with the inherently limited nature of standards-based professionalism as experienced in the Australian and global educational contexts (Earley, 2016; Edwards-Groves, 2013; Moller, 2023; Scott & Armstrong, 2019; Smith et al., 2020). There is a danger that the professional standards that involve expectations of prescribed reflective practice can tend to "act as outcomes, rather than as a participatory process that features reflection as a core component of developing teacher effectiveness" (Ditchburn, 2015, p. 95). Whilst designed to support reflective practices, such performative standards can encourage a culture of accountability and a mindset of compliance (p. 94; Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015; Kelchtermans et al., 2011). Prescribing narrowly defined reflective practices within a culture of "test-based accountability" (Earley, 2016, p. 23) stifles teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice.

### 5.4.7 Isolation - Working as Silos

In this study, many teachers described a sense of isolation that acted as a barrier to deep reflective practice. This isolation was often attributed to the school's size and location. There was a strong sense that although the teachers got along very well, they operated as silos in their teaching. For some, this was viewed as a loss and for others as an opportunity for autonomy. For all, however, this inhibited the potential for the community and interaction that Dewey noted as essential for deep reflection (Rodgers, 2002a). Feeling isolated impacts relationships and loosens the sense of belonging and connectedness needed to be engaged in "thinking partnerships" (Damore & Rieckhoff, 2021, p. 53). Although teachers and leaders at Faith School acknowledged the necessity for effective teamwork when working towards a schoolwide deeply reflective purpose, it seemed stubbornly elusive. This is a common problem in traditional organisations where teamwork seems fragmented, and individuals do not feel that their contribution gives value to a "coherent, interdependent whole" (Owen & Buck, 2020, p. 788). School leaders at Faith School acknowledged that the barrier of working in isolation needed to be addressed. Working in isolation is not particular to Faith School. It has been and continues to be, the modus operandi in many educational contexts (Burbank &

Kauchak, 2003; Sutton & Shouse, 2016). Educators can also isolate themselves ideologically. Working in isolation is counter-productive to deep reflective practice.

### 5.4.8 Limited Perspectives – Avoiding Deep Reflection

The participants in this study demonstrated a limited range of perspective-taking in terms of the Harvest initiative. The initiative was borne from the principal's research, reading and reflections. One participant was reading extensively and reaching out to gather information; however, he was overtly filtering the range of perspectives according to preconceived and unexamined personal beliefs and assumptions in a "self-confirming cycle" (Brookfield, 2017, p. 61). Some teachers were focusing on how the initiative might support or disrupt the beliefs and goals of their current practice. Others had relegated the initiative to what Ryan SL described as the *"too hard basket"* when an idea is *"theoretical and big"* and competing with long lists of tasks to accomplish. The *"too hard basket"* would avoid the discomfort of reflecting deeply with insufficient support and a lack of clarity and direction. Among the participants in this study, there was little evidence of deep reflection that involved questioning personal and professional assumptions, beliefs, and practices. The initiative was kept at arm's length, perhaps due to limited perceptions of reflective practice, but also because of workloads and a lack of a clear and supported process. Brookfield (2017) acknowledged that some needs must be taken care of before embarking on a pathway of deep reflection. "There's little point in taking the critically reflective journey if along the way you're battered and bruised beyond recognition" (Brookfield, 2017, p. 225). Leaders need to give attention to deep personal and professional barriers to free up the space for critical reflection.

### 5.4.9 Teamwork That Inhibits Reflective Practice

Acknowledging the need for collective reflective practice within the school community, participants in this study also identified traits of teamwork that can act as barriers to the ideals of reflecting, questioning, experimenting, and growing together. Svanbjörnsdóttir et al. (2016) observed that "teamwork is complicated" (p. 101), not always supporting the outcomes of deep reflective practice. Some teams have a culture where members tend to protect each other, avoid honest critique, and offer minimal depth in their feedback (p. 104). There can be a mutual seeking of comfort that avoids questioning practice deeply, where the collective's "desire for unanimity and cohesion blinds them to unsettling but provocative new ways of understanding their collective experience" (Brookfield, 2017, p.

179). Effective and deeply reflective teamwork involves similar conditions to the concept of critical friends, requiring a mutual sense of "high trust" and "critical eyes", where "ideas and practices are open to scrutiny" (Wright & Adam, 2015, p. 452). Creating teams without building a culture of trust and collective responsibility has the potential to act as a barrier to reflective practice rather than a support.

### 5.4.10 Unclear Process – Ambiguity and Uncertainty

A strong message from all teachers in this study was the need for a clearly defined pathway of process that included purpose-embedded direction and a structural framework that reduced the sense of risk and supported confidence. Teachers in the study expressed the need to understand where they were headed and how they were expected to proceed. It was evident that when things were "*nebulous"*, teachers felt insecure. In a study seeking to better understand organisational change in an educational context, Palumbo and Manna (2019) reported that "ambiguity and uncertainty" (p. 734) operate as significant constraints. In terms of direction, a shared vision and purpose can offer a banner that draws teachers together, "elevating the importance of individual and collective reflection and learning", with a common goal of growth and transformation of practice (Wright, 2009, p. 270). When things seem vague and uncertain, researchers have noted a tendency for professionals to limit their expectations of reflective practice to instrumental purposes and practices (Gudeta, 2022; Leering, 2019; Moayeri & Rahimiy, 2019). School leaders need to provide pathways of process and scaffolds of support that offer both strength and flexibility for teachers to feel safe enough to question practice, take risks, and innovate.

Teachers at Faith School wanted processes and frameworks that would offer confidence and stability within which they could feel safe to question their practice. As one participant expressed so well, this study's teachers felt they were being asked to "*fly the plane while you're building it".* This equates to questioning their practice while they are practising, a destabilising concept involving a disturbance to teachers' equilibrium (Dewey, 1910/1997; Nolan & Guo, 2022). Teachers felt professionally unsafe and personally vulnerable with no clear framework or scaffolding evident in the Harvest Project school initiative. School leaders must acknowledge the destabilising nature of deep reflective practice and offer structural supports and scaffolds that offer strength with the space for flexibility and possibility (Jones, 2020).

### 5.4.11 Barriers – Acknowledge the Accumulative Impact

The barriers above do not work in isolation. This study has indicated that their impact is not a sum of the individual components but is more often multiplicative in nature. For example, the lack of time impacts emotional depletion, leaving scant personal or professional resources and reducing efficacy. Add to this conundrum a number of worthy focus areas with no time or resources to see them through and teachers finds themselves working on an uphill treadmill of compliance, leaving them dissatisfied and frustrated. External pressures add to the compliance load, tipping the scales. This leaves the teacher feeling guilty and professionally harassed and embarrassed, resulting in them closing the door on their practice and becoming increasingly isolated. Prescribed teamwork becomes an exercise in seeking group comfort and the wearing of "got-it-all-together-masks". Ongoing busyness and technical rationalising continue to support the masquerade of deep reflective practice, and nothing changes. Perhaps this is an overstatement; however, many teachers beyond this study will acknowledge that they have stepped into such a narrative at various times in their career, as have I. The voices of the participants in this unique study have opened a window of understanding onto the accumulative impact of the barriers to reflective practice, some of which have been discussed above. In seeking how to build capacity, school leaders must first acknowledge those factors of school life that are barriers to that capacity.

In Chapter Two it was established that teacher capacity does not stand alone. It is impacted by and impacts interpersonal and organisational capacities. There is a sense of mutuality between the three that can either accentuate capacity or diminish it.

## 5.5 Organisational Inertia

Entwined with the accumulative and interconnected nature of the many barrier forces holding teachers back from engaging in deep reflective practice, there is a poorly understood but widely acknowledged organisational inertia that stubbornly seems to resist deep-seated change, making it slower and more difficult to achieve (Dong, 2023, p. 120). Palumbo and Manna (2019) noted that many side effects of change can work in concert to increase organisational inertia. Most of these effects were evident throughout this study, including cynicism, uncertainty, lack of confidence, unclear expectations, fear and resistance, and a perception of deteriorating working conditions (p. 746). Deep reflective practice is purposed to bring about transformational change; therefore, such immobilising side effects need to be intentionally addressed.

One indication of inertia was described by participants in this study as being *"stuck"*. With an emotive and enthusiastic start and no follow-on action, there was a commonly held perception that action had ground to a halt and the school was shifting assuredly back towards the status quo. The enduring nature of a school culture tends to operate as a push-back force that leads to inertia when faced with the potential for change (Svanbjörnsdóttir et al., 2016, p. 106). Teachers continue in their relentless busyness, and the problems of practice that are of "greatest human concern" (Schön, 1987, p. 3) can remain in the *"too hard basket"*, unheeded and untended.

What is needed are organisational support systems that alleviate barriers and acknowledge the tendency for inertia. Rather than tilting from one initiative to another, perpetuating the status quo and settling for "uninspiring results" (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011, p. 20), there is a need to build teacher capacity through individualised, collective, and scaffolded support. Oeij et al. (2017) found that "critical reflection can form a weapon against organizational inertia and the cover-up of undesired situations that require a change" (Oeij et al., 2017, p. 18). Actually being involved in scaffolded critical reflection can act as the needed catalyst to push past the inertia and seek transformation in our schools (Choy et al., 2021; Griggs et al., 2018; Hilden & Tikkamäki, 2013; Palumbo & Manna, 2019). Leaders need to intervene.

## 5.6 School Leaders Make a Difference

The findings of this study affirm that school leaders play a very influential element in either inhibiting or increasing teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice. The impact of leaders in a school context is widely acknowledged in educational literature (Brown et al., 2016; Cappelletti & Sajon, 2022; Gawne, 2023). According to Earley (2016), leadership, socioeconomic factors and teacher quality are the three most influential factors for student outcomes. What school leaders do and how they do it, makes a significant difference to teacher capacity.

### 5.6.1 Leadership Issues That Constrain Reflective Practice

Tackling the acknowledged barriers and pushing past inertia is a tall order for school leaders in their very full roles. Participants in this study felt that the heavy workload of the leaders left no one "*driving"* the reflective initiative. This eroded their confidence and dissipated their involvement. The work of a school leader is "hard, messy, abstract, emotional and undeniably risky" (Wright, 2009, p. 264). They are "engaged in an endless tug-of-war

between multiple criteria and competing values" (p. 261). School leaders are vulnerable to criticism and often find themselves dealing with conflicting loyalties, leaving them isolated from their staff (Kelchtermans et al., 2011). Wright (2009) described her own dilemma as a school leader, "Reflective practice quickly became a hollow concept within educational discourse as externally-imposed processes and policies left little room for me to improve my imagination to seek what *might be"* (p. 262). Such dilemmas lead to emotional strain (van der Zee, 2022). The principal at Faith School expressed frustration and discouragement at being pulled away from passionately driving the deeply reflective initiative he believed to be important. Many school leaders will resonate with both the strain and the frustration.

The dilemmas of educational leadership can be overpowering and difficult to manage, resulting in reactive, instrumental responses engaging short-term repair strategies (van der Zee, 2022, p. 1154). The principal in the study described such reactive realities as *"running from one bush fire to the next"*, and *"doing everything on the back foot"*. How can a leader breathe in the air of possibility in such circumstances? Before leaders can build capacity in their staff, they need to find ways to build it into their own roles (Moller, 2023, p. 50). Earley (2016) noted the importance of leaders deliberately moving away from reactivity to taking a proactive stance, replacing a compliance focus with the building of collective capacity, "with shared values and moral purpose" (p. 30). As was evident in this study, "the challenges are numerous and wide-ranging, and school leaders will continue to operate in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment" (p. 31). These are not simple dilemmas for school leaders, but it must be acknowledged that a school leader's lack of capacity for deep reflective practice will impact the capacity of the teachers they lead.

### 5.6.2 Dialectical Leadership – Seeking a Balance

In addition to the acknowledged workload barriers, teachers in this study reported the need for the leaders' vision to be balanced with effective process planning. Vision and passion alone were not enough for teachers to feel confident to step into deep reflective practice with the potential for significant changes to practice. All teachers in the study respected the school leader's vision but most believed there was a lack of a balancing emphasis on process and the consideration of the practicalities of the teachers' current classroom and curriculum roles. Teachers expressed frustration that their core responsibilities seemed to be lightly brushed off in the greater cause of the initiative. Sperandio and Kong (2018) noted the dangers of alienating teachers by promoting involvement in initiatives without an understanding of what might be needed to support their deep involvement.

Teachers need to trust that their leaders are capable of leading from vision through to practice (Benade, 2018; Willis et al., 2017). This involves balancing the passion and energy of vision with deliberate attention to matters of process.

The findings in this study indicate a need for dialectical balance in several areas. As discussed above, there was a strong call for balancing broad-stroked vision and fine-tuned process. There was also an implicitly evident need for passion to be balanced with compassion as teachers looked for the energy of a "driver" along with sensitivities to take into account their workloads and capacity levels. Several of the teachers believed that leaders needed to support by leading from the front with modelling, providing a clear pathway for them to follow, and communicating with them while on their "following" journey. A tempered approach such as this calls for practical wisdom which van der Zee (2022) describes as a capacity for making discerning judgments that integrate ethical and moral dimensions whilst understanding their school and societal context and the individual and collective dimensions of their practice.

### 5.6.3 Building A Web of Cultural Change – Changing the Architecture

The findings from the secondary research questions contributed a range of barriers and support measures that participants perceived as impacting teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice. When focusing on support measures, participants spoke of what they believed would be needed to circumvent or transcend the barriers they were experiencing. Triangulated analysis highlighted the interrelated and interdependent nature of the suggested support measures. The structural and relational factors suggested by participants operate at both individual and collective levels, indicating the need for a holistic system of support, intentionally cultivated by visionary leaders with practical wisdom.

Cultural and transformational change involves changing the practice architectures unique to a particular context. The theory of architectures of practice was developed by Wilkinson and Kemmis (2015) to explain how "practices get 'anchored' in places and people" (p. 348) and how they can be described "in terms of the talk (sayings), actions (doings) and relationships (relatings)" (p. 347), and the mutual interplay between each, within the context of practice. Changing practice architectures involves changing "the practices of leading, professional learning, teaching, student learning, and researching and reflecting" (p. 353), paying close attention to the "sayings, doings and relatings" (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015, p. 348) that are intrinsic within each of those domains of practice. This is a tall order. The entanglement of influential factors within a school such as Faith School, or any other

educational institution, cannot be simply teased into singular and separate compartments of practice. It must be engaged within its living complexity, layer by layer (Day, 2014), acknowledging and harnessing the overlapping and interdependent nature of the impacting elements. Such a journey towards transformation requires a process of deep reflective practice on the part of leaders, along with the courage noted necessary by theorists (Brookfield, 2017; Dewey, 1910/1997; Hoekstra & Korthagen, 2011; Schön, 1987).

### 5.6.4 Lead by Knowing

Most leaders, like the leaders at Faith School, are called to *"fly the plane while they are building it"*, working reflectively towards the potential for transformation in the 'future' while continuing to support and lead in the daily happenings of the 'present'. This requires leaders to know the plane well, the terrain in which they fly, and those working around them. However, first they must become self-aware. This is possible through deep reflective practice.

#### *Know yourself.*

This study's findings have established the need for leaders to be able to balance the dialectical dilemmas of vision and process, passion and compassion, and modelling and mentoring. Practical wisdom is essential for such a challenge. Yanow (2009) adds the idea of "passionate humility" to the concept of this tempered approach to leadership. Passionate humility encompasses being open to surprise and willing to take on others' perspectives in addition to modelling deep reflective practice through personally taking on the stance of reflective inquiry. Loughran (2021) suggests that leaders need to know themselves, see themselves through others' eyes, and develop a spirit of generosity to those with whom they work. These three principles can support a "positive emotional stance in leadership" (p. 141), establishing the open-minded, whole-hearted, focused, and open-minded dispositions that Dewey believed essential for effective deep reflective practice (Rodgers, 2002a). All three of Loughran's principles, in some way, require the support of others. Practical wisdom requires passionate humility to be willing to discover both personal strengths and limitations and honestly seek the gaps between espoused theories and the theories-in-use evident to others (Argyris & Schön, 1978; van der Zee, 2022). Engaging external support in the form of a mentor or critical friend would be of value in supporting this understanding of the personal and professional self that is leading (Brookfield, 2017; Costa & Kallisk, 1993; Schuck & Russell, 2005).

### *Know your teachers.*

Just as teachers are expected to "know students and how they learn" (*Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, 2017), the findings of this study indicate that school leaders must know their teachers, their stories, their goals, their dispositions, their needs, and the particular factors impacting their capacity for deep reflective practice. It is through open questioning and deep listening in a culture of mutual trust and vulnerability that leaders will discover the needs of each individual teacher (Dogan et al., 2019; Welch et al., 2020; Willis et al., 2017). Such listening will reveal a teacher's physical and emotional wellness and personal and professional efficacy. Each teacher's story will be different and "connected with extremely individualized interpretations of such notions as beliefs, identity, work history, and passion, all of them intensely rooted in a history unique to the individual teacher" (Moayeri & Rahimiy, 2019, p. 138). In a study exploring how to develop the capacity for critical reflective practice, Fox et al. (2019) found that a process of listening and co-engagement was essential to charting individual courses toward deepening reflective practice in an educational context. This process became a particularly evident insight in this study, illuminated by heuristic inquiry. Knowing and valuing each teacher's unique story provides school leaders with the information and understanding needed to offer bespoke, or differentiated, support for building capacity for deepened reflective practice.

School leaders who understand and value teachers as individuals, encourage teachers to deeply appreciate their own sense of professional self. This has been recognised in other educational and professional contexts. In order to enhance a sense of safety and counter the commonly held deficit approach to professional growth amongst TESOL teachers, Farrell et al. (2020) promote a holistic approach to developing capacity for reflective practice, centred on "who is the self that teaches" (Farrell et al., 2020, p. 343). This approach acknowledges Parker Palmer's (2017) mantra that "the personal can never be divorced from the professional" (p. xix). "We teach who we are" (p. 1).

The culture in which such conversations take place is crucially important. In an atmosphere of judgment and appraisal, there is often an unspoken *deficit mindset*, that could derail the positive intention of getting to know teachers. Scott and Armstrong (2019) put forward the idea of appreciative inquiry to counter the common deficit discourse that causes tension and stifles teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice and transformation. As one of the school leaders at Faith School study pointed out, "*Nobody can ever be a change agent when they are talking about the problems and not the solutions."* Appreciative inquiry builds

on an organisation's "energy, hope, trust, and knowledge" resources to seek growth by building on identified strengths (p. 120). Moving from a culture of judgment to a culture of strength-based and appreciative development must be very intentional. Trust is a pivotal concept.

#### *Know your context.*

Another very important element of knowing for school leaders is gaining a deeply reflective knowledge of the school context. This involves seeking to understand the current architecture of practice, the "sayings, doings and relatings" (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015, p. 348) that evidence "how we do things around here" (Tikkamäki & Hilden, 2014, p. 296). Examining these allows leaders and teachers to deeply consider the gaps between their organisation's espoused theories, what the organisation says they believe and value, and the organisation's theories-in-use, what evidence indicates they actually do (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Such a journey of understanding is best taken as a whole staff once the groundwork of structural and relational support has begun to bear weight and space has been created to allow an "air of possibility" to be evident in the school climate. The school leader must begin the process of coming to know and understand the school context in its complexity. It is likely to be of value to engage some external non-judgmental support in the early stages of this knowledge building.

### 5.6.5 Lead by Focused Empowerment

Balanced dialectic leadership seeks to empower teachers through offering scaffolds of support with room for autonomy and flexibility. Intentional leaders take the time to know-know themselves, know their teachers, and know their context. This then gives them a foundation from which they can impact the architectures of organisational practice to better align their school's espoused theories with the theories-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Empowering teachers involves a strong sense of shared purpose, directed focus, and collective commitment.

#### *Purpose.*

The findings of this study indicate the need for a strong, shared and protected purpose when leading school-wide deep reflective practice. This provides the clear direction that the teachers in this study were seeking from their school leaders. Whilst the particular purpose will differ according to each school's context and needs, it should be significant enough to act

as a banner, behind which teachers will feel confident and willing to gather. The feedback from teachers in this study indicates that the purpose for a schoolwide focus must be broad enough for all teachers to find practical connections within their individual teaching roles and meaningful enough to engage their imagination and vocational calling with depth and a sense of collective responsibility. The purpose must be positioned within the overlap of theory and practice, with value for the present, yet directed into the future (Wilson, 2008). It should transcend the minutia and compliance tasks rather than adding to them. It should synergise rather than scatter energy. In a study of high-capacity schools, Mitchell and Sackney (2016) noted the importance of school leaders keeping the "big picture" vision centred in all activities, whilst keeping things moving (p. 862). It is the school leader's role to hold the banner of purpose high, refreshing, and reminding teachers to keep the purpose as their focal point and supporting them to continue moving forward with a strong sense of direction embedded in action.

### *Focus.*

A strong sense of purpose must be guarded by school leaders. When asked how they intended to *"keep the main thing, the main thing"* or maintain a purpose-centred focus in the school initiative, participants' responses indicated that they were aware of how easily focus can stray from the central purpose to the peripheral elements of change. Suggestions from participants included visual display, intentional meeting agendas and involving other members of the school community, including parents and students. Each of the suggestions indicated that it would take intentional, discerning and ongoing leadership to keep purpose in focus.

### *Commitment.*

The barriers, interruptions and distractions inherent in school life were evident throughout the data collection period in this study. Together they impacted the reflective initiative to the point that some felt they were *"stuck in a rut"* from which it seemed difficult to move. Mitchell and Sackney (2016) reported a comment from a teacher from a high-capacity school saying, "We don't get 'stuck in ruts around' [sic] here. When something starts to feel like a rut, we change it up" (Mitchell & Sackney, 2016, p. 864). The high-capacity schools being studied were not without disturbances, interruptions, and difficult problems. However, they had built a culture of commitment and a collective capacity that enabled them to see challenges as opportunities and change as "a natural pathway in life"

(Mitchell & Sackney, 2016, p. 864). A culture of commitment begins with school leaders but cannot end with them. It requires intentional nurture and support to bring about a cultural change that builds teacher capacity for deep reflective practice and inspires both individual and collective commitment to big-picture purpose.

## 5.7 Creating Space – Structural Supports

Capacity is a measure of space. The findings of this study suggest that to build teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice, space must be allocated. The findings indicate that this *space* involves time, but not only time. Deep reflective practice requires dispositions of whole-heartedness, open-mindedness, focus and responsibility (Rodgers, 2002a), that are stifled by physical and emotional depletion and low professional efficacy. Creating space therefore must consider time, the physical and emotional realms, and professional identity. Suggested supports encompass interrelated and interdependent structural and relational interventions. Whilst there are obvious overlaps, the following suggested supports are considered structural in that they involve setting policies and procedures, boundaries and actions that create guaranteed time and supported opportunities for deep reflective processes. However, the creation of structural spaces must work in concert with relational supports. They will be presented separately for the purposes of discussion, yet the interdependence and overlaps between them will be obvious.

### 5.7.1 Time

When being asked to engage in deep reflective practice, one novice teacher at Faith School responded, *"I'm expecting time to be given to us to do it"*. However, most teachers shook their heads and were resigned to the lack of time available, both at school and in their evenings. School leaders could see the need to find ways to create regular time spaces for reflective practice. However, this was not a simple matter to resolve. There is little time for pausing in a regular school day. Alison Weikel (2019) encountered this dilemma in her school leadership role. Like the school leaders at Faith School, she wanted her teachers to question their practice with a willingness for change. She acknowledged that teachers "need time and space in which to do this" and so she created a rhythm of supported relational and "structured reflection opportunities" (p. 118). Her analysis of the process was that "creating time and space for this practice matters" (p. 135). Over the course of one year the teachers in her school moved from instrumental problem-solving to adopting an "inquiry-based stance"

(p. 135). The structure was not independent of relational measures, in fact it depended on them. Nevertheless, the structure was essential.

Staff meetings are a time-space that school leaders can influence. Many participants in this study expressed dissatisfaction over the use of time in staff meetings. School leaders at Faith School could see there was a need to change the use of time in staff meetings to relieve time pressures rather than add to them. In an autoethnographic research study, Moller (2023) described how she restructured staff meetings in order to develop trust and engage in collaborative deep reflective practice. She reported the development of a culture of mutual trust and collective participation in reflective practices. The relational processes and resultant capacity building were made possible by creating structural time boundaries. Staff meeting agendas are structural; however, they can operate to stifle or enhance deep reflective practice. In a research design that examined meeting agendas, Dogan et al. (2019) reported that "by allocating time and providing opportunities, school leaders set the stage for reflection in the school" (p. 244). School leaders should carefully consider the use of staff meeting time when seeking structural support for capacity building.

### 5.7.2 Processes

There was a resounding call from teachers in this study for clearly constructed processes to support deepened reflective practice. Although Schön was wary of technical rationalism and advocated for reflective artistry, from the findings of this study, it was evident that many teachers required some intentional rigour and structure within the complexities of the school situation to allow for artistry. Leaders need practical wisdom and discernment to define and create structural processes that are purposed to offer both stability and room for possibility (Connelly et al., 2020; Martínez Godínez, 2018; Mesimer, 2022). Structured processes can also protect the cyclic nature of deep reflective process, so easily lost in the busyness and distractions of school realities.

In a study conducted to evaluate the impact of a range of cultural supports for reflective practice, Mesimer (2022) found that structured processes involving development cycles supported teacher reflection and impacted student achievement. The study also reported that regular opportunities for less structured but intentionally planned and supported collaboration and differentiated professional development were also valuable. Leaders must intentionally balance and mutually infuse structural and relational support for deep reflective practice. Both formal processual structures and opportunities for less structured collegial reflection are best safeguarded through policies and procedures. In a Scandinavian study

examining school principals' instructional leadership, Aas and Paulsen (2019) noted the need for leaders to engage in "a delicate balancing act of autonomy and structure" (p. 550), providing tools and support for teachers whilst empowering them to make decisions based on their professional judgment. School leaders need to wisely provide carefully designed structural processes to balance the need for strength and stability with planned and safeguarded opportunities for teachers to exercise open-mindedness and develop their professional efficacy.

### 5.7.3 Scaffolds

Processes offer stability and put boundaries on time. They can protect and prioritise. Used with practical wisdom and passionate humility, carefully crafted processes and procedures can assuage fear and build confidence. Some processes are designed to go further than this and actually act as guides into a deep reflective journey. In this discussion, I refer to such processes as "scaffolds". The situational analysis of this study revealed the range of teachers' beliefs and expectations of reflective practice, with many limiting it to the process of Schön's reflecting-on-practice and reflecting-in-practice without also taking on the meaning of the "swamp" in terms of expectations of digging deeply into consequential problems of practice, with mindsets of open-mindedness and courage. Deep reflective practice is no small matter. It leads through swamps of disequilibrium, disturbance, dissonance, and deconstruction (Brookfield, 2017; Dewey, 1910/1997; Gahlsdorf Terrell & Sherman, 2022). Even the process of reconstruction is complex with many opportunities to lose sight of the overarching purpose. Much of the literature on reflective practice in schools describes and evaluates particular scaffolds to support deep reflective practice and safeguard it from confirmatory or instrumental misconceptions (Cushion, 2016; Tonna et al., 2017; Wright & Adam, 2015). A scaffold involves both time and specific processes designed to guide teachers into supported deep reflective practice.

There are a number of scaffolds acknowledged in literature to support reflective practice. Mentors, critical friends and processes involving reflective prompting are three such scaffolds. In this study, novice teachers spoke of the great value they experienced from their mentors. Participants gave examples of the structural support offered by mentors that gave the novice teachers a sense of safety as they trialled new skills and strategies. They also described the relational benefit of having a trusted person to whom they could turn for advice and who moved them steadily towards professional growth. In a study examining and evaluating a structured critical friend protocol, Blake and Gibson (2021) found that the

scaffold provided rich opportunities for deep conversations and reflective practice. Both mentors and critical friends bridge structural and relational support and can be of value in guiding a leader or teacher in deep reflective practices. Chen and Bergner (2021) conducted a study investigating a protocol to improve the quality of assessment feedback by employing a structured reflective protocol involving "think-aloud" reflective prompts and regular external support. The teacher using the protocol reflected, "[This] has caused me to really really dig deep in terms of what it is that I'm doing and how I'm doing it in ways that I never did dig deep into" (p. 213). The teacher acknowledged that it took time and was not a comfortable process, yet it had led him to radically improve his practice. This is another example of a structured process and support that scaffolded and gave direction for deepening reflections.

The scaffolded processes described in reflective practice research reports are often supported by a skilled facilitator. In this study, several teachers could see that an external facilitator had the potential to scaffold deep reflection through non-judgmental and relational measures, supporting deep questioning, reminding of purpose, offering fresh perspectives and *"bouncing ideas around"*. In much of the literature on reflective practice scaffolds, facilitators play an important role. Whilst often external, they don't have to be. They do need to be intentional and thoroughly understand deep reflective practice and the purposes particular to the teachers or leaders they are working with. They build relationships and ensure a safe environment. They clarify roles and expectations, support an understanding of deep reflective processes, and support participants to question and "see beyond themselves" (Marshall et al., 2022, p. 485). A facilitator acts as a relational and structural scaffold, safeguarding and guiding the depth of reflective practice, the journey into and out of the swamp.

Scaffolded reflective processes offer structural support for leaders and teachers to embrace complexities, uncertainties, and difficult problems and learn to value the ongoing discomfort of questioning assumptions and practice (Wright, 2009, p. 269). There is evidence, both in this study and in a range of other research studies, that leaders should create structural supports for developing teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. However, the results of such structured approaches depend on the quality of accompanying relational supports.

## 5.8 Creating Space – Relational Supports

As evident in the discussion on structural supports, the life and potential within the process and structure are dependent on positive relational elements. In their exploratory case

study into the impact of critical friends on reflective practice, Wright and Adam (2015) concluded that the school leaders' deliberate and ongoing enactment of vision and mission evident in strong structures and the cultivation of the relational scaffolds of critical friends supported a deeply reflective logic of practice and resulted in a culture of openness (p. 455). Structural and relational supports must be interwoven and deliberate. For the purposes of discussion, we will briefly consider some of the relational elements in supporting deep reflective practice, understanding that they operate best accompanied with structures to guide and support.

### 5.8.1 Emotional Capacity – Listen and Build

The physical and emotional depletion evident among many of the teachers in this study was observed to stifle the dispositions of wholeheartedness and open-mindedness necessary for deep reflective practice. The need for support to alleviate this depletion was evident. However, the findings clearly demonstrate, that the entangled narratives leading to depletion differed between the teachers. As other studies have emphasised, there is no "one-size-fits-all" support package that would meet the needs of all (Allen et al., 2018; Martínez Godínez, 2018; Svanbjörnsdóttir et al., 2016, p. 101). "*Adequate support"* would look different from teacher to teacher, involving "multiple, multi-layered opportunities" to promote openminded dispositions, deepen teachers' understandings of the concept of deep reflective practice, and develop skills and meaningful practices in a way that meets individual needs (Risko et al., 2009, p. 49). This *bespoke* approach would require leaders to know their teachers (Fox et al., 2019; Mitchell & Sackney, 2016; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016) and develop a culture of trust and positivity. This is a relational issue. It begins with non-judgmental listening.

At the heart of both emotional and professional capacity for deep reflective practice, a culture of trust must be intentionally nurtured (Benade, 2018; Damore & Rieckhoff, 2021). In an Australian study, Brown et al. (2016) noted that trust was imperative if teachers were to view school leaders' initiatives "as supportive rather than evaluative in nature", thereby rendering involvement emotionally safe (Brown et al., 2016, p. 628). Benade (2018) suggests that "critical, collaborative reflective practice presupposes a level of trust that ought not to be associated with appraisal" (p. 127). Developmental, differentiated support builds trust and encourages an open disposition for collaboration and receiving feedback. Alternately, judgmental evaluation has the potential to damage trust and result in teachers reverting to a closed-minded compliance mentality (Benade, 2018). There need to be safe spaces to grow

professionally, experiment and take risks without fear (Holmes, 2016; Mitchell & Sackney, 2016, p. 103; Smulyen, 2016). Teachers need to feel safe if they are to render themselves professionally vulnerable by engaging in deep reflective practices.

Several teachers at Faith School expressed their levels of physical, emotional and professional depletion in terms of *"survival"*. For school leaders to take teachers from surviving to thriving, there is a need to provide safe, reflective spaces within which they can acknowledge and share emotions and be listened to. They must be given the needed support. (Farrell, 2022, p. 391). Listening can reveal open wounds that need addressing. Attentive listening, coupled with trust and emotional attunement, has the potential to create a safe space in which "honest and critical reflection" (Tonna et al., 2017, p. 221) can occur and appropriate support can be given. Adequate, discerning support may involve practically guarding against overloading and, relationally, offering a sense of being cared for, listened to and respected, personally and professionally (Damore & Rieckhoff, 2021). Mitchell and Sackney (2016) found that school leaders in high-capacity schools "protect workers from distractions that would dilute their commitments to the work" (p. 863). School leaders need to understand that teachers who are just *"surviving"* have minimal capacity for deepened reflective practice. Leaders must intentionally turn this around, seeking to support teachers to thrive professionally.

In the stance of appreciative inquiry (Scott & Armstrong, 2019), the power of listening has an exponentially expanded potential. While it is important to understand what is depleting emotional and physical resources, it is also important to discover each teacher's passions, strengths, overarching goals, and interests to offer bespoke support that builds teachers. Several teachers in this study attributed their personal and professional depletion to factors beyond the school leaders' control. Rather than focusing on what cannot be changed, school leaders need to build a culture within the school that emphasises and values "a discourse of growth" (Scott & Armstrong, 2019), empowering creativity and celebrating positive achievement. The global deficit discourse prevalent in educational arenas is stultifying (Earley, 2016). It will take great intention, effective listening, positive reflective dialogue, and a strong resolve from school leaders to turn this around and seek growth and positivity, fostering the essential mindsets for deep reflective practice.

Building a culture of trust and adopting a stance of appreciative inquiry whilst intentionally addressing contextual factors that are depleting teachers' physical and emotional resources will support growth in teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice. Doing so

requires a carefully considered blending of structural and relational interventions. Attending to emotional capacity opens opportunities to support professional capacity.

### 5.8.2 Professional Efficacy – Reflect and Grow

Dewey (1910/1997) cited Locke in describing people "whose understandings are cast into a mold, and fashioned just to the size of a received hypothesis" (p. 24). Similarly, teachers who are exhausted, overloaded, depleted, or simply overcome with a deficit mindset have little capacity to think beyond the mould of conventional, technical goals and skills. Feeling unable to enact upon or change their context significantly, they simply crumble into a timid or resigned sense of professional hopelessness, staying as close as possible to Schön's (1987) "high ground" (p. 3) for a sense of safety, and closing their classroom doors to avoid vulnerability. This is a significant problem because it greatly limits the potential for deep professional reflective practice.

Professional capacity is closely linked to efficacy, an "I can" attitude. In the context of this study and this discussion, professional efficacy refers to leaders' and teachers' self-perceived judgments of work-related capabilities. A range of efficacy levels was evident across the teachers in this study, as would be the case in most schools. In a study examining the relationship between teacher reflections and change in practice, Tay et al. (2023) found that "a transformative mindset based on intentional reflection" is a "powerful catalyst" for professional growth and transformational change in practice (p. 41). There appears to be a two-way relationship between mindset and reflection, and the potential for growth when they are combined.

Valckx et al. (2020) found that teachers expressing higher efficacy levels are more likely to engage in reflective dialogue and exhibit higher levels of collective responsibility (p. 295), both factors that enhance teacher capacity for deep reflective practice. There is somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy in such findings. Because teachers believe they can, they then seek to learn, open their practice and continue to grow. Earley (2016) suggested that schools wishing to perform at a high level should build a culture of "trust-based responsibility" (Earley, 2016, p. 23). These concepts and attitudes are closely entwined. School leaders must seek ways to build such a culture and increase professional efficacy across all the teachers in their context.

Both organisational factors and personal traits impact the efficacy of teachers (Runhaar et al., 2010). Removing hindrances and building strengths can impact growth and should be intentionally pursued (Dexter & Wall, 2021). Dexter and Wall (2021) also found a

positive correlation between teachers' reflective functioning and their perceptions of self-efficacy. Rather than relegating such a finding to description, this correlation hints at an additional potential measure for increasing efficacy and increasing capacity for deep reflective practice. At Faith School, I observed the potential for teachers with lower perceptions of efficacy to be scaffolded to participate in facilitated critical reflection, allowing them the opportunity to grow their efficacy and their critical reflective skills with the guidance of a facilitator.

Critically reflecting with support in the safety of a group has the potential to build confidence. Engaging in scaffolded collective reflective practice has the potential to build both skills and attitudes. Doing deep reflection with others has the potential to impact the individual teacher's capacity for further independent reflective behaviours. It becomes both a tool and a catalyst for deep reflective practice. In an interesting turn, there is the potential for the "doing" of critical reflection to build capacity for further deep reflective practice. This would be a very interesting concept to pursue in further research.

### 5.8.3 Reflective Dialogue – Communicative Space

Discussion and responsive feedback with others can build teachers' sense of efficacy and empower them to grow professionally and contribute to the growth of others (Valckx et al., 2020). This was evident amongst some of the teachers at Faith School. Professional conversations, guided questioning and expanded perspectives gave some teachers the confidence to deepen their reflective practice, innovate and improve outcomes. In a study on professional learning communities, Vanblaere and Devos (2016) found that reflective dialogue was the only factor of significance for perceptions of changed practice (p. 205). They also found that positive feedback builds a teacher's sense of efficacy, which in turn leads to a disposition for professional growth and change. School leaders should support intentional opportunities for reflective dialogue as a matter of priority.

Providing reflective opportunities requires leaders to work structurally and relationally. Space must be intentionally created (Baer, 2022). Spitzner and Meixner (2021) recommend that "dialogic space" be intentionally created for "significant conversations" to explore assumptions and beliefs, exchange viewpoints, and understand each other as teachers (p. 302). When "communicative space" is opened to discuss context-based issues and prepare for collective action, capacity is built for teachers to deepen their reflective practice (Wabule, 2020, p. 393). Reflecting together appears to build trust (Kennedy & Smith, 2013) and develop "knowledge, confidence, and practice" (Cherrez & Jin, 2020, p. 64). This study

found that leaders need to create space for this within the complex and overfull social worlds of schools.

As mentioned above, staff meetings provide an opportunity for reflective dialogue. Dogan et al. (2019) found that teachers require structures that create time and offer support for professional reflective dialogue. One structure found to be effective involved the creation of regular "meeting agendas" that provided opportunity and support to reflectively discuss school goals, new curriculum, student learning and differentiation (p. 242). These reflective dialogues "help teachers build capacity to function as effective members of the school community", working together to grow and transform practice (p. 243). School leaders must know their context and their teachers well in order to create regular opportunities for reflective dialogue. Place and space are important, in addition to purpose and focus. Reflective dialogue works best in cultures of trust and collective responsibility, and the delightful loops and leaps of mutual impact indicate that reflective dialogue also has the potential to further build those cultures. Reflective dialogue opens the doors of classrooms, reduces mindsets of isolation, and increases the potential for the courage and capacity needed for deep reflective practice (Hessling et al., 2018).

### 5.8.4 Teamwork – Better Together

Deep reflective practice is not a solo venture. Whilst there was resistance, caution, and disinterest among the group of participants in this study regarding teamwork, all participants agreed that everyone would need to be involved if they were to impact school culture. Edwards-Groves (2013) suggest that the communicative space needed for the modelling, support and perspective-seeking needed in deep reflective practice is best accomplished "through the sensitivity, the spirit of collaboration, the lived-*ness* and the transformative nature of the dialogic practices encountered in groups" (p. 32). In an Austrian study of teachers' reflective practice, Kramer (2018) noted that "reflective understanding of a situation needs to build on the perceptions of everyone involved" (p. 215). He found that involving all encourages a sense of collective, "transformative agency" (p. 223), and extends the concept of reflective practice to include both individual and collaborative domains. In order to extend reflective practice beyond the individual, Kramer (2018) involved participants in his study in "a more or less cyclic movement through expansive learning actions, such as *questioning* and *analysing* a given practice and its developmental contradictions, and *modelling*, *testing*, *implementing*, *reflecting* and, finally, *consolidating* a new, culturally more advanced form of this practice" (Kramer, 2018, p. 213). He found that this collective rigour

over a period of two years supported a transformation of practice. The structured intervention was rigorous, facilitated and relational. Collaborative deep reflective practice must be intentional, supported and facilitated.

Although participants reported the isolated nature of their work, there was resistance from some to work collaboratively. A small rural school has by its nature both strengths and challenges. One challenge involves the sense of isolation. Reflecting in community has the potential to reduce the sense of isolation (Svanbjörnsdóttir et al., 2016). Collegial reflection helps to remove "the shroud of silence" teachers often work within (Brookfield, 2017, p. 66). Reflecting together offers the opportunity for safe and respectful interaction where ideas are listened to and valued, supporting both individual and organisational capacity for professional growth and development and reducing the sense of isolation (Dogan et al., 2019; Goh, 2019; Gutierez & Kim, 2017; Karimi & Vaez-Dalili, 2022; Mesimer, 2022). Building a community of reflective practice (Nolan & Guo, 2022) will involve school leaders integrating deep reflective practice into all layers of the architectures of practice, the sayings, the doings and the relatings (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015).

School leaders at Faith School saw the need to model and intentionally build teamwork in the spirit of appreciative inquiry. They understood that effective teamwork utilises strengths and interests, harnessing the collaborative best of the team without individuals losing professional autonomy. Such teamwork is founded on a culture of collective responsibility, where each teacher is "concerned with the teaching practice of each teacher and the learning outcomes of each student" (Valckx et al., 2020, p. 294). In a study that focused on teamwork in schools in Iceland (Svanbjörnsdóttir et al., 2016), researchers found that effective teams collaborated, created clear goals, used each team member's strengths and discussed matters constructively (p. 103). Owen and Buck (2020) suggest that synergistic team learning involves the team expecting knowledge to be created mutually, with opportunities for all members to speak freely and openly, and a rich relational and value-inspired structure. Rather than pushing teachers into mediocre uniformity, an effective team will celebrate individual strengths and promote autonomy whilst collaborating for a common purpose (Valckx et al., 2020). Such teamwork does not happen by chance. It requires intentional development. Leadership is crucial. Valckx et al. (2020) considered transformational leadership as a "lever for team building" (p. 285). For teacher teams to develop collective responsibility, school leadership must encourage a climate of sharing and exchanging ideas whilst creating space and flexible scaffolded structures. The process of

developing scaffolds and cultures and collective expectations is complex. There can be value in engaging additional support.

### 5.8.5 Facilitating Deep Reflective Practice – Engaging Support

One of the findings of this study is that there is a potential benefit for school leaders to engage external support when wishing to integrate deep reflective practice into the heartbeat of their school context and culture and provide contextualised scaffolded support. Much reflective practice research involves examining the impact of specific reflective practice scaffolds in a facilitated process (Avgitidou, 2020; Marshall et al., 2022; Sperandio & Kong, 2018). An experienced facilitator can support both the structure of the reflective process and the relational elements, initiating and guiding participants in the depth and rigour of structure whilst modelling and encouraging the intrinsic flexibility, creativity and curiosity involved in rich reflective practice (Marshall et al., 2022). In a Mexican study investigating the impact of a facilitated process of reflective practice, Cerecero (2021) found that being involved in a group-based and externally facilitated process of deep reflective practice moved teachers from exhibiting low empowerment and external attribution of responsibility to developing a sense of confidence and professional efficacy. The teachers in the study found that the combination of working with a non-judgmental group of peers in an atmosphere of trust and companionship was valuable and supportive, but that having an external facilitator to follow up, drive the process, and keep channels of communication open, was "indispensable" (p. 45). School leaders would do well to consider engaging such support.

Not all external support is positive. In this study, one participant cautioned, *"I think that someone who came in and just tried to impose their structure and all their ideas…would be an epic fail and would completely be at odds with the process".* During the course of this study, I had the opportunity to observe two forms of external support. The first external support person was a knowledgeable and experienced educator who came to the school in passionate humility. He listened, engaged in reflection with leaders and teachers, and supported them in elements of practice they had identified as problematic. Teachers and leaders felt encouraged and spoke of how they had professionally grown because of their time with him. The second external support person was also a knowledgeable and experienced educator. He spoke to the leaders only, in terms of evaluation and judgment, speaking of problems he had identified. He left, and the leaders were left disheartened and discouraged, and the teachers were concerned that there would be more *"big fat checklists"* for them to work through.

Alzayed and Alabdulkareem (2021) noted the value in engaging facilitated support, but not so if the facilitator's role involved judgmental and autocratic power as evidenced by the second external support person observed at Faith School. In a study focused on professional development, Gujarati (2018) indicated that professional development from "outside experts", without follow-up or knowledge of teachers' contexts has minimal impact on teachers' development and growth. Such experts resemble Schön's (1987) "high ground" (p. 3), and offer little of value to the development of a culture of deep reflective practice.

Whilst noting the cautions, carefully selected external support has the potential to act as a useful temporary scaffold of support. In a study on school and university partnerships designed to build capacity for mentoring and collaborative inquiry, Betlem et al. (2019) noted the value of having "an outside opinion, … a different set of eyes on us" (p. 339), to scaffold the initiative, guide the reflection and support the leaders until the systemic change gained its own momentum. Leading a cultural change that builds teacher capacity for deep reflective practice is complex and demanding. This study, in its unique holistic exploration of teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice, has brought focus to the interplay of supports needed in the face of an entanglement of barriers and the reality of organisational inertia. Findings have indicated that external support, whilst not a *solution*, has the potential to act as a valuable scaffold to support school leaders as they design and implement the complex task of developing a holistic approach to building teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice.

## 5.9 Organisational System of Support – Dynamic Web of Support

The findings of barriers and supports presented in Chapter Four, including those discussed above, are not discrete factors, able to be enacted upon one at a time. Rather, they represent facets of a complex and interrelated ecology of practice (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015). The overarching finding for the primary research question in this study is that school leaders should create a dynamic and multidimensional web of support to build capacity for deepened reflective practice.

The dynamic web of support indicated in the overarching finding is firmly grounded in context and situation. Indicative of the concept of deep reflective practice, support measures would be unlikely to be found as pre-packaged solutions to generalised problems as defined by others. Support for capacity building must be contextualised (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). As Chen (2023) found in her study on reflective practice amongst early childhood teachers, "reflective experiences are context-specific" (p. 341). They are "thoroughly

situated" (Kramer, 2018, p. 214). As such, support measures must be grounded in the unique context of each school and responsive to their ongoing situations, both in terms of human resources and circumstances. As Valckx et al. (2020) observed in terms of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs ) with deeply reflective purposes, "Teachers' participation … does not take place in a vacuum" (p. 283). The context of a school involves not only each individual teacher but also the combination of teachers, parents and other staff members (Gawne, 2023, p. 101). "People's capacities, commitments and dispositions are made visible in the situated*ness* and happening*ness* of these practices as they are enacted" (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015, p. 153).

In addition, each school has a "logic of practice", the way things are done in specific contexts, the routines, habits, and attitudes, often unspoken yet observably powerful and influential (Wright & Adam, 2015). When intentionally building a culture of deep reflective practice, this logic of practice must be examined collectively to note what is currently helpful and what should change. Wilkinson and Kemmis (2015) highlighted the importance of considering contextual conditions when considering a change process purposed for deep reflective practice. Any dynamic web of support must take into consideration the interplay of context, individual teacher characteristics and leadership when purposing the transformation of practice (Valckx et al., 2020). Figure 17 displays the dynamic web of support constructed over situation and context with no solid barrier between them, suggesting a two-way influence. Effective support must flexibly respond to the individual school context and situation.

The findings of this study identify the need for balancing relational and structural supports. Twenty-first-century school leaders have an ongoing struggle "to find a balance between the demands of a morally committed practice, social transformation and externally imposed standards" (Edwards-Groves, 2013, p. 32). A tempered approach to leadership involves building teacher capacity through the provision of intentional space and multi-layered differentiated support to meet the holistic needs of teachers with wisdom and balance (Sellars & Imig, 2021, p. 425). The findings of this study add a holistic "facet" to the prism of understanding regarding capacity building for deep reflective practice. By capturing rich accounts of leaders' and teachers' perspectives within the complexity of practice, this study has allowed the participants' voices to be heard and their perspectives valued. There are many barriers holding teachers back from deep reflective practice. This is not unique to Faith School.

Supporting capacity for deep reflective practice requires a range of layered opportunities involving conceptual understanding, skill development and intentional measures to promote open dispositions (Risko et al., 2009, p. 49). In a literature review conducted to propose a theory of the culture of inquiry, Morris (2017) suggests that there needs to be a "dynamic interaction" between five areas of organisational processes and practices: "transformational leadership, inquiry with healthy debate, license to experiment, collegiality and sharing, and a never-ending cycle of reflection" (p. 124). These five areas indicate structural factors to create opportunities, provide scaffolds and impact culture, as well as relational factors that impact the sense of trust, safety and efficacy that a teacher needs to take risks, experiment and offer honest opinions and reflections in professional sharing and debate as indicated in this study. The act of reflection, according to Tessema (2008), "is a dynamic, multilayered, non-predictable, social process" (p. 357). Therefore, it should be no surprise that building teacher capacity for such a process requires a dynamic, multifaceted and holistic model of support. Dogan et al. (2019) suggests a need to establish a safe, "nourishing" culture within the school (p. 244). This description reflects the support findings in this study regarding intentional leadership, the structural elements of creating space and pathways, and the relational elements of support and cultivating collaboration.

The dynamic web of support, as presented in Figure 17, portrays a unique holistic approach to developing teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. It offers potential holistic considerations for other school leaders to consider when seeking to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. The display of the support findings as a multi-dimensional scaffold is entirely intentional. Colour and lines also convey holistic information. The light blue spaces allude to the air of possibility intrinsic to the concept of deep reflective practice. Deep reflective practice is far removed from mechanistic instrumental problem-solving. A contextualised, multifaceted and holistic system of support that is dynamic, responsive and flexible, can offer strength whilst allowing for emergent possibilities (Kramer, 2018). The idea of possibilities engenders curiosity, creativity and innovation. So often, as in the case of this study, the prospect of possibilities is constrained by stifling contextual realities such as limited support, overload and compliance pressures. Moller (2023) suggests that "creating conditions of possibility" involves "structuring time, space, and resources" within the dynamic of relationships and power structures (p. 42). An effective support system will intentionally build dispositions "of openness" and "imagining, … creating possibilities that can be negotiated and co-created in relationships" (Morgan et al., 2014, p. 582). This requires a culture of trust, and supportive relationships (Tonna et al.,

2017; Weikel, 2019). “Emergent structures provide novelty, creativity and flexibility” (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011, p. 32), requiring systems that are both strong and flexible, structured and relational. Palumbo and Manna (2019) describe the need for “porous” organisations that are “resilient, but open to change” (p. 748). Very often, accountability measures intended to improve performance, suck the air of possibility out of schools, leaving leaders and teachers disempowered.

In Mitchell and Sackney’s (2016) examination of leadership in high-capacity schools, they describe such schools as operating as “living systems”, contextually sensitive with a focus on teaching and learning and operating with climates of deep respect that foster safe, yet energetic, collaborative practices. In the schools they studied, teachers were given both time and professional space to take risks and experiment. The *air of possibility* was evident. They also noted that school leaders protected the teachers from the pressures of external expectations. In many respects, the description of these high-capacity schools reflects the suggestions for building capacity offered by participants in this study. Leaders in the high-capacity schools were described as recognising “the interconnectedness – inherent, inescapable intertwining – of all aspects of educational life” (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011, p. 33). The participants of this study, teachers and leaders from a small rural Australian school, expressing a low sense of collective efficacy, knew what it would take to build their capacity. Their support suggestions resonate with the experience of some schools on another continent that have challenged the traditional architectures of practice to bring in new life and find structures that allow teachers and students to thrive. What might support the building of teacher capacity for deep reflective practice in the complexities of school? Nothing short of a healthy, interdependent living system.

A “living system” is best understood as an ecosystem. It is complex and involves interdependent, interrelated, and often symbiotic living organisms and their environment. Not all ecosystems are healthy. Wright (2009) noted school leaders “individually and collectively” work within “distinct and overlapping contextual ecosystems” (p. 268) that often constrain reflective practice. Adding a glimmer of hope, Smith et al. (2020) describe a healthy ecological school organisation model that values the individual and the interdependent whole in a living system where teachers, in their unique individuality and their dynamic collective interdependence, are respected as agents of change. In such a system, both leaders and teachers engage in regenerative practices that critically question in order to gain wisdom and the courage to change (p. 94).

The dynamic web of support proposed in this study is purposed to acknowledge, examine and actively change unhelpful aspects of the school's ecologies of practice, "layer on layer on layer" (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015, p. 348). The purpose is to build "connectedness between staff", a culture of "trust", shared understanding and adequate "support" (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015, p. 351), in order to build personal, interpersonal and organisational capacity for deep reflective practice. The solution is no simpler than the problem, but just as barriers tend to be multiplicative by nature, so are supports. School leaders willing to create space and offer support can begin to bring life into their school, which will slowly but surely multiply in impact.

Recognition of such ecological complexity and hope is reflected in Margaret Wheatley's (2007) observation, "It is time to wake up to the fact that we live in an interconnected world, embedded in a fabric of relationships that requires us to pay attention to the dynamics of systems" (p. 102). She challenges educational leaders to "weave an organization as flexible and resilient as a spider's web" (p. 112). The findings of this study offer a response to her challenge.

The overarching finding of this research study was that school leaders should build a holistic, contextualised and dynamic web of support that includes both structural and relational measures and operates within both the individual and the collective domains. Varied elements within the 'wholeness' of the dynamic web of support were found to be reflected in reflective practice and educational literature. The unique contribution of this study is in identifying the complexity of parts – both barriers and supports, and bringing them together in terms of the whole, a contextualised dynamic web of support. The crystallised, triangulated analysis from which these barriers and supports emerged brought into focus the interconnected and interdependent nature of both the existing barriers and the needed supports.

## 5.10 Another Way of Seeing: Crystallisation, Models and Metaphors

Deep reflective practice involves seeking insight into important issues through a range of perceptive filters. This has been the focus of this study. It has also been at the heart of the methodology of this study. To capture a rich understanding of the elements of complex practice that impact teacher capacity for deep reflective practice, there has been a need to 'see' from multiple perspectives. The 'crystallisation' approach has offered multiple ways to seek and to see, to analyse and synthesise, to reflect and report. The creation of models has added visual dimensions to convey complex and often abstract, concepts. In addition,

metaphor and allegory have been employed to communicate, consider, comprehend, and collate concepts and ideas throughout the study and the report. The following description and evaluation of their impact in this study are offered in order to suggest the potential for further use and adaptation in other research and educational contexts.

### 5.10.1 Crystallisation

Crystallisation, an interpretive approach to qualitative research, is not widely used in educational research. This study demonstrates the value of this approach when investigating the lived experience of teachers in school settings. Ellingson (2009) suggests four strengths for the use of crystallisation in qualitative research which enhanced this study and which, I would argue, indicate further potential for use in the field of exploratory educational research. Firstly, crystallisation offers a means to deeply enrich description (p. 15). In the case of this study, crystallisation offered opportunities to richly describe the teachers' and school leaders' lived experience of reflective practice through their varied lenses of perspective. Secondly, Ellingson (2009) suggests that crystallisation supports "less naïve representations" (p. 15), allowing the complexity of different viewpoints to continue to problematise understandings and remind both researcher and reader that qualitative research offers rich, yet partial understanding. This is an important consideration in the complex arenas of educational research. Crystallisation also adds an air of possibility to the field of research, avoiding the stagnation of thinking that might creep in when research remains tethered to technical methodologies that cannot respond to context or situation (p. 16). Finally, Ellingson (2009) proposes that crystallisation allows researchers to engage both their passion for the topic and their curiosity and creativity by providing meaningful and diverse ways to seek, study and represent complexity (p. 16). In this study, the methodology of crystallisation provided opportunities to build meaning and nuance of understanding to the complex concepts of building teacher capacity and reflective practice. This study shows the potential for further use of crystallisation in these fields.

The value of the crystallised approach became increasingly evident throughout the collection of data and ongoing initial analysis and member checking. Individual stories were seen to impact both personal and collective capacity for deep reflective practice. The crystallised approach sought to "better understand participants and their perspectives in multidimensional ways" (Barbosa Neves, 2023, p. 40), indicating the need to seek a range of perspectives grounded in contextual understanding with a carefully selected triangulation of analysis methods. Crystallisation offers researchers the opportunity to be both innovative and

discerning in creating a research design that is fit for the purpose rather than adhering to a generalised template (Pratt et al., 2022).

Preparing the crystallised report with "layered accounts, multivocal/multigenre texts, and experiential forms of representing phenomena" (Snowden, 2011, p. 933), offered an important constant reminder that the focus of this study was set in the "messy realities" (Stewart & Harwood, 2017, p. 2) of school and teaching, which are also multi-layered and experiential. There were varying genres of situations and experiences that impacted the capacity of teachers to reflect deeply in overlapping, interdependent, connected, and often conflicting ways. A satisfactory account of these realities could not have been portrayed in a tidy, two-dimensional formal account. "The gold is often found in deep and dark places that seem hidden under the obvious" (Stewart & Harwood, 2017, p. 4).

Crystallisation offers researchers the opportunity to dig beneath traditional expectations, not to displace them, but to add richness and value. A crystallised report reminds both the researcher and the reader of the multiplicity of theoretical, experiential, and emotional impacts in the social world of schools. There is much scope for further exploration of the use of crystallisation in educational and reflective practice research. Engaging a methodology that aligns with the integrity and complexity of the phenomenon being explored offers the potential to deepen understanding and seek rich accounts.

Employing a crystallised approach allows for a zephyr of possibility to gently blow through all aspects of a research study, stretching "traditional boundaries" to "add value and depth" (Stewart & Harwood, 2017, p. 4). Insight, innovation and imagining are core to deep reflective practice; hence the approach, in this study, became deeply entwined with the topic. Breathing in this air of possibility fuelled my interest in deep reflective practice with curiosity and creativity. Crystallisation allows the researcher to take on the role of "the perceptive seer delving deeply into the mysteries with a solid belief that discovery must be rich, credible and trustworthy" (Stewart & Harwood, 2017, p. 2), a complex, though invigorating role (Ellingson, 2009, p. 77). Whilst the complexities involved in crystallisation will not suit all researchers, it will open the door to some for engaging with creativity and depth, enlarging the scope of qualitative research and the range of qualitative researchers.

Researching with a crystallised approach in this study, allowed me to walk a journey of deep reflective practice on multiple levels, in terms of theory, in the context of Faith School, and within the process of research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation and the representation of the final report. I have been "digging in the swamp", and at times, yearned for the safety and security of Schön's "high ground" (1987, p. 3), where life, and in

this case, research, has instrumental certainty with limited options and assumed clarity. Instead, I have had the privilege and pain of wondering, weighing a plethora of options and contemplating the value and suitability of theory in light of both my own and my participants' experiences (Ellingson, 2009). The journey has needed courage and support from others. There have been times when the swamp seemed to overwhelm me, where the fetid miry atmosphere left me gasping. It is in these times, that I have been able to relate to those participants who felt unable to reflect deeply. It has also knocked me off the high grounds of my own making that may incite judgment on others. Instead, I am reminded to care deeply, empathise compassionately and seek ways to better support teachers. A crystallised approach demands much from the researcher, yet it also offers much. It has particular potential in research studies seeking *verstehen,* an empathetic understanding of another's lived experience.

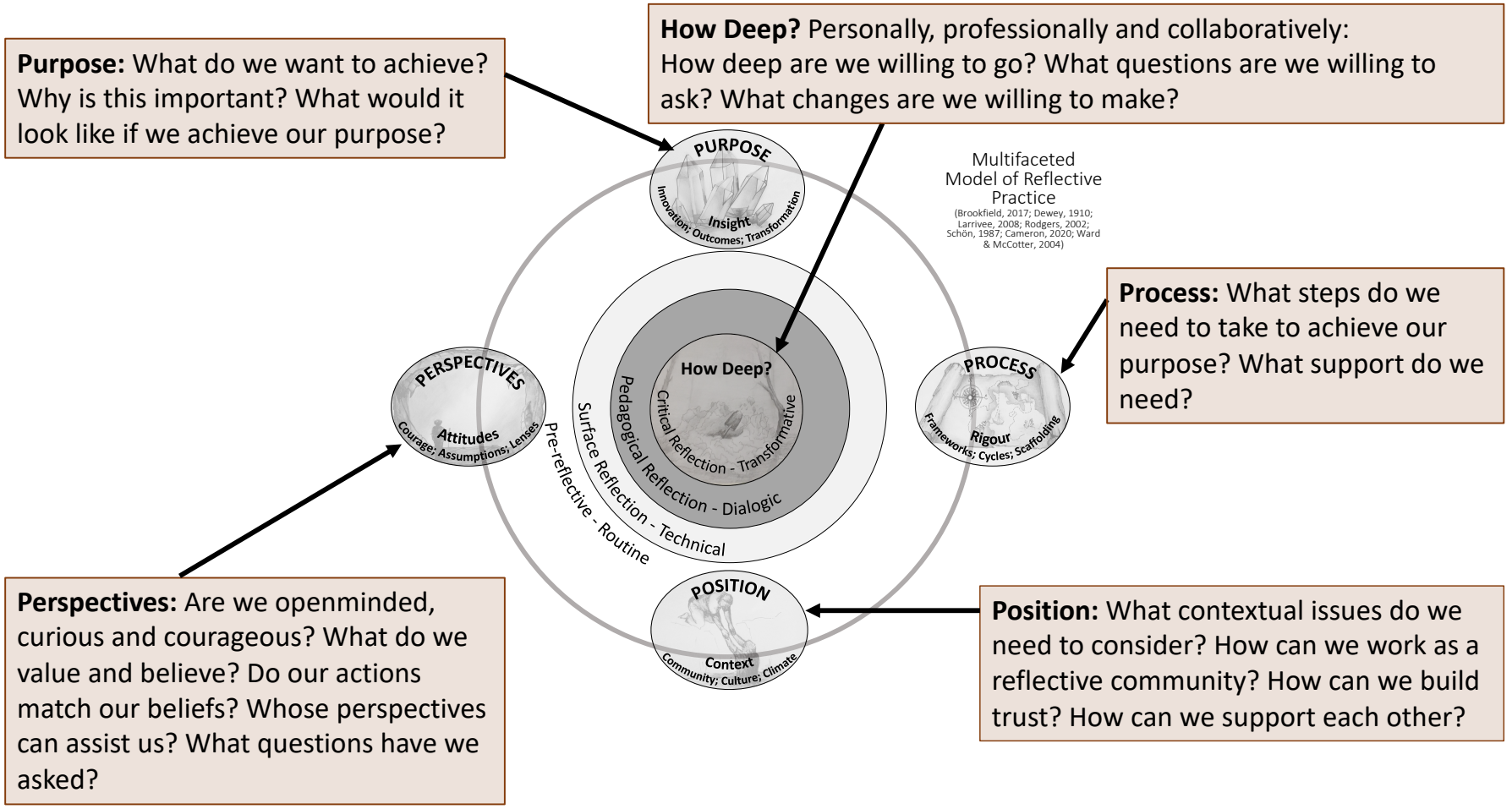
Crystallisation has not been widely employed in the field of educational research; however, this study is an example of its potential value in delving "deeper into the sociological and psychological world of the people that are the true dynamics of any organizational work environment" (Stewart & Harwood, 2017, p. 14). Thus, the use of crystallisation as an analytical approach to interpreting and reporting on the findings of this study represents an original methodological contribution to the way in which reflective practice has been investigated in a school setting, suggesting the potential for further use in exploring lived experience in the field of educational research.

### 5.10.2 Models

Models are another element of this study employed to broaden avenues of "seeing" concepts and findings. "Visual representation can facilitate deeper understanding by provoking an alternative form of communication that is accessible to a wider audience than text alone" (Buckley & Waring, 2013, p. 148). Models add a visual dimension to a text that indicates relationships and reflects complexity. They demonstrate graphically "how concepts, constructs, themes and processes work" as interrelated factors (Waller, 2022). Two models have been created in this study to illustrate complex concepts and relationships consequential to the outcomes of this study. Each model offers a diagrammatic representation designed to convey holistic, interrelated and complex concepts in order to support collaborative communication and problem-solving. The adage, "a picture paints a thousand words" helps portray a model's value to impart, remind and refresh understanding of complex concepts in collaboration with others.

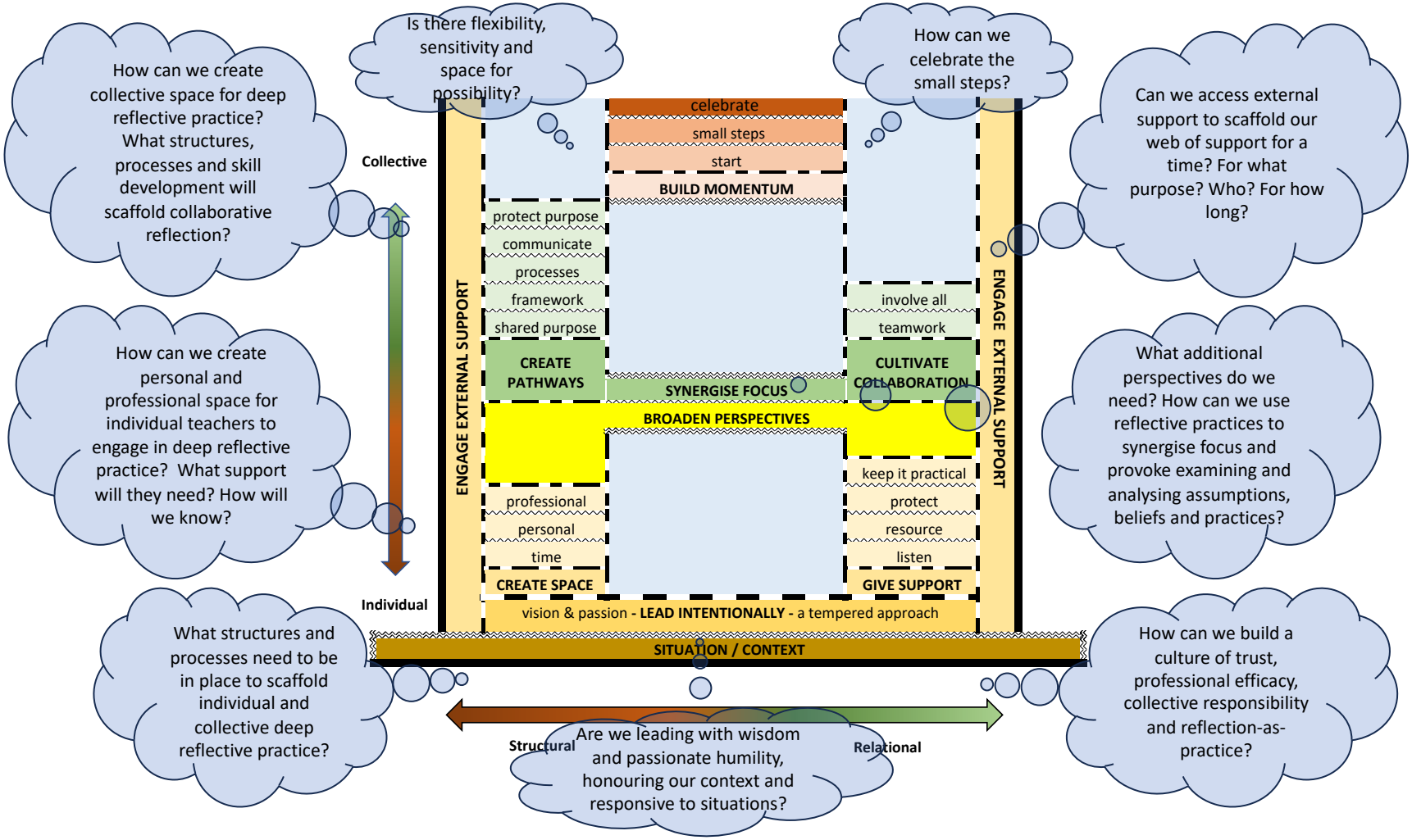
The Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice was created to illustrate interrelated facets of understanding from the conceptual framework developed in Chapter Two (Figure 1). The model integrates metaphor, allegory, and diagrammatic features to represent a literature-based and theoretical understanding of the varying qualities of reflective practice and the lenses of practice-based purpose, process, position and perspective in conveying a range of factors that impact and influence reflective practice. This model was used when designing the research and preparing the interview prompts. It was also used when communicating the concept of reflective practice to the participants throughout the study. Figure 18 gives an example of some of the questions this model evoked informally in conversations and formally in feedback to individuals and participant groups in this study. The Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice offers a unique and valuable representation of many dimensions and contextual factors integral to deep reflective practice in educational and other professional contexts. It has the potential to support ongoing knowledge development and inquiry in research and practice.

**Figure 18** *Using the Model to Support Questioning for Deep Reflective Practice*



The Dynamic Web of Support Model (Figure 17 in Chapter Four) contributes a diagrammatic representation of the holistic findings of this study. It was created to blend the findings from the constructivist grounded theory analysis (Figures 6-15) with understandings developed through situational and heuristic analysis. The initial in-study purpose of this model was to convey the interpretive findings with clarity to others. The iterative process involved in creating the final model; however, became an element of the heuristic process that illuminated deeper insight and understanding. It was in the making of this diagram that the dimensions of structure and relational factors became much clearer. This in turn led to the seeking of additional perspectives through reading and research and collegial sharing, all supporting ongoing interpretive understanding. Some informal 'road testing' of the model with educators and school leaders have indicated its value to support collaborative reflection and problem-solving. Figure 19 illustrates a sample of questions this model has supported when engaging with school leaders in other school contexts who have found resonance between the story of this study and their own educational context.

Both of these models have played informative, communicative and pragmatic roles in this research study and have potential for use beyond this study. They provide another way of seeing, another way of saying and another way of showing vital elements of this research. They also offer potential for inspiring deep conversations into the future regarding deep reflective practice and building teacher capacity with educators who find themselves asking how they might build the capacity for teachers to engage in deep reflective practice.


How can we create collective space for deep reflective practice? What structures, processes and skill development will scaffold collaborative reflection?
Is there flexibility, sensitivity and space for possibility?
How can we celebrate the small steps?
Can we access external support to scaffold our web of support for a time? For what purpose? Who? For how long?
How can we create personal and professional space for individual teachers to engage in deep reflective practice? What support will they need? How will we know?
What additional perspectives do we need? How can we use reflective practices to synergise focus and provoke examining and analysing assumptions, beliefs and practices?
What structures and processes need to be in place to scaffold individual and collective deep reflective practice?
How can we build a culture of trust, professional efficacy, collective responsibility and reflection-as-practice?
Are we leading with wisdom and passionate humility, honouring our context and responsive to situations?
Collective
Individual
Structural
Relational
ENGAGE EXTERNAL SUPPORT
ENGAGE EXTERNAL SUPPORT
celebrate
small steps
start
BUILD MOMENTUM
protect purpose
communicate
processes
framework
shared purpose
CREATE PATHWAYS
involve all
teamwork
CULTIVATE COLLABORATION
SYNERGISE FOCUS
BROADEN PERSPECTIVES
keep it practical
protect
resource
listen
GIVE SUPPORT
professional
personal
time
CREATE SPACE
vision & passion - LEAD INTENTIONALLY - a tempered approach
SITUATION / CONTEXT

### 5.10.3 Metaphors

Employing metaphors to support a deeper understanding of abstract concepts is not new. Metaphors have long been used "as a powerful strategy to portray complex realities, illuminating aspects of phenomena not previously noticed and adding depth of meaning to understanding" (Carpenter, 2008, p. 275). "Many researchers have used metaphors to explain and convey complex concepts or at a stronger level as a powerful tool for theorizing" (Ghazinoory & Aghaei, 2023, p. 19). In this crystallised study, metaphors have provided additional ways to *see* and *understand* (Schechter et al., 2018, p. 20) concepts, theory and data and to *show* and *say* in terms of representing knowledge development, theorising and communicating ideas, providing insight "into ideas that are not explicit" (Ungar, 2016, p. 118).

Metaphors have been utilised in this dissertation as a cohesive device; however more significantly, they have played a part in wrestling with ideas and building theory. The swamp metaphor used by Donald Schön (1987) in *Educating the Reflective Practitione*r, has had an immense influence as a foundation for a conceptual understanding of reflective practice. As referenced throughout this report, Schön (1987) compares professional practitioners with the courage to dig for insight and wisdom in the "indeterminate, swampy zones of practice" (p. 3) with those taking the easier route, remaining on the high ground and accepting technical pre-packaged solutions to less consequential issues. This metaphor opened ideas of allegorical proportion in my mind as it illuminated new insights into personal and professional experiences (Kaarst-Brown, 2017, p. 312). It excited me to consider reflective practice as an expedition requiring courage and curiosity. An allegory of a medieval quest developed and grew in my thinking and became a cohesive device throughout this thesis. It informed and inspired my own journey into employing crystallisation in both research design and representing the report. The concept of crystallisation became infused in the allegory, both in terms of seeking *jewels of wisdom* and the multifaceted nature of reflective practice.

The metaphors employed by many of the participants; however, did not convey a desire for adventure. Journey metaphors abounded, with many references to lack; lack of a roadmap, lack of direction, lack of a driver, and lack of momentum. Building metaphors were also common among both teachers and leaders. They conveyed the need for structure and stability and being supported. The metaphors employed by most of the participants in this study conveyed a sense of reticence and caution rather than adventure and curiosity. These were important messages that needed to be heard when seeking illumination of ways to build

teacher capacity. I could see the limitations of a metaphor such as "quest" when teachers and leaders were feeling insecure and unsupported.

Further insight grew as I sought to expand my understanding through theory and research. In a qualitative study of the relationship between teachers' views on educational reforms and the metaphors they employ, Ungar (2016) discovered a range of metaphors being used. The study concluded that "teachers differ from each other in how they experience and deal with the reforms" (Ungar, 2016, p. 125), leading to the finding that there is a need for a range of support measures from leaders. This resonated with what I had observed regarding the uniqueness of each teacher's perspectives, and also inspired me to take a deeper look at the metaphors used by the participants in this study.

The differences between the idea of quest and the metaphors used by the participants of this study made me curious. Further insight developed through yet another metaphor. Thomson's article, "Thinking About the School Most of the Time: Studio as Generative Metaphor for Critical Reflection" (2019) uses the metaphor of an artist's "studio" to convey ideas regarding critical reflection in schools. This opened up a potential conceptual alternative to "journey" for consideration when supporting battered and weary teachers to discover reflective practice as a capacity-building place of healing, restoration and renewal. There is the potential for the metaphors of quest and studio to be brought together and explored through research and practice to find new ways to portray and experience reflective practice, acknowledging the need for courage and discomfort but also making conceptual room for creativity and delight.

The challenge by Wheatley (2007) to "weave an organization as flexible and resilient as a spider's web" was another consequential metaphor influencing the interpretive theorising of this study's findings. Delving into this metaphor through the lens of this study's findings and further light from current literature, added insight to the theory of developing a dynamic web of support to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. This metaphor offers nuances of understanding. Spiders' webs have intentional design which is matched to the environment and purpose. Spiderwebs are very strong yet flexible, sensitive yet resilient. When conditions change or damage occurs, the spider just gets back out there and makes another (MacDonald, 2017). The web of support suggested by the findings of this study is intentional and requires systematic design based on the unique context and situation of a school. The web of support uses the strength of structures and the sensitivities of relationships. It is flexible to the needs of individual teachers, and resilience is built through a culture of collaboration. Another feature of a spider's web, that is analogous to the creation of

a dynamic web of support, is that in the initial stages of building a web, many spiders create a network of dry silk lines to act as a form of scaffold until the spider is in a position to cut them free and continue building the web (Ault, 2015). Support findings in this study noted the potential for scaffolded support in the form of an external facilitator to assist the leader in the early stages of the development of the dynamic web of support. This simple metaphor opened up a powerful cascade of insight and understanding. Metaphor has the power to see in new ways and add layers of meaning that extend beyond the written word, connecting with experiences and understandings, evoking emotion (Carpenter, 2008, p. 275) and generating understanding (Ungar, 2016, p. 119).

Crystallisation, models, and metaphors have worked in concert within this study and report to add texture, colour, depth, and insight. They have offered new ways of "seeing" the concept of building capacity for deepened reflective practice, adding depth of meaning to the data, and supporting the interpretation of findings with both inductive and abductive reasoning. Their use in this study has contributed additional facets of insight and opportunities for depth in the reporting of findings and theory. There is much potential for an extended application in a wider range of educational research.

## 5.11 Deep Reflective Practice: Reviewing the Definition, Reviewing the Theory

Reflective practice is a term used widely in educational contexts, yet often with a narrow conceptual understanding (Marshall, 2019; Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014). When asked about their reflective practices, the participants in this study offered a range of understandings, most involving reflecting in and on practice in terms of student engagement or teaching techniques. For some, the term represented external requirements seen as compliance. Few regarded its purpose in terms of seeking transformation. A powerful concept misunderstood loses its potential. A deep and significant concept narrowly understood will only be narrowly applied.

In the context of this study, there needed to be a shared conceptual understanding of deep reflective practice. In Chapter Two, theory and literature were used to build a descriptive definition of deep reflective practice in order to allay the problematic situation of varied conceptions (Fergusson et al., 2019). This definition was purposed to build a shared understanding, and set the focus of this study apart from commonly held instrumental understandings of reflective practice (Nolan & Guo, 2022). Deep reflective practice was described and defined as:

> … a deliberate iterative professional process embedded in context and action and purposed towards seeking insight that leads to the transformation of beliefs and behaviours, ultimately leading to improved outcomes. It involves both individual and collective questioning and analysis of current assumptions and practices through theory and varied personal and professional perspectives, seeking understanding from both the past and the present to build a better future.

In this study, some of the elements of reflective practice described in the definition appeared to particularly susceptible to impact from the contextual barriers described by participants. Three such elements are described below in order to explain the observational insights that led to a final revision of the descriptive definition.

The definition includes the opening phrase: "a deliberate iterative professional process". "Iterative" refers to cycles and rigour. This concept was seen to be problematic in a school context due to the wide range of expectations and needs. It is difficult to move through the important iterative cycles of reflection, assumption seeking, perspective sharing, experimentation, reviewing, and refining, when new ideas, problems, expectations, and requirements are pushing for their place in the limelight of focus. Schools will often "think" in time boundaries of terms and school years, with many focal points having no chance to be worked through over rounds of evaluation and improvement.

The definition also includes the phrase: "It involves both individual and collective questioning and analysis". Teachers in this study regarded reflective practice as an individual activity. The idea of "collective" reflective practice was not generally understood in terms of critical depth. The problem-solving done as a collective was either theoretical, disconnected from the classroom or more instrumental in nature. There was a tendency for the "collective" to be protective rather than deeply reflective. My observations were that it would take very intentional scaffolding and facilitation to harness the potential for "deep" collective reflective practice.

The third element of the descriptive definition most susceptible to contextual barriers involved the *"questioning and analysis of current assumptions*". This is very difficult to do without the support of "another". It is difficult to question assumptions and notice gaps between espoused theories and theories-in-use without yielding to a deficit mindset and experiencing downwards spirals of discouragement. To move through these processes in ways that result in positive growth, hope and improved efficacy would be more achievable with the support of skilled facilitators. School leaders would need to use practical and tempered wisdom to engage such support.

In the light of the findings of this study, and to highlight these issues, I offer the following amended descriptive definition for consideration by school leaders, educators and researchers. The reviewed definition focuses on the process of deepening reflective practice, inferring an ongoing nature and direction rather than intimating a static standard.

> Deepening reflective practice requires deliberate iterative and ongoing professional processes embedded in context and action and purposed towards seeking insight that leads to the transformation of beliefs and behaviours, ultimately leading to improved outcomes. It involves supporting individual and collective questioning and analysis of current assumptions and practices through theory and varied personal and professional perspectives, seeking understanding from both the past and the present to build a better future.

This descriptive definition has the potential for use by school leaders and educators as a tool for building a shared understanding of the concept of deep reflective practice. It can also be used as a developmental self-evaluation tool in schools. Using the descriptive definition in this way to reflect on Faith School's reflective journey over the time of data collection offers an example of such use. From the outset, it was clear that the school leaders and teachers began their Harvest initiative with the purpose of seeking insight that would lead to improved outcomes. However, most teachers remained uninvolved and did not dig deep into reflective practice. It was "someone else's problem". Reflections throughout the interviews revealed mindsets of cynicism from past school initiatives that had begun well but lacked the rigour of ongoing evaluation that teachers believed necessary for sustainable transformation. Many teachers distanced themselves from direct involvement, wanting to be told what they had to do rather than personally reflecting deeply and seeking purpose-focused insight for their own practice.

The perceived barriers to deep reflective practice were too great for most teachers to feel they could fully engage in Harvest. Some change was evident; however, many teachers appeared to have a predominantly instrumental approach to that change. The busyness of pedagogical change appeared to be swamping teachers' attention, leaving the original purpose side-lined.

Using the descriptive definition as a developmental evaluation tool offers a shared terminology and understanding for both leaders and teachers, allowing them to utilise descriptive and evaluative lenses and developmentally assess elements of the depth of reflective practice within their schools. School leaders can then use this knowledge to support and scaffold both the building of capacity and the integration and facilitation of deepened

reflective practice at both individual and collective levels. There is also potential for this descriptive definition to be used in further research exploring reflective practice in educational contexts.

By listening to the voices of teachers and school leaders individually and in chorus, this study has contributed additional facets of understanding and depth to current knowledge regarding teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice.

## 5.12 Researcher: My Voice, My Footprints

In Chapter Two, a conceptual framework was constructed to ensure a shared understanding of reflective practice. The work of three theorists, John Dewey, Donald Schön and Stephen Brookfield, provided foundational understandings for that framework. In the closing section of Chapter Two, a creative narrative explored some of the major ideas of these theorists juxtaposed with each other. As we come to the close of this discussion chapter, we once more breathe in the rich aroma of coffee and sit with these theorists to consider the major findings of this study in light of their ideas. In this creative musing, a fourth theorist joins the group.

**Another Dialectical Dialogue with Dewey and Friends**

*Once again, the coffee was warm and weak. I sat gazing beyond the window, my thoughts spilling outside the walls of my study. Once again, I found myself standing beside a table, breathing in the rich coffee aroma. I smiled and looked around, knowing the faces I sought. Yes, there they were, John, Donald and Stephen. I was a little surprised to notice a fourth gentleman at the table but could see an empty chair and knew the steaming cup was for me.*

*"Karyn, we were hoping you would drop by. Meet our friend, Parker."*

*I smiled at Parker and sat down. It dawned on me, "Parker Palmer?"*

*"The very one," Parker replied.*

*"I am so happy to meet you. Your work has inspired me on many levels."*

*Parker humbly replied, "I'm glad."*

*There was silence. I had not broken in on a conversation. They were waiting, looking at me. I breathed deeply. "It's hard to know where to begin."*

*John put me at ease with a chuckle and said, "Oh don't worry about that. Just start anywhere. We're sure to mess up your train of thought anyway."*

*With the ice broken, I began.*

*"Well, I expected complexity, but … what I found made me realise my initial understandings were naïve to say the least."*

*It was John again that prompted me to continue. "Surely our last conversation did not leave you thinking the road ahead would be smooth."*

*"Well John, that is true. In fact, I must thank you to begin with. The dispositions you spoke of, wholeheartedness, open-mindedness, directness and responsibility. … You are so right. No teacher could step into the paths of deep reflective practice without them. I can see now, however, that is not simply a matter of personal choice. There are many factors that can stifle these dispositions." I shook my head. "As I spoke with teachers and leaders, I could see that … each one had a different story. … The teachers' own school experiences, personality traits, things going on in their personal lives, workloads, professional experiences, the mix of colleagues around them… It's a big list. The situational impacts… working through the situational maps opened my eyes to complexities I had never considered. … Oh, so many things can pull back on those dispositions. You said they were important, but going the next step to think of things school leaders can do to nurture them…" I left the sentence hanging. There was silence for a moment, then Parker cleared his throat.*

*"I've dedicated a great deal of my time and thinking to this Karyn."*

*"Yes, Parker. I continue to be inspired by your book, "The Courage to Teach" (Palmer, 2017, p. 21). It is so pertinent to teachers adopting John's dispositions… or perhaps it is the other way around, the dispositions of deep reflective practice are pertinent to teachers having the courage to teach. Deep reflective practice is absolutely part and parcel of teaching with identity, integrity and wholeness. Your book might not use the jargon often used in reflective practice literature, but it cuts straight to the core – the teachers. I remain convicted of all you say. I just believe that for many teachers, their identity, integrity and wholeness are under attack from accountability measures that major in minors, unsustainable scattered focus, compliance cultures and a sense of overwhelm that threatens to replace their original calling to a work contract."*

*Parker was quietly nodding, thinking. "Yes, I have sadly noticed the diminishing of values, the loss of soul in our educational workplaces. I noted in my book that "we spend too much time lost in the dark, alone and together" (Palmer, 2017, p. 213). After a pause, his face lit up. "I remain hopeful though Karyn. There are teachers all over the world who hold tightly to their 'teacher soul'."*

*I interrupted, "… and I want to discover how we can nurture those 'teacher souls' and build their capacity for courage. From what I observed and synthesised from the many*

*conversations with teachers and leaders, I believe deep reflective practice is evidence of such a soul and has the potential to safeguard and even intervene and become a catalyst for teachers to regain the soul of their teaching. It is both the solution and the process."*

*"Ah, now you are speaking my language", Stephen interjected. "Critical reflection … yes it takes courage, it is difficult, … and I might say, unpopular in many educational environments. It is a means to an end. Justice and equity are the overarching goals of critical reflection."*

*I looked at Stephen. "Your book challenged me, Stephen. It is an important reminder to look beyond my assumptions and to seek to learn from and with others for moral and ethical purposes. But, …" I took a breath; I wondered if I had the right to add my thoughts.*

*Stephen looked intently at me. I continued, "I actually feel as though there are other big, big societal issues that need to be considered in addition to power and hegemony. Purpose, identity, integrity…" I paused a moment. "I am grateful for the four perspective lenses you describe so well. They help clarify what it means to question assumptions to teach well and fulfil our overarching vocation as teachers. I just don't want to limit the big purposes."*

*I waited for Stephen to become defensive. He didn't. I went on, "Parker spoke to my soul, Stephen, but you offered scaffolds for understanding of what it might look like to be courageous and teach with integrity."*

*I looked at Donald. "Donald, your swamp metaphor fed my 'teacher soul'. That metaphor inspired me to be courageous and to see the difference between depending on 'high ground' instrumental pre-packaged solutions and digging deeply, using, I might say, Stephen's lenses and John's dispositions, feeding my 'teacher heart' and refusing to give in to a 'culture of fear', … thanks Palmer." I gazed at each of these courageous men with admiration. "You have all taught me so much." After a sip of steaming coffee I continued, "Donald, there appears to be some disconnect with the way many teachers interpret reflecting-on-practice and reflecting-in-practice. It is often interpreted in a very instrumental way – 'looking back to see how to improve' or 'thinking quickly on my feet'. There is little art in such interpretations."*

*Donald looked a little perturbed. "I was clearly intending something far bigger than that. In fact, …" he was clearly frustrated, "… there was a reason I began with talking about the swamp".*

*"Yes, and you inspired me to dig deep with courage. And yes, you suggested practicums where novice professionals learn from those who have mastered the art to such a*

*degree that it seems effortless. … Sadly, I have seen many teaching students return from practicums intended to inspire. Instead, I have seen some practicums result in furthering the cause of instrumental deficit-based, soulless teaching." My mind wandered to faces returning from teaching practicums uninspired, defeated, or devoid of Parker's 'teacher heart' or John's dispositions. Of course, there were other faces – excited, enthused, motivated and ready to keep growing. The silence in the room brought me back to the conversation. "I know there is no simple solution. If there were, we would expect it from Donald's 'high ground', … and that would not end well." There was a knowing smile on each face.*

*"So what next Karyn," Donald asked. "What are you proposing?"*

*"Well, first of all, to you Donald. I have been inspired by another metaphor that just might help the cause in addition to the 'swamp'?"*

*Donald's eyes looked into mine, "Go ahead."*

*"Pat Thomson (2019) has suggested the metaphor of 'studio' for critical reflection." This time Stephen's shoulders also went back.*

*In unison, the men unconsciously chorused, "Studio?"*

*John shot back, "That seems way too cosy and comfortable".*

*I responded. "But what if this is the missing link to creating the space for teachers to build their courage to go exploring in swamps? What if the fusing of these metaphors allowed the creativity of art to work in sync with the curiosity of critical thinking?"*

*Palmer was quietly nodding his head. "I think I can see it. 'Studio' gives the idea of a productive retreat. Stepping out of the madness of constant busyness to pause, equip, 'recover identity and integrity, reclaiming the wholeness of our lives' (Palmer, 2017, p. 21). This would allow teachers to build the dispositions needed to courageously dig in the swamps." We all looked to Donald.*

*Donald tapped his fingers on the seat, pensive and thinking. "The artistry of reflective practice…"*

*"Mmm … you have given us all something to think about Karyn."*

*"Oh, it is just an idea bubbling in my soul at the moment." I looked around at each of the wise men sitting with me. With more confidence, I stated, "I am sure that school leaders have to be very intentional in creating space for teachers to deepen their reflective practice. … That is not an easy task. Each of you and your ideas are core to understanding the need. School leaders must reflect very deeply, with every 'tool of the trade', so to speak, to find a way that works in the ecosystem of their practice."*

*The men murmured in thoughtful response, "Mmm".*

*The phone broke my reveille. The window looked out on the neighbour's fence. I took the books off my lap and stretched. "It is not going to be an easy task, but it will be worth it."*

## 5.13 Leaving a Trail: Chapter Précis

The findings of this study represent a crystallised synthesis of the perspectives of the participants from one rural Australian K-12 school regarding how school leaders might build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. This chapter has offered insights and interpretive theorising from the findings of this study, suggesting that the process of building teacher capacity and leading reflective practice involves providing a contextually derived dynamic web of support that is both flexible and resilient and purposed to empower teachers, both individually and collectively, to reflect deeply on the educational issues that really matter. In essence, such a web of support involves creating physical, semantic and relational space and offering a bespoke system of support with the intention of developing cultures of trust and collective responsibility. The results of this study add additional and original facets of understanding regarding the building of teacher capacity for deep reflective practice.

This chapter has also offered interpretive reflections on the crystallised methodological and reporting features of this study, including the creation and use of two diagrammatic models and the interpretive use of metaphors. The contributions of each were considered in terms of this study and the potential for further use and application in educational research.

The descriptive definition developed in Chapter Two was considered for potential ongoing use as a developmental evaluative tool for school leaders. The definition was reviewed and revised in order to reflect the findings and emphasise the ongoing process of deepening reflective practice. This original descriptive definition contributes to the ongoing development of knowledge and understanding in the field of educational reflective practice.

In the next chapter, we must tie the ends together and conclude the study, leaving the windows open for the zephyr of possibility as recommendations are suggested in terms of practice and research.

# CHAPTER SIX
# CONCLUSION: FILLING THE BACKPACK



***It was time to leave this swamp, so I carefully packed each precious jewel of wisdom into my backpack. Jewels of wisdom that I could share… Just in case I came upon another band of travellers seeking wisdom and insight in the land of their practice.***

## 6.1 Overview

This qualitative research study was designed to contribute to knowledge and understanding regarding reflective practice in the field of education. It is predicated on the established need for a deepening of reflective practices in an educational context embroiled in change and conflicting expectations (Moller, 2023). This study confirms and builds on previous research that has identified barriers to enacting deep reflective practices, including misunderstanding of the concept, episodic and fragmented attempts and the inertia of established practice (Amiripour et al., 2017; Massingham, 2014; Nolan & Guo, 2022). The purpose of this research study was to suggest recommendations for school leaders to consider when intentionally attempting to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. The

primary research question asked how school leaders could build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice and the secondary questions sought to understand the barriers and support measures participants believed were factors that impacted their capacity to deepen their reflective practice. During six visits over fifteen months, data were collected from informal interviews with teachers and school leaders of one Australian rural K-12 school. The overall finding of this study is that school leaders need to create a dynamic and multidimensional web of support to build capacity for deepened reflective practice. This should include structural and relational interventions and the provision of bespoke support for teachers at both an individual and collective level. This overall finding acknowledges the contextual, personal, interpersonal and organisational factors that impact teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice. Elements of the holistic findings of this study have been noted across a range of international educational research reports. Mitchell and Sackney (2016), in their study of fifteen high-capacity schools in the U.S.A., highlighted similar conclusions to those suggested by teachers in Faith School, adding credibility to the participants' voices. This unique qualitative case study adds a fresh viewpoint to current understanding regarding teacher capacity for reflective practice. When the findings of this study are examined within the scope of current research, it is clear that teacher capacity for deep reflective practice is dependent on multiple, interdependent, connected and interrelated factors involving personal, interpersonal and organisational capacities (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). It is an important matter, but it is not a simple one to address.

This final chapter briefly discusses the research-informed conclusions in terms of the research questions and interpreted findings. Recommendations for practice are drawn from the insights and theorising of the findings of this study. The chapter then moves to briefly discuss the trustworthiness and limitations of the study and add some recommendations for future research. A concluding description of the significant and original contributions to knowledge is offered before the final reflexive text where I share personal responses to this research journey.

## 6.2 Research-informed Conclusions and Recommendations for Practice

The conclusions of this study are directly linked to the findings of Chapter 4 and the interpretive analysis discussed in Chapter 5. They are organised according to the research questions. Findings responding to the secondary research questions provided the various elements that make up the dynamic web of support suggested as a response to the primary research question and modelled as a diagram in Figure 17. This discussion begins by noting

the research-informed conclusions that broadly address the primary research question. From a brief reminder of the whole, the discussion then addresses the partial conclusions drawn from responses to the secondary research questions. These are offered to add depth, understanding, and practical implications to the concept of a dynamic web of support. A range of recommendations are offered as suggestions for school leaders to consider when carefully designing the layers of intervention and opportunities that can interweave and build into a dynamic web of support intentioned to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice.

### 6.2.1 The Dynamic Web of Support

The primary research question of this study asked: "How can school leaders build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice?" The findings of this study denote the need for a dynamic web of support, leading to the conclusion that teacher capacity for deep reflective practice is dependent on multiple, interdependent, connected and interrelated factors involving personal, interpersonal and organisational capacities.

Foundational to the intentional provision of a web of support is the need for a shared conceptual and developmental understanding of reflective practice. This study and others have concluded that limited and varied understandings of the purposes and processes of reflective practice which lead to fragmented and ineffectual approaches, resulting in a reduced potential for impact.

> **Recommendation:** *In order to clearly communicate conceptual understanding and developmentally evaluate deepening reflective practice, school leaders should adopt a shared and detailed definition, such as the revised descriptive definition developed in this report, and utilise visual representations, such as the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice.*

A shared understanding of deep reflective practice recognises contextual impacts and considerations. Each educational organisation has a unique context, inferencing the need for leaders to understand their context and base their supportive measures on the strengths and needs that are particular to their situation and context, such as geographical, socio-political, socioeconomic, and human factors. Situations change, therefore support measures must be dynamic, having the flexibility to adapt and respond to those changes.

The secondary research questions explored the barriers and supports to teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice identified by teachers, school leaders and the researcher. Findings indicated the need to "weave" together of a range of supports in order to offer a dynamic web of support. There is a need for the "warp" threads of structural supports, such as providing space in terms of safe-guarded and focused opportunities, rigorous and intentional processes, and scaffolds that offer strength along with the space to grow and respond. Findings also revealed the need for the "weft" threads of relational support, the offering of discerning and differentiated support according to individual and collective teacher needs and the provision of opportunities for supported collaborative reflective practice. When weaving, neither weft threads or warp threads are useful alone. It requires the integration of both. Similarly, the web of support requires an interwoven integration of support factors in order to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. School leaders must be intentional in this matter, building a culture of trust and integrating deep reflective practice layer by layer into the unique contextual architectures of practice in the school.

### 6.2.2 Lead with Intention

Within the theme of leadership, it was found that school leaders need to intentionally lead with vision and passion, whilst tempering their approach to consider the well-being of their teachers and the realities of their school situation. There is a need for leaders to take a dialectical approach, adopting a stance of passionate, humble, and values-rich practical wisdom, whilst balancing vision and process, structure and relationships, and support and autonomy, at both an individual and collective level. Leaders' attitudes, actions, and aspirations are consequential to a teacher's capacity for deepened reflective practice.

Leaders must begin the change in culture with their own deepened reflective practice. Leaders are called to know. They need to understand their own strengths and challenges, build wise and balanced leadership teams and seek ongoing developmental growth.

This is a formidable task, especially in light of the stresses and strains of school leadership, dealing with many stakeholders, conflicting needs and pressures, and government overreach (Earley, 2016; Scott & Armstrong, 2019). Kelchtermans et al. (2011) likened the principal's role to that of a lonely gatekeeper, "caught in a web of conflicting loyalties … balancing on the threshold between inside and outside" (p. 96). The participants of this study recognised these difficulties. Just as teachers require a bespoke system of support to have the capacity for deep reflective practice, leaders should also be given support in order that they

have the capacity to be proactive rather than reactive and adopt a stance of deepened reflective practice in their leadership. This requires the support of a trusted facilitator.

> **Recommendation:** *School leaders should engage external support in the form of a mentor, coach, or critical friend to facilitate deepened reflective practice in their leadership.*

### 6.2.3 Create Space

Findings within the theme of space focused on time and personal and professional factors that either inhibited or built capacity for deepened reflective practice. Many teachers find themselves with no space in their practice for deep reflection. Scarcity of time is a commonly reported barrier to reflective practice. Constantly growing lists of tasks that must be completed tend to fill available time to overflowing, leaving limited or no time for reflective processes. A lack of time, among other factors, can result in both physical and emotional depletion, leaving teachers with little emotional space and reduced perceptions of professional efficacy. The dispositions of open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility known to be pivotal for deep reflective practice are difficult to maintain or develop when such *space* issues are experienced.

The findings of this study indicated that school leaders need to create space in the busy worlds of their teachers: time-space, personal-space, and professional-space. These issues must be addressed with intention and wisdom, using both structural and relational measures. Creating space involves the provision of time, including structuring opportunities for reflective dialogue (Dogan et al., 2019). To counter physical and emotional depletion and low professional efficacy, safe work environments must be built with cultures of trust and autonomy (Marshall et al., 2021). Deep reflective practice needs both the nurtured space of restoration and creativity, as depicted in the metaphor of studio (Thomson, 2019), and the courage and criticality inferred by the swamp metaphor (Schön, 1987).

> **Recommendation**: *School leaders should prioritise, safeguard and facilitate regular time and opportunities for focused and facilitated reflective dialogue and deepened reflective practice within the rhythms of structured school activities, balancing the need for restoration and creativity with the need for courage and criticality.*

### 6.2.4 Give Support

Intentionally addressing physical, emotional and professional depletion involves the provision of differentiated support. Leaders are called to know their teachers. It is in the *knowing* that this differentiated support can be given, that effective teams can be formed, and that a culture of trust and appreciation is established. Knowing requires listening, which informs the relational substance of support needed for teachers to flourish.

This study found that leaders need to listen, resource, and protect their teachers, acknowledging their complex and demanding roles and responsibilities. Individual teachers' stories, experiences, goals and challenges must be heard to enable leaders to provide the bespoke support that teachers need on both an individual and collective level. Listening matures to become reflective dialogue when there is a culture of collective responsibility and appreciative developmental growth, as opposed to a culture of appraisal and judgment. Mesimer (2022) has also advocated the need for a balance of differentiated support and both structured and open opportunities for individual and collaborative reflection. The results of this study emphasise that support must be differentiated.

> **Recommendation:** *In the stance of passionate humility, school leaders should get to know each of the teachers that they are leading through a process of supportive listening, in order to provide a responsive, flexible and differentiated system of support intended to build on teachers' strengths and reduce personal and professional barriers to capacity.*

### 6.2.5 Perspective, Pressure and Focus

Specific measures of support take several factors into consideration. Within the themes of perspective, external influences and focus, this study found that limited perspectives and scattered focus lead to shallow reflective practice. School leaders need to support opportunities for teachers to use a range of lenses to broaden the perspectives they seek in their reflections. They must also reduce the limiting nature of focus fatigue that results from external pressures, interruptions, competing initiatives, and role expectations and promote a long-term approach to deep reflective practice. Leaders must actively align both perspective seeking and synergised and sustained focus to an overarching and unifying purpose that transcends competing expectations, interruptions, and pressures. This will take much wisdom and intentionality from school leaders.

**Recommendation:** *School leaders should adopt contextually appropriate processes and procedures that protect a long-term, rigorous 'action plan' approach to achieving deeply reflective purposes. This will involve limiting the number of deep focus points expected of teachers and providing and protecting time and opportunities to see reflective processes through to a meaningful and professionally satisfying conclusion.*

### 6.2.6 Create Pathways

In addition to the structural and relational creation of space, the offering of discerning support, and the reduction of scattered focus, the participants of this study emphasised the importance of procedural planning when building capacity for deep reflective practice. This study found that school leaders need to create pathways, structural frameworks and rigorous processes that offer stability, protection of purpose and clear direction to deep reflective practices. Specific processes designed to facilitate and guide teachers in deep reflective practice, referred to as "scaffolds", need to be selected according to contextual and differentiated needs. Reflective circles (Baxter et al., 2021) is one example of a research-endorsed and facilitated scaffold for collective deep reflective practice. Mentoring (Tonna et al., 2017) is an example of a facilitated scaffold for individual deep reflective practice. Intentional pathways of processes, frameworks and scaffolds offer strong yet flexible and responsive structures within which teachers build confidence and courage to reflect deeply, take risks and innovate.

**Recommendation:** *As part of a dynamic web of support, school leaders should provide contextually appropriate and facilitated scaffolds for deep reflective practice, at both individual and collective levels.*

### 6.2.7 Cultivate Collaboration

Participants in this study believed that collaboration was essential for a school-wide reflective initiative to achieve significant purposes. They also noted inherent risks and pitfalls. This study found that a positive culture of collaboration and collective responsibility is needed for effective teamwork where teachers utilise their strengths, engage their interests and contribute to the *bigger picture* of purpose. This reduces perceived risks, expand perspectives and increases confidence. Martínez Godínez (2022) found that collaboration supported deep reflective practice only when teachers displayed open dispositions and when purposeful spaces and systematic processes were offered. Similarly, Owen and Buck (2020) noted that transformative team learning was dependent on attitudes, a safe and trusting

culture that promoted open expression, and relational structures that promoted growth. These relational and structural support measures are interdependent. The dynamic web of support suggested by the findings of this study requires wise and purposeful leadership to harness the positive potential for collaboration and avoid the pitfalls. Facilitated collective reflective practice offers opportunities to cultivate open dispositions and build effective teamwork skills.

> **Recommendation**: *School leaders should practically support the cultivation of effective teamwork skills and the dispositions of open-mindedness and collective responsibility through engaging in facilitated deep collective reflective practices.*

### 6.2.8 Build Momentum

Within the context of school-wide reflection and school-wide transformation and change, this study found that when working together on a shared journey of deepening reflective practice, there is a need to build momentum by pushing past the inherent inertia of established personal and organisational practices. Palumbo and Manna (2019) advise that organisations tend to be resistant to substantial change. Participants in this study suggested that school leaders must be intentional in navigating around identified barriers, utilising personnel as change agents and bringing together teams to implement change. In a similar vein to the overarching finding in this study, Hilden and Tikkamäki (2013) found that pushing past the barriers to build momentum requires a multidimensional approach. They cite the need for the prior establishment of "reflective capacity" or time, personal and professional space. They also describe the need for "reflective dialogue" or space and processes for collective reflective practice and "reflective experiment" or action-based exploring and trialling. They emphasise the importance of "reflective management control" or flexible structures when an organisation such as a school is intentionally desiring to push past the inertia of status quo for positive organisational learning and growth (p. 90). Their study and the findings of this study concur that the integration of 'structural' rhythms of safeguarded time and opportunities for facilitated reflective dialogue is essential to building a dynamic web of support embedded in action.

Starting is a very important area of consideration when intentionally building momentum. Ideas left hanging without action lead to cynicism and a culture of avoiding big issues. "Talk" disconnected from achievable action can result in teachers' disengagement. Ongoing action must include steps that are small enough to achieve without overburdening

teachers, yet significant enough to celebrate. Small successes within a purpose-embedded framework, such as an action plan, will support continued momentum and push against organisational inertia.

> **Recommendation**: *School leaders should devise a range of ways to visually recognise, remind, and refresh engagement in purpose-driven deeply reflective initiatives in order to achieve and celebrate small steps of purpose-centred action.*

### 6.2.9 Engage External Support

Finally, this study found that engaging external support has the potential to act as a scaffold for the development of a dynamic web of support. Engaging an external facilitator can be helpful in the developmental stages of providing a dynamic web of support. A facilitator who is not caught up in the daily entanglements of the local context can offer expanded perspectives and developmental accountability. Such scaffolded facilitation may be of value until effective structures, culture and momentum are achieved (Sperandio & Kong, 2018). It is essential that external facilitators exhibit the reflective dispositions of open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, directness and responsibility (Rodgers, 2002a), understand deep reflective practices, and approach their role with passionate humility.

> **Recommendation:** *Leaders of educational systems should train external facilitators to model reflective dispositions and skills, utilise a range of reflective scaffolds, and guide individuals and groups through deep reflective practices.*

### 6.2.10 Summary: Conclusions and Recommendations

This qualitative research study has heard the voices of school leaders and teachers in one Australian school, and their message is clear. There is an entanglement of barriers to teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice within the complexity of school contexts. Whilst the particulars vary from school to school, the themes are familiar, as discussed in Chapter Five. It is reasonable and logical that any attempt by school leaders to cultivate the capacity for deepened reflective practice must also be layered, interwoven and multidimensional. The conclusions and recommendations above are offered in the acknowledgement that there is no quick fix. Effective solutions will not be found in Schön's

high ground of technical pre-packaged solutions. Rather, leaders must look to the swamps of "messy indeterminate situations" (Schön, 1987, p. 4) to seek solutions to the complex problems of practice. This requires deep reflective practices from leaders and teachers. In order to build capacity for such deep reflective practice, this study proposes that leaders must seek ways to build living systems of support that are strong and flexible, sensitive and passionate, scaffolded and autonomous.

## 6.3 Trustworthiness and Limitations

As described in Chapter Three, this research study was designed and implemented with the intention of building trustworthiness by consideration of the eight criteria suggested by Sarah Tracy (2010). This research has a worthy and timely topic. Currently, the global educational context faces an exponential rate of societal change, "ever-growing and changing demands of national policy-makers and other stakeholders" (Earley, 2016, p. 22), and increasing instrumental standard-based accountability measures. There has never been a greater need for deep reflective practice, and it has never been more difficult to achieve. The crystallised approach to this qualitative research study has added rich rigour, seeking both breadth and depth in data gathering and analysis. Sincerity has been supported by honouring all participant voices and clearly indicating reflexive researcher perspectives. Credibility has been established through seeking multiple lenses of data, analysis and reporting, and through comparing findings with a large range of literature.

The findings that have emerged from the participants of this study have resonated closely with a range of research, conducted from around the world, adding credibility and trustworthiness to the participants' perspectives and the process of analysis. Resonance has also been supported by integrating creative representations with the more traditional reporting style to communicate the concepts and ideas in more ways, thereby impacting the reader on different levels. Ethical boundaries have been transparent to participants through gaining initial ethics approval, conducting thorough member checking, using pseudonyms, and the honouring of all voices.

There have been intentional measures of coherence at all levels of this research design, implementation, and reporting. The overarching coherent concept is that of the phenomena of reflective practice itself. It has been involved in every aspect of the study. It is evident in the comprehensive design, the data collection, and the triangulated analysis that included extensive constant comparison between analytical methods and the data. Deep

reflective practice became the standard for each interview. It became my *modus operandi* as a researcher.

Finally, and importantly, this study has contributed additional and consequential knowledge to the field of education. It has been conducted within the swamp of the messy complexity of one school. Seeking to understand the fullness of the lived experience of teachers and school leaders within this complexity, this study has avoided the "high ground" of instrumental findings by seeking understanding in the swamp of complex practice (Schön, 1987).

Such complexity has also brought inherent limitations. Time has been a great limitation. The original intention was to collect data over one school year. The emergent nature of the research design opened a window to extend the data collection into the following school year; however, this study was only able to capture the beginning of a long-term school initiative. Ideally, it would have been profitable to continue that journey through to the end of the second school year.

The complex research design has also been a difficult path to traverse. A further time limitation involved the time required for the extended triangulated analysis. This delayed the preparation of the final report, leading to a need for renewal of literature searches, once again adding to a cascade of delays, and frustrating the need for the voices of these participants to be heard in a timely manner. Such interruptions and time-based pressures are familiar to those working in schools. In effect, this limitation reflected similar barriers to those evident in regard to teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice.

"Interruptions" became a significant limitation of this study. Changes in staff roles within the initial year of data impacted the participants, the leadership team, and my perceived role. The principal was distracted from the initiative by external pressures and circumstances, leaving limited time for communication and supporting teachers in their reflective practices. Interruptions also impacted the data collection of this study. At the final meeting with the staff, final feedback forms were left for each participant to return by post. Soon after the final visit, the school was inundated with a flood that destroyed textbooks, student work, and the final feedback forms that collected and ready to post. As a result, I did not receive these. The unplanned interruptions of messy practice impacted teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice and also acted as limitations to this study.

Choosing to use a crystallised approach became both a strength and a limitation. It did suit the research purpose and questions; however, because crystallisation has not often been used in educational research, there were scant models and examples to support the many

quandaries I faced throughout this research journey. This became a challenge that needed both creativity and critical thinking, requiring deep reflective practice that was uncomfortable and felt insecure, yet offered opportunities for problem-solving and innovation.

This research is a qualitative case study of one school, its leaders and its teachers. Data consisted of participants' perceptions, and there was no intention to verify these objectively. The findings are offered as partial yet deep and rich perspectives that may be useful to other school leaders in other school contexts who seek ways to build their teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice. They are no more; they are no less. As a qualitative researcher, I make no claim to generalisability. The findings are presented here for perusal, consideration, and possible application by other educators and leaders who resonate with the elements of this context.

## 6.4 Research Contributions and Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this study, as established in Chapter 1, was to "suggest recommendations for school leaders to consider when intentionally attempting to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice". The design of the study included recommendations from previous research. Shabeeb and Akkary (2014) recommended the need to "further examine the factors that support or hinder teachers' learning experiences at all levels …and in different organizational contexts" (p. 394). They also noted the need for studies "to examine further the impact of the identified enhancing factors on teachers' reflective practice" (p. 395). Josten (2011) identified the need for in-depth studies to explore reflective practice through a better understanding of "the relationship between the supportive school environment - or the unsupportive environment - and the effectiveness of teachers' thinking and their teaching practices" (p. 299).

This research study has achieved its primary purpose and contributed additional knowledge and understanding regarding supports and hindrances for teachers' capacity to engage in deep reflective practice. Findings have identified a range of individual, interpersonal and organisational factors that impact teachers' reflective practices. The support measures suggested by the findings have brought additional light and an original holistic approach to a shared understanding of supportive and unsupportive school environments and the impact these have on teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice.

The findings of this study are significant. Seeking ways to build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice is crucial in a global and Australian educational context of rapid change, increasing instrumental accountability and the need to meet students' individual and

complex needs within an educational system that is still largely anchored to traditional models not designed to meet current needs. These findings present a holistic and contextual approach to building teachers' capacity for deep reflective practice. They offer the potential to bring about needed change and transformation. The findings add to a wide range of international and local studies, offering a unique synthesis from the viewpoint of the leaders and teachers in one Australian K-12 rural school. The synthesis of findings draws together individual elements that impact capacity in a sense of interconnected wholeness. Taken in their wholeness, these results suggest a change from leadership approaches which seek measurable accountability through narrow and compartmentalised means. Such approaches rarely result in transformational change. A dynamic web of support is more akin to building an ecosystem. This is not a simple approach, but it has the potential to make a profound difference. This study has contributed a list of recommendations for school leaders nested within the one overarching finding, that school leaders should build a contextual and dynamic web of support to build teachers' capacity for deepened reflective practice.

The study has also contributed additional perspectives to a shared understanding of the accumulative barriers that impact capacity building and reflective practice. Two models have been developed, the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice, and the Dynamic Web of Support Model. The Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice offers a combination of diagrammatic features to convey a conceptual framework of understanding for deepening reflective practice that offers ongoing value in terms of a communicative purpose. The Dynamic Web of Support Model also uses diagrammatic features to display the themes of barriers and supports that impact teacher capacity in addition to the broader conceptual issues of complex layers of structural and relational dimensions and the importance and mutual influence of considering teachers' capacity needs on both an individual and collective level.

In addition, a revised descriptive definition for deepening reflective practice has been derived from literature and revised to emphasise observations from this study. This definition is an original and significant contribution to school leaders for building a shared understanding of what deep reflective practice encompasses. It also has the potential for ongoing use as a developmental self-evaluative tool for tracking the development of deepening reflective practice in an educational context. Finally, the study has contributed the additional metaphor of quest to support an additional facet of understanding of the concept of reflective practice, emphasising adventure and deep purpose.

This study has contributed useful and original examples of original methodological elements that offer ongoing value to the field of educational research. The use of crystallisation in terms of methodology and reporting is not yet common in educational research. This study offers an example of the strengths and limitations of using crystallisation for future researchers to consider. Furthermore, the triangulation of analysis, combining constructivist grounded theory, situational analysis, and heuristic analysis, built a unique three-dimensional perspective of the participants' perspectives. This approach was a good fit for this study, offering contextual, individual, and collective perspectives as vital lenses through which to view the data and achieve the purpose of the study.

In light of the contributions and limitations of this study, some recommendations are offered for future research:

> **Recommendation:** *A future qualitative research project should be conducted to follow one school's attempt to build a practice-based Dynamic Web of Support following the recommendations from this research study, in order to verify contextual applicability, and build practice-based knowledge.*
>
> **Recommendation:** *Future research should be conducted within the field of education using the crystallised approach to support rich and nuanced accounts of lived experiences.*
>
> **Recommendation:** *Further study and research consideration should be given to better understand the dialectical value of utilising both creativity and criticality in deep reflective practice, bringing together the need to develop a sense of both possibility and courage when building attitudinal capacity for deep reflective practice.*
>
> **Recommendation:** *Further study be given to the role of facilitating deep reflective practice at the three levels of leadership, groups and individual teachers.*

In conclusion, this deep dive into the world of schools, teachers and reflective practice has been important and consequential. In a context with a great depth of need that is hampered by an encompassing squeeze of accountability to measurable yet inconsequential and even contradictory technical indicators of achievement, this study calls for a halt to the madness. This is a reminder that we must stop, … pause, … reflect deeply, … and breathe in the possibilities of deep and significant change that will help teachers flourish and improve their students' outcomes on matters that are important.

## 6.5 Researcher: My Voice, My Footprints, My Final Reflections

*As I stop and look back on the tale of this research "quest", I realise that I have lived and breathed my own adventure of deep reflective practice just as surely as I have accompanied the staff of travellers on theirs. I have learned much from my fellow travellers. I am indebted to their willingness to open the doors of their personal and professional selves. Throughout this 'quest' I have questioned, I have reflected, and I have grown. I am forever changed. This will not be my last quest.*

*As I reflect on this research journey, I am reminded of the impetus for this project. My school team were asked to describe and evaluate each teacher's reflective practice. I thought of the hastily written reflections required at the end of each teaching unit, writte for someone who would likely not read it, added to a page rarely retrieved.*

*"Meaningless! Meaningless! ... Everything is meaningless!" (Ecclesiastes 12:8 New International Version) were the words rolling through my mind. However, a glimmer of hope whispered in response, "But what if it's not? What if there was a way to reflect in practice AND make a difference." This research has been a long and difficult journey, but I am glad I listened to that whisper. I am now resolute that there is a way to reflect deeply and make the difference that our educational systems sorely need.*

*In the initial literature review, I felt the burgeoning excitement of discovery. Yes, here was the way. John Dewey taught me logic, Donald Schön gave me metaphor and artistry and Stephen Brookfield held out the challenge to consider critically, beyond the narrow constraints of mandated curriculum. Deep reflective practice was needed. Each student deserves no less than for teachers to dig deeply with the courage to swim against the flow and the willingness to question theories in action, holding them to the light of higher values, and acting to transform. I was not satisfied with the technical solutions that bypassed the important to simply achieve instrumental goals. It was with this fervour that I set out on this research quest.*

*Finding a school with a courageous dream excited me. My initial assumptions were that I could help empower teachers through a greater understanding of reflective practice. I believed that the fire in my soul would burn in others. My naivety even extended to thinking that in one year I would see what was to begin as collective reflective practice become increasingly evident as deepening individual reflective practice among teachers. It was not to be as I expected.*

*It was a bumpy journey, with setbacks, detours and delays. I have taught and led in schools for over three decades. This should not have surprised me. This wonderful group of school leaders and teachers, absolutely unique, yet oh, so familiar, were not characters in a fairy tale or a textbook. Their lived experience was real. Their situational complexities were real. I was to walk beside each participant, hear their stories, feel their emotions and face the conundrums of their professional experiences. Their stories became mirrors to my own soul, my professional identity and my personal responses and dispositions. And I was changed.*

*There were points of "aha". Moments of clarity that illuminated the way. Long experienced and taken-for-granted ideas and responses were seen in a new light as observations of participants' lived experiences resonated with my own lived experience in the field of education.*

*As I observed one interruption after another impacting the school and slowing down their ability to achieve their worthy goals, I was able to reflect on different interruptions having the same impact on my own teaching. I looked back over thirty years in schools and realised that this is always the story. Interruptions, unplanned and unavoidable, are inevitable. This is the "certainty of surprise" that school leaders and teachers experience often. It became clear that we should not continue to be surprised, disappointed or frustrated. These emotional responses were self-defeating. There must be a different way to view them and respond to them. Mitchell and Sackney (2016) suggest that interruptions can be viewed as opportunities for growth and creativity. I look forward to living that "aha" into my ongoing teaching.*

*Another "aha" moment occurred as I saw the reality of scattered focus in the lives of the teachers. A cascade of ideas and focus, regardless of the merit and value of each one, leaves teachers depleted if there is not enough time or professional space to see them through top effective fruition. I could see how this had played out in my own career and those of my colleagues. Such scattered focus involves much change but little transformation. Its fruits are exhaustion, dissatisfaction, frustration, and quite often, cynicism and a compliance mentality that only masquerades as reflective practice. Original noble purposes are drowned in busyness. I have experienced this. It is only too familiar, yet it has not been exposed, examined, and enacted upon. I believe that the only way forward is to synergise focal points under one banner, a worthwhile banner that can be believed in by all. This offers the potential for a culture of thriving rather than surviving. A culture of synergised focus is needed to transcend the minutiae and offer enough time and space for teachers to engage in deep reflective practice and effect authentic change.*

*A third "aha" revealed itself as I was pouring over each individual participant's interviews through the extended processes of heuristic inquiry. I realised that I had initially assumed it was important for every teacher to reflect at a critical level, digging deep, ensconced in societal concerns. My research question had however used the term "deepened" rather than critical, referencing a movement in reflective practices towards deeper questioning practice and becoming open to a greater range of perspectives for the benefit of their students' important needs. As I listened and conversed with each teacher, I could see that each cared deeply about their students. However, not all would become societal prophets, standing on the edge of society and calling out for great reforms. Not all needed to do that. Not all should do that. My "aha" was that a collaborative staff team could engage in critical reflection as part of their collective reflective practices, without the need for each member of the team to reflect at that critical level. A team is best comprised of a wide range of members with different strengths and challenges.*

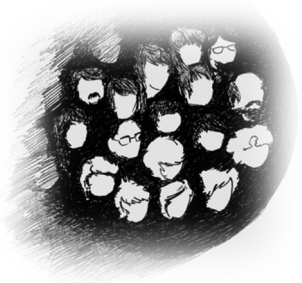
*Whilst there are countless stories to tell of my own learning on this complex journey, I will conclude with my metaphor "aha". As I have related, Schön's swamp metaphor came alive as an ongoing and influential allegory that brought added meaning and depth to my understanding of this crystallised research journey and my concept of deep reflective practice. I infused the courageous "quest" allegory into how I initially explained reflective practice with the participants, and indeed, how I personally lived and breathed this research "adventure". As I listened to the participants and then extensively analysed their responses, I could see that they related to the idea of a journey, but that most were not ready for a "quest". Some were enthusiastic initially, but as the year wore on with its rhythm of busyness, interruptions, and the meeting of expectations, many found themselves moving one step at a time, needing well-established pathways and support for a journey they believed to be important but for which they were ill-equipped. Once again, their experience held a mirror to my own professional experiences. There were many times when I was trudging the professional road with heavy steps, struggling to breathe, eyes to the ground to ensure I didn't trip. In the final literature review, conducted after writing the findings chapter, I discovered a new metaphor. It didn't replace the quest but added a needed element that had been missing. The studio metaphor put forth by Pat Thomson (2019) helped me see that a quest was filled with curiosity and a desire to discover, but there was little room for creativity. "Studio" involves space, pause, creativity, experimentation, possibility, and innovation. It is a place for one or a group of like-minded artists. I think back to the many expeditions I did as a child with my father, looking for precious and interesting crystals,*

*jewels, and rocks. That was never the end of the story. We came home and looked over what we had found. We labelled and displayed. My father cut and polished. He set some for jewellery and shone lights through others to capture their true colours. My metaphor had been incomplete. The swamps of important problems are where we must dig and seek solutions. This does take courage and resolve, but it is not the end of the story. We need a studio to come back to, where we can share the stories, look over what we have found with others, label, create and innovate. We need that space to bring the colour and nuances of practice to view in their beauty. We need to shine the light of celebration and joy through all that we do. Our students need to see the hope, the adventures, the joy, and the peace that we want for them, through our lives.*

*In conclusion, I find myself standing beside Lisa Wright, as she calls out a challenge to all school leaders:*

> It is incumbent upon us, upon me, to choose to descend to the swamp. I may find myself there alone, or I may find others who have found the courage to go there too. The dilemmas, ambiguity, conflicts and disturbances in the swamp are endless, but important. In addition, lying in the depths of the swamp are hidden possibilities, freedoms, chances and potentialities. In the swamp we no longer focus on ridding our lives and schools of problems; rather, we embrace each opportunity to create and understand what is most important to students and to us. (Wright, 2009, p. 265)

*"Reflective practice has many facets. It wears faces that vary from heart to heart, yet one thing unites all – intentionality, great intentionality. Deep reflective practice happens on purpose, by purpose, for purpose." (Karyn Cameron, 2023)*



## 6.6 Leaving a Trail: Thesis Précis

Education in Australia and across the globe is thwarted by complexities, compliance, and unprecedented change. There is an acknowledged need for school leaders and teachers to engage in deep reflective practice in order to meet the changing needs of students with moral and ethical discernment. Deep reflective practice seeks insight, innovation, improved outcomes, and transformation of practice. There is a balancing acknowledgement that the complexities, compliance, and change that increase the need, also combine to diminish teachers' capacity to engage in deep reflective practice. In addition, reflective practice is often conceptualised in a limited instrumental way which reduces its potential.

The primary research question in this crystallised qualitative study asked how school leaders might build teachers' capacity to reflect deeply. The secondary questions explored the barriers and supports participants in this study perceived as impacting teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. The purpose of this study was to offer recommendations for school leaders to consider when intentionally attempting to build their teachers' capacity for reflecting deeply .

This study has contributed additional knowledge and understanding regarding the barriers and supports that impact teacher capacity. Specific barriers such as scarcity of time, physical and emotional depletion, focus fatigue, and a reduced sense of professional efficacy arose from the findings. The entangled nature of these barriers and their stubbornness to change add to the dilemma facing school leaders and teachers. The results of this study have contributed additional knowledge and understanding regarding the need for a holistic approach to overcoming these barriers and building teacher capacity.

The overarching finding of this study suggests the need for school leaders to build a dynamic web of support that encompasses the intentional provision of both structural and relational support. Structural support includes safeguarding time and ensuring opportunities for focused and facilitated reflective practice within the rhythms, processes, and procedures of school. Relational support includes getting to know each teacher in order to offer bespoke, differentiated assistance and cultivating a culture of collaboration. This study has noted the crucial way in which these structural and relational interventions work together. School leaders are called to offer stability, direction, and protection of purpose, in conjunction with providing individual support, facilitation, reflective dialogue, and the building of trust and collective responsibility. A practically wise leader has the dialectic task of balancing the strength of structures with the flexibility and sensitivity of autonomy, possibility, and

strength-based teamwork. This holistic approach is acknowledged as complex; therefore, this study suggests there is value in engaging external support in the development phase of meeting these needs.

This crystallised qualitative study has utilised deep reflective practices within the research design to capture rich and deep accounts of participants' lived experience of reflective practice within the complexity of a functioning school. It has yielded several original significant contributions to knowledge. The descriptive definition for deepening reflective practice and the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice support shared understandings of the multiple dimensions of reflective practice in an educational context. Both have ongoing potential to be used as communicative and developmental self-evaluation tools. The Model of a Dynamic Web of Support contributes a diagrammatic representation of the elements and dimensions of a holistic approach to building capacity. It has ongoing communicative potential, supporting leaders in the complex task of building teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. This study has also contributed the additional metaphor of "quest" in conceptualising deep reflective practice. Finally, this study has contributed an example of a crystallised approach to educational research.

This study's research design, implementation, analysis, and reporting has been a deeply reflective quest. Its purpose has been to find ways to build capacity for teachers to have the courage to reflect deeply and, if necessary, transform their practice to better meet the needs of their students. Recommendations have been made to support school leaders in commencing this journey.



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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Harvest Project

*This research study was conducted within the context of the early stages of Faith School's long-term Harvest Project initiative. Following is a brief, time-bound description of the project.*

**The catalyst for inception:** The idea of Harvest was spawned out of discontent with traditional schooling and its inability to meet the needs identified within the school's student population. The principal shared a book with all school staff members that exposed many deficits in traditional formal school practices. The staff met and discussed the ideas within the context of Faith School and their students' needs. Alternative and innovative ways to do schooling more holistically were sought. Within the faith tradition of this school, ideologies that emphasised character development, critical thinking and holistic health pointed to the potential for outdoor and garden-based opportunities for service and the development of practical skills to impact attitudes and character development whilst connecting learning and offering relevance to the curriculum being taught.

**Initial big picture conceptions:** During the visioning process, many teachers felt confronted by open-ended ideas that were not attached to a transparent and clear process. In group discussions and individual interviews, there was a clear consensus regarding the needs of the students, but a wide range of cautionary responses. Barriers to moving forward included time, commitment, finances, concerns regarding either too quick or slow progress, small school limitations, and guilt reactions. Teachers needed a clear step-by-step process and strong leadership that acknowledged teachers' daily realities and curriculum requirements amidst big-picture visioning.

**Pilot Project:** The principal and two staff members engaged in a Year Nine pilot project involving integrated learning through gardening – moving from creating garden beds, soil development, planting, garden maintenance, harvesting, creating garden-based products, marketing and sales and learning evaluation.

**Ongoing Reflective Practice:** All teachers were asked to reflect deeply and consider ways they might transform their own practice to be more garden or outdoor-centred, integrated, connected and values-rich. They were asked to consider short-term steps they might make and the potential for longer-term transformation of practice.

**Focus plans for 2017:** Out of this complex journey, the administration team and teachers made plans for a whole-school approach that involved project-based learning (with an emphasis on outdoor, nature-based learning where possible) and a more intentional school-wide emphasis on values-based character development to support both teachers and students in noticing, nurturing and celebrating growth.

## Appendix B: Ethics Original Application

**Project Title:** Building teacher capacity for deep reflective practice through scaffolded contextual professional learning

**Principal Investigator (Lead researcher):**
Karyn Stanton – karynstanton@adventist.org.au
**Supervisors:**
Maria Northcote - maria.northcote@avondale.edu.au;
Kevin Petrie - kevin.petrie@avondale.edu.au

**Abstract:** The intention of this qualitative constructivist case study is to analyse responses to a scaffolded professional learning program that has been contextually developed to deepen capacity for reflective practice within one school. It is intended to use a model of reflective practice, developed from the literature review, as a framework for the professional learning program with the purpose of building a shared understanding and guiding scaffolded support for critical reflective practice over the course of one school year.

**Objectives of study:** The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of effective ways to deepen teachers' capacity to engage in deep reflective practice.

**Background to the study: In** a climate of high expectations and rapid change, there is great need for innovation and reflective practice within Australian education. As an element of their professional artistry (Schön, 1987), teachers need the capacity to engage in deep reflective practice with skill and purpose. The concept of reflective practice, however, is shackled by misunderstanding, fragmentation and the inertia of status quo. Its potential to transform practice and improve outcomes is rarely realised.

**Literature Review:** For the purposes of this study, reflective practice is defined as a deliberate professional process embedded in action which involves questioning and analysing current assumptions and practice through theory and varied perspectives, and seeking insight which leads to transformation of professional beliefs and behaviours, ultimately leading to improved outcomes. This researcher has constructed the "Harmonious Reflective Practice Model" to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of deep reflective practice. The model holds in dialectic tension the rigour of John Dewey's four criteria for reflective thinking – meaning making; rigour; community; and open-minded, whole-hearted, focused, open-minded responsible attitudes (Rodgers, 2002a), along with the concept of a professional artistry (Schön, 1987) that is best acted out beyond the constructs of instrumental rationalism. Other theorists and current research have influenced the model with the infusion of the concepts of transformational learning (Josten, 2011; Mezirow, 2010; Ward & McCotter, 2004), seeking hidden assumptions (Brookfield, 2009; Sellars, 2012), and employing both affective and social supports in the development of reflective practice (Parsons & Stephenson, 2005; Taylor, 2010). The model also displays the varying qualities of reflective practice, ranging

from pre-reflective routine behaviours through to critical reflection, along with its potential to transform practice (Larrivee, 2008a; Ward & McCotter, 2004).

The literature review also highlighted a number of identified barriers to reflective practice, and some evidence of supportive actions towards developing more effective and deeper reflective practice. Barriers can be grouped into the categories of misunderstanding (Loughran, 2002; Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014), fragmented approaches (Edwards & Thomas, 2010; Harnett, 2012; Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014) and the inertia of status quo (Le Fevre, 2014; Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014). Supports include developing a shared understanding (Harnett, 2012; Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014); a harmonious approach to development including scaffolding (Cornish & Jenkins, 2012), contextualisation (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006) and a long term commitment (Leeman & Wardekker, 2014; Massingham, 2014); and the development of open-minded attitudes, empowered for change (Dimova & Loughran, 2009; East, 2014; Nelsen, 2015).

Recommendations from other research studies lie at the heart of this project. These include seeking a deeper understanding of how to develop reflective thinking; the formation and use of purpose and implementing changes which support teachers' willingness to take risks (Josten, 2011); examining the use of scaffolding and identified supports and barriers (Shabeeb & Akkary, 2014) and identifying innovative and effective strategies to develop reflective practice (Parrish & Crookes, 2014).

**Research Design and Methodology:** This is a qualitative constructivist case study. Reflective Practice is core to the conceptual, theoretical and methodological frameworks of this study.

**Setting:** This study will be conducted within one school chosen as a significant case study. The context of the school is pivotal to the study and data collection methods are chosen to gain a deeper picture of the development of reflective practice within this context.

**Recruitment:** The researcher will approach a school in which school administration is seeking a significant change that engages all teachers, and that is also willing to become involved in this year-long study. Teacher participants will be given the choice of whether or not to be involved in the interviews and/or focus groups. Full information about the study will be given to all potential participants before consent is sought (see Appendices B-E, Ethics Application Form). There will be no pressure for involvement, and withdrawal will be an option at any point in the study.

**Data Collection:** In order to build a thick and multi-perspectival description, qualitative data will be sought through interviews and focus groups from both teacher participants and school administration (see Appendices F-J, Ethics Application Form)**,** to gain both a sense of single and collective viewpoints. The researcher, in both the roles of professional learning mentor and researcher will be given a reflexive voice through the researcher's journal. All participants will have the opportunity to see transcripts of their personal interviews, and to

clarify, change or even withdraw data. Regular member checks are an important aspect of this study. They may also be of benefit to the participant's growing self-awareness.

**Data Analysis:** Constructivist grounded theory; situational analysis; and crystallisation will be used in analysis to build a rich account from a variety of viewpoints. Analysis will be ongoing, with participants being given multiple opportunities to engage with the data and collaborate in the development of themes and categories, and eventually inform the recommendations built from the data.

**Ethical Implications:** This is a low-risk study, with adult participants, audio recordings of interviews and focus groups, and external transcription development. Integrity will be intentionally built through the process of regular member checks and opportunities for collaboration of themes and recommendations. Fairness is served through collecting both group and individual data, giving voice to those that may not speak up within a group. All teachers will be given the option to be involved in the interviews and groups, once again supporting fairness and justice. There is the potential for benefit to the participants as the interviews and group sessions have the potential to support self-awareness and reflective thinking. Safety is an important matter and will be considered in the choice of timing and placement of interviews, so that there is a mutual feeling of safety. Audio-recordings will be destroyed through deletion of files once transcriptions are completed. Participants will be de-identified. Paper data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the premises of Karyn Stanton, and e-data will be kept on a secure Moodle site within Avondale's password protected Learning Management System.

**Timeline:** The aspects of this study involving the school will be conducted in six main stages over the course of one year (see Appendix L, Ethics Application Form). The first stage would begin towards the end of 2015. This would involve giving information, seeking consent and then negotiating the contextual design of the professional learning and the timing for interviews and focus groups. This stage gives opportunity for the first interviews with school administration. The second stage involves delivering the first professional learning program and collecting interview and focus group data from all consenting participants. The third and fourth stages will be conducted throughout the year as the scaffolded professional learning is rolled out. Each stage involves data collection. Data analysis will be ongoing, giving opportunity for participant member checks and collaborative input into analysis. The fifth stage will occur near the end of the school year, and will involve the final data collection. The sixth stage will occur near the beginning of the 2016 school year and will involve member checks and further collaboration of analysis and input to recommendations coming from the study.

## Appendix C: Ethics Approval

Human Research Ethics Committee
Telephone: 02 4980 2121
Fax: 02 4980 2117
Email: research.ethics@avondale.edu.au

11 November 2015

Karyn Stanton
11 Madera Place
LESMURDIE WA 6076

Dear Karyn,

Thank you for submitting an application for ethics approval for your project *Building teacher capacity for deep reflective practice through scaffolded contextual professional learning.*

Your application was deemed to be of a low-risk nature and eligible for expedited review. I am pleased to advise that your project is granted ethics approval for the duration of your project to 31 December 2018, project number [2015:36].

The following additional standard conditions apply:

1. That you notify the committee of any changes to circumstances or research design, which might require a review of the ethics approval.
2. That you provide an annual interim report of your progress to the committee, and a final report once this project is completed. The first report will be due twelve months from the date you commence the research.

We wish you well in this valuable research endeavour.

Sincerely

**Roberta Matai**
Secretary
Avondale Human Research Ethics Committee

## Appendix D: Excerpt from Participant Information Sheet

**Project Title:** Building teacher capacity for deep reflective practice through scaffolded contextual professional learning

**YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROJECT:**
You are invited to participate in a research project that aims to analyse responses to a scaffolded professional learning program that has been contextually developed to move past identified barriers and deepen the capacity for reflective practice within one school.

**RESEARCHERS' NAMES:**
Karyn Stanton; Maria Northcote; Kevin Petrie

**PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT:**
Your participation in this project is sought so that school leaders and teachers can develop a better understanding of effective ways to deepen teachers' capacity to engage in deep reflective practice.

**PARTICIPATION CRITERIA:**
Participants for this study will include:
School administration from a selected school wishing to deepen reflective practice through school-wide professional learning;
All practicing teachers within the selected school who take part in the professional learning program will be invited to take part in individual interviews and/or purposeful focus groups.

**WHAT PARTICIPATION INVOLVES:**
Teacher participation in interviews will involve four interviews (30-45 min) spread throughout the school year to describe and record individual representations of experiences involving the four criteria of reflective practice and any changing responses over the course of the scaffolded professional learning program.

Teacher participation in focus groups will involve four focus (30-45 min) groups spread throughout the school year to describe and record group representations of experiences involving the four criteria of reflective practice and any changing responses over the course of the scaffolded professional learning program.

School administrators' participation in interviews will involve five interviews (30-45 min) spread throughout the school year to describe and record individual representations of experiences involving the

## Appendix E: Participant Consent Forms - Principal

**Consent Form: Building teacher capacity for deep reflective practice**

Avondale
COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**School Principal CONSENT FORM**

**Project Title:** Building teacher capacity for deep reflective practice through scaffolded contextual professional learning

**RESEARCHERS' NAMES:**

Karyn Stanton – ph: 0438 586 786; karynstanton@adventist.org.au
Maria Northcote - maria.northcote@avondale.edu.au
Kevin Petrie- kevin.petrie@avondale.edu.au

I _____ agree, on behalf of _____ School to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I have read and understood the information provided in the Information Statement to Research Participants. I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have been given to keep.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me. I understand that the interviews and focus groups that I take part in will be audio recorded and transcribed for analysis using an external service to support de-identification. Recordings will be destroyed immediately after transcription. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to contribute to:

- Ongoing negotiation to support a professional learning program that meets the needs of my school and staff;
- Four 30 – 45 minute focus groups over the course of one year; and/or
- Five interviews, taking 30 – 45 minute interviews each over the course of one year.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers, and that I will be given the opportunity to review and amend data collected from myself in the ongoing process of collaborative data collection and analysis.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

## Appendix F: Participant Consent Forms - School Leader Consent

**Consent Form: Building teacher capacity for deep reflective practice**

Avondale
COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**School Administration Participant CONSENT FORM**

**Project Title:** Building teacher capacity for deep reflective practice through scaffolded contextual professional learning

**RESEARCHERS' NAMES:**

Karyn Stanton – karynstanton@adventist.org.au ph: 0438 586 786
Maria Northcote - maria.northcote@avondale.edu.au
Kevin Petrie- kevin.petrie@avondale.edu.au

I _____ agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I have read and understood the information provided in the Information Statement to Research Participants. I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have been given to keep.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me. I understand that the interviews and focus groups that I take part in will be audio recorded and transcribed for analysis using an external service to support de-identification. Recordings will be destroyed immediately after transcription. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to contribute to either or both of the following:

- Five 30 – 45 minute focus groups over the course of one year.
- Up to five interviews, taking 30 – 45 minute interviews each over the course of one year.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers, and that I will be given the opportunity to review and amend data collected from myself in the ongoing process of collaborative data collection and analysis.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

## Appendix G: Participant Consent Forms - Teacher

**Consent Form: Building teacher capacity for deep reflective practice**

Avondale
COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**Teacher Participant CONSENT FORM**

**Project Title:** Building teacher capacity for deep reflective practice through scaffolded contextual professional learning

**RESEARCHERS' NAMES:**

Karyn Stanton – ph: 0438 586 786; karynstanton@adventist.org.au
Maria Northcote - maria.northcote@avondale.edu.au
Kevin Petrie- kevin.petrie@avondale.edu.au

I _____ agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I have read and understood the information provided in the Information Statement to Research Participants. I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have been given to keep.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me. I understand that the interviews and focus groups that I take part in will be audio recorded and transcribed for analysis using an external service to support de-identification. Recordings will be destroyed immediately after transcription. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to contribute to:

- Four 30 – 45 minute focus groups over the course of one year.
- Four interviews, taking 30 – 45 minute interviews each over the course of one year.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers, and that I will be given the opportunity to review and amend data collected from myself in the ongoing process of collaborative data collection and analysis.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

## Appendix H: Excitements and Fears – November 15 Focus Group

*Teachers and school leaders broke into groups and brainstormed their early responses to Harvest.*

| Excitement | Worries |
|---|---|
| **Group 1** *[secondary teachers]* | |
| Active P & C | Unstructured activity and loose students |
| Parental Buy-in | Perhaps roll out later to High School |
| Selling Point | High School indicative hours |
| Integration | Time |
| Big picture | How can we provide enough work? |
| Primary School will get excited | Parental misconceptions, re: boy/girl split - reflective practice? |
| Manage budget | How can we copy the blueprint in the 21st Century? |
| Contribute to fees | |
| Older students could help staff student ratio | |
| Sell core beliefs to parents well | |
| Work for $: Cleaning; moving; Fruit trees; honey; tuck shop; Op shop; nursery | |
| **Group 2** *[School leader and secondary teachers]* | |
| Develop responsibility (parable of the talents) | Reach BOS requirement |
| Student leadership | Cost $ / Resources |
| **STEM** | Workload to develop |
| Student excitement about learning | Fear of change / Unknown |
| **Group 3** *[mixed secondary and primary teachers]* | |
| Unique Selling Opportunities (Welch et al.) | Professional development |
| More time outdoors | Definition of a project? |
| Thinking outside the square | Accountability to powers that be |
| Meeting atypical child's needs | TIME & ENERGY |
| Developing a great love of learning | Support staff? |
| Involving more people from the community | Getting parents on board |
| Developing life skills | Communication |
| Developing good leadership skills | Equipment / Resources |
| Watching kids work as a team / building better relationships with each other | Safety WHS |
| | Programming |
| **Group 4** *[secondary teachers]* | |
| Results | Subjectivity |
| Students taking ownership of their learning journey | Change without purpose |
| Teaching engaged and interested children | More work landing on me |
| Expanding my repertoire of skills | Lack of structure and discipline |
| **S**tudents **W**illingly **I**nvesting **T**hrough **I**nnovations (SWITI) | Unnecessary programming without support, in isolation |
| **Group 5** *[School leader, secondary and primary teachers]* | |
| God's promises | Lack of staffing |
| Toads into frogs | Task variety |
| We'll stand out | Parent perception |
| Reaching different learning styles and their different strengths | Curriculum barriers and complexities |
| Doing God's work (Blueprint) | Lack of resources |
| Exciting to try something new! | Funding |
| Staff unity | Paperwork |
| Adventuring outside the 'mundane' classroom | Class management |
| Hope | Academic standards |
| Renew their passion and wonder for the natural world that God created. | Time |

## Appendix I: Allegory Two – [Shared in the Final Staff Meeting]

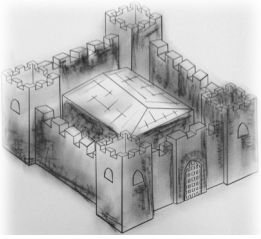
**The Quest – An allegory of reflective practice - The journey so far**

Everyone in the land knew something of the jewel. Many spoke of its lustre and magical qualities, some even claimed to possess this rare and valued gem. There were scrolls laboriously written to describe it, and many attempts at creating copies. In fact, the copies were easily purchased. And so it came to be, in the land of Profession, that the majority of citizens believed they owned one of these gems – copies of course, … but few had felt the magic. The powerful jewel of Reflective Practice had become a legend that most thought to be a fairy tale.

For those who displayed their copies there was no reason to search any further. Life in Profession was demanding enough. Time was limited, and so much was expected. Their copied gem filled the spot required, and they continued their daily busyness.

Most of the citizens of the land lived within the high, hard walls of Technical Rationality (Schön, 1987). Within these walls there were to be found systematic solutions to all problems. The citizens worked hard applying and delivering pre-packaged solutions. Of course, the very nature of the solutions meant that the problems also needed to be pre-packaged. The citizens felt safe in following the expertise of others, and if the "solutions" didn't work, … they just quietly closed the doors of their practice and either gave up or persisted trying with the same formulaic solutions.

Although those who governed the city of Technical Rationality had explicit expectations that all citizens display their Reflective Practice gem, there was no will or way to tell the real from the fake, so life went on, with copies of the jewel found throughout the city, citizens busy following the laws of the land, and there was no magic to be found.



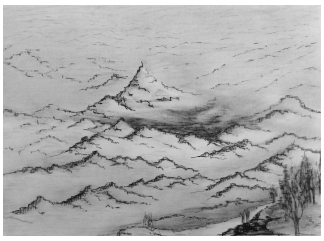
Behind the closed doors of complex practice, some citizens got together and wondered. They wondered if there was another way. They wondered if magic actually existed. They wondered if there really was an actual jewel of Reflective Practice, one with magic to open the closed doors and enable transformation within complexity.

As these citizens pondered the reality of their dilemma, a slight glow was seen to illuminate one of the copied jewels briefly. Whilst it didn't last, it was enough to provide

hope to this small band of professionals. They poured over the scrolls and found that all accounts of the real jewel were cited from beyond the walls of Technical Rationalism. It seemed that they would need to open the doors and leave the safety of their current practice.



And so it was that this Band of the Brave slipped out of the city gates and headed for a vantage point to look over the land and plan their journey. As they looked over the lie of the land ahead, doubts crept in.



"I'm barely surviving within the safety of the city. What chance have I got out there in that wilderness?" said one. The quiet that followed fell over the band like a fog, heavy with fears.

"Looks like a whole lot of hard work, with no guarantee of success. What's the point? We work too hard as it is," said another.

"Look, who's in charge here! Who has the map? Where are the supplies? I can see a whole lot of pits on the trails down there. If we get lost out, who is going to rescue us. It's a risk I'm not prepared to take. When I see a map, and the journey properly planned… well… I'm staying right where I am until I'm convinced."

"Hey, this is not good timing. One thing at a time please! You simply can't survey the whole land at once. We could just end up in no man's land… Another time may be."

The travellers were stepping back toward the city, and the journey was in jeopardy. Heads were turning back to the gates when a voice called out,
"Why not? Anyone can see the so-called "gems" we are using at the moment simply aren't working the way we need them to. Let's get out there and explore. …C'mon, we can do this!"



An ember of hope cast a glow over the fog of doubts, well at least for some. Some of the travellers set out on short forages into the edges of the swamps. They brought back stories of adventure and hope. They knew the best gems were found further and deeper into the swamplands. To find them would take the whole Band. There were perils in the wilderness as well as treasures. They needed each other.

A group within the Band got together. They poured over the scrolls and the maps. They decided to map out the beginning of their journey and agree on where they would start searching. As they looked over maps and other adventurers' journals, they could identify

some of the pits and create a packing list. They were convinced, however, that real gems were to be found. They weighed the risks with the benefits and came up with some ways to move around the pits and dangers.

With a deep breath, these plans were shared with the rest of the travellers. Some of the Band weren't convinced. "… All words…," they called. Others felt a glimmer of hope in their hearts.



With the packing list in hand, the travellers began to gather the equipment they needed. More of the Band headed off in short forays. This time they explored in groups. Each time they returned, they shared their successes, … and their failures, … adding to the maps.

And so, in time, and without even realizing it, the "Band of the Getting Braver" found themselves moving away from the walls, … together.

The journey had begun.

## Appendix J: Pre-liminary Co-Constructed Recommendations

Possible Recommendations to Similar Schools Embarking on Critical Reflection & Transformational Change – shared as a PowerPoint with participants, March 2017.

**SUMMARY**

**Build shared understanding as a whole school.**

**Ensure there is a step-by-step process in place which includes ongoing questioning and evaluation.**

**Allocate time and resources to the development of both the reflection and the changed practice.**

**Create synergy through a clear, simplified process.**

**The benefit of listening to teachers – (safe, professional conversations).**

**The benefit of an external facilitator (or mentor).**

**<u>Preliminary Recommendations with quotes from interview summaries that add detail</u>**

***Build shared understanding as a whole school.***

- Seek ways to create a shared understanding of the initiative/quest/transformation [e.g. mind maps, visual display, professional learning as a whole staff].
- "You can't sell something to someone else when you don't know what you are selling".
- Once staff are enabled, there needs to be communication that enables the whole school community.
- Shared understanding needs to flow out to students, parents, and the community. This will support change, and keep accountability high.
- Ongoing and visible emphasis on the purpose of change so that it is not lost in the busyness of changing structures and practices.
- There need to be some visible "flagships" as a reference for further change. Initial projects need to be overtly aligned with the core purpose of the change to encourage buy-in and enthusiasm from staff, students, and the community.

***Ensure there is a step-by-step process in place which includes ongoing questioning and evaluation.***

- Avoid leaving staff with a big idea and no steps in place to achieve the goals.
- Leadership is needed to give vision and to drive the project in a practical, clear process. Someone needs to put in the little steps that will move things from an idea to an ongoing rigorous school improvement plan.
- Someone needs to "drive" a shared critical reflection initiative. This needs to be an explicit role.
- Admin needs some idea of where they are headed, and some outline of how they will enable the staff to keep going.
- Keep the initial purpose or intention constantly in focus in planning, implementing, and evaluating.
- Take care not to fall into the trap of simply asking the questions but not moving on to actually change the way things are.
- Critical reflection and transformation of practice are long-term in nature. A rigorous process needs to be long-term.

***Allocate time and resources to the development of both the reflection and the changed practice.***

- Time is needed to have an ongoing impact.
- There needs to be an established and shared evaluation process that is ongoing and long-term.
- There needs to be buy-in from staff, and scheduled meetings so that teachers can meet and think and talk about what they are doing and achieve a flow of ideas.
- Time and scheduled meetings are needed to bring about change. In a small school, being busy holds things back.
- Regular, dedicated staff meetings where teachers can collaboratively reflect, develop "ideas" and achieve goals together.
- Find ways to collaboratively and efficiently move through "compliance" tasks to allow time and headspace for reflective practice.

***Create synergy through a clear, simplified process.***

- Ongoing school improvement to be informed by the collaborative, reflective practice i.e. This is what is important to all of us, and this is how we are going to achieve it.
- Employ compliance structures to support reflective practice rather than adding layers of complexity.

***Benefit of Listening to teachers – (safe, professional conversations)***

- Someone to provide support to teaching staff that includes regular sharing of ideas and encouragement, along with practical support.
- Professional conversations and collaborative mentoring encourage accountability to purpose.

***Benefit of External facilitator (or mentor)***

- Monthly consultations in person, and fortnightly calls to admin by an external change consultant / facilitator / external mentor.
- An external person can be a "catalyst for change". They can change the dynamic and add momentum. It would especially be a way to add value to small schools.

## Appendix K: Example – Interview Guides – Semi-structured Interviews

*The following guides supported informal interviews with the intention of adding to the data already collected.*

### January – Research Interview Guide

Tell me about your understanding and experience of reflective practice within your own teaching.

**Subsidiary questions – potential follow up questions -**

**Reflective Practice**

- What is your understanding of the term: Reflective Practice?
- In what ways do you reflect on your teaching?
- How does this impact your teaching?
- What is expected of you in this school in terms of reflective practice?
- In what ways do these expectations impact your teaching?
- Tell me of a time when you felt you were deeply reflective about your teaching.
- What were the results of your reflections?

**Purpose**

- Tell me about the aspects of your teaching that you reflect upon most often.
- Tell me the top two goals you have for your students.
- How do you plan to meet these goals?
- Tell me the top two goals your school has for students.
- How does your school plan to meet these goals?
- Can you tell me about one current problem or dilemma you expect to face in your current teaching role?
- What do you plan to do to solve this problem?

**Process**

- Tell me about a recent significant change you made in your teaching.
- Describe the process you took to accomplish the change.
- How would you say the change process is going?
- How do you know if the change is effective?

**Position**

- Describe the context of your teaching.
- Can you tell me of a recent time when you reflected on a professional problem with school administration or colleagues? Describe the process.
- How do your colleagues respond to suggestions for change?
- If you were struggling with a professional problem, how safe would you feel about sharing the problem with a colleague?

**Perspective**

- Tell me about your own school experience.
- How do you think this might influence your teaching?
- How do you feel about change?
- What influence do theory and research have on your teaching practice?
- What do you believe your greatest responsibilities are as a teacher?
- Who or what has the greatest impact on your decision-making as a teacher? Can you explain this?

**What have I missed?**

- Are there any other questions you think I should ask the other interviewees about this topic?
- Is there anything you would like to say on the topic that I haven't yet asked you about?

## October – Research Interview Guide

**School Leaders** (annotating Multifaceted Model, referencing current research/ pedagogical summaries)

- Describe the process to date with Harvest Project.
- In terms of the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice, which aspects of the reflective practice have you been intentionally focused upon and which need further development?
- How deeply are you expecting your teachers to reflect and change their current practice?

**Teachers** (annotating Multifaceted Model, referencing current research/ pedagogical summaries and printed summary of Focus Group presentation in September)

- Tell me about your experience at this point in time in your school's reflective practice project (Harvest Project).
- With reference to the Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice, what planning and decision-making still need to occur to allow you to reflect deeply and make changes to your planning and teaching?
- What has supported you in deepening your reflections?
- What is holding you back?

**Teacher group** *(Brief Brainstorm– following PL Session on Character development research)*

- Describe the school's reflective practice initiative (Harvest Project).
- List the events, situations or activities that have supported progress towards this project.
- List the events, situations or activities that have hampered progress.

## Appendix L: Excerpt from School Leader Interview Transcript – January 2016

*Speaking about leading teachers to reflect deeply and be willing to make changes to practice. [Names have been removed.]*

| | |
|---|---|
| Researcher: | *Yeah, yeah okay and um and you've got in place at the moment strategies to keep staff buy-in for one thing by not adding to their workload. Have you thought about the ongoing... keeping up … the enthusiasm or the commitment by the staff as yet?* |
| School Leader: | I think … as long as the staff, as long as it is not adding to their workload and well… yeah, as long as it's not adding to their workload and it's always in areas that they are interested in and um it doesn't feel like work, I think they'll still be interested. |
| Researcher: | *Yeah, okay, you've been a teacher for how long?* |
| School Leader: | Six… about six years. |
| Researcher: | *Okay, so in that time have you ever seen a good idea in a school go flat and stop?* |
| School Leader: | Yeah. |
| Researcher: | *Okay. Any ideas on how that happened?* |
| School Leader: | I've seen a lot of great ideas, being thrust upon people. |
| Researcher: | *Okay.* |
| School Leader: | And that never works. |
| Researcher: | *No buy-in?* |
| School Leader: | … I've seen good ideas that have not had adequate support. That increases people's workload without, you know, any payoff … and it falls flat. |
| Researcher: | *Will this guide you a little bit in the way that you handle this as an administrator?* |
| School Leader: | Yeah, absolutely, … nothing I introduce, or … get behind is going to… is going to add to workloads without a payoff somewhere because I just know that teachers are already overworked. It's a very stressful profession, and … it's not sustainable to make it harder. What we should be doing, should be making the best outcomes for the kids whilst making the job as manageable as possible for the teachers and I think the payoff with the Harvest is, if we truly … if we truly do it right then the teachers' jobs are going to become easier because the kids are going to become more responsible. |
| Researcher: | *So the success in terms of changing students' character and behaviour...* |
| School Leader: | That's a payoff. |
| Researcher: | *Will be the payoff, yeah.* |
| School Leader: | But I still like, I'm not going to increase the hours, you know if we give tasks, I want to give time, that kind of thing. |
| Researcher: | *So next step for school-wide Harvest, where to next, baby steps, you said, so what is the first baby step. Thinking of the school-wide project or idea?* |
| School Leader: | Um, yeah, there's been a lot of talk of a master plan. I think that's probably a priority because yeah, we need to sit down and say okay, what are we going to build up from the primary that's then going to follow to the high school and... |

## Appendix M: Excerpt from Teacher Interview Transcript – October 2016

*Seeking to understand the impact on reflective practice from the specific plans announced after the September meetings. Note "comfortable" and "apprehensive". [N.B. Names have been removed.]*

| | |
|---|---|
| Researcher | *So, in terms of the reflective practice with Harvest, do you feel any movement since we spoke last? Has that focus group made a difference? Is there a shared mentality? There's no good answer… (laughter) it's just about being real.* |
| Teacher R | Yeah, yeah, … Well, I think in a lot of ways from my perspective, we're still kind of more, moving through it individually. I know that they have been doing things, and I'm interested to hear what they're doing, but it hasn't necessarily impacted my classroom, apart from the things I've sort of thought about and tried myself … So, I would say, not, in terms of whole school classroom practice, but … |
| Researcher | *Is there any clearer concept of what it is?* |
| Teacher R | Probably not. … I'm being perfectly honest, I don't think so. |
| Researcher | *No I , I ...* |
| Teacher R | I think we all apply it in different ways. … to… well, I think with anything you've got to … if there is a common concept, you're going to apply it in different ways. |
| Researcher | *Well, you are* |
| Teacher R | With what you think of… |
| Researcher | *Do you think there's the mentality that it is the ag subject? ... still? ... or do you think that there is a um, ... more thought about it?* |
| Teacher R | I think probably we do, well from my perspective anyway… I do think about the things I can implement in my own subjects. |
| Researcher | *You've been thinking that way from the beginning.* |
| Teacher R | Yeah. Right from the beginning. But I think that residual perspective is still there. |
| Researcher | *It's still there* |
| Teacher R | It's a bit ingrained I think. I think people are starting to think about it. But I think, mostly, It's a little bit easier to say, 'Oh well that's … that." |
| Researcher | *Yes it is.* |
| Teacher R | And so I think that's comfortable… |
| Researcher | *And you can't put that down because that's a survival mechanism as well.* |
| Teacher R | It is |
| Researcher | *... but at the end of the two days in September when they presented ... and said that there would be a project-based learning required from every subject, ... um, how did you feel with that?* |
| Teacher R | I find it… I do … I like the idea, but as with many things I'm a little bit frightened about how it's going to look when we actually get to doing it. Because I think, probably, I like to do things my own way a bit, and so there's that kind of apprehension, but I do think it can be a very valuable … and I think it could be exciting. I don't feel excited yet. But I do, I want to… (Laughter) but I'm still a bit cautious about it. |

## Appendix N: Example Teacher Summary Member Check Email Message

*[N.B. Names removed; school pseudonym inserted]*

*May 2016*

Dear XXXX,

Thank you so much for your time when I visited you in May. It was lovely to catch up with you. You are very thoughtful and sensible in your approach to Harvest. Your openness to professional growth and moving students to be more critical thinkers is inspiring.

There is great wisdom in shared thinking. I have attached a general summary of the main points brought out in the conversations I had with staff whilst at Faith School in May [*Attachment 1*].

I believe that the long-term benefits of developing the Harvest Project as a school-wide "way of doing school" have great potential for transforming lives and building a more positive learning atmosphere at Faith School.

The second attachment is a general summary [*Attachment 2*] of our shared conversation. Please look through it and let me know by **a return email**, if this is a fair representation of the ideas in our conversation and **if you are happy for it to be included in the development of a school-wide plan, and also for consideration with my research** into finding ways to support deepened reflective practice in schools. If you want there to be changes or if you would like me to remove this data from the data collection, simply let me know.

Kind Regards,

Karyn Stanton
Avondale College

## Appendix O: Excerpts from Teacher Summary Email - May 2016

**Attachment 1** *[School pseudonym used; … denotes segments removed for sake of brevity]*

Dear Faith School Colleagues,

Once again, I have allowed weeks to pass since I was last with you. I think I must acknowledge that school holidays are my only true block of time for reflection and communication. It was a great pleasure to meet with you in May. I had the privilege of catching up with a lot of you; however, time issues meant that I did miss speaking with a number of people, which is a great shame.

I have now transcribed the interviews from May, and I am once again reminded of the great depth of skills, experience and vision there is amongst the staff of XXXX.

It is fair to say that there is not yet a shared and agreed-upon framework for Harvest Project as a school-wide venture, though it was great to hear of the pilot study being done with Year 9. After speaking with many of you, however, it is clear to me that Harvest has the potential to be at the core of all that is done in the school. At its heart, it is not an add-on, but rather a filter through which to move forward, make decisions and transform.

My research is about deepening reflective practice in schools. Harvest has the potential to be a transformational act of critical reflection.

…

I must acknowledge that there are some fairly intimidating barriers to the ongoing momentum of Harvest. Some strong contenders in this (as reported by teachers) are:

**Lack of Time**
**Curriculum - writing and implementing cross-curricular units**
**Lack of a shared vision**
**Lack of sequential process and central framework**
**Feeling overwhelmed, over-committed, discouraged**
**A lack of support, feeling alone and unsupported**

These are very real, but not insurmountable. Through gathering wisdom from across the staff and co-constructing possible ways to move forward, I believe there are wonderful opportunities to move forward in this journey safely.

Why do it? The ultimate goals teachers have shared are worthwhile, and greatly enhance opportunities for students and for improving circumstances for teachers.

At our group meeting, towards the end, it was suggested that the school's mission **…** had the core of Harvest contained in the following four elements.

Here are some representative goals shared by staff in May. I have grouped them in accordance with the elements of the school mission:

*[Following from this were the specific teacher goals for Harvest listed under each component of the School Mission, followed by 6 Harvest Mission statements suggested by teachers.]*

…

I will share with the school administration some suggestions that came from my preliminary analysis of the conversations we had in May in terms of addressing ways to overcome the barriers to moving ahead as a school towards Harvest objectives. …

*[Final salutations and a diagram connecting Harvest with current theory]*

## Appendix P: Example Teacher Summary Member Check Email – May 2016

**Attachment 2** ***An individual interview summary (grouped into themes) sent to participants***

**What's Happened with Harvest since January? Teacher R**

- You have continued to develop ideas for units and activities within units that will get students outside and involved in some hands-on experiences. You see these as a very small-scale thing; however, each activity you shared with me was well-considered and intentionally working towards Harvest ideals in terms of character development, being inspired by nature, and using teamwork and practical activities to teach theoretical understandings.
- Your steps towards Harvest are firmly within the principles of the Harvest Project.

**What are your goals for Harvest – in the context of your role?**

- Character – and seeing character as gifts from God, that grow through a connection with Him.
- Reaching students with varied learning needs
- Although not central, connection with nature is a goal and may be an easier step to take towards Harvest.
- There is the potential for some cross-curricular work. This needs to be the next step.
- Professional growth – dialogue with colleagues about better practice
- Making real connections between your subject area and the lives of the students and the rest of the world

**What is currently holding back progress with the school-wide implementation?**

- Dealing with the urgent and then not having time for reflection and growth.
- Being a small school, there is not a natural structure of departments, and this leads many teachers to take on extra loads. Finding the right people to lead the building of a shared framework and making a five-year plan is problematic.

**What are some issues you can see with implementing Harvest?**

- Harvest needs staff ownership to be authentic.
- There needs to be a passionate person to take it on, however, you think it would be hard to add it to someone's current role.
- Research is showing that people are shying away from administration in our schools because they fear the workload.
- There has to be a sense of momentum to keep up a continual process of change.
- Harvest needs a "champion" – who will keep reminding, encouraging and inspiring.
- Harvest needs to be presented in a way that's NOT like, this is another thing you have to check off your list of a hundred things to do today.
- Harvest needs to be something everyone is excited about (and someone needs to keep reminding everyone that they are excited about it).
- We began a conversation on thinking about how you assess some of the very important learning planned through Harvest.

**What could support moving forward?**

- Harvest needs to be embraced by everyone.
- You see value in opening a forum for teachers to share the small steps they are making within Harvest Principles, in effect creating time and space for collaborative reflection.
- This needs to be built into the regular routine of the school.
- You suggested starting small with ten minutes in every staff meeting and being deliberate and dogged in using that time.
- Time for Harvest needs to be prioritised.
- Once Harvest becomes part of professional conversations there is the chance of building momentum.
- Sharing can be across disciplines and stages, as teachers can adapt principles for their context.

## Appendix Q: Example – Excerpt from "Building the Narrative" – Portraits

Excerpt from one teacher's narrative table *[Name and identifying features removed]*

| **Jan 2016** | **RP** | **Purpose** | **Process** | **Position/Context/ Colleagues** | **Perspective** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Teacher C**<br><br>Prim teacher experienced; respected for RP; confident with curriculum; happy to reflect and change independently | r-on-p; r for p<br>(student enjoyment and learning) leading to change practice<br>Barrier: Finances<br>(Curriculum guidelines)<br>Support: Autonomy | Content needing RP: Math<br>Reading<br>Support differentiation<br>Help build enjoyment | Ongoing. (ind.)<br>Make changes if needed<br>School process – written – if necessary | You get listened to, but it may not come to fruition.<br>Autonomy – teachers have scope to make many choices in regard to pedagogy and teaching style, within parameters of curriculum. | School should be enjoyable.<br>Happy memories<br>Caring teacher<br>Schooling high impact on teaching.<br>Double check assumptions about students |
| Personal RP | Math Program: Inspired by PL and school visit; change made independently<br>School Gardening: Class - simple and not intrusive of curriculum | | | | |
| School RP | Gender splitting upper Primary class – Principal read – teachers noticed "boys were falling through the cracks" – staff meeting – guest speaker – "we thought well why not? Let's give it a go."<br>Parent survey taken, no other formal evaluation; tchr observation; ongoing informal student feedback. | | | | |
| HP | Early on in process; time and curriculum boundaries may not allow full | | | | |
| **May, 2016 – Interview and Centre Diagram** | | | | | |
| **Notes from Centre Diagram** | | | | | |
| **Goals for HP** | Student Engagement & Learning Practical Life Skills | | | | |
| **Who is needed?** | Principal/ Business Manager and Head of Primary – strong ties<br>Curriculum Writer (external or internal); Staff; XXXX | | | | |
| **What is needed?** | TIME and ENERGY; Written up with Curriculum outcomes. – Noted that this is project-based learning – and related it to visit to school with PBL as primary pedagogy. | | | | |
| **Roadblocks** | Physical limitations – resources – chicken runs, who will build them?<br>Finances –<br>Class Management – work as a class or share project with other classes (pros and cons); noted the feeling that high school tended to do their own thing, leaving the primary school feeling left out "The high school does their thing and moves ahead, leaving us to pick up,"<br>Class Management – keeping all students engaged – the activity not being big enough to involve all. (Note this was also a concern to secondary teachers)<br>Time – writing up curriculum | | | | |
| **Additional Interview Notes & Memos** | | | | | |
| Notes | **Memo – working as a school or individually?**<br>…. could see benefit of working as a school – "one way of having a big project that is achievable by everybody's small projects fitting in nicely, perhaps.", also promotes "togetherness" as they work on the same goal.<br>**However** working in with other classes "just becomes a bit trickier".<br>As we were talking, I could see that teacher felt comfortable to go it alone, meeting the needs of her students and forging ahead when she wanted to. | | | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| How can the school keep the overarching goals at centre of all actions? | "lots of professional development days with their staff meetings, it's professional development time, time to write your curriculum or your units of work"<br><br>"staff meetings become the actual focus for change not a reporting time, … it's actually the time when you, when they group reflected" |
| Researcher Notes | Since my last visit in January some teachers had visited XXXX school that is working on a very different pedagogical framework based on Project-based Learning. This was also a faith-based school, though a much larger school with a great deal of resources and purpose-built infrastructure. |
| Participant Processes | Harvest – big meeting in January, "talking and seeing where things were going, but we haven't heard anymore on that yet." [Nothing has happened since January – except teacher's ten chickens.] |
| What should Harvest be, schoolwide? | … "a huge issue"<br><br>Compared to XXXX school – they had "lots of professional development days with their staff meetings, it's professional development time, time to write your curriculum or your units of work" |
| Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice & Harvest<br><br>**Purpose/ Why**<br><br>**How deep?** | Thinks there is strong purpose but "not everyone's on board with it yet".<br><br>Roadblocks: "ticking boxes" – an example of how compliance issues can lead to teachers feeling like 'it's more work' and "something else we've got to do.' And these can blindside strong purpose, perhaps feeding inertia.<br><br>Roadblocks: needing support with curriculum and writing units. May be another factor in dissipating strong sense of purpose.<br><br>According to teacher these roadblocks can stop people being on board. Does this mean they don't have a strong sense of purpose? Can these roadblocks inhibit reflective teachers from taking on the purpose … too hard? |
| Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice & Harvest<br><br>**Process/How - Steps** | At this point in time there did not appear to be a school wide process evident to this teacher.<br><br>Aware of a project two people were doing in Secondary "I think that's what …" – a sense of disconnect.<br><br>"… and that's great but it's, it's over there, again." It was apparent that teacher felt a divide between the primary and secondary campuses, and "again" gave the sense that this sense may be ingrained and accepted.<br><br>"No, and you know, again we haven't got garden beds here, and XXXX spoke to us about that of last year or the year before, … And that hasn't come about. I don't know why, it's just a statement of fact not a judgment."<br><br>"A crazy term" – busyness and things that distract seem to be the norm in schools. Teacher mentioned they had 'whooping cough' to deal with. …<br><br>**Process: - momentum?** …<br><br>Teacher: Yeah, it would be easy to lose momentum.<br><br>Researcher: Yeah is there momentum?<br><br>Teacher: Maybe not (laugh) it sort of got … you know the wheels turned once and then… they're in a rut. … |
| Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice & Harvest<br><br>**Position/**<br><br>**How & Who** | When asked about 'how', teacher's comment was that it (Harvest planning) needs to be 'deliberately done… intentional." She didn't pick up on the together part, though the context indicates that leading a school-wide process of deepened reflective practice needs deliberate planning, and with the earlier comment about the lack of clarity in communication, and the sense of being isolated from the secondary campus, I feel she is referring to a need for deliberate, intentional actions to encourage working together and seeing the project as a group project with all having a place.<br><br>Who is needed? Principal and Head of Primary. "Yeah, I think, initially it's got to come from, yeah vision from there, and then you're going to have to have curriculum writers, now that could either be teachers and/or somebody brought in to be to do it. … in consultation"<br><br>When asked if the curriculum writing could be done within staff, even her (knowing from earlier discussions that she is head of curriculum in the primary campus, she was hesitant, but agreed she would have to be given time.<br><br>XXXX system not seen as a support but 'detrimental' to the Harvest Project. Teacher wondered if at times they just liked to "throw their power round".<br><br>Self - concept in school context: When the idea that she was influential in the school was put to her, she laughed and replied, "Not on purpose".<br><br>Researcher: Well, you are an experienced teacher and you have an admin role in curriculum.<br><br>Teacher: Yeah but at the moment I feel like I'm on the edge of a precipice, … And you're not sure where to head, because you've got the ideas we saw coming in from living faith and I think they're great and this kid's seemed engaged and enjoying their learning. They shared some surveys with us, all saying that sort of thing.<br><br>And …. (long pause) I like to encourage people and help people, um (Hoffnung et al.) but I don't want to be the 'where the buck stops" person." |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Teacher was happy to be a support person, but she felt the ultimate responsibility lay with admin – Principal and Head of Primary. On the centre diagram she distanced herself from these two. They were placed close to the heart of the project.<br><br>When asked if there were other teachers who would push the project, she mentioned one, but acknowledged that he was not a strong influencer of other teachers. She placed XXXX close to the admin because of his practical skills in the area. She said that agents of change needed the "passion and the ability of organization".<br><br>She also said that she had not seen any teachers speak up and offer to push this project. |
| Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice & Harvest<br><br>**Perspectives** | **Perspectives** – Researcher – this has to be a movement (alluding to all the voices of staff and other perspectives needed to reflect together and make transformations in school culture.<br><br>When referring to the visit by a couple of teachers to XXXX school, teacher could see that a couple of teacher perspectives would not be enough. Administration would need to go and see and ask and learn about process from a school who has been through the changes.<br><br>Whose perspectives are being sought is important. It appears that significant change will only be brought about with the deliberate and focused attention of admin.<br><br>Roadblocks: Time – for Principal – time, being snowed under<br><br>Governing bodies – both system and government: Teacher hadn't heard of any helpful or supportive actions of their system governing body.<br><br>Teacher felt that there needed to be collaboration with a school that has already gone down the track of change that aligned closely with aspects of Harvest. |
| Staff Meetings | How could staff meetings be different?<br><br>Teacher – "Time… I think otherwise there's not going to be any time to do any of this…"<br><br>**Memo – Staff Meetings and Small Steps:** So it started rolling around in my mind I was going through the interviews, that the staff meeting, the concept of setting small goals, sort of having really tiny steps and actually doing it all together, just had the possibilities for making a change. |
| Additional Memos | **Memo – Going alone in the midst of "crazy term" and external pressures**<br><br>I got the sense that Teacher engaged her pedagogical reflective practice alone. Her response to being asked what had happened in terms of Harvest between January and May was, "I have ten chickens."<br><br>Researcher – "a crazy term" – busyness and things that distract seem to be the norm in schools. Should be we be building the expectation of these unexpected distractions?<br><br>In this interview I acknowledged Teacher's courage and willingness to question, reflect and change her practice. Working to do this as a whole school, though is a greater challenge.<br><br>The visit to XXXX school had impacted teacher. She reflected on their journey.<br><br>When talking about the courage needed to tackle curriculum writing, Teacher spoke of the fear (The thing that scares me most about curriculum) engendered from the system based governing body and Government governing body. Words she used were: "breathing down your neck"; "If you take one step wrong, you're going to be obliterated."; "given great big fat checklists and all sorts of things to do"; "so that's another thing to do"; "we seem to be … going back to the same sort of pressure we had then"; "And I don't know if it's because the [government body] studies puts that on the [school system leaders] so they're passing on, or if the [school system leaders] just feels like they have to throw their power around, I don't know." …<br><br>**Memo – Agent of change?**<br><br>Researcher: an agent of change needs to have the passion ….<br><br>Teacher: The passion and the ability of organisation.<br><br>Researcher: Yeah, has he got that?<br><br>Teacher: I don't think so no not that I've seen<br><br>Researcher: So who does? (long pause) because it could be that it depends on…<br><br>Teacher: Put it this way I haven't seen anybody speak up and say they wanted to do it<br><br>Researcher: No. … So is it a big deal to people then?<br><br>Teacher: (long pause) or are they simply agreeing with the boss? … I think you've probably got people who see great virtue in it and think it's a terrific idea, (long pause) but the time limits constrain and there's probably some that don't care … And just haven't spoken up. … Or there's the people who like the idea but don't know how to go about it. …<br><br>**…** |

## Appendix R: Situational Map: Human & Non-Human Elements – Faith School

<table>
<tr>
<td rowspan="3">Individual Human Elements / Actors<br>○ Principal<br>○ Head of Secondary<br>○ Head of Primary<br>○ Teachers<br>○ Chaplains<br>○ Education Assistants<br>○ Relief Teachers<br>○ Office Staff<br>○ Nursery Manager<br>○ Bus Drivers<br>○ Teachers' Family and Friends<br>○ Parents<br>○ Teachers<br>○ Students<br>○ Groundsman<br>○ Private benefactors<br>○ Independent Schools Officers<br>○ CEO<br>○ School Improvement Manager<br>○ Operations Manager<br>○ ASA Officers<br>○ Researcher<br>○ QAS - officer</td>
<td>Collective Human Elements / Actors<br>○ Board of Directors (National)<br>○ Board of Directors (State)<br>○ SIAS (teachers and Independent Schools Officer)<br>○ Local Churches<br>○ Parents and Friends (local)<br>○ Board of Studies (State)<br>○ Federal Government: Department of Education and Training<br>○ State Government: Department of Education<br>○ AISNSW<br>○ Collective Staff – Primary<br>○ Collective Staff – Secondary<br>○ Collective staff – Whole school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicated / Silent Actors / Actants<br>○ Bus drivers<br>○ Local Churches<br>○ Parents (Some)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonhuman Elements / Actions<br>○ Nursery<br>○ Industrial kitchen<br>○ Current gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political / Economic Elements<br>○ Board of Studies (State)<br>○ Federal Government: Department of Education and Training<br>○ State Government: Department of Education<br>○ AISNSW<br>○ ASA Board of Directors (National)<br>○ ASA Board of Directors (State)<br>○ School Advisory Council (Local)</td>
<td>Sociocultural / Symbolic Elements<br>○ Faith- based beliefs and understandings<br>○ Historical system foundation and narratives – global & local<br>○ Principal beliefs and worldview<br>○ Varied teacher beliefs and worldviews<br>○ Variations in demographics of student base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal Elements<br>○ Recent and ongoing staffing and role changes<br>○ Current SIAS initiatives<br>○ Resources and financial constraints</td>
<td>Spatial Elements - Geographical position<br>○ Distance from centres of influence<br>○ Weather and soil<br>○ Property – size and current use of land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Issues / Debates [usually contested]<br>○ Conflicts in direction, process and focus of teacher energy and reflective practice<br>○ What is the "blue-print"? Is it relevant? What would it look like? Is it possible?</td>
<td>Related Discourses [Historical, narrative, and/or visual]<br>○ Perspectives regarding recent school-wide initiatives and change<br>○ Expectations from regulatory bodies<br>○ Perception of isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Discursive Constructions of Individual and/or Collective Human Actors<br>○ Teacher life and education experiences<br>○ Previous school initiatives – experiences, responses and feedback<br>○ Perceptions of external support bodies<br>○ Perceptions of external regulatory bodies<br>○ Public and parent perceptions<br>○ School Mission and Vision<br>○ History of Adventist Education – writings and actions</td>
</tr>
</table>

*Note: Italics have been used to indicate evidence from participants of perceived impact on teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice within the context of this initiative.*

## Appendix S: Memo List: November 17, 2019

| Themes | Memo Titles (*in vivo* codes in italics) | |
|---|---|---|
| **External Facilitator** | a. External Facilitator<br>b. Feeding back from interviews | c. Professional conversations – linking research and experience<br>d. Role of the external facilitator |
| **Working collaboratively** | a. "A collaboration of effort"<br>b. "Everyone needs a role" | c. Teacher ownership<br>d. Not involved |
| **Incremental Steps** | a. "I do think we need to start slowly" | b. "It takes time"<br>c. "Small steps" |
| **Workload** | a. "A teacher can't do everything"<br>b. "Go, go, go"<br>c. "You are expecting more of your teachers"<br>d. "It's a crazy term!" | e. "I don't know where we're at, and I don't want to waste my time"<br>f. "You're trying to fly the plane while you're building it"<br>g. "The treadmill of survival" |
| **Emotional Responses** | a. "Absence of courage"<br>b. "Getting frustrated"<br>c. Guilt, panic and excitement<br>d. "I'm a little depressed about the whole thing"<br>e. "I'm knackered"<br>f. "I get mocked for this"<br>g. "It totally can be done" | h. "It's a dream to be a part of it"<br>i. "Some would say stupid"<br>j. "I don't want to tread on others' toes"<br>k. "The too-hard basket"<br>l. Feeling cared for<br>m. "Things are kind of a bit nebulous"<br>n. "Self-reflecting or self-effacing" |
| **Compliance** | a. Compliance masquerade<br>b. "Ticking boxes" | c. The oppression of compliance<br>d. Strengthening the compliance trail |
| **Feeling alone** | a. "I just live in my own little world here"<br>b. Isolation<br>c. "I'm not the only one" | d. Leaving it to one<br>e. "You have to spin your own wheels" |
| **Leadership** | a. "We need heroes, agents of change"<br>b. "Followship"<br>c. Seeking to get others to be deeply reflective | d. Staff Meetings<br>e. Supporting teachers<br>f. "Once that concept is sold, then the mind will start working"<br>g. School context |
| **Reflective Practice** | a. Defining reflective practice<br>b. Need a structure for reflection<br>c. Need to involve students in reflection<br>d. Seeking students' perspectives | e. RP individual and collaborative<br>f. Invigorating teacher through RP<br>g. reflecting in practice informally and effectively<br>h. What are we willing to reflect deeply on<br>i. "It's a mindset" |
| **Change Process** | a. Adopting new ideas, making changes<br>b. "Keeping the main thing the main thing"<br>c. "You don't want a half-hearted job" | d. Theory of inertia<br>e. Settling for the framework and missing the life<br>f. Travelling down a different path, having a different agenda |
| **The Teacher** | a. "Islands of Competence"<br>b. Making personal assumptions<br>c. Relationships | d. The impact of school experience<br>e. Relating professional goals with current cohort of students |
| **Harvest** | a. Harvest 100% buy-in | b. Identifying Harvest |
| **Practical Processes** | a. Having a model to work from<br>b. "How it will work on a practical level" | c. "There is no road map to get there" |
| **Barriers** | a. "Spot fire" approach | |

*Note the predominance of in vivo codes used as titles of memos. It was often the voices of the participants and their descriptive phrases that sparked my reflexive reflections.*

## Appendix T: Excerpts from Researcher's Journal

**Date: Sunday, January 24, 2016 [reflecting on the first interviews conducted]**

I spent some time with XXXX, listening to her concerns about how her classroom was perceived in comparison with others. The room was light and attractive but had apparently not changed from the previous year. I brainstormed with her ideas to add to her room and offered to help. I could see how grateful she was. I think it is important that teachers are listened to and supported in their areas of self-doubt. I am keen to develop an ongoing conversation with XXXX. She is quick to show her self-doubt. When she feels safe, conversations reveal a reflective, caring, competent teacher.

The interview I conducted with XXXX … was revealing of the teacher mindset I feel may resonate with others. XXXX doesn't feel she has time to do extensive reading herself – professional reading. She does not like to take risks because she values the responsibility she has and is not willing to harm her students' learning path through an untried, unproven methodology. When confident that others have tried and succeeded, she is happy to do things differently.

It came up over and over in the interviews that the teachers feel isolated from support. They don't have connections from ZZZZ [system support] or other schools in their area of teaching, so they feel they are 'on their own' within their particular discipline or teaching area.

The first teacher interview, YYYY, stood out in that this teacher was a part of what she regarded as a successful school-wide reflective initiative – the school improvement committee. She felt that this was effective and important to the school. I saw the value of shared leadership as I spoke with her. She didn't see herself as a leader, but as a member of the group that made a difference. The group was headed up by a secondary teacher. I was keen to interview him.

On Tuesday afternoon I interviewed the primary teachers. … I had to go to each one and ask. No teacher, apart from YYYY, approached me for an interview, and I could see the concept made many a little nervous. Many appeared to feel they may not have the right answers or anything smart to say. …

My interviews started with the primary question about their understanding of reflective practice and how it played out in their current teaching role. I asked about their major goals as teachers – the things they most wanted to get across to students. I asked about the process for reflective practice at Faith School, the things that supported it, the things that hampered it.

I asked about significant changes in recent times within teaching and/or school and asked how it played out, and any ongoing evaluation.

It was somewhat helpful to have the reflective practice framework (*Multifaceted Model of Reflective Practice)* in mind throughout the interview. I wonder if having a visual copy would be helpful next time. Each teacher had valuable insights, and I'm looking forward to analysing these interviews and gaining a deeper/more inclusive perspective. …

**Group self-efficacy? May 30, 2016**

Does it impact reflective practice? There could be a logical connection… if you believe you can…? If you believe you can't?

How do previous transformational projects impact on feelings of efficacy?

Is there a necessary mindset for effective transformational reflective practice?

"We are not always disappointed with our progress?" – Is this an indication of a lack of confidence as a group?

What is in the literature about collective group efficacy?

"reflective conversations… while it's fresh…" (Patrick – Jan p. 1)

"Running a different agenda"; "travelling down a different path" (Jan interview – Patrick)

Do these phrases speak to barriers to group reflective practice leading to transformation?

"We often aren't who we want to be" Patrick, Jan p. 7

"These are the worst kids." "These are the best kids." Note Patrick was expressing that the same students can be seen in opposing lights depending upon the relationships and perspectives of the teachers. This was mentioned with the idea that any transformation of practice may have quite different results – and impacts on students – with the relationships between students and teachers making a great impact. Patrick May – p. 7, 12 "… if you're not smiling when you do it…."

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**Role of an External Support Person – October 20 2016**

I found myself often saying… "What if…" (Patrick and Ryan, May 23, p. 7)

Is this something an external personal can and should ask? Does it open ideas and potential concepts for those on the ground to consider?

"Please let me know which direction you would like me to take?" (Researcher, email to admin, October 13, 2016).

"Although the interview times are data for my research, this is also a time when teachers can be very honest and provide great feedback for strengthening…." (Researcher, email to admin, October 13, 2016).

There has been something far more profound than I imagined about deeply engaging in professional conversations with teachers. It feels as though is part of the answer to the research question. Listen to teachers, really listen.

**Just thinking – January 24, 2017**

Just thinking about that these teachers need to have the capacity to dig deeper in their reflective practice. They need **time** – time to talk, think, get on the same page… But also time to work beyond a year… They appear to have a new big emphasis every year. That is how I would describe most of my teaching experiences, too. It's not enough. You just get things started, and you never get to see a project through to a satisfying end.… so frustrating.

**It takes more than a school year to ask the big questions, think them through, struggle together to get wisdom and practical solutions.** Then, you need to set up processes for **ongoing evaluation**, redirecting…

Just thinking – you need to take care to consider which **areas need schoolwide focus**. If anyone or anything or interruptions or a new great idea, come and gobble up the 'old' one [last year's great initiative] … Not only does the old one fade, but those who are convinced on that get discouraged and there is a danger of staff believing…'better just to sit it out'… Wow, how many times have I heard experienced teachers say that to me over the years. Perhaps…

As a new focus comes – find a spot in the one already in process…

May close it, but it has to be intentional… This is a step…

Pull them both into an existing evaluation loop. Just thinking.

Although I've lived this scenario many, many times, it has only now become clear to me as I have observed these leaders and teachers navigate their world.

**Last site visit (excerpt only) March 7 2017**

… I went straight over to the administration meeting. I gave each a copy of their summary to read through.… Very valuable comments. They responded… "How did you get this from our conversation? Thank you". I explained that I had grouped information. The gems were all there, and they were very insightful. Perhaps this is another positive aspect of meeting with teachers – the conversations, Tying it together into ideas, actionable steps, etc.

Then, I used administrative questioning to guide the conversation. There was limited time. The principal did use time for stories; however, an important concept was broached… The idea that with any change… No matter the depth of administration/group reflection and purpose, the delivery will be what determines the student outcomes. It is about teacher passion and enthusiasm. …

## Appendix U: Code Hierarchy November 18, 2019

***Attitudes:*** *Emotions and mindsets clearly impact both the level of reflections a teacher feels enabled for, and the willingness and capacity for transforming practice.*

- a hint of cynicism
- cautiously responding
- feeling connected to Harvest - feeling positive to the goals and transformation
- feeling disengaged - feeling outside project;
- 'if you're the only one putting yourself out there'
- 'don't want to know' - avoiding the topic;
- having a mental shift - if you're the only one putting yourself out there – discouraged; feeling reluctant
- 'I can see a way forward'
- 'that's been very emotionally tiring' - sense of self – unsure

***Barrier****s – There are barriers to RP that must be acknowledged and addressed when asking teachers to move beyond routine and surface reflections.*

- 'just something else we've got to do' - makes more work; snowed under
- lack of staff buy-in
- need people for process
- thinking of barriers - barriers funds; barriers lack of people; roadblocks where who how much; thinking through barriers – barrier timetable
- ticking boxes - 'breathing down your neck external bodies; external pressure; QAS I've given that up; ticking off programs
- 'too many ideas' - Roadblocks – keeping all students engaged
- 'we haven't heard a lot' - it's really hard to conceptualise; needing to know what is going on -lack of communication

***Supports:*** *Supports are intentional actions that may remove or reduce barriers and/or assist momentum to change. The teachers could see potential supports that may be useful in enabling themselves and their colleagues to both reflect and then turn the reflections to change in practice. The external facilitator coding highlights a natural outflowing of the professional conversation that took place during the interviews, a natural flow-on from a safe conversation. This role was described in terms similar to coach, agent of change, mentor, champion, collegial partner, and critical friend.*

- Addressing barriers
- External Facilitator - adding perspectives; asking questions; connecting; guiding ideas; sharing ideas between teachers; empathizing; sharing knowledge; thinking with teacher
- Nurturing staff - have to look after teachers
- Creating space for reflective practice
- Supporting curriculum writing
- Supporting with PD time
- Supporting with focused and intentional staff meetings

***Leadership*** *– I was exploring one school's attempt to journey together through reflection towards transformational change. The initial idea stemmed from the school leader, however the concept of leadership in a number of guises was evidently an important issue as teachers conversed with me.*

- agents of change
- leadership
- selling the concepts
- who can lead? - who could lead

***Context*** *– Each school has a unique context that needs to be understood. The context, with many stakeholders, impacts teachers in all aspects of their teaching, including their willingness and ability to move from deeper reflections to transformational change.*

- acknowledging parent perspectives - acknowledging parent perspectives – parent misconceptions
- barrier divide between two campuses - barrier divide between two campuses – secondary first then filtered down
- changing nature of student needs
- considering student buy-in
- depends on the teacher - attitude to students – personal response to students; they want a piece of who we are – students absorbing values
- prioritizing student engagement
- 'things change' – add something to the load
- things evolve every year

***Dilemmas*** *– When Barriers, Context and Teacher Attitudes are considered, the school is faced with several dilemmas, issues that do not have simple, straightforward solutions. These dilemmas are both a source of content for deep reflective thinking, yet they also pose considerable barriers to transformational change if left unresolved.*

- be apart, but yet not be islands
- conflicting use of resources
- don't want a half-hearted job
- finding a model - describing Living Faith; learning from other schools; seeking knowledge from other schools
- identifying issues
- keeping the main thing the main thing
- linking changes to current practice (like building the plane while you're flying it) – linking life skills with student engagement
- prioritizing issues - listing long-term goals
- synergistic thinking - synergy adds time
- there needs to be some sort of framework

***Emerging Theories –*** *Change is hard, hard to lead, hard to plan, hard to live. A number of factors work together to appear to bring into the educational realm a well-known scientific theory, the 'theory of inertia'.*

- Theory of inertia - a mind shift, an intention to move; back in the same old rut; in a rut; looking for movement; needing momentum

***Harvest Project:*** *This Project was the focus of the specific reflective practice this school's admin had put to the teachers for critical reflection and purposed change. It was the journey and progress made with this project that I was observing as a researcher and participating as an external facilitator. Below are some codes that relate specifically to HP. These codes may yet be collapsed into the general node hierarchy.*

- defining blueprint
- Harvest attitudes - barriers - guilt trips; not everyone's on board
- Harvest – practical questions
- Harvest – personal goals – Harvest Project dreams; integrating cross curricular tasks
- larger vision – Harvest should be bigger than ag; thinking about the expanded view
- not feeling involved - not feeling a part of Harvest; not involved; who can be involved

- nothing's happening - describing progress with Harvest; no change
- outdoors
- piloting the change - Harvest Year Nine
- setting personal goals - Harvest goals class characteristics; Harvest goals communication and relationships; growing their spirituality; Harvest goals problem solving critical thinking; Harvest goals responsibility; Harvest goals student accountability; Harvest goals collaboration; Harvest goals values

***Reflective Practice:*** *This slippery creature, hard to objectify, yet crucial within this study – the focus of this inquiry. As I sifted over the interviews again and again, I was able to catch glimpses of RP – the why, the how, the who and the what, and also some degrees of depth.*

- using the reflective practice model
- identifying critical reflective practice
- innovative thinking

**HOW do we reflect**

- building ideas on initial concept
- empowering through small steps and conversations
- need ongoing reflection and evaluation
- needing a framework
- process needed - process not clear; reflective practice process rigour
- small steps - finding the next step; small scale changes
- stop the train

**WHAT do we reflect upon**

- challenging pedagogy
- reflecting and finding opportunities
- reflecting and relating to current students
- reflecting and finding an analogy
- reflecting noting limitations
- reflecting on complexity
- reflecting on models
- reflections start with class content

**WHO reflect**

- Collaborating - brainstorming possibilities; champion and collaborative ownership; collaborate in stages; collaboration can be tricky; common purpose; do it together; "followship"; learning from others; needs a team; sharing but keeping class responsible for one project; thinking together; this has to be a movement; working together
- difference of RP individual and whole school
- it needs to be embraced by everyone
- RP learning from others

**WHY – Purpose in RP**

- sense of purpose
- stating the goal
- critical thinking for solving problems
- finding purpose
- overarching principles

## Appendix V: Focused Codes December 10, 2019

**Identifying 'push-forward' forces**

1. Create time and space for reflective practice
2. Nurture Staff
3. Support curriculum writing and documentation
4. Provide practical professional development
5. Needing structure
6. Display to communicate, remind and enthuse
7. Involve everyone
8. Needing to be inclusive
9. Seeking to build momentum
10. Getting things started
11. Celebrate small steps
12. Engage an external facilitator

***Identifying 'pull-back' forces***

1. *Seeking leadership*
2. *'I'm chasing my tail' – the tyranny of busyness*
3. *Feeling unsupported*
4. *You have to 'spin your own wheels' in a small school*
5. *Conflicting foci*
6. *Needing communication*
7. *Pressured by curriculum*

**Responding personally in attitude and emotion**

1. *Avoiding involvement*
2. *Feeling cynical*
3. Feeling energised
4. *Feeling uncomfortable*
5. *Feeling uninvolved*
6. *Lacking confidence*
7. *Seeing it as compliance*
8. *Waiting to see what unfolds*

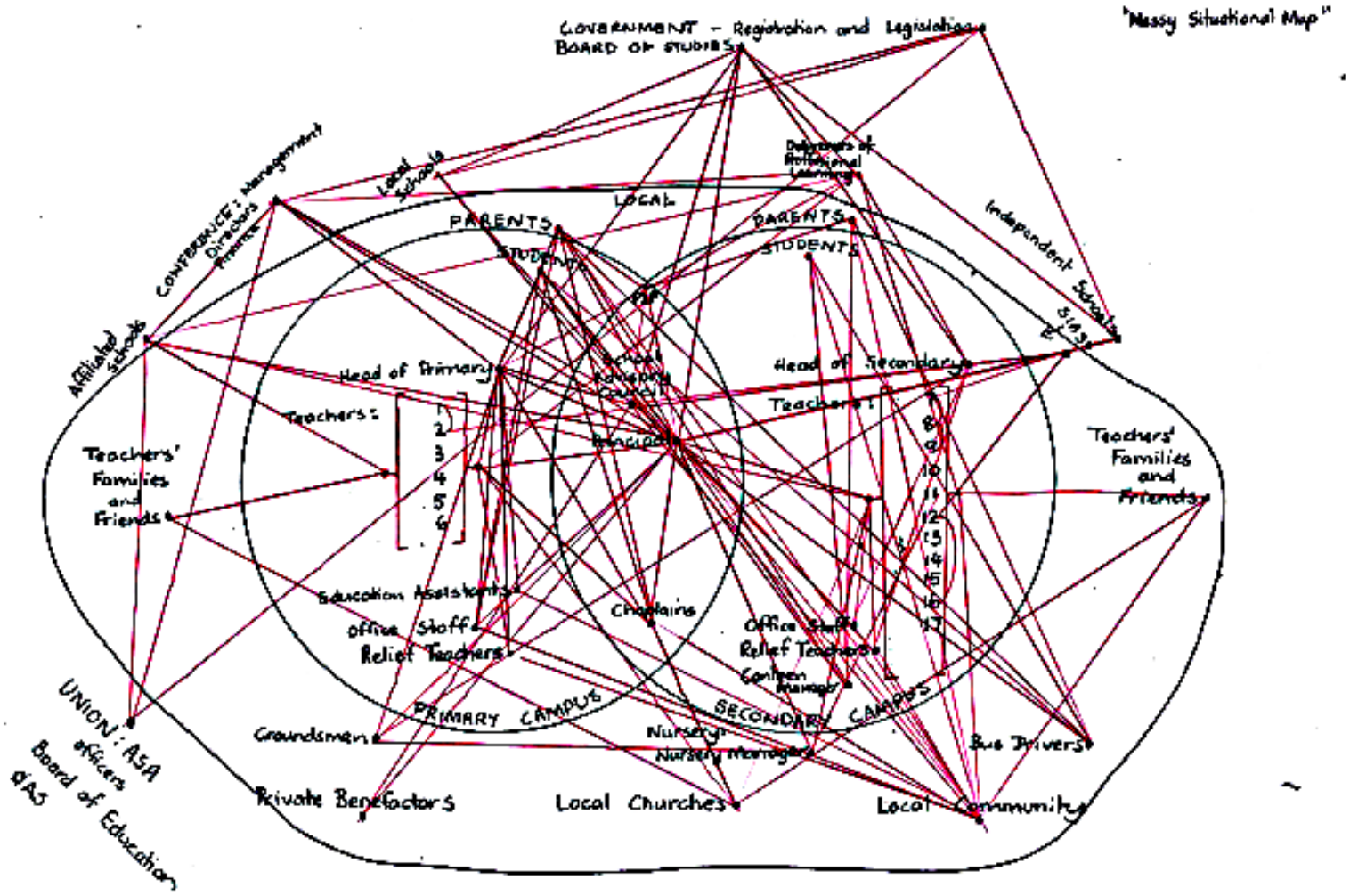
**Leading a push to deepened reflective practice**

1. *Leading with a 'spot-fire' approach*
2. Leading with a 'tempered approach
3. Leading with passion
4. Sharing leadership
5. Empower a champion

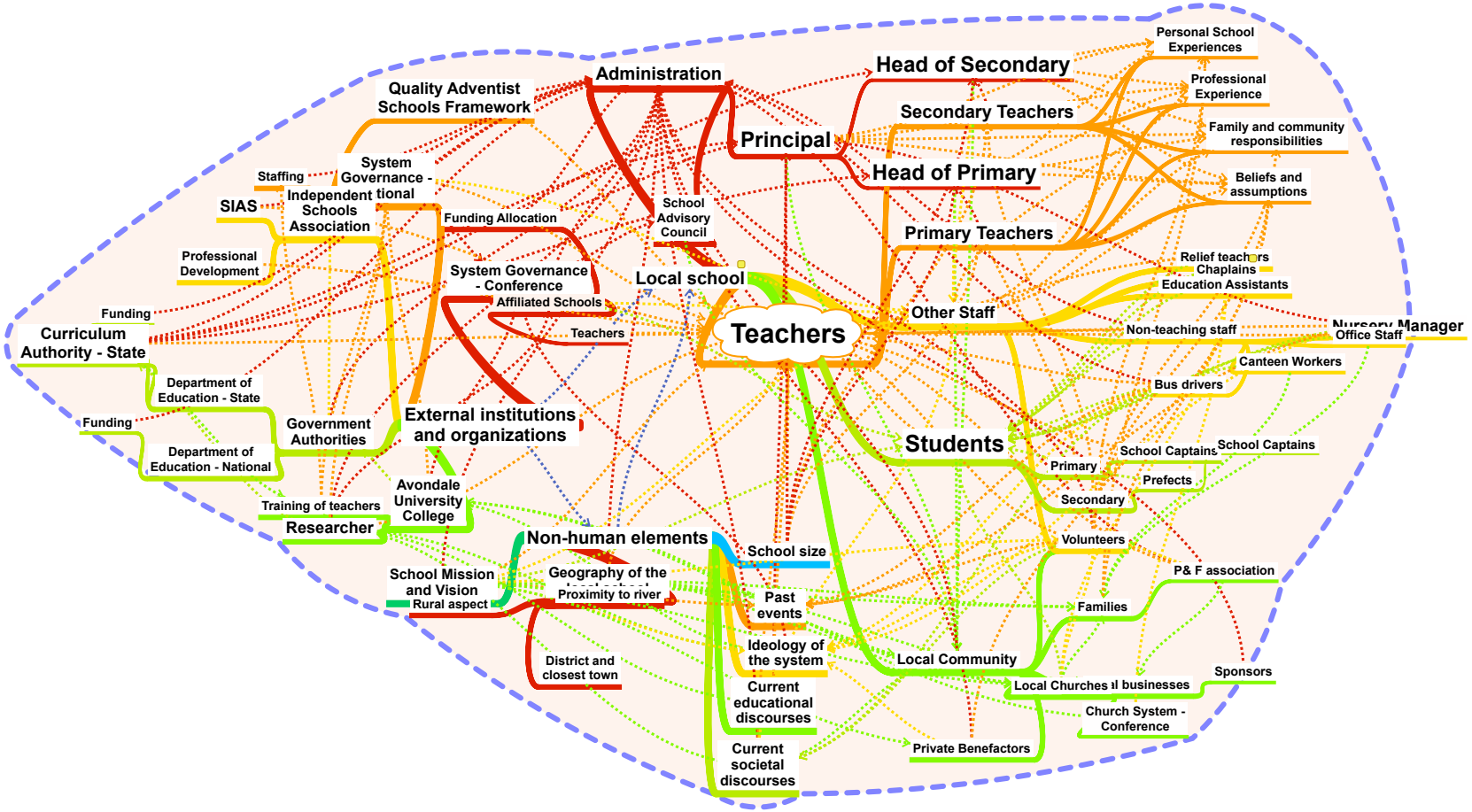
***Note: Italics indicate codes describing barriers to capacity***

## Appendix W: Situational Maps – Examples

*Initial situation map – messy – January 2016*



*A teacher's complex situation - May 2016*



## Appendix X: Expanded Social Worlds Ordered Maps - Administrative

| **Harvest Project:** Schoolwide deeply reflective practice initiative – Social Worlds and Arenas impacting depth and direction of teacher engagement | |
|---|---|
| **Administrative Social World** | |
| **1. Principal** | Initiated the vision: trialled a subject to 'lead by example' |
| **2. Head of Secondary** | Took the time to take on a vision that would work for teachers and students; Trialled a senior Thrive – led by example |
| **3. Head of Primary** | Supported the vision: trialled an initiative – Thrive; and healthy canteens; and garden beds – led by example |
| **4. School Advisory Board** | Initial presentation was to this group. Their enthusiasm inspired the Principal to continue with Project. |
| **5. Staff Meetings** | Staff meetings are a phenomenon that came up both as distractions to reflective practice, and potential support for reflection and transformation change. |
| **6. XXXX external system support** | Local School Improvement Committee, chaired by officer from XXXX; thought to be useful in bringing about gradual change; not yet employed to support Harvest Initiative – some felt the two to be in competition with each other – competing for time and administrative support. |
| **7. XXXX school system self-assessment** | A self-assessment framework to help construct rolling school improvement plan; potential to link reflective focus to continued school improvement |
| **8. Researcher** | Short-term, agreed partnership with mutual responsibilities and privileges; Given permission to investigate and support school-based reflective practice initiative; some limited impact on focus through teacher interviews and regular feedback, along professional learning and the development of resources based on teacher suggestions |
| **9. Private Benefactors** | Some funding promised on the strength of Principal's vision. This allowed some projects to take off. |
| **10. P & F** | Potential for support and useful ongoing feedback |

## Appendix Y: Expanded Social Worlds Ordered Maps – School Campuses

| Social Worlds: Primary and Secondary Campuses | |
|---|---|
| **11. Teachers - Primary** | Range of responses – fear, concern, excitement; took on Thrive as a group; accepted support; varied perspectives |
| **12. Teachers - Secondary** | Range of responses – fear, cynicism, excitement; resistance; varied perspectives |
| **13. Teachers –Relief** | Limited impact, some showed interest; would need to be informed to continue focus of Harvest Project |
| **14. Non-teaching staff** | Potential to support Project focus, but not involved in discussions; Many areas of influence through engagement in local community; Nursery Manager very involved and passionate |
| **15. Volunteers** | From families, local churches and local community – essential for Thrive initiative |
| **16. Students - Primary** | Responded with enthusiasm to Thrive; potential for involvement in understanding the purpose of Harvest and sharing it at home – Visible Learning opportunities; Attendance improved on Thrive days. |
| **17. Students - Secondary** | Responded with a range of responses – enthusiasm, acceptance, some initial resistance, but showing some steps towards a sense of responsibility and critical thinking, to Agriculture initiatives; potential for involvement in understanding the purpose of Harvest and sharing it at home – Visible Learning opportunities |

## Appendix Z: Social Worlds Ordered Maps – Local Community

| Social Worlds: Local Community | |
|---|---|
| **18. Teachers' Families and friends** | Varying impact – Some support through knowledge, physical support, others pull away by necessity and/or complaint; can encourage or discourage – rarely neutral<br>This is a strong bond that impacts a teacher's life. Some support through volunteering, making etc. Sometimes there are competing demands for time, as teachers spend long hours at the school, or doing schoolwork at home. Much reflective practice was done at home when planning or at the end of the day. |
| **19. Local Churches** | Potential for support if brought into the vision (not yet) and if there are shared goals; involved in Thrive. There are a few churches represented by the students and teachers. Can pull away from school through teachers being heavily involved in church and not having the energy or time to go the extra mile at school. |
| **20.Local Businesses and Communities** | Potential for involvement in authentic experiences; can be the context for authentic tasks; opportunity for connected learning and honest evaluation |
| **21. Student Families** | Impacted by reflective practice; or negatively impacted if promised something that does not eventuate: Potential for partnership with school; potential for ongoing evaluation – checking if there is an impact on students; fee-payments<br>These are the 'paying customers', the ones who make judgments on the school through evaluating the impact of the school on their children. Some are involved in the school on boards, volunteering or attending meetings and engaging in dialogue with teachers. This element of the social world also greatly impacts student attitudes. Most were not yet engaged with Harvest, because of the project's stage of development, however, some participants acknowledged the importance of parent engagement and communication with them for the long-running success of the project and embedding into the school culture. |
| **22. Other schools in area** | These schools form the 'competition' to the school and yet there is also opportunity for professional learning and mutual support. |
| **23. Local demographical and socioeconomic elements** | The demographics of the catchment area for any learning institution impacts the 'who' within the situation (both students and staff), and will often impact the 'what', the 'why' and the 'how', as learning is designed to cater for student needs. In this case study teachers identified behavioural issues that they linked to 'home' situations and experiences. Teachers also identified the range of 'home' situations as a consequential issue within the school. |
| **24. Geographical features of local area and school** | The 'where' brings with it opportunities and limitations when considering pedagogies, and, to some extent, curriculum. The geographical isolation from other affiliated schools was seen as an isolating feature for teachers at the school. This impacted teachers' self-efficacy. |

## Appendix AA: Social Worlds Ordered Maps – External Bodies

| **External Bodies Arenas** | |
|---|---|
| 25. School System: State level governance | Provides governance; support; financial management; ideological parameters; evaluation; data; not yet involved in this initiative |
| 26. School System: State level- affiliated schools | Potential for collegial support; finding shared initiatives; trialling and sharing ideology and practices; shared professional learning |
| 27. School System: XXXX | Accreditation of school; support for 'special character' – teaching curriculum infused with Christian worldview; professional learning; opportunities for some collegial work with teachers, leaders and schools across Australia – potential to support initiatives and conduit to share with other schools; Professional magazine |
| 28. Independent Schools XXXX | Independent body that liaises with government and represents the concerns of independent schools, including the faith-based school in this study; Offers professional learning to leaders and teachers; administrative and legislative support to schools; not yet connected to this initiative |
| 29. Government Bodies: XXXX | School registration: Ensuring legislative compliance; impacts decision-making at the local school level; Funding body |
| 30. Government Bodies: XXXX | State Curriculum authority; perception that this body allows little room for critical thinking and transformational change to curriculum in schools – Perceived as demanding and inflexible |
| 31. Government Bodies: Federal – Dept of Training and Education | Funding Body: legislative and regulatory requirements; represent government priorities |
| 32. Government Bodies: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) | Federal curriculum authority – linking state education systems; each state has used this as a base for the state curriculum. Schools are responsible to state authorities; Many textbooks and resources are written to match the Australian Curriculum |

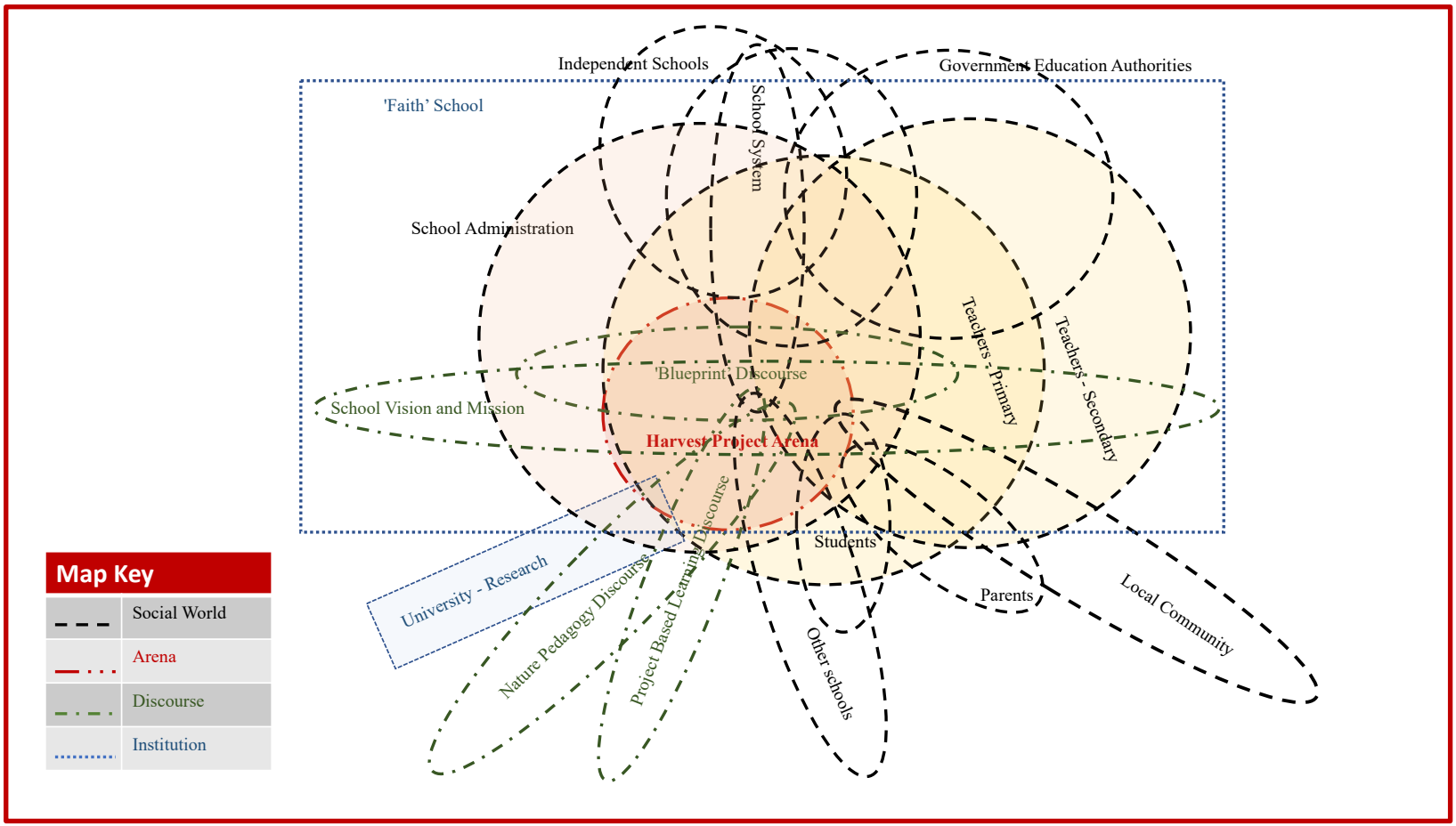
Note: XXXX Specific names removed to protect identity

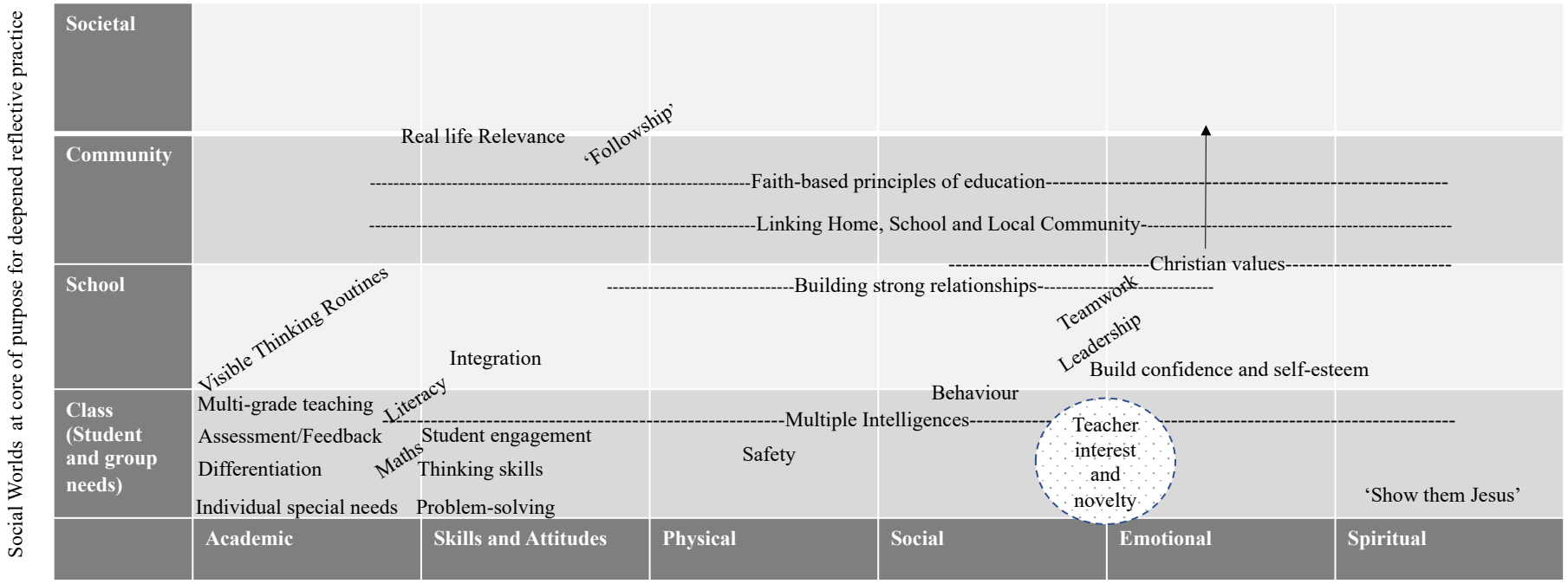
## Appendix BB: Expanded Social Worlds Ordered Maps – Discursive Discourses

| **Arenas of discursive discourses** | |
|---|---|
| **33. System Ideologies** | The faith-based school system within which this school is situated ideologically has certain shared understandings, expectations and motivations. These speak into both content and process, curriculum and pedagogy. There is a heritage of experience and history within the system, although the interpretations and enactments can vary considerably. |
| **34. Societal and political discourses** | Media publicises both societal and political ideas, values and issues. These can often pull and tug at teachers in contradictory directions. A range of these pressures and ideas filter through communities, families, students, colleagues, administration and external bodies, creating expectations that can feel daunting and weighty, mixing in with each teacher's beliefs and assumptions and bringing forth behaviours, attitudes, actions and reactions. This is often a subtle area of discourse. |
| **35. Extant educational discourse** | Within the professional arena there are a range of 'educational' ideas, attitudes, concepts and directions that are overtly shared through journals, professional development and 'teacher talk'. These interplay with the teacher's own experiences and training, beliefs and assumptions. Within each learning institution, there can be certain emphases, brought about through administrative intention, collaborative reflections and the demographics and interruptions on a more local level. |
| **36. Teacher beliefs and assumptions** | Teachers' beliefs and assumptions are not always deeply examined, yet they are powerful. Training has some impact, however many of the teachers in this study reflected that most learning occurs within the classroom. The impact of their own school experience was also acknowledged in the interviews within this study. Beliefs and assumptions do not appear to change easily. In fact, there can be a confirmation bias that keeps them increasingly entrenched. This is an important concept when considering ways to enable teachers to critically reflect. To move significantly from long-held beliefs and assumptions may require an examination of their core and foundation, and would need to have some powerful reason, because this would not be a comfortable process. |
| **37. Teacher attitudes, actions and reactions** | The attitudes, actions and reactions that are observed emanating from teachers within their practice are the evidence of beliefs and assumptions. When a teacher is self-reflective and discovering external behaviours and attitudes that are clashing with espoused values and beliefs, they may need some support to dig in and discover what is causing the variance. |
| **38. Interruptions** | The 'stuff that happens' within any learning institution that messes with routines, detours us from carefully designed pathways, assaults our preconceived ideas, and takes us by surprise… can lead to deep personal and collaborative reflection. These 'interruptions' can be incredibly difficult, and also incredibly powerful tools for transformation. |

## Appendix CC: Social Worlds Maps – Example

Social worlds map showing social worlds within the Harvest Project arena.






Arenas of purpose for deepened reflective practice

2. *Positional map showing purpose with motivation.*

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Teacher motivation** | + + + **External** | | Professional Learning; Maths; Reading; Outcomes | Blueprint; Reading & Listening; SIAS. | Compliance Tasks Curriculum Requirements | |
| | **Mixture** | Student outcomes | Differentiation; Problems of practice; Multiple intelligences; Professional Learning. | Blueprint; PL; Colleagues; Reading/Listening . | QAS | |
| | | Behaviour; Spiritual growth; Student needs; Students ('my children'); Differentiation; Love for learning; Engagement; 'Spark curiosity'; Student feedback; Challenge; 'Enhance learning'; Offer challenge; Building curiosity. | Integration; Relevance; Authenticity; 'Hitting the goals'; Finding a new resource; Professional learning. | Professional conversations; Blueprint; Reading of Books. | | Character development; Following God's plan; Visible change in school. |
| | **Internal** – – – | **Student focused reflective practice** | **Teaching Focused reflective practice** | **Ideas of others' reflective practice** | **Externally imposed foci** | **Critical holistic or societal goals** |
| | | **Purpose Focus** | | | | |

## Appendix EE: Positional Maps – Example of Assumption Map

3. *Positional map showing a range of potential assumptions mapped against 'who' is the focus, and the type of impact they may have on reflective practice.*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| +++<br>**Enabling Assumptions** | ○ What I love about having your own class is that there is flexibility …<br>○ What can I try this year? What's out there?<br>○ I'm really wanting to see it move forward…<br>○ It's a dream to be a part of it.<br>○ I am a person who loves structure…<br>○ A teacher can't give, do, everything, but they can do something.<br>○ If … I know that it's beneficial and tried and true, then I'll feel confident to go with it.<br>○ I'm a critical thinker, and I come on board, … but I want to solve the problems first.<br>○ I'm potentially a bit negative towards it…<br>○ I'm ready for someone else to be on the team… it is a commitment…<br>○ If there's no spiritual lesson, what's the point?<br>○ Oh well… that's not mine, I don't have to worry about it.<br>○ I've got enough to think about here.<br>○ You're on this treadmill of survival… | ○ Is there a model out there we can use?<br>○ School should be enjoyable…<br>○ It does require a little bit of optimism…<br>○ The way we teach at school sometimes …is so, so institutionalized and it is so compartmentalized.<br>○ We do tend to be self-effacing…<br>○ One person can't do it… | ○ Something has to change.<br>○ If there's no ownership, it's not really authentic<br>○ I'm assuming it will come top down…<br>○ There is no road map to get there<br>○ … When you get all this reflective paperwork , … I don't know so much if I'm into that.<br>○ Reflective practice is lost by paperwork…<br>○ If you take one step wrong, you're going to be obliterated … |
| **Limiting assumptions** ---<br> | **Personal Focus<br>Me** | **Collective Focus<br>We** | **External Focus<br>Them** |

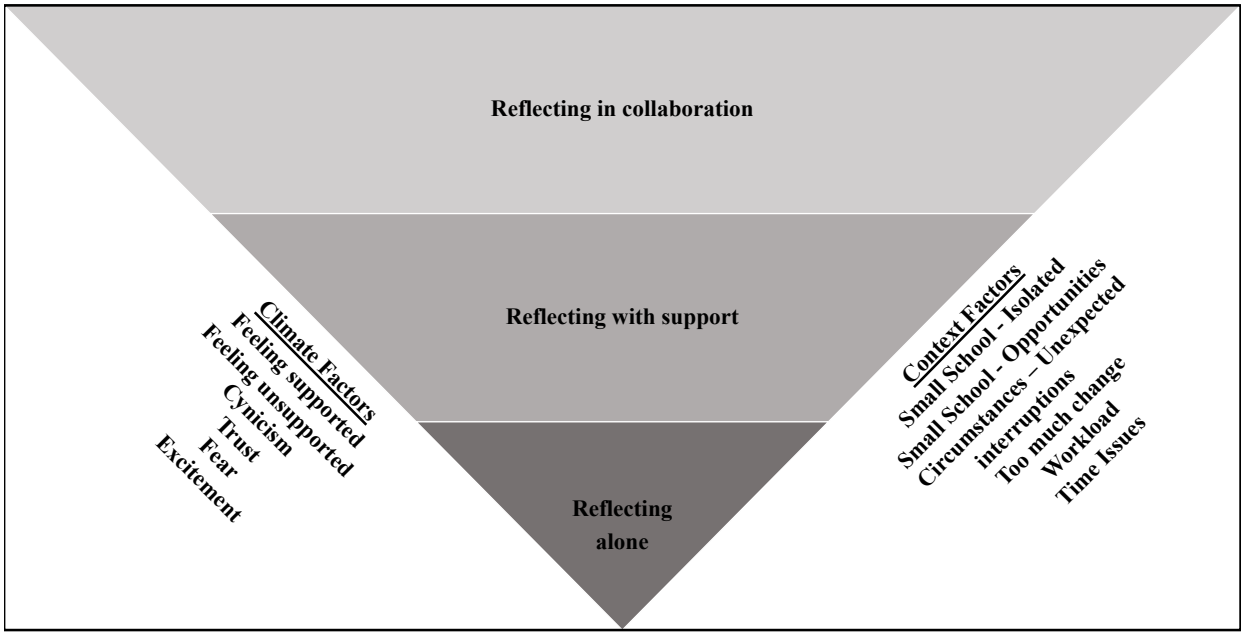
## Appendix FF: Positional Maps – Example of Process Map

4. *Positional map showing participants' declared processes for reflective practice in terms of formality & structure.*

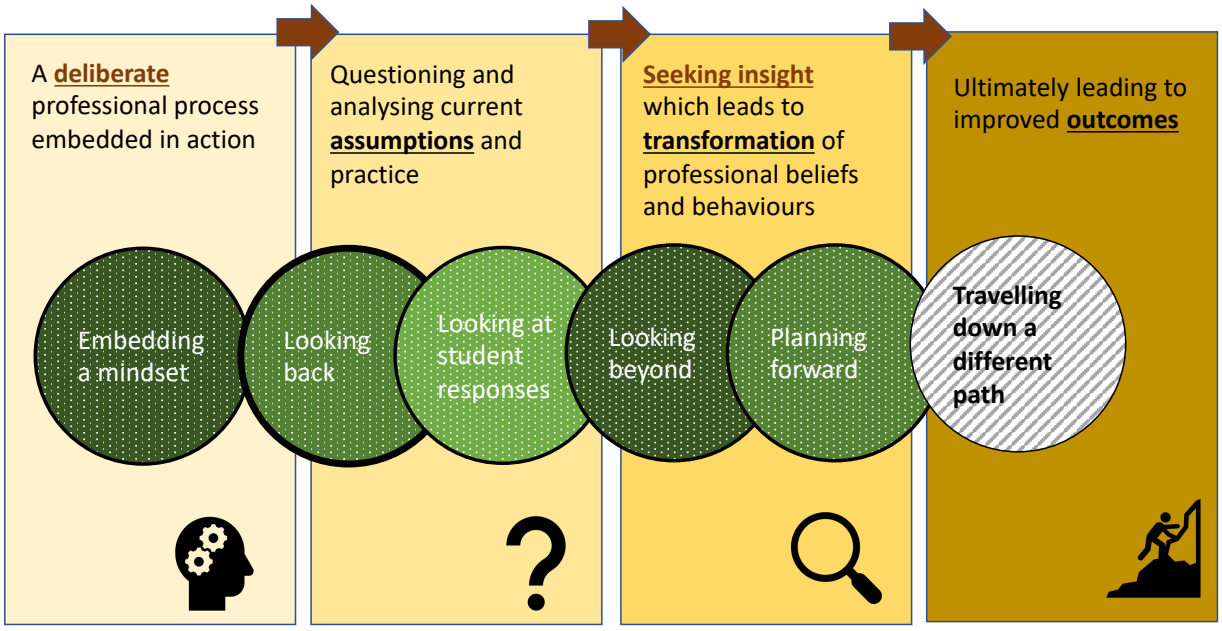
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| +++<br>**Formal Processes** | | ○ Select goals for year and use in all planning forward<br>○ Work from a Master Plan<br>○ Mentors | ○ School process – written if necessary<br>○ Staff Meetings<br>○ School template<br>○ QAS<br>○ SIAS<br>○ PD<br>○ Draw up a formal proposal for change<br>○ Small Committees<br>○ Scribble on units – tick a box<br>○ Visiting other schools |
| | ○ Write notes as things come up in practice<br>○ Professional conversations<br>○ Hitting the spot in the moment | ○ Going on Google… having a look at ideas<br>○ Online networking<br>○ Planning forward during school breaks | ○ Work out a step-by-step process to achieve goals<br>○ Formal student feedback<br>○ Reading for Professional Development |
| **Informal Processes**<br>--- | ○ Informal student feedback<br>○ Collegial chats<br>○ Ongoing – make changes if needed<br>○ Hit the same thing from a different way<br>○ Try new things<br>○ At home thinking<br>○ 'Stewing in the back of my mind" | ○ Personal reflections - regular | ○ Research in depth for particular need |
| **Reflection TOOLS** | **Less Structured Process**<br>--- | | **More Structured Process**<br>+++ |

## Appendix GG: Positional Maps – Examples of Position and Process Maps

***5.*** *Positional map showing a range of positional elements impacting reflective practice.*




***6.*** *Positional* map showing participants' declared general processes for reflective



## Appendix HH: Heuristic – Exemplary Portrait - Example

At the time of this data collection, Kerry had taught for over fifteen years in primary education. She was friendly and communicative and made herself available for an interview at each of my visits to the school. My professional conversations with her provided useful and productive perspectives on the idea of enabling deepened reflective practice in teachers. Four interviews (approximately half an hour length) were recorded, transcribed, summarised, and shared with her for participant feedback. I have chosen to share her story in depth to represent many of the themes evident across the participant group.

Kerry was excited about Harvest Project. She had fond memories of her personal schooling experiences in rural schools. As we conversed, she recalled the sense of freedom and fun involved in the agricultural subjects. A smile spread across her face as she remembered a school project involving breeding quails. She longed to give her students similar experiences. *"I've waited a long time to see something like this happen in this school', she shared, 'but it's kind of inhibited because we have had a lack of funds in the past, also a lack of people available … it takes time, you know" (May 2016).*

It was clear that Kerry engaged in an ongoing informal reflective practice which she described as asking herself the question, *"How can I move forward, [and find] the best ways that I can look at teaching … for my children" (Jan 2016)*. "For my children" was evident in every interview with Kerry. Her reflections were child-centred, considering home backgrounds, personality traits and socioemotional development, child by child. She didn't speak of theories, rather her responses were filled with colourful pictures of the children she was teaching, along with those she had taught in past years. Kerry's two overarching goals for her students clearly filtered her reflective practice.

> *God first definitely and then self-esteem… because without that you can't achieve much …. Over all the years that I've taught, if [a] child has come into your [sic] classroom and they have got no confidence, you know it's hard … You can raise children up even though … they have not had a good start and the things that they can achieve are unbelievable. (Jan 2016).*

These goals also impacted her response to the school-wide initiative at the heart of this study. It was apparent that they were the connecting link to her willingness to reflect more deeply and be willing to make significant changes. When I asked her perspective on the biggest goals for Harvest Project, she responded, "*I guess my biggest goal would be for them to have interaction with animals. … … every day" (May 2016)*. Kerry tended to move straight

to the practical 'what' of practice. When I asked why, her overarching socioemotional goals were clear.

> *I guess, [it's] important for me because, particularly the class I've got this year, .... I've got 22 kids, so there are about 8 of them that have either learning problems, social problems, ... behaviour problems, ... Animals don't judge. Animals are there for the kids to offload on. ... Animals give them responsibility, that they might not get from anyone else. ... It's special because this animal is paying attention to this child who may or may not go home at night and have that attention or that care and love from their families. We've got lovely families, you know, in our school, but we've [also] got families that are busy and families that are big and so I can see the love that some kids miss out on. I don't know everything that goes on at home, but this is one ... [way] that I think our school can cater for those sort of kids. ... Getting responsibility…. (long pause) and they're getting skills to communicate with their friends as well, ... about something that they all have in common… with each other. There are kids that come to this school that are amazing wakeboarders… or they do things on the weekends that are great and incredible, and there are other kids that just go home and don't do much at all. You know, no fault of their own or their families but ... you know it gives them a common ground to talk over. (May 2016)*

She prioritised having animals inside classrooms, *"… That to me, I do find a little bit of a higher priority ... I don't know if I'm meant to, but that's my personal [perspective]"* (May 2016). She felt it would best suit the big goals for her students. She recalled how animals in the classroom had worked for her before.

> *... When that bird was there, I saw kids that normally mightn't have the opportunities to speak up, they're not fantastic at Maths, they're not fantastic at Literacy, but I'd look at them with this bird, and look at how much fun they were having with this animal, ... it was used as an incentive actually for two boys, in particular, to get their work done, make sure their behaviour was good, ... and you know what? Those two boys never stepped a foot out of line, whenever they knew that the bird was on offer, they were perfect. (May 2016)*

This teacher reflected and considered new ideas of practice through the lens of particular students and current and recent past classroom experiences.

Although Kerry could see great potential for the Harvest Project initiative to support her overarching goals, she was quick to consider immediate practicalities. *"But I'm just not sure how that's going to work"* (May 2016). She was not one to delve into theories or abstract reasoning. If it was worth her time, she needed to see that the practical issues were dealt with. In reflecting on the idea of a garden, she moved directly to how it could be utilised amongst the classes, *"I think shared would be easier… in a sense, but it would need careful*

*monitoring, and rostering"* (May 2016). In terms of the animals she was once again thinking of the practical ramifications, "*We need somebody, like a caretaker, for these animals on the weekends, whom we can pay. I don't know if that's possible, … But we definitely need to have somebody. We need facilities for these animals as well"* (May 2016).

Kerry identified busyness as a great barrier to her reflective practice. When I asked her how she made it happen, she responded,

> *Um good question … you know, at home coming up with ideas … after the child and husband have gone to bed, … it could be, you know, talking to colleagues reflecting on how I've done things here. And whether they have done those similar things. … It could be staff meeting. It could be online with friends … masses of different ways. (Jan 2016)*

I asked how she moved her reflections on to potentiate changes in her practice.

> So it depends on how … big the task is going to be. If it involves the quick *mend, um if it involves … professional development … and one has to seek advice from the Head of Primary, whether you might have to get help from the curriculum person. … But it's hard. It's difficult to change something that you have been working through and doing year after year after year. (Jan 2016)*

Kerry was able to verbalise some of the barriers to deepening reflective practice.

> *You do it … to an extent but no, there is not really any time given for … [someone to say] 'Come, sit down here. We are going to reflect on what you are doing in the classroom'. … I think that the problem stems from busyness. And also, you know, let's … get grandparents' day finished and over and done with. Okay … the next thing that's on the agenda … (Jan 2016)*

From the first interview it was evident that Kerry felt the need for a collaborative approach to support reflective practice. She related a story of recently visiting another school with one of her colleagues. She added, *"Um, I've never ever done that, so to go out and have a look and see … what other schools are doing. So perhaps if I had done that earlier it might have helped my confidence a little bit" (Jan 2016).* Isolation, both geographic and in terms of school size, had left her lacking in confidence. She felt that seeing other teachers at work and reflecting with colleagues was helpful and could build confidence.

> *Um just, you know, bouncing ideas off each other and reflecting as we are driving, … just that whole … working as a team together rather than being isolated. … Because we do feel a bit isolated, well I do. … You're responsible for … [your class] stage and there is no one else to talk to about that stage. (Jan 2016)*

"*Working as a team together"* came to be quite a theme in the conversations with Kerry. Whilst expressing a lack of confidence to independently take on critical reflections and major change, she was willing, and initially even excited, to be involved in the Harvest Project initiative because she thought it would be a team project.

With the initial excitement after the shared PD in January, Kerry took the initiative to research some of the practicalities that would be involved in setting up a diverse school orchard, one of the practical ideas that had been put forward to achieve the character goals the teachers had agreed upon. She put considerable time into finding detailed information to support the project. She was quickly discouraged.

*"I did a whole lot of research"*, she explained. She had spoken at length to someone who had successfully done something similar. Kerry noted some of the lessons learned, cost effective suppliers and the names of people who would be willing to support the project with advice and experience. With a disappointed air she sighed,

> *We haven't had any meetings, it takes my time, a lot of my time… I don't know then if there's other people out there who have already done all that, and researched, …? Like … do I really want to keep going because I don't know where we're at, and I don't want to waste all my time. And so it is easier for me to concentrate on my classroom at the moment. (May 2016)*

In October, she once again recalled the effort she had put into that early research – which indicated a deepening sense of reflective practice, noting, *"Yeah, but it kind of went a bit flat…" (Oct 2016).*

Kerry was looking for a process to be in place where she could share this research, contributing something of value to the whole school-wide project. What she found was that there was no framework that would allow a teacher to contribute elements for others to build upon. She was respectfully heard, however there was no space or place for her contribution to be valued, shared or utilised and so she made a quick retreat back to her classroom busyness.

> *I don't want to sound cynical, but I think that's the only reason why it hasn't started yet, because people are flat out doing other things. If you start to do that too, it sounds good, in theory, but in reality I feel like, I'm not sure, like if you have, too many cooks spoil the broth sometimes, sometimes You just need to get it up and running and then say alright, you're in charge, of this bit, and you can do that bit, I just feel like that might work easier, from my experience. (May 2016)*

She could see the problem, and even some of the solution, but did not feel she could do anything about it. *"I don't want to tread on anybody's toes. … I don't know what other people have in mind" (May 2016)*. As I listened to Kerry and the other teachers, I sensed that

the teachers were aware of the problems and that they needed to be heard in finding solutions if this Project, or any other similar school-wide initiative, was to bring about lasting change and improved student outcomes.

> *We need to be having meetings together and talking about this altogether rather than me trying to find solutions [and] … step forward, but you know, everyone is so busy, so you just feel like, oh I'll just do it myself … (May 2016).*
>
> *I would love for us to sit down as a staff and say alright, this is what Kerry wants to do, and this is what Cara wants to do, this is what Mandy wants to do, what are we going to do to achieve these goals these teachers have? … Do you want to do the same thing? Is that part of your goal? And let's do a time frame. (May 2016)*

As I dug deeper into Kerry's ideas, I asked, *"Do you think it could happen here …?" (May 26).*

Kerry thought for a moment and answered with an air of defeat,

> *Um, I don't know. I'm reluctant to say yes, because … everyone's busy on that side, and everyone's busy on this side and if you make suggestions like this, it kind of goes, 'Oh yes that's a good idea, and then, six months later, … it's no fault of anybody, … it could be that I'm not pushy enough, or I don't have the passion, I don't have the expertise … (May 2016)*

In October, after the September focus group had met and come to some agreement on moving forward, I asked Kerry if she felt that anything had changed.

> *Not really. I don't think so, … we are all doing our own things, … so we've had a meeting and we've talked about, you know, things that we would like to see happen and to be able to share, but … But, yeah, I think it's still the same but there's a shift in where we want to go, and probably I think we'll end up there next year... (Oct 2016)*

Then she added more hopefully, *"… very quickly" (Oct 2016)*.

Conversations with Kerry continued to show fluctuations in emotions from excitement and hope to caution and pessimism.

> *I do feel like I do have a strong purpose, and the reason for why we're doing this, um. I guess, I guess I'm still a little bit guarded in that I want things to … so desperate for things to happen but I'm just worried that it's not going to happen. But I think we just need to keep … [the purpose] in the forefront of whatever we're doing. (Oct 2016)*

Kerry knew that things needed to proceed slowly. *"You can't do so much all in one hit, because everyone will feel quite overloaded, and overwhelmed" (Oct 2016)*, however,

there was also a need for momentum, "… *a few months ago when it all got first started, um, everyone had, and still do, had good ideas, but I felt like nothing was happening. But then things could have been happening behind the scenes, but I'm not privy to that, I don't hear that" (Oct 2016).* Later in that conversation, she added, *"We're not going to learn from it until we start it"* (Oct 2016).

Communication was an area that Kerry noted as impacting teacher attitudes. *"Cause you know, we're a small school but you know, messages still get lost along the way … so if we can set time aside to make sure we are discussing what's going on … that's what needs to happen …" (Oct 2016).*

In January 2016, Kerry had described a current schoolwide funded program reflecting on school improvement. She had been a member of the committee. She could see potential value in group reflections for bringing about school-wide change but noted that the reaction from teachers in staff meetings, was, *"Here we go…. It's that … need for wanting to not … spend time reflecting but rather push on … and get through … these jobs that everybody has" (Jan 2016).*

Along with being painfully and personally aware of the lack of time and busyness each teacher was juggling, Kerry suggested some valuable supports that would be needed if the Harvest Project initiative was not to become another good idea being put on the shelf.

> *I think number one is finances … I think also time, and I think … sometimes you know, teachers don't know how to put it into their program, so they need that time to actually be shown how it's going to be immersed in everything. (Jan 2016)*

It was important to Kerry that teachers were not *"left on your own to sort of fumble through or work it out yourself" (Jan 2016)*.

She also mentioned that someone needed to *"take control of something like this…"* and help each teacher *"to be accountable… to check in and refresh [and] remind" (Jan 2016)*. She saw the Principal as *"… a driver and … [with] a vision and he motivates people to actually um get on board. … He is a big plan sort of person… It's easy to help and support … someone like that …." (Jan 2016).*

In October, when speaking of my role coming to an end, Kerry responded, *"Somebody has to keep asking those questions"* (Oct 2016).

I caught up with Kerry on my last visit to the school on March 6, 2017. The conversation was not recorded, although extensive notes were taken, and a detailed summary shared with her for participant feedback. The purpose of this final visit was to share my

overall findings to the staff group, however some teachers made time to speak with me and I took the opportunity to check in and listen for any additional ideas or changes in opinions and attitudes.

I asked her what had prompted her to question and change her practice in the last twelve months. Individual student needs continued to be a strong impetus for reflection and change. She also spoke of some school-wide emphases on building visible learning and better transition between grades. She then added a thought that had not come up in any of our previous interviews. Kerry shared that finding fresh ways to approach teaching can bring life and interest when your teaching role has stayed the same over an extended number of years. As I listened, I realised once again how important it is to understand each teacher's story. Building capacity for deepening reflective practice could improve student outcomes, and, it seems, it could also improve a teacher's enjoyment of their role.

As we discussed the last twelve months, I asked her to share the biggest roadblocks to questioning and consequential change. She spoke of being *"overworked"*. Time and busyness stifled both the reflecting and the potential changing of practice. She worried making some changes might be *"too hard"*. She also felt that moving from one schoolwide change to another in succession had left teachers without the time needed to properly evaluate changes made.

I moved on to ask her how these issues could be addressed and how teachers could build the capacity to reflect effectively and transform practice if required. She spoke of *"hearing from other colleagues"* and *"other schools"* and finding how they built their confidence and found ways through the busyness and limited time all teachers face. Kerry moved deeper into this theme of collegiality and spoke of the value of *"making changes together"*. She felt it would feel safer to solve problems and trial new solutions as a team. She added that once some successful changes had been made, *"it makes me a braver teacher, up for change"*. Kerry said that she had appreciated the professional conversations (interviews) we had shared. They had built her courage so that she could *"test the waters"* of change.

Kerry contributed much to our exploration of seeking ways to build capacity for deepened reflective practice in teachers. The ideas she shared were indicative of many of the other teachers.

## Appendix II: Heuristic – Individual Depiction Example

Each individual depiction is an imagined conversation based on a deep immersion in the data. After pouring through all the data that pertained to this teacher and consciously bracketing my beliefs and assumptions, I was able to *hear* Mandy's voice clearly respond to the questions.

**Heuristically-derived individual depiction – Mandy**

Mandy is an experienced primary school teacher. At the time of this study, her declared core goals were to show Jesus' love and foster student engagement.

**A Conversation with Mandy**

**So Mandy, how could school administrators support you to deepen your reflective practice?**

*Engage with me in my core goals. Take the time and make the space to walk beside me, talk, guide, hear my fears, support my growth.*

*I need someone to initiate professional conversations. I would love support in selecting effective PD, because I take my professional growth seriously for the sake of my students.*

*I do best with one-on-one coaching or mentoring. I would feel "enthused and inspired to make steps" with this type of support but can get overwhelmed and lack confidence in larger groups.*

**How could school administrators encourage a school-wide initiative that requires deepened reflective practice?**

*Well, there needs to be a clear understanding of the purpose. And I think we all need to find our little niche within a framework and be ready to encourage each other to achieve our goals.*

**Did you deepen your reflective practice with the Harvest initiative?**

*You know, I really did. I didn't like to try new things in case they didn't work. I would never want to waste a moment of my students' time. With the extra one-on-one support, I became more courageous. I really feel like a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis. My class did some amazing things, and I kept the goals of character development strongly at the core of everything I did. It was exciting.*

## Appendix JJ: Heuristic Analysis – Summing up Feedback on Capacity Builders

Teacher capacity for deepening reflective practice can be intentionally built within a school by creating a variety of safe spaces for teachers to question current practice and bring about consequential change, meeting individual needs of teachers, and employing positive and rigorous collaborative strategies that honour and value teacher professionalism and strengths.

**Creating safe spaces**

**Engage an external facilitator**: *An external facilitator that works with both teachers and administration to mentor, coach, listen, support, feedback, remind, and guide through the distractions of contextual interruptions. This role supports accountability for leaders and teachers alike.*

**Utilise staff meetings for safeguarding reflective time**: *Create time-space that prioritises deepened reflections over compliance and interruptions.*

**Synergise around a shared focus and protect against competing focal points**: *Avoid adding to loads through synergistic planning thereby avoiding multiple focal points that divert, dilute, or drown attempts to reflect and transform.*

**Create a roadmap**: *Innovative problem-solving needs flexible yet stated direction, boundaries, goals, resource allocations and timelines for teachers to safely participate. Artistry can flourish within this safety net.*

**Meeting individual needs**

**Communicate with clarity**: *Each teacher needs to understand the core purpose and ongoing progression of school-wide reflective practice.*

**Check in often and provide individual, practical and classroom-centred support**: *Teachers have unique combinations of personal and professional strengths and needs. Their current class context will also have unique challenges. Know each teacher's narrative and support them in their growth with practical and tangible support.*

**Move in small steady steps**: *Momentum can be built and sustained with steady but sure steps that clearly and visibly build towards ultimate goals. Small steps reduce fear and resistance.*

**Celebrate small successes**: *Success breeds success. Positive feedback builds a teacher's sense of efficacy.*

**Employing positive and rigorous school-wide collaborative strategies**

**Lead with sustained passion and wisdom**: *Visionary leadership is inspiring. Although not enough on its own, it is an essential element of building school-wide and deepening reflective practice. Wisdom is required in flexibly guiding pace and direction whilst acknowledging and valuing unique teacher needs and strengths.*

**Utilise visible rigour to ensure a focussed purpose and sustainable process:** *For many and varied reasons, change can be short-lived or ineffective unless a strong and rigorous process is included from the outset. Rigour includes a cycle of ongoing reflection, evaluation, and improvement with the original rationale central to each aspect of the cycle.*

**Move together:** *Reducing a sense of isolation, collaborative reflective practice has the potential to increase courage, utilise individual strengths, and create an atmosphere of mutual support.*

**Involve everyone:** Building a negotiated and supported role for each teacher negates a tendency to leave responsibilities and problem-solving to a few and increases the potential for reflective practice to infuse school culture.

**Memo – Insights after working through the heuristic analysis process**

Not every teacher will respond to enabling support in the same way. The point is to engage them a little more deeply than their current practice.

My personal bias was that it would be valuable for all teachers to be willing to ask the big questions – regarding lifelong impact, hidden curriculum, school climate, societal issues, changing needs etc. I now wonder if this is a journey that is best done as a whole school – in collaborative reflective practice, with individual teachers adding their strengths to the process, rather than seeking to have all independently embarking on this level of reflective practice.

Deepening may involve adding to the perspectives currently sought, allowing a critical friend to step with them in a trusting, honest and authentic journey of mutual sharing and accountability. It may involve some utilising their creativity, others their love for autonomy, some their logical problem-solving skills, some their emotional strengths and others their interests, skills and passions.

The role of the external facilitator in this study involved conversations and following up with written summaries of those conversations being sent to each participant. This process, though initially intended purely as data collection, took on two additional roles – one was to listen, support, brainstorm and incite questioning and wondering, both modelling and facilitating reflective practice. The other was that in the de-identified feedback to admin, teachers found that they could give their voice, their ideas, and their concerns, an airing. That they could be heard without feeling that they were disappointing leaders whom they respected.

## Appendix KK: Answering the Primary Research Question

The following support findings are written as a collective response to the research question: *"How can school leaders build teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice?"*

1. School leaders need to **intentionally lead** with vision and passion, whilst tempering their approach to consider the well-being of their teachers and the realities of their school situation. This may require a leadership team.

2. Leaders need to **create space** in the busy worlds of their teachers, time-space, personal-space, and professional-space.

3. Leaders need to **give support** by listening, resourcing, and protecting their teachers whilst keeping things practical in acknowledgement of the complexity of demands within the teaching role.

4. School leaders need to help **broaden the perspectives** of their teachers, supporting them to look at the reflective focal point through varied lenses, including students, colleagues, parents, and theoretical knowledge.

5. It is important that significant effort is put into **synergising focal points** of deepened reflective practice to allow for the time, depth and processes required and to avoid the death knell of compliance attitudes.

6. Supporting synergised focus requires rigour. You need to **create pathways** that clearly lead in the direction of purpose. This purpose must be shared and understood by all concerned. Frameworks should be formed that allow teachers to see the big picture whilst working within the small parts. Processes must be clearly planned, adding the details of rigour within the common framework. Communication is vital, both in supporting and protecting overarching goals and purposes.

7. A **culture of collaboration** enhances the journey of leading teachers through the pathways and processes. This culture will be developed through ongoing teamwork experiences, involving all teachers in some consequential way that best uses teachers' strengths.

8. Leaders must **build momentum** when working together on a shared journey of deepening reflective practice. Starting is very important. Ideas left hanging without action lead to cynicism and a culture of avoiding big issues. Steps must be small enough to achieve without overburdening teachers yet significant enough to celebrate.

9. In the world of schools and teaching, interruptions, workloads, and fragmented responsibilities become major distractors and inhibitors of deepened reflective practice. **Engaging external support** offers a scaffold for intentionally leading the building of teacher capacity for deepened reflective practice. As with all scaffolds, this support is given for a time and purpose, with the intention of removing it, leaving a framework for ongoing reflective practice within the school.