
A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of the work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Julie Anderson

18/08/2018
Acknowledgements

The seed for this topic germinated several years ago following my work as a primary school teacher and thereafter my experience of post-graduate research with RMIT University. My research project uncovered a wide gap between the implementation of the Numeracy component of the Early Years Strategy and the Literacy component. The findings motivated my quest for further experiences with research and coincidentally I became aware that there was a wide disconnect between my teaching colleagues' beliefs and practice and a recently launched large-scale policy, known in this thesis as The Blueprint.

In pursuing this quest I was fully supported in undertaking further research by RMIT University and in particular, Professor Heather Fehring. Heather wisely placed me in the supervisory care of Professor Dianne Siemon and I have been so very lucky to have had the wise and generous counsel from a sage in the field. Di's patience knew no bounds and her guidance encouraged the development of my puzzle-solving skills and supported the strengthening of the argument in the final refinements. Sincere thanks go to Dr Rebecca Seah, whose generous support and gentle encouragement as second supervisor during the last few months is greatly appreciated. It has been a pleasure to undertake my research with RMIT University and in particular, my sincere thanks go to the School of Education.

I would like to thank the participants in this study, the six teachers and four principals who generously donated their time, their knowledge, and their expertise to this project. With your generosity and risk-taking the seed for this project germinated and flourished.

Thanks also to the outstanding guidance of the scholars who have informed this research. One of the benefits of the delayed publication of this thesis is that over the last few years the body of literature has been enriched by a host of scholarly works. There are also many researchers whose work was not included in this thesis due to its scope however I would like to acknowledge their support in not only providing important background knowledge but also in shaping my thinking.
There were many twists and turns in this research, and at times the challenge of locating and keeping to a definitive pathway seemed elusive. My original concern was to give teachers a voice as they champion their way through the uncertainties of adapting to new policy initiatives. And in keeping this in mind, the argument began to shape as I began to develop deeper understandings of the wide dissonance between the daily work of teachers and the prevailing ideals advocated by standards-based policy reforms.

This research experience has captivated my very being and for twelve years has been my mainstay through traumatic events including severe heart issues, a broken leg and ankle, and a very beloved family who have needed a great deal of my support. In bouncing back after enforced time away, I have immersed myself in the puzzle-solving that a doctoral thesis brings and have been richly rewarded by driving my thesis to a close. To my mother who has always been my steadfast supporter, thank you and to my brother Stephen and sister-in-law Bettina who understand the need to pursue dreams, thankyou. To my children Campbell, Felicity and Bronwyn and their sweethearts, thankyou my darlings and may you always find happiness. Last of all I would like to thank my darling husband Peter for his ongoing love, many laughs and sustained support although I’m sure he enjoyed many extra days at golf course.

I dedicate this thesis to my darling grandchildren:

Ruby, George, Albert, Cecilia, Louis and Gene

May you always chase your dreams and find gold at the end of the rainbow.
Abstract

This thesis investigates how teachers respond to profound changes to their practice introduced by policy reforms. Building on a literature base suggesting that education reforms are shaped by prevailing global political ideologies and the reliance on school leadership and professional learning as implementation strategies the thesis embeds this literature strongly in pedagogy, and in classroom assessment to explore why these trends continue to create tensions in teachers’ professional lives. Using a qualitative, ethnographic case study approach, the thesis used a multi-faceted approach to data collection. A small sample of teachers and principals contributed to the data collection comprising face-to-face interviews, video-recorded classroom observations and artefacts consisting of the teachers’ assessment and planning documentation. The thesis finds that since the push for teachers to change their practice is persistent and pervasive, it is not surprising that teachers cling to familiar routines and resist change. An important finding in this thesis is that support, which is currently being offered to teachers undergoing profound change, is fundamentally flawed and that teachers and schools are commonly blamed for poor educational outcomes and policy failures. Teachers take the opportunity to adapt to innovative assessment practices yet they require time and support to assimilate what may appear to be revolutionary pedagogical ideas, particularly in assessment. Theoretical positioning on classroom assessment has undergone significant change, shifting from a view of assessment purposes based on summative and formative perspectives to assessment for/of/as learning and more recently, a shift to a unified approach comprising summative and formative perspectives. These significant shifts have been identified in evolving Victorian education policies and while teachers are expected to keep abreast of these shifts, professional learning and school leadership lag behind as the means of support for teachers experiencing substantial changes to their professional practices.
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CHANGES

Everyone is going through changes
No one knows what's going on
And everybody changes places
But the world still carries on

Love must always change to sorrow
And everyone must play the game
It's here today and gone tomorrow
But the world goes on the same

Now love must always change to sorrow
And everyone must play the game
It's here today and gone tomorrow
But the world goes on the same

Alan Price

1973
Preamble

This thesis is the outcome of a long and interrupted journey, the inspiration for which began with my primary teaching career that spanned 35 years followed by a stint in tertiary education. I held a number of roles in regional network leadership, school team leadership and curriculum leadership in the Arts (1990–1995), Mathematics (1995–1998), and Numeracy (1995–2005). Overall, the leadership experience provided me with an opportunity to engage with, and ultimately reflect on, a series of educational change initiatives. Following two overlapping events I was prompted to consider an in-depth study of the ways in which such initiatives were experienced, interpreted, and enacted by teachers.

The first event followed the introduction of the Early Years Strategy by the Victorian Education Department1 in 1999. The strategy was a response to the reports of two large-scale Victorian research projects: the Early Years Literacy Research Project (EYLRP, 1996–1999), and the Early Years Numeracy Research Project (EYNRP, 1999–2000). The strategy was well funded and provided assessment resources, a large diversity of professional learning programs and opportunities, and access to regional consultancy teams. As a member of one of those teams it soon became obvious there was a marked difference in the uptake of literacy and numeracy components for the strategy. While a major reason for this was the disparity in funding in favour of the Early Years Literacy Program, perhaps more importantly was that where the use of literacy assessments such as Running Records and Observations Tests were mandated2, the use of the Early Years Numeracy Interview3 was optional. This surprised me given the demonstrated value of the Numeracy Interview in both helping teachers identify children’s learning needs and gain an understanding of what was required to improve numeracy outcomes (Clarke, 2003; Clarke & Clarke, 2004).

---

1 Education Department is a generic title that will be used throughout this thesis due to several name changes that occurred over the period of this study. It is currently known as the Department of Education and Training Victoria.
2 As a condition of funding, government primary schools were required to have a literacy strategy framed in terms of the Whole School Design Model (Hill & Crévola, 1997).
3 A diagnostic assessment tool that constituted a face-to-face interview designed to illicit mathematical understandings; it was fundamental to the EYNRP data and outcomes.
The second experience, an event in 2005 afforded by my ongoing role as Numeracy Coordinator Leader, was the observation that the very same teachers, who enthusiastically endorsed the value of the literacy assessment resources to inform their teaching and track student progress, were reluctant to use the Numeracy Interview for the same purpose. This intensified my curiosity about teachers’ actual numeracy assessment practices given that the Early Years Strategy had been in place for six years. I sought and was given permission to conduct a small pilot study in two schools. The eight teachers who agreed to meet me to discuss their numeracy assessment practices on an individual basis, taught across Prep (Year K or Foundation) to Year 6. They volunteered samples of their students’ assessment work and copies of their assessment records.

The analysis revealed a lack of consistency in numeracy assessment practices within and between schools. Although the use of the Numeracy Interview was by now advocated in the recently introduced Blueprint for Government Schools: Future Directions for Education in the Victorian Government School System (State of Victoria, 2003)\(^4\), only two of the four teachers who taught in P-4 used the Interview. Most reported using a range of assessment strategies including checklists, portfolio assessments, observation notes, student reflections, scoring rubrics, and written tests of basic number facts. While some teachers reported feeling confident about their assessment strategies, others were less certain and spoke of their reliance on formalised tests. All except one of the teachers said that they often use the descriptors: ‘below’, ‘at’, or ‘beyond’ the expected curriculum level despite the introduction of a new numeracy assessment and reporting advice in The Blueprint. This experience suggested that there was also a disparity in the extent to which teachers and schools were willing and able to implement changes in numeracy assessment practices.

In many ways this state of affairs was understandable given the shifts in education policy in the 1990s and the lasting impact this had on schools. The Schools of the Future (DSE, 1993; Hayward, 1998) reforms for example changed the ways in which schools were managed, competition between public schools

\(^4\) Hereinafter referred to as simply The Blueprint, this comprised seven flagship strategies, the first of which was concerned with student learning and assessment (1.2).
for students and government resources was fostered, and principals and school councils became responsible for many areas previously managed at the Regional or State level. This policy ultimately resulted in the loss of 8000 teachers and the closure of some 350 public schools, and led to a spate of policies requiring increased accountability and reporting. By the time the Early Years Strategy was introduced in 1999–2000, many schools were simply overwhelmed with reform.

As a teacher at this time, I too had to implement the new literacy assessment practices but I quickly became disillusioned with the limitations this imposed on my literacy teaching. By contrast, the Numeracy Interview provided me with an in-depth understanding of children’s thinking and strategies that richly informed my teaching of numeracy. These experiences not only sharpened my interest in formative assessment but the ways in which educational policy is implemented and teacher responsiveness to change.

Faced with the results of my pilot study and the realization that the introduction of The Blueprint was inevitably going to impact teachers even more dramatically than the Schools of the Future reforms, I was motivated to explore teachers’ experience of change in more depth, particularly as many of the strategies and expectations included in The Blueprint concerned a fundamental aspect of their practice, that is, the teaching, learning and assessment of literacy and numeracy in primary schools. I enrolled in a PhD at RMIT University in 2005, and set about planning and conducting my study in a small number of primary schools as a part-time student.

By the end of 2008 a large data set had been collected and analysed and three draft chapters had been prepared. I was on my way. Unfortunately my health suddenly and unexpectedly deteriorated and from 2009–2013 I found myself in and out of hospital with severe heart complications involving a mitral valve repair and complex atrial fibrillation issues that required several subsequent procedures. The culmination was a pacemaker implant in 2013 and since then I have regained my health and driven this project towards completion.

Given that the only major policy initiative since The Blueprint is The Education State (State of Victoria, 2017a) that strongly advocates teaching informed by
data, the underlying issues investigated in this project and the findings are of continued relevance. Faced with declines in international comparative data and the growing clamour to improve educational outcomes for all students, *The Education State* has led to an increased focus on assessment practices. However, as was the case for The Blueprint, there is little or no evidence that teachers will have access to quality school-based professional learning and the resources needed to reach the targets set by *The Education State*. Teachers are at the coalface of change, and the in-depth exploration of a policy implementation offered by this study will inform the implementation of current and future policy initiatives.
Chapter One

Defining the Milieu

1.0 Introduction

The influence of educational reform on teachers and their practice is pivotal to successful policy implementation and improvements in existing schooling conditions. This thesis examines the implementation of a specific policy: the Blueprint for Government Schools: Future Directions for Education in the Victorian Government School System (2003), herein The Blueprint. This study aims to understand how teachers responded to the introduction of this policy and the extent to which they appropriated those changes into their practice.

Research on educational change rarely considers the implications for teachers as they grapple with the reality of policy implementation. Nor has there been any rigorous analysis of Victorian teachers’ responses to policy implementation in the last 30 years. The Blueprint remained in place for 14 years and remains a relevant policy to investigate as, like The Education State (2017a), it called for improved educational outcomes for all through the adoption of a new curriculum, and changes to teaching, learning, assessment and reporting practices. A tabled summary of the three large-scale policy reforms dating from the 1990s is shown in Table 2.1. Due to several name changes, Victoria’s Department of Education is herein known as the Education Department.

Teachers are fundamental to the success of policy initiatives and policymakers are well advised to ensure teachers understand the intended changes. Pivotal to this is the provision of a range of professional learning opportunities, leadership support and appropriate resources. This study explores the extent to which these were provided in relation to the implementation of The Blueprint and teacher’s experience of that change, which is rarely addressed in the literature and is generally ignored by policymakers.

The following vignette serves to illustrate the complexity of this issue and how one teacher struggled with expectations of changes to her practice.
Linda

People don’t resist change; they resist being changed (Sparks, 1997).

We are all creatures of habit and in the face of imminent change turning to the familiarity of routines is a helpful strategy. In the teaching profession, responses to change fall along a continuum where at one end, new practice is welcomed and embraced, and at the other end, changes are resisted and ignored.

In 1999, Linda was part of a team of eight teachers who had established a *streaming*, or ability-based system for teaching mathematics in Years 3-6. The students were formally tested, graded and placed by ability in separate classes. The team of teachers referred to the groups as top, middle and bottom and they used instructional methods where hands-on, concrete materials were rarely used; mathematical problems were presented as closed questions with a single solution and rote learning dominated.

The *Schools of the Future* (SOTF, 1990s) policy directive expected teachers to make graded judgments against the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) and, also lauded the statewide testing system as a legitimate and worthwhile means of assessment. At the time, Victorian policymakers viewed assessment as separate to teaching. Thus, it is not surprising that some teachers took these policy recommendations as an endorsement to maintain formal summative assessment practices. The school leadership and the parent community supported the streaming system and it became embedded as a part of the school’s culture. However, following the installation of a new leadership team the streaming system was dismantled and the balance of power shifted considerably within the school. For Linda this represented a challenge as it meant that business could not proceed as usual.

With the coincident introduction of the Early Years Literacy and Numeracy programs Linda was expected to modify her teaching and assessment practices. Participating in the school-based professional learning programs, Linda appeared to be acquiescent. However, there was no evidence of a change in practice in her classroom. For example, I came across Linda using a Round Robin instructional method where the whole class was seated in a circle and in turn,
they read aloud. Linda picked up on errors and loudly commented on each child’s reading, such as: “Well that was better Michelle. You only made three mistakes”. This approach was contrary to the approaches recommended in the Early Years Literacy program. Similarly, Linda agreed to administer the Early Years Numeracy Interview: a face-to-face diagnostic mathematics test. However, despite being given teacher relief to complete the test, she said she hadn't done it and she appeared unfazed by her admission.

On one occasion Linda’s non-compliance tactics culminated in an extraordinary outburst. This happened after our team, including Linda, had decided on a science experiment for the students to conduct. Each student would make a terrarium to observe changing conditions such as condensation, plant growth and so on. We discussed the process at length, I set about organising my students with their terrarium planting, and I assumed that the others had also followed up on our planning. After a few weeks, my students were very excited with their terrariums and stimulated by their observations. When I used this as a discussion starter at our next meeting, Linda broke down in a fit of rage, which was entirely out of character. She seemed angry at the team’s decision to complete the science task. But it was more likely an impulsive reaction brought about by the rapid changes in the school and her perceived loss of autonomy.

Linda’s experiences of reform had so far involved the implementation of an outcomes-based curriculum where teachers were free to administer formal tests to evaluate student learning. Linda preferred this approach and the introduction of the Early Years Literacy and Numeracy programs, that valued differentiated teaching based on identified student learning needs, had limited impact on her practice. She continued to use lock-step instructional methods, despite the provision of a range of on- and off-site professional learning opportunities.

Although information about The Blueprint was provided on the Department of Education’s website, it is hardly surprising that Linda chose not to access this or to engage with the changed practices. Soon after The Blueprint’s introduction, Linda retired from teaching and it is open to conjecture as to whether or not she would have eventually implemented any or all of the policy components. This
real-life vignette represents an example of one teacher who found it difficult to cope with changes brought about by policy initiatives. And I was spurred on to discover how and why other teachers had responded to The Blueprint, a policy that expected substantial changes to teachers’ daily professional work.

The next section outlines key features of The Blueprint policy.

1.1 The Blueprint (2003–2016)

In 2003 the Labor government announced The Blueprint through the Department of Education’s website. Minister Kosky provided a justification for reform followed by details of the seven flagship strategies (Table 1.1). Although not explained by the government, the term Flagship Strategy was possibly used to flag each Strategy’s importance and to encompass the various intentions outlined in each of the seven Flagship Strategies. Information about The Blueprint was available on the Department’s website and large-scale briefings were provided for Principals and Leading Teachers. Printed copies of the policy documents were available through downloading; this in itself was a major shift from previous initiatives since printed copies were distributed to schools, for example, the Early Years Numeracy program package comprised three bound booklets, a CD, and a video. As the primary focus of this study is concerned with the introduction of Flagship Strategy 1, all following references to The Blueprint will be limited to this Strategy.

Flagship Strategy 1

Flagship Strategy 1 contains four components central to this study. The first component, the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) replaced the previous curriculum, Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF). The CSF was structured in terms of discrete Key Learning Areas (KLAs) and clearly defined levels containing several outcomes and benchmark milestones. The framework for VELS differs substantially from CSF since it comprised Strands of Core Knowledge, Ideas and Skills outlined in Disciplines; Essential Skills such as thinking and communication skills across the curriculum; and Personal and Social Skills in relation to values and personal attributes. The VELS curriculum
framework provided a lengthy learning focus for each level in each discipline followed by performance standards outlined as *National Statements of Learning* to provide guidance for what students are expected to achieve at each level.

### Table 1.1 The Blueprint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flagship Strategy</th>
<th>Improvement focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flagship Strategy 1: Student Learning</td>
<td>Curriculum: Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT) Assessment: Assessment Advice Reporting to parents: Progression Points and Online reporting system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flagship Strategy 2: Developing a New Resource Allocation Model</td>
<td>Replace school global budget with a new funding model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flagship Strategy 3: Building Leadership Capacity</td>
<td>Leadership performance management: scorecard approach; coaching and mentoring; development programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flagship Strategy 4: Creating and Supporting a Performance Development Culture</td>
<td>Accreditation for schools’ performance and development (e.g., feedback for teachers from parents and students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flagship Strategy 5: Teacher Professional Development</td>
<td>Introduction of teachers’ professional learning for 460 teachers per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flagship Strategy 6: School Improvement</td>
<td>School planning, performance and accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flagship Strategy 7: Leading Schools Fund</td>
<td>Extra resourcing: teachers and facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) consultations were conducted across the State, from April 2004 to June 2004, involving several educators from all sectors. The final VELS document was published in November 2004. The final report on consultation (VCAA, 2004) indicated a “strong level of endorsement” (p. 75) for the proposed curriculum, yet detailed throughout the report are numerous concerns raised by educators. For example, these include implementation concerns, the overall complexity of the framework, and the levels of support for teachers and as well, incremental increases to teachers’ workloads. Given the short timeline between the final report on the consultation and the publication date, it is questionable as to whether or not concerns were considered, although the VCCA acknowledged a
“list of areas that need to be addressed in the development of the new framework” (p. 75).

Another component of Flagship Strategy 1, the *Principles of Learning and Teaching* (PoLT) was built on the findings of a range of projects conducted in 2000 to 2004 where teaching and learning came to be viewed as complex, “multifaceted and highly interconnected activities” (State of Victoria, 2012, p. 1). The six principles comprise a nutshell statement and additional points pertaining to the principle, as well as brief descriptions of what the component does and does not demonstrate, in brief:

1. The learning environment is supportive and productive.
2. The learning environment promotes independence, interdependence and self-motivation.
3. Students’ needs, backgrounds, perspectives and interests are reflected in the learning program.
4. Students are challenged and supported to develop deep levels of thinking and application.
5. Assessment practices are an integral part of teaching and learning.
6. Learning connects strongly with communities and practice beyond the classroom (State of Victoria, 2006).

In contrast to the introduction of VELS, three-day PoLT professional learning courses were provided for one or two teachers from each school in Victoria. During the program, participants were required to use an evaluation rubric to rank their practice against the principles and then provide evidence of their ranking (Education and Training Committee, 2009). At the conclusion of the program, the trained PoLT teachers were required to provide similar professional learning programs for colleagues in their schools.

A third component, the *Assessment Advice* introduced the terms *Assessment for Learning, Assessment as Learning* and *Assessment of Learning* (State of Victoria, 2004a). Detailed policy advice concerning assessment was new to teachers; however the only professional support offered involved online discussion starters and review questions that schools could opt to consider. The Assessment Advice offered a set of 10 principles, but excluded information concerning the
statewide testing program and the Progression Points; the principles include the following:

- The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student performance.
- Assessment should be based on an understanding of how students learn.
- Assessment should be an integral part of course design and not something to add afterwards.
- Good assessment provides useful information to report credibly to parents on student achievement.
- Good assessment requires clarity of purpose, goals, standards and criteria.
- Good assessment requires a variety of measures.
- Assessment methods should be valid, reliable and consistent.
- Assessment requires attention to outcomes and processes.
- Assessment works best when it is ongoing rather than episodic.
- Assessment for improved performance involves feedback and reflection.


The fourth component of Flagship Strategy 1 comprised the online Reporting to Parents Report Card system. At the time, schools had two years from 2006 to 2007 to implement the system. In 2006 one or two teachers from each school attended large-scale briefings to become familiar with the new system and like the PoLT trainers, they were expected to train their school colleagues. The online system involved a complex software package that required teachers to use Progression Points and to select generic statements of student progress. Progression Points were marks along a continuum against the standards outlined in VELS. In effect, teachers needed to have a deep understanding of VELS and to have implemented it in order to use the Progression Points effectively. However, as mentioned above, professional learning to support the introduction of VELS was very limited and apart from the initial regional briefings and a Power Point presentation on the use of the online reporting system, schools were largely left to manage their own professional learning in relation to this key component of Flagship Strategy 1.

In all, Flagship Strategy 1 represented substantial changes to pedagogical practice that required teachers to interpret and understand, be willing to adopt
and to implement in their daily practice. However, grappling with the changes to assessment outlined in The Blueprint required more than simply content information; policy enactment also required purposeful leadership and supportive and relevant professional learning.

1.2 Implementing The Blueprint

To support the implementation of VELS, *The Victorian Essential Learning Standards Sample Units* were available for downloading and were developed to “exemplify ways of using the new curriculum to develop teaching and learning activities and illustrate appropriate assessment in relation to specific standards over Levels 1 to 6” (VCAA, 2006). In practice, this provided thematic units of work to model planning, appropriate learning activities and assessment criteria against the standards and “evidence of learning” (p.9). A “combination of assessment practices” is described as:

- assessment of learning “summative”;
- assessment for learning “formative”; and
- assessment as learning “ongoing” (p. 9).

The assessment practices and learning task are integrated in various ways and are modified according to each of the activities. Overall, the Sample Units outline how to integrate three Strands, six Domains, 13 Dimensions as well as key elements of the standards. Although the Sample Units provide a holistic, finished product as a practical template, there is no information concerning the processes involved in creating the template.

The PoLT component of The Blueprint was the only component of Flagship Strategy 1 for which a formal implementation strategy was developed by the Education Department (State of Victoria, 2004c). Essentially, the PoLT implementation strategy advised schools to develop strategic plans, access support through regional networks and/or utilise resources provided in an online manual, including the PoLT Student Perceptions Survey (p. 47); SWOT Analysis, Pedagogical Practice in your School (p. 53); and advice on developing
and writing school action plans (pp. 63-64). However, schools could choose whether or not to make use of these resources, and given the complexity of the strategy and the lack of any public evaluation of the extent to which this strategy was implemented, it is open to conjecture as to how many schools actually undertook an action planning process or made use of the resources provided.

Professional learning for teachers and for principals was resourced through two flagship strategies. Flagship Strategy 5: Teacher Professional Development provided an opportunity for teachers to apply for Professional Leave over a negotiated time limit, from four to 10 weeks. Teachers chose an area to research in keeping with their school’s strategic planning and took their research back to the school to share their new knowledge and skills. Professional Leave was available to 460 teachers per year from 2004, an investment of $5m each year, and teachers applied through the regional offices. Accordingly, this opportunity would help teachers become “more creative, innovative and flexible classroom teachers” (State of Victoria, 2003, p. 21). By way of contrast, aspiring and existing school leaders were offered a developmental program resourced in Flagship Strategy 3: Building Leadership Capacity. This program has been recognised internationally as a model of best practice (OECD, 2007) and at “the leading edge of improvement strategies internationally” (Elmore, 2007, p. 7). In comparison to the teachers’ professional learning provisions, there were no limitations on availability and apart from the need for “investing in leadership development” there was no other reference to funding (State of Victoria, 2003, p. 17). Soon after the launch of The Blueprint, the Education Department rolled out The Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders (DoE, 2007) outlining the developmental leadership approach for Victoria’s school leaders.

The disparities in the provision of professional learning between school leaders and teachers has continued since the introduction of The Blueprint with principals typically engaging in 30% more professional learning than teachers, according to a study undertaken by the Australian Council for Educational Research, ACER (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014). Even though the quality of professional learning is not usually measured in terms of time, the ACER study
found that primary teachers reported only moderate improvements in capabilities compared to school leaders who felt well prepared for their job. Given that teachers are crucial to the implementation of change that relates to classroom practice, such as assessment (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000), their experience of change implementation strategies warrants further investigation.

1.3 Rationale for this study

Successful and sustainable educational change brings together the forces of governmental policy, public interest, and the professional engagement of teachers. A combination of these forces has the power to drive change through shared educational visions where inclusivity and opportunity focus on fostering prosperous societies (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Governmental policies bring about change through the instigation of infrastructure and resource allocations or through changes in teaching practice such as curricula and assessment. In Victoria, the Schools of the Future (SOTF, mid-1990s) reforms focused on re-structuring schooling through the shifting of power and authority from a centralised bureaucracy to self-managing schools. A secondary aspect of the reform was concerned with the introduction of a standardized, outcomes-based curriculum and accountability measures through statewide testing. These changes, although not overtly relevant to this study, impacted greatly on the teaching profession since by the end of the century, schooling in Victoria had irrevocably changed. School closures and teaching job losses created a sense of wariness in the profession and the hierarchical decision making contrasted with the sense of autonomy teachers had enjoyed over the previous decades (Spaull, 1999).

By the time The Blueprint was introduced in 2003, Victorian teachers had experienced significant change. This was particularly the case in relation to assessment practices. On the one hand, teachers were expected to report students' progress in relation to the curriculum while on the other, implement and respond to the Early Years initiatives that emphasised individual diagnostic assessments in Literacy and Numeracy. The Assessment Advice and PoLT components of Flagship 1 introduced an integrated approach to teaching,
learning and assessment that had profound implications for classroom practice. Given that the latest policy *The Education State* (State of Victoria, 2017a) focuses even more strongly on an integrated approach informed by assessment data and given the critical role of teachers in implementing such approaches (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000), it remains topical and important to consider the experience of teachers as they undergo such change initiatives. To date there is little or no research that has systematically examined teachers’ experience of change in relation to their assessment practices, particularly in relation to formative assessment. At stake is teachers’ willingness to adopt and ultimately implement innovations. However, how teachers interpret policy initiatives and adopt them in practice is a continuing concern (Perryman, Ball, Braun & Maguire, 2017).

This study aims to reveal how teachers responded to the introductory years of The Blueprint and highlight the plight of teachers as they grapple with immense changes to their daily practice. Although focused on the experience of teachers in relation to The Blueprint, this study aims to contribute to what is known about teachers’ understanding of formative assessment and, to offer new understandings about what is needed to support teachers challenged by changes to their practice expected as a result of large-scale reform initiatives.

**Research questions**

This research will focus on the literacy and numeracy assessment practices used by teachers in relation to the recommendations outlined in The Blueprint. This thesis draws on the literature debates on policy, educational change, and pedagogical practice to investigate the nature of change through policy reforms. The thesis addresses the following interrelated questions:

1. How did the introduction of The Blueprint impact on teachers’ knowledge and attitudes towards assessment in literacy and numeracy?
2. What forms of literacy and numeracy assessment practices were typically used in the primary years of schooling and to what extent were these reflected in the assessment practices advocated in Blueprint 1?
3. To what extent did teachers use formative feedback as an integral part of their teaching?
4. What supports or inhibits the implementation of assessment policies in schools?

1.4 Thesis overview

Chapter Two, the literature review, is organised in three themes to examine and discuss change through policy reforms; negotiable change through implementation strategies such as school leadership and teachers’ professional learning; and teaching, learning and assessment. In particular, theories of formative feedback are explored in greater depth. The critique develops a framework for exploring and assessing the impact of policy reforms on teachers and their practice.

Chapter Three, methodology, will explain and justify the qualitative research design that aimed to address a research gap in relation to teachers’ responses to Victorian educational reforms. Analysis drew on the considerable amount of data to develop six cases studies across four schools.

Chapter Four presents an analysis of the results derived from the six case studies data from the interviews, videoed classroom observations, and artefacts integrated and combined to generate portraits of the cases. The pairing of the cases for analysis provided the opportunity to draw on comparisons and to highlight significant patterns in the teachers’ practices. To follow, cross-case analysis draws on recurring patterns and significant differences. This part of the chapter also draws on the interview data provided by the principals as a means to contrast and compare trends across the four schools.

Chapter Five comprises two main sections. The first section revisits the research questions to present brief responses derived from the findings. The second part presents a discussion of the findings with connections to the literature.

Chapter Six will finalise the thesis with a conclusion derived from the findings; recommendations that include two models that contribute to the body of knowledge; limitations to the study; and suggestions for future research.
Chapter Two

Literature Review: What is Known

I am interested here in questions of scale, of a relation between the putatively large (the nation) and the small (a particular subject); between the ambitions of the government and narratives of personal satisfaction. (Bansel, 2015, p. 12).

2.0 Introduction

The quotation above encapsulates challenges faced simultaneously by educational reformers and practitioners who experience the rigours of reform. Educational reform impacts on people's professional lives and this chapter examines the literature on policy reforms, educational change, and pedagogy. The chapter positions my research and develops a conceptual framework to explore the relationship between policy reforms and teachers’ practice that have shaped my thinking and this study.

The chapter opens with an examination of the literature concerning educational policy reforms and the impact of global trends on Victorian educational policy to gain a big-picture perspective (2.1). Distinctions between the meanings of policy and the enactment of policy are considered prior to an exploration of reform agendas such as standards-based and assessment-led reforms. Recent thinking about how reforms may be accomplished is discussed in relation to recent policy reforms in Victoria.

The second section of the chapter turns to the possibilities of negotiating educational change through policy reforms (2.2). Changes to schooling have a widespread impact and although policymakers commonly tend to rely on economic imperatives and improvements, there are many other variables that warrant deep consideration including teachers’ orientations to change, access to a diverse range of relevant professional learning options, and the role of school leadership.

The third and most substantial section of the review concerns teaching, learning and assessment (2.3). Teaching and learning have been placed together since these aspects of pedagogy are integral to teachers’ practice, a key part of this
study. Next, contemporary assessment theories are introduced and discussed including terminology such as *Assessment for Learning*, *Assessment of Learning*, and *Assessment as Learning*. These perspectives are explored and compared to recent policy developments in Victoria’s educational system. The chapter concludes with a brief summary (2.4).

**2.1 Education policy reforms**

Most schemes for fundamental change present a paradox. They offer appealing visions of a new order but therefore also contain a devastating critique of existing realities. If pursued, these critiques reveal the lack of many capacities that would be required to realize and sustain the new vision. Reformers can imagine a better world in which those capacities would be created, but their problem is more practical – how to create the new world when those capacities are lacking? (Cohen & Spillane, 1992, p. 35).

The Blueprint presented Victoria’s education system with a vision of comprehensive reforms based on worldwide concerns for economic prosperity and the role that education plays in “social health and cohesion” (State of Victoria, 2003, p. 8). This review opens with an exploration of the literature focused on increased global interest in education reform to understand The Blueprint’s perspective and its possible connections to global trends concerning education reform.

Policy reforms are the means to instigate change although as Fink and Stoll (2005) have suggested, this is easier said than done. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines reform as making changes to institutions or practice for improvement, and the use of this term tends to imply that deficiencies or flaws need to be changed and improved, whereas the term policy refers to a “course or principle of action proposed by an organisation or individual” (Soanes & Stevenson, 2004, p. 1109). Taken as a stand-alone term, policy can be described as a conceptualization because it has many different meanings in differing contexts (Ball, 1993). However, the distinction here is that when the two terms are used together, policy reform becomes a proposal put forward for improvement.

The meaning of the term educational policy holds much more than a proposal for improvement since it involves a complex web of relationships between political agencies and educational practitioners. In building on this notion, Ball (1993,
2015) proposed that policy poses problems for subjects, that is, the teachers and school leaders who are expected to implement, or be impacted by the policy. The problem is that policy may mean “very different things” at “different points in the same study” (Ball, 1993, p. 10). Subsequently, Ball offered two distinct perspectives: policy as discourse where subjects consider ways of thinking about policy through the use of texts, events, or artefacts; and policy as text where policy is a textual intervention and is concerned with interpretation, translation and enactment (Ball, 2015, p. 307).

To gain a big picture perspective of global policy events, this review begins with how these may have influenced The Blueprint including global trends such as policy mobilities and the developments in standards-based reforms (2.1.1). Since this study concerns the enactment of The Blueprint, the next part of the review examines ways in which policy reforms are shaped and enacted (2.1.2). Because The Blueprint refers to the importance of school effectiveness, an examination of the literature concerned with change imperatives focused on educational improvements (2.1.3) follows. Policy uptake by teachers is essential for reforms to be successfully implemented and this final part examines the unique relationship between policymakers and teachers to draw parallels with The Blueprint (2.1.4). The section concludes with a brief summary (2.1.5).

### 2.1.1 Global trends

Historically, educational policies and reforms have been driven by political, military, and religious forces more than economic goals and interests … Perhaps this overall historical situation arose because education was seen as having a public face and economic management was seen as part of the private sector. That perspective has, of course, dramatically changed. (Ramirez, Luo, Schoffer & Meyer, 2006, p. 1).

As a large-scale reform effort, The Blueprint made a distinct connection between the role of education and economic prosperity and claimed that the “educational stakes were higher than ever” (State of Victoria, 2003, p. 8). The assumed causal effect implicit in these claims has pervaded education systems for well over a century, as seen in Minister Tate’s calls for educational reform in Victoria in the early 1900s when educational productivity was strongly linked to prosperous
economic growth of the nation (Smyth, 1922). The recent policy initiative, *The Education State* (2017), has continued to emphasise these connections by linking the curriculum to economic output.

There is widespread agreement that the development of education policies has been influenced by global activities, commonly referred to as *globalisation* (e.g., Blackmore, 2010; Lingard, 2016; Mundy, 2005; Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004). Due to a focus on economic integration, the movement of goods and financial flows, the last 25 years has seen the development of globalization (Mundy, 2005, p. 4). Lingard and Sellar’s (2013) description of globalization as an infrastructure that facilitates “flows associated with the multiple circuits” in the global economy indicates how comparative performances in national schooling systems are an important component of this “global infrastructure” (p. 637). The most powerful influence on globalization, *neoliberalism*, a political ideology focused on performativity has, according to Blackmore (2010), altered the “field of power” (p. 103) in education so that teachers, students and school leaders are “framed by neoliberal-liberal policies as winners or losers” (p. 101). Moreover, Lingard and Sellar (2013) link the neoliberal-liberal policies to the creation of a “global space of measurement” where comparative performances of schools predominate (p. 637).

As Mundy (2005) explained, “globalization-driven” (p. 9) reforms in education began 40 years ago and the competitive theme is now a part of the “policyscape” where governments may choose an approach to reform based on either “high” or “low” skills in the workforce (p. 12). Similarly, The Blueprint emphasised the need for a highly skilled workforce. However, Mundy questions whether the skills approach to reform ultimately produces the promised outcomes.

Olssen, Codd and O’Neill (2004) argued that globalization is about a power shift where power or influence is pulled away from local communities and nations into a global arena and ultimately, education becomes a “function of the state in the global order” (p. 11). This shift over the last generation has taken education policy from an era when “democratic consensual” processes dominated to global contexts where nations may choose to shape reforms around neoliberal ideals,
or alternatively where nations are more concerned with the welfare state the overarching position is one of “social justice ethic” (p. 216).

This suggests that nations have a choice and that the neoliberal-liberal doxa need not be the prevailing global trend and, Olssen et al. argued that the effects of marketization result in inequalities. However, although The Blueprint has followed the trend in adopting a neoliberal approach, concerned with economic issues and performativity, incongruently it also calls for a reduction in inequalities and instead intends to “pursue excellence in teaching and learning outcomes for all students” (State of Victoria, 2003, p. 3).

Policy mobility

Arising from globalisation is the phenomenon of policy mobility, involving the borrowing, lending, or transference of policies from other places and other times across nations. Policy mobility has increased significantly over the last decade as policymakers adopt ideologically compatible reforms that align with their local ideals such as performativity, marketization and standardization (Whitty, 2012). However, a prevailing view is that policy borrowing or lending has a detrimental effect on schooling and schools (e.g., Hargreaves, 2009; Lewis & Hogan, 2016; Lingard, 2010; Peck & Theodore, 2012, 2015) since as Hargreaves (2009) pointed out, in educational reform “you cannot change one thing without changing the rest” (p. 108).

Education policymaking in a globalised world is nuanced and complex and even though nations may look abroad for policy shortcuts, policy transfers are not always the best solution (Lingard, 2010). Reasons for this are that it creates shortcuts in favour of more deliberative, developmental modes of policy formation (Lewis & Hogan, 2016; Peck & Theodore, 2012, 2015). Moreover, when governments attempt to borrow successful policies from other nations, they don’t usually “travel well” (Hargreaves, 2009, p. 107) and evidenced by failed efforts to copy the practice of lighthouse schools. These selective, but unsuccessful attempts to implement aspects of reform (“cherry picking”) tend to lead to the fallacy that there are “silver bullets”, that is, single solutions to complex problems and a failure to recognise the interconnectedness of
educational reform (p. 108). There is a growing criticism of international organizations, such as the OECD and education departments in Australia, that promote policy mobility and the move away from localized and contextualized educational settings (Lewis & Hogan, 2016; Peck & Theodore, 2015).

Hence, Lingard (2010) warned of the pitfalls in borrowing from nations that support performativity and the “transfer of authority away from teachers to standardized testing instruments” (p. 138). In Finland, for example, “intelligent accountability” has worked hand in hand with a broad learning focus, and “trust-based professional” approaches, resulting in outstanding student achievements in international test results such as the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) (p. 139).

Sahlberg’s (2007) commentary of the Finnish education system similarly focused on its success, the lack of high-stakes testing, and how the system heeded seven elements of education development identified as a holistic approach to learning incorporating long-term visions and diffused leadership responsibilities, equal opportunities for all students, the development of students’ specialized competencies and, teaching and learning practices based on innovations combined with traditional methods (pp. 166-167).

By avoiding the global accountability movement the Finnish education system has addressed the needs of existing conditions in Finland rather than searching for silver bullets from other systems. Across municipalities Finnish educators devise local curricula following broad guidelines and that a sense of delivering a curriculum devised by others is “totally alien to Finnish educators” (Hargreaves, 2009, p. 110). Consequently, a combination of contextualized curriculum, equality of access and the range of available opportunities have ensured a quality education founded in a strong national vision (Kumpulainen & Lankinen, 2012). The highly productive and successful education system in Finland (e.g., Hargreaves, 2009; Sahlberg, 2006) provides compelling evidence that when governments attend to the local education needs of their own nation, it is possible to build a system where students perform in international tests exceedingly well (Reinikainen, 2012).
**Standards-based reforms**

The concept of standards is somewhat elusive and often unclear when used in policy documents (Bartholomew, 2000; Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2010). However, although standards influence observations, paradoxically, they are not easily observable (Bartholomew, 2000). Commonly used terminology such as content standards, achievement or performance standards, and developmental standards, provide a range of interpretations in relation to meanings (e.g., Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2010; Maxwell, 2009). From another perspective, Popham (2008) suggested that the term *standards* may be a *buzzword* and further, that striving for high standards can be a fruitless endeavour.

Standards, of course, is a warmth-inducing word. Although perhaps not in the same league as motherhood, democracy, and babies, I suspect that standards ranks right up there with oatmeal, honor and excellence. It’s really tough not to groove on standards, especially if the standards are high. Everyone wants to reach high standards (p. 109).

Another view is that standardisation may be counterproductive to economic prosperity, the very ideal it sets out to achieve (Sahlberg, 2006). In taking this view, Sahlberg explained that making connections between teaching and learning to economic prosperity tends to emphasise competitiveness and disconnectedness rather than innovation and creativity. Alternatively, Sahlberg suggested that successful reforms should be based on educational change knowledge, knowledge of teaching and learning, and reflection on how educational changes are effected over time. Sahlberg considered this preferable to policymakers’ tendencies to focus on the structure and content of education.

Standardisation is not directly attributed to coercion but rather to the use of “soft power” through the use of benchmarks and standards where schools are obliged to conform (Waldow, 2012, p. 415) and governments continue to use standards as a powerful policy lever as a means to improve teaching and learning (Au, 2007, 2010; Lingard, 2011; Sahlberg, 2006; Waldow, 2012). However, Sahlberg (2006) contested the value of standards-based reform to suggest that perpetual comparisons of schools’ performances against standards in only the core subjects are less than democratic since the result is an
“extremely reductionist judgement of the subtle and complex process of education” (p. 276).

Although The Blueprint has employed soft language to describe various strategies for improvement, and references to, for example, rigorous accountability, high expectations, and student performances indicate that standards are involved. This is further evidenced in the introduced curriculum Victorian Essential Learning and Standards (VELS) and in the accreditation scheme proposed for teachers (State of Victoria, 2003, pp. 19-20). The following summary of three key, standards-based education reforms introduced in Victoria is presented in Table 2.1. Similar patterns may be seen in the agendas for reform such as economic imperatives, an emphasis on accountability, and curriculum frameworks designed around standards.

Table 2.1 Victoria: three large-scale education reforms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Reform</th>
<th>Reform Agenda</th>
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<tr>
<td>Schools of the Future (SOTF, 1990s)</td>
<td>Economic issues: a need to make funding cuts to education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A curriculum based on standardized outcomes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accountability: statewide testing; teacher performance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Poor and varied academic outcomes</td>
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<td>Low school retention rates</td>
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<td>Improve school practices and performances/ accountability</td>
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<td>The Education State</td>
<td>Economic: skills and knowledge for the future</td>
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<td>Improved academic outcomes</td>
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<td>Standardized curriculum domains</td>
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<td>Funding for targeted programs</td>
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<td>Accountability through assessments</td>
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2.1.2 Policy enactment

What complicates the task of [policy makers and] researchers is that they often underestimate the impact of the workplace and prior constraints upon teachers and overestimate the power of the innovation to alter teaching and learning. (Cuban, 1993, pp. 287-288).
Governments’ efforts to introduce policy reforms have either been accelerated towards successful implementation, or have failed due to a number of inhibiting factors (Cuban, 1993; Fullan, 2010; Hargreaves, 2009; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Hill, 2001; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). Why education policies succeed or fail has captured a large amount of interest and explanatory factors may include policy clarity, organizational issues and deficiencies in resourcing (Spillane et al., 2002). Yet in the context of implementing policy initiatives Spillane et al. hold that policymakers fail to take into account the “complexity of human sense-making” (p. 391). While many scholars have investigated the aspect of sense-making in relation to policy initiatives, what is of primary concern to this study is that although teachers are the primary implementers of policy initiatives, the extent to which they are connected to policy initiatives remains questionable.

Teachers can have a tendency for reluctance when they are expected to take on board the entirety of new ideas that are often expected by reforms innovations (Spillane et al., 2002). Others have argued that the tendency for teachers to borrow fragments of ideas to integrate into their practice in part explains why reform implementation is often fragmented and inconsistent (Cuban, 1993; Perryman, Ball, Braun, Maguire, 2017). Fragmented policy implementation has been similarly explained as teachers taking on superficial similarities between existing practice and reform ideas (Spillane et al., 2002, p. 415). Despite technological advances in communications and policymakers’ efforts to articulate policy initiatives, they can be misinterpreted and misunderstood and in this event, misunderstandings cannot be explained away simply as perfunctory attention to policy initiatives (p. 397).

The messages conveyed in policy initiatives may vary according to how the use of the language is interpreted and this may result in policy reform efforts failing to be fully implemented (Clarke, 2012; Hill, 2001). In the United States of America, Hill's case study investigated a policy initiative designed to “reshape curriculum and instruction” (p. 313). Hill found that instead of compliance with the required changes, the teachers believed there was very little difference in their traditional practices and reform ideas. Hill’s findings led to the conclusion
that not only did the teachers feel distanced from the policy, but the policymakers were at a loss to know how to alleviate the problem.

Central to classroom enactment of policy is the “issue of engagement” and how to motivate teachers to make a commitment to reform (Gitlin & Margonis, 1995, p. 384). However, schools and teachers enact policies in circumstances not always of their own choosing even though policymakers may make assumptions concerning conditions in schools (Braun, Ball, Maguire & Hoskins, 2011, p. 595). Moreover, Pitsoe and Letseka (2013) argued that policymakers continue to seek greater control over schooling since “the authority of the policymaker or bureaucrat in the education system is unique” (p. 26). These assumptions and issues of control impact on teachers who are expected to interpret policy and to enact it in their classrooms, that is, to relate the smaller picture of the classroom to the bigger picture of policy (Fullan, 2001).

According to Braun et al., policy enactment involves interpretation and translation or “recontextualisation” in that how policy eventuates in schools is based on the perspective of key actors within the schools. How the key actors in schools interpret policy is dependent on a range of options that await responses since according to Ball (1993), policies do not “tell you what to do” (p. 12) and he adds that “we do not do policy, policy does us” (p. 307). This view prevailed in the findings of study involving four schools in the United Kingdom. The research focused on the notion that policy is a process subject to contestation and interpretation and that it is enacted creatively in classrooms, rather than implemented (Braun, Ball, Maguire & Hoskins, 2011). The study’s findings have shown that in policy enactment, teachers and schools are firmly embedded in the prevailing policy discourse, and that teachers’ interpretations draw on existing conditions to create personalized and sophisticated enactments. The researchers point out that policy enactment does not necessarily reflect the original intentions of the policy initiative. However, policy enactment in schools occurs continuously and places the lens directly on what happens in schools. Hence, a further article by the researchers noted the significance of locating teachers at the forefront of policy enactment since this has the potential to deepen our
understandings of how teachers respond to policy (Maguire, Hoskins, Ball & Braun, 2011).

From another perspective, Bansel (2015) distinguishes between policy as an “inanimate object, instrument or technology of government” and the subject of policy, that is, the human or the “agent to be acted upon” (p. 7). He argues that the narratives of experience matter and that for every subject, differing narratives may express a range of experiences. In this way, a singular case may stand for many cases and vice versa. This notion has significant implications for research that delves into the detail of interactions between one person and policy. Indeed, the implications for this study are strengthened by Bansel’s argument, since not only does this study intend to delve into the interactions between people and policy, a singular case may coincidently represent the responses of many to the introduction of The Blueprint.

2.1.3 The challenges of school improvement

Pressures on schools to continuously improve have escalated over the last generation and yet what is meant by continuous improvement is a contested issue that emerged several decades ago (Fink & Stoll, 2005; Hargreaves, 1995; Mulford, 2005). The term effective schools was initially given to schools that responded appropriately to the socio-economic backgrounds of children, although over the last generation a shift has emerged so that effective schools are perceived as those who focus on outcomes, equity, progress and consistency (Fink & Stoll, 2005). However, the term effectiveness in relation to schooling is questionable due to an apparent lack of sound theoretical foundations to establish the meaning of what it takes to be an effective school (Fink & Stoll, 2005; Van Houtte & Van Maele, 2011). The result is that the focus of effectiveness is considered in terms of measurable, quantitative results, and this focus has tended to dominate over alternative focal aspects such as qualitative, human traits and in particular, human connectedness, relationships and emotions (Fink & Stoll, 2005).

Adding to the complexity of what makes an effective school, ambiguities emerge when international bodies take the view that school effectiveness is measured by
both high-stakes test results and that schools require an orderly, positive environment (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015, p. 79). The OECD’s description of a “positive environment” can be taken to mean qualitative aspects such as school climate or school culture. As Van Houtte and Van Maele (2011) explained, climate is an organisational feature and members have perceptions of the impact of the environment yet, they question whether this is measurable since a school’s climate does not necessarily equal the actual conditions of an organisation. Whereas, and concurring with the study by Maguire et al. (2011), a school’s culture may be visible through artefacts and expressive symbols, although how this can be measured is similarly questionable.

In the context of change, Deal (1990) argued that the deep structures and practices of schooling require transformation rather than reforming although this is a “formidable challenge” because schools are “highly symbolic organizations” and occupy a special place in the community (p. 9). Yet, central to reforms is the question of whether the core problems are schools, teachers or both. Deal has suggested that the problem is not teachers if they “keep the capacity to dream and dance” and to “impart the joy of learning to young people” (p. 12). The term transformation has similarly been used in a global sense, occurring in economics, technology, cultural diversity, where schools are placed in a “perpetual paradox” due to multiple change imperatives, that teachers are “mere tools” and, that in the main, educational policy inhibits opportunities for renewal (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 16).

Given that although the term school effectiveness is a key part of policymakers’ rhetoric, the use of the term school improvement is similarly part of the prevailing language of policies. The question arising here is what is school improvement and improvement for whom? (Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell & Mockler, 2016). It can be said that when teachers take on a committed and morally-informed action, then improvement may be viewed as the outcomes of the action (p. 81). In Australia, the statutory body, known as the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), is the primary means for school improvement where teachers are expected to engage in “the systematic collection of evidence on their practice as part of their performance and
development cycle” (p. 83). However, Kemmis (2006) and Groundwater-Smith et al. (2016) expressed concern that this process results in a standardization of teaching practice rather than a form of schooling focused on genuine transformation (p. 87).

The recent trend to prioritise data as evidence of school improvement has yet to be fully understood although Schildkamp, Poortman and Handelzalts (2016) have asserted that the use of data for educational decision-making is now highly prevalent. They point out that data use is a complex process and many schools make “little productive use of data” due to the lack of training and knowledge (p. 248). Consequently they undertook a study in six Dutch schools to examine the use of data teams where four to six teachers were led by a data expert to work on a problem and use data analysis processes. They found the teachers’ skills in data usage were low and while some teachers were able to “engage with data and make improvements” and, other teachers were unable to understand the complexities of data usage (p. 248). Overall, the study’s results were not overly conclusive, indicating that the use of data in schools to measure school improvement is an area requiring further investigation.

From another perspective, Hargreaves and Braun’s (2013) investigation of the convergence of school improvement and accountability through the use of performance data found that it leads either to “greater quality and integrity” or to the “deterioration of services” (p. 7). The investigation was not overly conclusive since no single solution was identified, because the use of data has the possibility to either restrict education by autocratic strategies or to enhance and enrich “collective professional judgement” (p. 27). However, as Hargreaves and Braun explain, the use of data for school improvement can have negative consequences such as a loss of quality in services, diminished use of performance results, and a focus on short-term at the expense of long-term wins for sustainable improvement (p. 7).

The Blueprint’s model of school effectiveness included a number of pointers for success and the Education Department claimed that the model was a coherent strategy, although this claim has not yet been affirmed or disproved by research.
The recent reform outlined in The Education State (State of Victoria, 2017a) emphasises the use of school data as the means to measure improvements; however, teachers’ responses to this emphasis are as yet unknown until further research is undertaken. However, what it means to be a good teacher, what students have learnt, what is improvement and how policy is enacted in schools are all matters of policy concepts which “constitute the contours of professional practice and subjectivity” (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011, p. 622) and may not be measurable.

2.1.4 A focus for reforms: literacy and numeracy

Education reforms in Victoria and across Australia’s federal system have long focused on literacy and numeracy and it is debatable whether, in Cuban’s (1993) words, “although there is motion, there is no change” (p. 6). Recently, the management and comparison on curriculum have been influenced by international bodies such as the OECD, for example, an emphasis on governments and their concerns, and reforms built on “comparative and contextualised” analysis (OECD, 2015, p. 22). Whether the drivers for curriculum reform come from within or across nations is questionable, however differences in reform agendas may have varying consequences for education systems.

Nevertheless in Victoria, The Education State (State of Victoria, 2017a) reform that has not only prioritised literacy and numeracy, but has also amplified the importance of evidence collection, analysis and interpretation as the means to judge students’ progress. In its Literacy and Numeracy Strategy policy, the Victorian government compared Australia’s PISA results with other countries, commenting that other nations have significantly improved their mathematics results, while similar improvements were lacking in Australia. The Strategy offered the following definition of literacy.

Literacy is defined as students’ ability to interpret and create texts with appropriateness, accuracy, confidence, fluency and efficacy for learning in and out of school, and for participating in the workplace and community. (State of Victoria, 2017c, p.7).
Also included in the above literacy definition is mention of differing arrays of text types and contexts and how knowledge may be represented. The international body, UNESCO, has an interest in the development of literate societies and has offered the following similar definition focused on the needs of a literate society.

Literate societies are more than locales offering access to printed matter, written records, visual materials and advanced technologies: ideally, they enable the free exchange of text-based information and provide an array of opportunities for lifelong learning. (UNESCO, 2006, p. 159).

Almost three decades ago, a landmark policy, *Australian Language and Literacy Policy*, recognised and acknowledged the importance of literacy and identified a need for citizens who are “literate and articulate: a nation of active and intelligent readers, writers, listeners and speakers” (Commonwealth of Australia, 1991). According to UNESCO (2006) scholars from a wide range of disciplines, literacy has four discrete constructions including:

- literacy as an autonomous set of skills;
- literacy as applied, practiced and situated;
- literacy as a learning process; and
- literacy as text (p. 148)

In relation to numeracy, the Victorian *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy* (State of Victoria, 2017c) presents a definition emphasising skills and knowledge, “Numeracy is the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that students need in order to use mathematics in a wide range of situations” (p. 7). Included are a range of aspects of Mathematics and for example, there is an acknowledgement that students will encounter and require capabilities such as reasoning, mathematical understanding, and problem solving. This view of mathematics as a *capability* rather than *knowledge* resonates with the view that knowledge can be treated as facts and skills (Yates & Collins, 2010). Essentially, as Yates and Collins explained, capabilities tend to become more of a “wish list” of what students might need and it represents a move away from “traditional academic content knowledge” (p. 95).
In Victoria, a survey was undertaken to ascertain teachers’ perspectives on what they considered was most important in the teaching of mathematics to primary school children (Carroll, 1996). The findings pointed to teachers’ beliefs that knowledge and understanding of skills and concepts was a priority, followed by the use of concrete materials in hands-on activities, then enjoyment, then the solving of real-life problems using problem-solving strategies. Carroll compared the teachers’ views to the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF, Board of Studies, 1999) statements and found them to be oppositional, for example, the teachers considered problem solving to be marginally important in comparison to the CSF. The study’s conclusions highlighted this dissonance and signalled a need for increased and relevant teachers’ professional learning. According to Carroll, another finding strongly indicated that while teachers considered student enjoyment in their learning to be important and also, the necessity to understand children’s conceptual understandings, these considerations were overlooked by the CSF. Carroll’s (1996) report is one of a kind in Victoria and, since it takes into account teachers’ perspectives and their practice, the findings hold significance for policymakers’ decisions in relation to policy reforms, and in particular, curriculum reforms.

**Literacy and numeracy reforms**

In Victoria, and over the last three decades, three large-scale reforms have impacted on the teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy, *The Schools of the Future, 1992-1999, The Blueprint for Government Schools: Future Directions for Education in the Victorian Government School System, 2003-2017* and, *The Education State, 2017*. Table 2.2 presents a summary of key and relevant educational policy reforms dating from 1985-2017 in Victoria and the Commonwealth. The column to the left includes a number of sequenced policy initiatives and programs focused on literacy and numeracy in Victoria. The column to the right includes policy activity involving the State and Federal governments and is similarly focused on key literacy and numeracy developments. Generally, educational policy developments in the Federal sphere
were followed up in Victoria with the development of literacy and numeracy policies focused on improved student outcomes.

Table 2.2  Victorian and National educational policy reforms and initiatives

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Victoria Policy initiatives &amp; programs</th>
<th>National policies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Program: Early Literacy In-service Course (ELIC)</td>
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<td>Program: Early Mathematics in Classrooms (EMIC)</td>
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**Schools of The Future (SOTF, 1992–1999)**

| Early Years Literacy Research Project (Hill & Crévola, 1999) | Literacy for All: The Challenge for Australian Schools (Commonwealth of Australia, 1998) |
| Early Years Numeracy Research Project (State of Victoria, 2001a) | Numeracy a Priority for All: Challenges for Australian Schools (DETYA, 2000) |
| Middle Years Literacy Project (Deakin University, 2001b) | |
| Middle Years Numeracy Project (RMIT University, 2001) | |
| Middle Years Research and Development (MYRAD) Project (State of Victoria, 2002) | |


| Inquiry into the Promotion of Science and Mathematics Education (2005) | Victoria’s Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy Outcomes (COAG, 2007) |
| Key Characteristics of Effective Literacy Teaching P-6 (State of Victoria, 2009). | |

**The Education State (State of Victoria, 2017a)**
The Literacy Profiles introduced a hierarchical, levelled approach to the teaching of literacy (Rowe & Hill, 1996). However, until the *Early Years Strategy*, there was very little cohesiveness or consistency in literacy teaching across Victoria (Hill & Crévala, 1998). The Early Years Strategy, with its central focus on a whole-of-school model with beliefs and understandings at its core, introduced Victorian teachers to a program of teaching with an organised structure. However, the program followed lock-step procedures between teaching and assessment, and according to Cloonan (2009), the program failed to represent a broader view of literacy.

**Wider implications**

In Victoria, two major reforms, The Blueprint and The Education State (State of Victoria, 2017a) have advised generic assessment strategies as a holistic approach without consideration to the differences between disciplines such as English or Mathematics. Moreover, research to date has rarely compared how teachers assess literacy and numeracy, possibly due to the notion of the complexity of mathematical ideas in comparison to the surface structure of English (Hodgen & Marshall, 2005). Arising here is the issue of the traditions of mathematics assessments where tools or instruments are in general use to judge mathematical learning. To further understand this practice and in the context of a social perspective of assessment, Hodgen and Marshall (2005) carried out a study to compare observational data from English and mathematics lessons. The researchers focused on formative feedback and scaffolding strategies and found that because mathematics is often taught as formal, abstract concepts, mathematics teachers had difficulties in implementing innovations. Whereas, in the English lessons, there was an apparent “affinity” between the roles of language and constructivist theories (p. 173), contrasting with the mathematics lessons.

Widely agreed is that although education reforms focus on the need for accountability through the use of high-stakes testing, this form of assessment has been contested due to its detrimental effect on schooling (Brown & Harris, 2009;
Harris & Brown, 2009; Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2012; Lingard, 2010). Harris and Brown’s (2009) study in New Zealand surveyed 2008 teachers and in several interviews they questioned 26 teachers to seek information concerning their individual conceptions of classroom assessment. The researchers identified seven categories where three major purposes emerged including, beliefs in the irrelevance of some assessments and, a need for accountability and student improvement. Overall, the conclusions indicated tensions between the school and the students, and between demands for compliance and improvement. As a result of their study, Harris and Brown consider that the underlying premises of assessment should include the following notions:

- Assessment should enhance student learning and teaching quality.
- Assessment should hold individual students accountable.
- Assessment should be used to evaluate a teacher’s, a school’s, or a system’s use of society’s resources (p. 366)

Moreover, Brown and Harris emphasised that the findings clearly indicate that teachers want to use assessment for “improved teaching and learning” and hence, in policy reforms, policymakers should consider teachers’ views to ensure a “robust improvement-oriented conception of assessment” rather than focusing on accountability (p. 88).

From another perspective, Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith (2010) questioned the sequencing of policy initiatives where assessment remains “unaddressed” until after curricular decisions are taken, due to traditions of separating the curriculum and assessment derived from teaching and learning activities (p. 104). Another view proffered by Maxwell (2009) considered standards in terms of type, focus, construct, and purpose (p. 264) and argued that it is crucial to differentiate between Content standards, Performance standards, and Developmental standards (pp. 281-282). According to Maxwell, content standards signal important concepts for students to learn, performance standards are concerned with merit and proficiency and, developmental standards provide progressive descriptions of milestones. The significance of these differences is that the learners’ individualised needs are taken into account.
and that the challenge is to reconcile representations of standards “at the systemic level” (p. 283). In taking a reconciling approach, Maxwell suggested that educational assessment should be “recast” to develop ways of characterizing and recording student achievement and to “make transparent” to teachers and learners future steps in learning (p. 283).

Lingard (2010) identified a major issue of performance standards and argued that the concept of performativity has been “distorted” so that high-stakes testing, such as through NAPLAN, is detrimental to learning and instead produces “defensive pedagogies” instead of pedagogies focused on the quality of learning for all students (p. 139). Other concerns raised by Gipps and Stobart (2009) focus on the idea of fairness is assessment and they noted that test development is often reduced to “statistical considerations of bias” and as an alternative, classroom-based assessments provide opportunities for teachers and students to agree on assessment objectives (p. 112). To counteract the issues of performativity and of fairness, Bennett and Gitomer (2009) argued that a diagnostic model is a preferable system of assessing student achievements and they add that the development of an assessment system that supports all stakeholders has been “elusive” due to competing ideas of the purposes of assessment (p. 46).

Nations such as Finland have eschewed high-stakes testing yet as Lingard (2010) suggested, it is an “outstanding” achiever in the OECD’s PISA tests (p. 139) and instead have an education system based on a welfare state approach (Hargreaves, 2009; Sahlberg, 2004, 2006, 2007). One of the consequences of reforms based on the market-based “offspring of globalization” is that Literacy and Numeracy are “prime targets” of reform and consequently determine the success or failure of students, teachers, schools and education systems (Sahlberg, 2004). By way of contrast, education policies in Finland focus on holistic developments, long-term visions involving equal opportunities, inclusiveness that promotes diversity, and a recognition that educational innovations already exist somewhere in the system (Sahlberg, 2007, pp. 166-167). For example, Sahlberg (2004) argued that when reforms are based on targeted curriculum areas, assessment and
curriculum standards there are several consequences involving increased standardization in teaching and learning; cost-saving measures; and demoralised teachers. Instead, Sahlberg called for equity-oriented reforms that value democratic approaches to teaching and learning.

Historically, educational reforms in Victoria have targeted literacy and numeracy (Table 2.2) however there is growing evidence to show that a focus on broad, holistic educational frameworks supports excellent achievements in educational outcomes (Hargreaves, 2009; Lingard, 2010; Sahlberg, 2004, 2007).

2.1.5 Summary

This part of the review has focused on education policies to compare and contrast with The Blueprint. At the global level, the adoption of similar policies has captured researchers’ interest, and there is common agreement that when policy designs focus on local education needs, they tend to be more successful than borrowed policies. Processes involved in policy enactment are complex and compounded by issues of translation yet teachers’ interpretations of policy are crucial to successful policy implementation. The concern for ongoing school improvement is further illuminated by the extent of prioritised governmental interests in literacy and numeracy, and standardization and accountability through high-stakes testing. These concerns are reflected in The Blueprint and the subsequent targeting of improvements in literacy and numeracy.

2.2 Implementing policy reform

This section will explore the literature concerning two main strategies for policy implementation, school leadership (2.2.1) and teachers’ professional learning (2.2.2). These strategies were included in The Blueprint as separate flagship strategies and it is necessary to explore the relevant literature to locate and discuss similarities or differences. The section concludes with a brief summary (2.2.3).
2.2.1 The role of school leadership

Successful leadership is sustainable leadership; nothing simpler, nothing less. (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 700).

As a standards-based reform, The Blueprint’s intention to improve school leadership employed a comprehensive and strategic approach based on hierarchical standards that were peer and self-evaluated. Further, The Blueprint’s efforts to build leadership capacity in school leaders focused on the attributes of managerial styles and the assumption that these may be learnt. As mentioned in Chapter One, the development of school leadership was prioritised and given credence through the third flagship strategy (see 1.1), and known as Flagship Strategy 3: Building Leadership Capacity. A sub-strategy outlined in The Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders (DoE, 2007), herein known as The Framework, encompasses the main elements of Flagship Strategy 3: Building Leadership Capacity and comprises, for example,

3a. Improved principal selection process
3b. Mentoring program; coaching and supporting
3c. A balanced scorecard approach to principal performance management
3d. An accelerated development programme for high potential leaders
3e. A development programme for high performing principals

Soon after The Framework was implemented it was described as an exemplary model of leadership (Elmore, 2007; OECD, 2007) and, as noted by the OECD

Ingenious strategies are used to raise the level of discourse and understanding about school leadership among the principal class in Victoria (2007, p. 15).

However, not known is the extent to which Flagship Strategy 3 responded to an earlier report of a survey of Victorian principals’ views concerning their professional attitudes, well-being, and typical workloads. The survey’s results published in The Privilege and the Price: A Study of Principal Class Workload and its Impact on Health and Wellbeing (State of Victoria, 2004d) reported on

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5 The Principal Workload Study, see The Privilege and the Price: A Study of Principal Class Workload and its Impact on Health and Wellbeing (State of Victoria, 2004d).
implications where principals felt high levels of anxiety and stress due to a disparity between the demands of the managerial and accountability aspects of the job and their personal desires to be a caring leader. Otherwise known as “carer-versus manager tension”, the report concluded that this tension remained “unresolved and unresolvable” (p. 22). In commenting on these results, Caldwell (2006) asserted that due to “disturbing evidence of a distraction from the core functions of educational leadership”, deep issues in school leadership were emerging and that across the state, “nothing short of transformation is required” (p. 2). Consequently, Caldwell argued for a reform manifesto to resolve system-wide transformation.

Nevertheless, the education department’s framework was based on the work of Sergiovanni (1984) and it was developed in a hierarchical, vertical structure with built-in self-and peer-assessment evaluations. The three overarching components comprise leadership domains, leadership capabilities and leadership profiles and each of the components includes five key “profiles”,

• Technical
• Human
• Educational
• Symbolic
• Cultural (DoE, 2007, p. 4).

Within each domain, school leaders progress through five levels with various descriptors focused on specified capabilities. In its structure and intention the leadership framework met The Blueprint’s criteria in relation to building leadership capacity and the overall emphasis on performativity indicated a concern for managerial attributes. This suggests a disparity between The Blueprint’s agenda for reform and the results of The Principal Workload Study (see State of Victoria, 2004d) in that most Victorian principals preferred to take a carer’s rather than managerial role. In the promotion of The Framework, as the

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means to build leadership capacity, The Blueprint seems to have missed the thrust of the findings of the study of the principals’ health and wellbeing.

**School leadership and change contexts**

Leadership is a phenomenon that traditionally focuses on the interplay between leaders and the organisations they lead (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). However, even though there is a proliferation of debate on leadership traits, attributes and behaviours, leadership is not understood “particularly well” (p. 359). According to Eacott and Norris (2014) there are several ambiguities surrounding definitions of leadership, although in relation to educational reforms there is a common link with a prevailing focus on managerial qualities and economic performance.

There is no doubt that rational management rhetoric is being employed by policymakers in the ongoing reform of the Australian education system (p. 179).

Crawford (2012) pointed out that the qualities of leadership are generally elusive although managerial functions are more easily identified. Nevertheless, Crawford suggested that distributed leadership is now endorsed as good practice and where schools and leaders use this approach, the school’s culture is enhanced. According to Crawford, increased interest in how leadership can empower teachers to change by developing their own practice may be attributed to distributed or shared leadership approaches. In schools where school leaders share the leadership and for other approaches such as team collaboration, leadership expertise is found across a number of team members rather than just a few. Accordingly, distributed leadership may be defined within an organizational context.

Distribution is framed within a cluster of ideas and values which attaches to different people different measures of value and recognition, and indicates where the limits are to what is open to discussion and change (p. 613).

Hargreaves and Fink (2005) suggested that sustainable change attained through a distributed leadership approach fosters learning and stands the test of time. This is not just a way of thinking but an approach to making school improvements. To achieve a sustainable leadership approach, leadership should
be embedded in a culture where community is valued, leadership is a collective responsibility and leadership skills are developed over time. When a broad, collective approach is adopted, Copland (2003) argued that distributed leadership may be defined as a “base of expert rather than hierarchical authority” indicating that organizational power is not always typically centred on the principal (p. 378). However, creating the conditions for distributed leadership cultures is easier said than done due to the need of a school culture that embodies “collaboration, trust, professional learning and reciprocal accountability” (p. 379).

In the context of large-scale reforms where major change is proposed, school leadership requires a “relentless, resolute” approach that engages teachers in the development of positive working relationships (Fullan, 2010, p. 13). Additionally, a push-pull mechanism refers to conditions where school leaders use challenges and incentives to activate change where people are empowered to “accomplish extraordinary things” in a deep and meaningful manner (p. 72). According to Fullan, this approach supports the development of a network within schools and the likelihood of effective change is increased “exponentially” (p. 72).

Nevertheless, in the context of change, the role of accountability presents a complex challenge for policymakers (Fullan, Rincon-Gallardo & Hargreaves, 2015). An important distinction is that while internal accountability concerns individuals and groups involved in a cycle of continuous improvement, external accountability is the role of system leaders who monitor interventions to indicate that the system is in line with societal requirements (p. 4). This relates directly to school leadership since their role is to develop “platforms and incentives” to enable school communities to “implement, and to innovate in and improve teaching and learning” (p. 10). Although Fullan et al. advise that internal and external accountability need to work together and, also they emphasize the need for policymakers to invest in leverage mechanisms to build the “professional capital of all teachers and leaders” because once started, increased results become apparent.
Discourse on school effectiveness inevitably involves discussions of effective school leadership and very few studies have taken the teachers’ perspectives of effective school leadership. Thompson’s (2017) study in Jamaica places teachers at the forefront since their perceptions of school effectiveness were a priority including for example, shared decision-making, acknowledgement by the school leaders of teachers’ expertise, and leaders’ acceptance of feedback from staff. Thompson argues that leadership is not a position but rather, it is a function that takes into account the importance of shared decision-making. Similarly, Blasé and Blasé (1999) found that an effective leader is one who, while enacting school improvements, acknowledges the psychological needs of teachers and enhances professional learning in the development of professional learning communities.

While the above two studies emphasize school leadership in terms of meeting the needs of teachers and taking the teachers’ perspectives into account, there is a vast body of literature concerned with other aspects of leadership such as the interplay between leaders and the organizations they lead; managerial efforts; leadership traits and attributes; and leadership approaches (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Eacott, 2013; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Osborne, Hunt & Jauch, 2002; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004; Thomas, 2008).

Moreover, contrasting views of leadership emphasizing either leadership traits and managerial styles or psychological perspectives have implications in the context of change since all “current school reform efforts aim to improve teaching and learning” and, they all depend on school leadership (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 4). However increasingly, perceptions of school leadership see it as a caring role that resolves to build supportive communities of teaching and learning and where there is a balance of support and academic press, that is, high academic achievements (Louis, Murphy & Smylie, 2016). Accordingly, in these communities, there is more certainty that challenges and disruptions are managed well. From a similar perspective, Blasé and Blasé (1999) argued that it is not the attributes of a leader that is key to effectiveness but how they encourage teachers and also, how they provide
feedback and acknowledgement. Indeed, the fostering of effective schools requires resolute, steadfast leaders who ensure teachers are on-side (Fullan, 2010).

Currently in common usage, the term *effective schools* initially referred to schools that responded positively to the provision of support for children from low socio-economic backgrounds, although the same term now refers to schools where priorities include equity, progress and consistency (Fink & Stoll, 2005). However, the question of effectiveness is a contested issue due to an apparent lack of sound theoretical foundations to establish what it means to be an effective school (Fink & Stoll, 2005; Van Houtte & Van Maele, 2011). Consequently, more easily measurable, quantitative results tend to dominate over qualitative, human traits such as connectedness, relationships and emotions (Fink & Stoll, 2005).

Adding to the complexity of what makes an effective school, ambiguities emerge when bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development take the view that school effectiveness is measured by both high-stakes test results and schools require an orderly, positive environment (OECD, 2015, p. 79). The OECD’s description of a “positive environment” can be taken to mean qualitative aspects such as school climate or school culture. Van Houtte and Van Maele (2011) make a distinction between these aspects to note that a school’s climate is visible through expressive symbols and artefacts, whereas school culture involves beliefs and to some extent school leadership influences.

The terms *school effectiveness* and *school improvement* have recently become interchangeable and are in common usage in education policies. However, the question arising here is what is school improvement and improvement for whom? (Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell & Mockler, 2016). As a counterpoint to this question, Groundwater-Smith et al. have argued that school improvement may emerge following inquiry-based professional learning programs. They point out that this form of improvement may prove exceptional in contrast to conditions where teachers are expected to collect evidence of their practice. They add that systematic evidence collection is a form of a “standardizing”
process that has little to do with school improvements (p. 81). The study undertaken by Groundwater et al. has implications for recent reform in Victoria (State of Victoria, 2017a) since teachers and school leaders are expected to collect quantities of data for analysis and interpretation.

A recent European study investigated data collection methods in secondary schools in the Netherlands. The study involved expert data teams who supported the teaching staff to evaluate school improvement although the results were inconclusive due to a number of unforeseen issues (Schildkamp, Poortman and Handelzalts, 2016). Some of these issues involved the participating teachers’ presumed inability to interpret and use data despite the support offered by the expert data teams. The study recognised and emphasised the need for policymakers to consider the extent of teachers’ abilities with respect to data usage. However, the practice of data collection and usage continues to be problematic for policymakers and the Australian context (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2016). They point out that although the documentation and dissemination of research findings in respect to practitioners and schooling has difficulties, visible benefits include “transformations within schools and classrooms” (p. 89). On these grounds, they argue there is a need for more research to link data results to proposals for school improvements and, to understand how that improvement can be defined, developed, and ultimately, documented.

**How school leaders lead**

Safeguarding and sustaining learning is the primary responsibility of all school leaders and learning should be central to everything they do (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). There is nothing controversial about the notion that educational leadership makes a difference in improving learning since

> Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 5).

Moreover, leadership is a catalyst for change and turnarounds in schools are possible through a framework of interactions where school leaders play a critical role in “identifying and supporting learning, structuring the social settings and
mediating the external demands” (p. 17). Yet, while researchers have uncovered evidence of leadership effects on learning through qualitative case studies and large-scale quantitative studies, Leithwood et al. (2004) called for research that is more specific to unpack how leaders create the conditions in their schools to foster and promote student learning. Similarly, Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) sought clearer understandings of how leaders engage in leadership activities to enact conditions that promote innovation.

How leaders lead for learning and the kind of knowledge they require has recently been investigated in five New Zealand schools (Timperley, 2011). Central to the study was the question of how school leaders’ interactions with the teaching staff resulted in high levels of motivation. A standout finding concerned evidence of improved learning outcomes in schools where the school leaders used a distributed rather than transformative approach and Timperley notes the need for more research focused on how leadership approaches affect student outcomes. Volante (2012) similarly emphasised the potential for leaders to influence colleagues when the professional interactions focus on a distributive leadership approach.

Leadership takes shape in the interaction of leaders, followers and their unique situation … all members of a school have the potential to significantly influence their colleagues’ practice (p. 14).

A recent case study undertaken in New Zealand investigated the ways in which one school principal led the teaching staff through major changes to the school culture and organization that had been instigated by governmental reforms (Robertson & Notman, 2013). The principal undertook multiple strategies to transform the school including a distributive approach where teachers led the educative aspects. The findings highlighted reports by the teachers concerning their passion for teaching and their sense of purpose, and where the principal demonstrated a caring attitude towards the teachers' professional development and the fostering of pedagogical dialogue. Their conclusions found that successful improvement in the school stemmed from shared decision-making and importantly, that “teaching practice and school leadership cannot be separated” (p. 66).
According to Spillane et al. (2004) schools that have a shared vision of teaching and learning and a collaborative responsibility for academic success are likely to also have leadership that values innovation and shared decision making and that a distributed perspective on human activity presses us to move beyond individual activity to consider how the material, cultural, and situation enables, informs, and constrains human activity (p. 10).

Spillane, Healey, Parise and Kenney (2011) expanded on this notion to add that the “practice of leading and managing is stretched over the work of two or more leaders” (p. 161). This ensures the inclusion of multiple actors in the school and indicates a move away from solo leadership that, as Crawford (2012) noted, has implications of power and influence. Leadership requires more than a vertical, one-dimensional view and should instead focus on how and when to share leadership in order to draw on the capabilities of all actors in the school (p. 618). Indeed, the distributive approach has the potential to mobilize “stories of practice” emerging from interactions of people and contexts as they develop insights into how to improve their school (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 28).

**Caring school leadership**

The fore-mentioned report following a survey of Victoria principals (State of Victoria, 2004d) revealed that many principals valued the function of caring leadership, even though this leadership role caused tensions in relation to other roles leadership focused on managerial responsibilities. Recently, Louis et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of caring and define this as somewhat nebulous but that caring, which they define as “a property of relationships that is expressed through action and interaction” (p. 313). Additionally, caring promotes well-being, and that caring “begets caring” in that in caring for others, care is a learned experience (p. 313). In a caring school setting, Louis et al. argued that there is a large amount of empirical evidence to suggest that academic outcomes are raised and that caring school leaders create conditions that foster success.
Caring for students in and academic setting requires that the school pay attention to the quality of instruction to ensure that a students’ opportunity to develop is not impeded by using weak instructional approaches (p. 325).

From another perspective, Kellerman (2013) proposed a model of leadership based on an equilateral triangle that incorporates the leader, the follower and the context. In creating this model, Kellerman has argued for a shift from old traditions based on leadership typologies and that instead we should “expand our conception of what should constitute a leadership curriculum and broaden our understanding of how change is created” (p. 139). However, the positioning of school leaders in a system where accountability and comparability dominate is counterproductive to effective school leadership (Eacott & Norris, 2014). These perspectives suggest that the capacity for leaders, teachers and students to flourish is greatly enhanced in school communities where collective responsibility takes precedence within a distributive leadership approach.

As mentioned, there is a prevailing trend to prioritise the managerial aspects of school leadership and Watson (2007) argued that in Australia this priority is at the expense of teaching and learning, and she calls for the means to “reinvent” school leadership as a driver for high quality teaching and learning. This call is an opening for further research since leaders do matter, and they have a significant role to play in fostering student learning. Discussions of leadership need to draw attention to aspects of leadership such as how leadership “should be rethought in the context of policy discourses for quality” (Thomas, 2008, p. 332) and, to focus on the professional relationship between school leaders and teachers

        Leadership becomes a way of empowering teachers to develop in autonomous ways through articulating what it is they are about and change it as a consequence of dialoguing, intellectualising and theorising about their work (Smyth, 1985, p. 186).

This section of the review has explored the literature in relation to school leadership as a strategy for change in the context of policy initiatives.
2.2.2 Dimensions of teachers’ professional learning

A crucial element of education policy initiatives relates to the field of professional learning. In the context of policy implementation this section explores aspects of this field including the uniqueness of professional learning, challenges for policymakers, teacher’s orientations to learning, translating theory to practice, critically reflective practice, and professional learning communities.

Change is a learning process

Successful change, that is, successful implementation is none other than learning, but it is the adults in the system who are learning along with, or more than, the students (Fullan, 1989, p. 7).

The phenomenon of professional learning is both elusive and complex since it involves change, a learning process, and an educational setting. Indeed, the relevance of Bascia and Hargreaves’ (2000) argument that it is time teachers “were pulled back from the sharp edge of change and moved towards its leading edge – intellectually, emotionally and politically (p. 20) continues to hold currency. According to Wiliam (2002), the nature of teacher expertise is not easily reducible to recipes and reforms in education involve change processes.

School improvement and student learning outcomes have long been connected to teachers’ professional growth and researchers agree that this is best achieved through collaborative approaches, collective inquiry, and supportive, shared leadership (Carpenter, 2015; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Deal & Peterson, 2009; Little, 1993). Yet, achieving change is difficult because it must contend with “a personal and collective learning process on the part of individuals working in an organizational context” (Fullan, 1989, p. 8).

How educational policies provide for teachers’ professional learning is a challenge for policymakers and although the onus of policy implementation inevitable falls to teachers, policymakers tend to assume that teachers have the capacity to transfer new knowledge into their existing practice (Little, 1993). To overcome this issue, Little argued that proposals for reform should take into account teachers’ current beliefs, commitments and practices. To support this
challenge, Little advocates that teachers have opportunities to access robust professional learning that empower them, particularly in the building of professional learning communities that value high standards and have the capacity to motivate and sustain teachers’ ongoing learning commitments.

**The uniqueness of teachers’ professional learning**

Since teachers’ professional learning is unique to teachers and to teaching, it has the potential to transform “knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students’ growth” (p. 10). For effective professional growth, however, Merriam and Clarke (1993) emphasise that for “learning to be significant” then the personal involvement of the learner must be “personally involved” (p. 137). Teachers are expected to continue learning throughout their careers, since professional growth enhances teacher quality and student learning and, effective professional learning has the potential to lead to school improvement (Borko, 2004; de Vries, Jansen & van de Grift, 2013). Researchers generally agree that the question of what teachers learn from professional development is yet to be fully known, and this can be problematic due to the diversity of teachers’ needs and to the influence of their existing practice and beliefs (Brown, 2004; Jasman, 2009; Muir, Beswick & Williamson, 2010). Since teachers will continue to need expertise for future schooling requirements, then all stakeholders have a role in working towards the best interests of the teaching profession (Jasman, 2009).

The impact of policy initiatives on teachers’ existing practices was studied in New Zealand and it was found that for the policies to be effective, teachers’ existing practices must be acknowledged and managed (Brown, 2004). Brown’s interest in this notion was later taken up in a further study in Queensland focusing on the interactions between policy reforms, teachers’ professional learning and teachers’ perceptions of assessment (Brown, Lake & Matters, 2011). Brown et al. found that there is an important link between teachers’ professional learning and their existing beliefs and understandings. While the earlier study signified the need for policymakers to acknowledge teachers’ existing practice, the second study focused on teachers’ beliefs and understandings that underpin their practice. The evolving pattern between professional learning, beliefs,
understandings and practice has significance and further research is indicated to broaden understandings in this field.

**Professional learning: a challenge for policymakers**

A challenge for policymakers is the provision of adequate and relevant professional learning opportunities for teachers (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995). In this context, supportive, learner-centred activities provide opportunities for teachers to build on existing practices. Hence, they advocated a structured approach to professional learning to enable teachers to integrate theory with classroom practice in “top-down support for bottom-up change” (p. 34). A recent example of top-down support from policymakers has emerged following a study in New Zealand where reforms encouraged teachers to expand their leadership roles while remaining classroom teachers (Taylor, Yates, Meyer & Kinsella, 2011). According to Taylor et al., since the program was aligned to the teachers’ interests and built on their existing expertise, it seemed to be successful in the integration of professional learning with the directives of the policy initiative. As Jasman (2009) argued, there is a need for policymakers to not only acknowledge teachers’ existing beliefs and practices but also to provide top-down support to ensure successful bottom-up change. Moreover, transition from “traditional instructional approaches” to reform-oriented approaches requires teachers to adjust their beliefs since “without these adjustments, teachers are likely to resist changes and maintain a strong adherence to more traditional teaching methodology” (Muir, et al., 2010, p. 129).

Policies do not “land in a vacuum, they land on top of other policies” and importantly, they should be well communicated and understood by those who are expected to implement them (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 346). Policymakers generally underestimate the cumulative effect of policies and consequently, issues arise concerning the beginnings and endings of various policy reforms (Little, 1993). Moreover, Thomson Lingard and Wrigley (2012) advocated the recognition of teachers’ existing expertise and, for policymakers to avoid recipe-like approaches for change that have had, according to Fullan
limited effects. Instead, they suggest that the instigation of strategic approaches may be supportive, particularly when resources are coherently organised and involve teachers. It seems that researchers have recognised a sustained lack of trust in the teaching profession, resulting in policies that exclude teacher involvement, since “it is assumed that directions for change need to come from elsewhere and be teacher proof” (Thomson et al., 2012, p. 3).

To address issues in policy implementation, Darling-Hammond (1990) called for top-down support for bottom-up reform and for a focus on the needs of teachers who are required to make challenging changes to their daily professional work. Compounding this problem is that policy-makers tend to consider the policy process is already completed soon after the introduction of new initiatives. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) took up this point to argue that “reformers”, that is policymakers, tend to envisage an ideal reform agenda that successfully changes schooling.

Reformers of all stripes press for an agenda of fundamental change in the ways teachers teach and students learn. They envisage schools in which students learn to think creatively and deeply, in which teachers’ ongoing learning forms the core of professional activities, and in which students and teachers alike value knowing why and how to learn (p. 34).

Yet, on the other hand, if policy initiatives are to succeed it is imperative for teachers to meet new challenges, and in doing so they are often required to adjust their knowledge, beliefs, and instructional practices (Borko, Elliott & Uchiyama, 2002). Moreover, in agreement with Fullan (1989), Little (1999) argued that the implementation of change is a problem of learning rather than of implementation. And as Fullan (2001) sees it, “change is a process, not an event” since it involves initiation, implementation, and institutionalizing (Fullan, 1989).

Policy initiatives may begin with policymakers’ instigation however the teachers are the “final policy brokers” since in the end they are the “key agents when it comes to changing classroom practice” (Spillane, 1999, p. 144).

When policymakers propose changes to the core practice of teaching, teachers’ responses are complex for example, the teachers’ attention to the proposals are usually mediated by the forms of language used in the policy reforms (Spillane, 1999). Even if teachers’ claim familiarity with policy initiatives there is no
guarantee that changes are understood, rather, teachers’ beliefs and existing practice are key indicators of their willingness to “change their practice in response to reform” (p. 157).

**Teachers’ orientations to learning**

The inevitability of change requires teachers to adopt new ways of working through active participation, external pressure and support, changes in beliefs and behaviors, and ownership of ways of working (Fullan, 2001). The capacity for change involves far more than willingness, it also involves the capability of transforming knowledge into practice or, in other words, agency (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). Teachers’ individual orientation to learning, or willingness to learn, is fundamental to possible changes in beliefs and practices (Opfer, Pedder & Lavicz, 2011). Yet as Morgan and Xu (2011) argued, teachers’ beliefs about learning, particularly in mathematics, are a major obstacle to reform. What is problematic is the dissonance between how teachers express their beliefs in differing contexts and what actually happens in practice (Morgan & Xu, 2011). Indeed, teachers’ beliefs are fundamental to their teaching practice and play a key role in how new information is perceived and interpreted. Borg’s (2001) elaboration of the term *belief* focuses on how beliefs are guides for thought and behaviour since they are thought by the person to be true and,

> a belief is a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behaviour (p. 186).

It could be said that teachers’ professional beliefs are shaped by their daily work experiences, their interactions, and their access to professional learning opportunities. Maskit (2011) for example, argued that lifelong learning involves five stages of orientation to professional learning such as exploration, trialling, establishment, maintenance, and plateauing. Additionally, Opfer et al. (2011) defined teachers’ orientations to professional learning as an integrated set of attitudes, beliefs and practices as well as alignment to one’s ideas and contextual circumstances. They were particularly interested in how teachers perceive their own learning, rather than how they perceive themselves and that new knowledge emerges from interactions between beliefs, experiences and practice.
Although teachers’ orientations to learning may remain static over time, several influences may converge to determine teachers’ participation in learning including:

- the influence of context;
- the stage of career development;
- previous teaching experiences; and
- the pupils a teacher has at any given time (p. 444).

Interest in teachers’ capacity to change has been slow to develop and even slower has been the interest in teachers’ continuing professional development, and their beliefs about teaching and learning (de Vries et al., 2013). The most significant predictors of change introduced by policy initiatives or official discourses have been identified by research and include teaching experiences, opportunities for reflection, such as in novel or challenging circumstances, and the application of knowledge about teaching and learning (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Morgan and Xu (2011) reported on a study where Xu used interviews and observations to investigate how teachers positioned themselves with “official discourse” in relation to “efficient mathematics learning” (p. 17). Amongst the teachers they found varying responses, interpretations and enactments of the official discourse (p. 17). The study's conclusions emphasise that in relation to understanding and interpreting policy reforms, while teachers’ behaviours are generally coherent, it is the policy or discourse that may hold ambiguities or differing degrees of persuasiveness. Xu’s study has ramifications for further research to uncover teachers’ learning activities, beliefs, and connections to official discourses or policy initiatives.

In agreement with Borg (2001), de Vries et al. (2013) argued that teachers’ beliefs involve general understandings that connect to what a teacher holds to be “true” (p. 81). Of interest is that Orafi and Borg’s (2009) study concerning teachers’ prior beliefs when implementing policy innovations, revealed that the reform uptake was limited by a lack of alignment with teachers’ existing beliefs of teaching and learning, and that “such challenges exist even where innovations are introduced gradually, sensitively and with appropriate support for teachers and students” (p. 252). Indeed, there is still more to be understood in relation to
teachers’ orientations to learning when faced with policy initiatives and research should be prioritised to focus on teachers’ beliefs and their needs because they are the “crucial actors” in the provision of education (de Vries et al., 2013).

Ways of learning: theory to practice

Professional learning is complex and involves deep thinking and emotional effort to understand where one stands in the enactment of change (Avalos, 2011; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; de Vries et al., 2013; Hoekstra, Beijaard & Korthagen, 2009; Little, 2006; Opfer, Pedder & Lavicza, 2011; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd, 1991). Since professional learning is concerned with “teachers learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students’ growth” (Avalos, 2011, p. 10), they are “both the subjects and objects of learning and development” (p. 17).

Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) took up the notion of teachers as subjects to argue that linear, causal models of professional learning programs represented “something done to teachers”, and that deficits in their practice were assumed. Accordingly, linear models initiated by an inservice program assumed that the process ensured that teachers would change their beliefs and practice and that this was followed by a change in student learning. Similarly, de Vries et al. (2013) argued that previous linear, causal models focused on teachers’ autonomous decision making and that courses were stand-alone events.

Little (2006) argued for a model of professional learning that incorporates the teachers’ relationship with the subject matter, with understandings of student learning, and to the diversity of students’ learning needs. Indeed, when schools are organised for teacher learning there is the potential to promote systemic attention to teaching and learning in “multiple ways” and to ultimately promote student learning (p. 4). Moreover, a shift in perceiving teachers as agents of change occurred when whole school contexts were involved in participatory methods from programs that change teachers to teachers as active learners shaping their professional growth through reflective participation in professional development and in practice (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 948).
In agreement, de Vries et al. (2013) took this point further to note that teachers are generally positively learning-oriented, adaptive experts who actively seek professional development as an essential part of their profession. de Vries and colleagues attribute this to the fact that continuing professional development is no longer an option, and is now an expectation for all professionals. Accordingly, these positive developments have the power to update teachers’ knowledge and provide multiple reflective opportunities for teachers in collaboration with peers.

From another perspective, Muir, Beswick and Williamson (2010) were interested in how professional learning changed teachers’ beliefs and practice. They undertook an in-depth study of three teachers involving videoed observations of numeracy lessons and an action research approach. The study found that one teacher’s beliefs were altered and led to a change in their teaching approach. By contrast, the other two teachers stated their satisfaction with their existing beliefs and were not induced to change following the professional learning activity. Although the study’s sample was small, nevertheless, the findings raise the issue that the conditions for professional learning intent on inducing change and further studies could reveal more information on the causal effect of professional learning on teachers’ beliefs and subsequent practice.

In the workplace, when diversified opportunities are offered in formal and informal contexts, teachers’ differing learning needs are met, and there is a strong possibility that their teaching competencies are strengthened and deepened (Hoekstra, Brekelmans, Beijaard & Korthagen, 2009; Kwakman, 2003; Richter, Kunter, Klusmann, Ludtke & Baumert, 2011). For example, Richter et al. (2011) undertook a study in German schools to investigate teachers’ responses to a range of professional learning opportunities in both formal and informal contexts. Their study identified the differing interests of teachers that altered considerably according to their career stage in that late-career teachers preferred to follow up with their own research while early career teachers preferred structured activities. On the basis of their findings, Richter et al. suggested that in the context of introduced policy reforms, a role of policymakers includes the acknowledgement and consideration of the differing needs of the teachers who are expected to implement the reforms.
Two studies in the Netherlands also reported on teachers’ responses to professional learning in relation to participation (Kwakman, 2003) and teachers’ learning needs (Hoekstra et al., 2009). In the first of these, Kwakman (2003) identified significant differences in rates of participation and these were more dependent on personal factors than on workplace conditions. Six years later, Hoekstra et al. (2009) found that since teachers differ substantially in the way they learn in informal contexts, when policy initiatives are proposed they should ensure teachers have opportunities to connect meaningful, cognitive activities to the policy proposals. Practical examples include experimentation and interactive collaboration with peers and, to use feedback in a “meaning-oriented” way (p. 672). Although six years apart, these two studies underline the importance of teachers’ opportunities to interact with peers in diverse ways when faced with changes to practice proposed by policy initiatives.

This part of the review has considered how teachers’ professional learning may be useful in practice; the next section examines cognitive aspects of professional learning such as reflective practice.

**Critically reflective practice**

Given that effective professional learning programs have the power to alter teachers’ beliefs and practices, Tripp and Rich (2012) argued that teachers’ willingness to change comes from within rather than from external impositions. In essence, reflective practice has been described as an integrative process between theory and practice (Thompson & Pascal, 2012). Additionally, reflection is a to and fro process, fluctuating between searching and inquiring in order to resolve doubt and a perplexing problem and, there are multiple ways for teachers to reflect on their practice such as in the plans for action, the practice action and the after-thoughts of the practice (Dimova & Loughran, 2009).

In highlighting the importance of reflective practice Morgan, Tsatsaroni and Lerman (2000) suggested the use of a framework for teachers to examine the sources of their attitudes to assessment. They contend that when teachers have the opportunity to recognise the form of pedagogy they have drawn on in their practice, then they have the potential to examine their personal attitudes to
assessment. For example, teachers were found to adopted various positions as they evaluated students' mathematical work, such as “interested mathematician” or teacher-student, or as a questioner; and this study demonstrates the need for further in-depth investigations focused on teachers’ orientations to evaluations of students’ learning.

A study undertaken by Williams and Grudnoff (2011) investigated the types of reflections used by a small group of experienced teachers compared to another group of beginning teachers. The researchers asked four questions in order to guide the reflective process, in brief:

1. Describe: what did I do?
2. Inform: what does this mean?
3. Confront: how did I come to be like this?

The findings identified key differences between the groups in that the beginning teachers described their practice and later used reflection as the means to modify their practice. However, the experienced teachers used reflection to widen their lenses towards viewing their practice in relation to the norms and practices undertaken across their school. Implications of this study suggest the need to tailor professional development and it also highlights the importance of maintaining a workable, reflective model for teachers to make sense of their professional practice.

While the above studies involved small groups of teachers, Wood (1995) took another approach in a case study of just one teacher’s response to professional learning and over the course of one year, the changes to her teaching of mathematics. This in-depth investigation of one subject revealed an attitudinal change evidenced by the adoption of new teaching approaches in order to accommodate students’ learning needs and also by the teacher's reflection on her practice. During the study, Wood noted a substantial change in the teachers’ perspectives, from a view of mathematics teaching focused on positivist traditions to a view based on students' problem solving strategies. Wood observed this change through the teachers’ interactive discussions with her
students and her new approaches involving listening and questioning. For example, the teacher said on two occasions:

This year I’m not giving the answer … and it’s forced them (the students) to take on the responsibility for figuring it out for themselves … They feel good about it … They have come to the point where they can learn, you know, themselves in spite of me (p. 213).

I’ve learned to let go of my classroom. Empowering students with responsibility gives them the feeling that they are needed and most important, that they have ownership of what they are learning (p. 225).

Wood makes the point that the teacher’s reflective practices were not detached from her activity, rather they evolved alongside the changed practices. At times, Wood identified tensions such as when the teacher was unsure of what the mathematics was that she was trying to teach, and she was unable to anticipate the direction of the children’s understandings and the quality of their mathematical responses. Nevertheless, the teacher’s development of reflective practice enhanced the change process and, according to Wood, she reported feelings of satisfaction with her change efforts. It seems that teachers’ resolve and their determination to change embedded beliefs and practices has the potential to yield substantial change. These substantial findings indicate there is more to be known concerning teachers’ beliefs, practices and, the extent of their resolve to make changes to their practice.

**Video-recording as a professional learning tool**

In my work with teachers, videos convey the immediacy of classroom actions in ways that support rich conversations about the nature of productive learning environments (Schoenfeld, 2017a, p. 431).

The use of video recordings of classroom activity as an effective tool for reflective professional learning has recently become more widely documented although studies are more widespread in other nations than in Australia. However, groundbreaking studies in Victoria have pointed to an important relationship between reviewing practice via videos and teacher agency through enhanced reflective practice (Clarke, 2012; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Hollingsworth & Clarke, 2017). The visibility of teachers’ work is possible when
videos are reviewed, since many practices have a “subtlety” that renders them otherwise invisible (Hollingsworth & Clarke, 2017, p. 458).

Almost two decades ago, Stigler et al. (2000) advocated the use of video recording in research and they described several advantages such as the capturing of unanticipated events, multiple viewing opportunities, and the integration of qualitative and quantitative analysis methods. Moreover, in the context of professional learning, the use of video recordings has a powerful influence on changing and enhancing teachers’ practice.

The shift in perceptions of the use of video in classrooms has altered dramatically since the data collection process for this study was undertaken in 2006, largely due to an upsurge of interest by researchers. A recent example is Schoenfeld’s (2017b) extensive use of video-recorded data “video has been a central source of data” (p. 417). Nevertheless, there is a need for further investigative work incorporating for example, teachers’ perceptions of how videos may be useful for individual teacher agency and as well, collective teacher growth.

Initially, video playback was useful for professional program leaders to identify deficits in teachers’ practice and given that the playback focused on negativity it is not surprising that the teachers felt anxious and confronted (Fuller & Manning, 1973). However, a shift in attitudes to the use of video recording supports the understanding of multiple and complex human interactions (Stigler, Gallimore & Hiebert, 2000). Additionally, this technique has proven an effective method for teachers who wish to develop professional vision and the ability to notice and interpret significant classroom interactions occurring in their own classrooms (Sherin & Han, 2004; Sherin & van Es, 2005, 2009).

**Professional learning communities**

Recent interest in the development of professional learning communities has focused on the empowerment of schools to improve and to flourish (Carpenter, 2015; Deal & Peterson, 2009). Moreover, professional learning communities are posited as having a key change role in reform efforts and school improvement due to the effects of teacher collaboration and school leadership (Avalos, 2011;
Carpenter, 2015; Harris, Jones & Huffman, 2017; Little, 2006; Little & Veugelers, 2005; Wenger, 2000). The approach provides school leaders with opportunities to provide structure while “also providing openness for teachers to problem solve within that structure” (Carpenter, 2015, p. 685). As well, there are increased understandings of the interactive relationships in communities and instructional improvement. Little (2006) defined professional learning communities as

close relationships among teachers’ professional colleagues, usually with the implication that these relationships are oriented towards teacher learning and professional development (p. 15).

Moreover, professional learning communities demonstrate robustness when focus is on core schooling involving student learning, student experience, teacher initiative, new ideas, and resources derived from both within and without the school. According to Little, elements of a professional learning community may include shared values, a collective and collaborative agreement focused on students and student learning, innovative practices that comprise problem-solving situations and reflective dialogue, and shared curriculum decisions (p.15).

The seminal work, Lave and Wenger (1991) initially argued that a situated community of practice is “an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge” (p. 98). Moreover, and according to Wenger (1998) a community of practice exists when individuals are engaged in a joint enterprise to ensure “a shared repertoire of ways of doing things” (p. 49). However, conceptual developments have shifted to notions of professional learning communities where there is active inquiry and collaborative problem solving (Little, 2006). Similarly, Kwakman (2003) emphasised that teachers’ learning within a collaborative environment enhances the whole community and stimulates further learning opportunities, while Avalos (2011) identified the importance of collaborative teacher co-learning as a mediating factor in change processes.

Successful professional learning communities have clarity of purpose (Harris et al., 2017) although collaborative norms of practice have remained unaltered since first conceptualised three decades ago (Little, 2006). Broadly, the norms
involved disciplined collaboration; a model that goes beyond aspirational beliefs; the ability to engage in inquiry; and authentic teacher agency and leadership (Harris et al., 2017). Additionally, Carpenter (2015) draws attention to the significance of leadership that is supportive and shared since effective learning communities promote teachers as school leaders.

Professional learning communities have the power to transform learning since individual teacher-learners are interconnected within the community of practice (Borko, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Little, 2006; Wenger, 2000). Indeed, the power of professional learning communities is visible in trajectories of progress that enable the practitioners to “influence, complement and enrich each other”, and that the primary source of information within communities of practice lies in informal processes such as conversations and the pursuance of ideas (Wenger, 2000, p. 242). Purposeful conversations were acknowledged as crucial by Horn and Little (2010) since they are the means to forge and cultivate communities of practice. Little and Veugelers (2005) extended the notion of professional learning communities to the wider community to argue that the expansion of networks provides increased empowerment for educators. Accordingly, network forums may be likened to communities of practice since they have the potential to provide opportunities for horizontal ways of shared learning.

In the context of policy initiatives, professional learning communities may well be drivers of change (Carpenter, 2015) since they empower teachers in working together towards a shared vision. Carpenter’s recent study investigated three schools in the US where professional learning communities were well established in order to understand overlaps in school culture, school improvement cycles, and in the effectiveness of the professional learning communities. Carpenter found that shared leadership was an effective component of the professional learning communities due to shared values and the collaborative approach to problem solving strategies. School leaders who removed themselves from the cycle “created boundaries” and this created difficulties for the teachers (p. 689). In one school, where the teachers were held accountable and top-down decisions prevailed, Carpenter reports on a noticeable lack of trust and a lack of supportive, shared leadership that
“promoted a toxic culture with the staff” (p. 690). Carpenter concludes that an effective cycle of continuous improvement is possible in collaborative environments where teachers feel empowered. Accordingly, Carpenter advises that when school leaders focus on shared leadership structures, then improved student achievements will increase over time. Carpenter’s findings uniquely signify the importance of collaborative, shared culture in schools. Moreover, Carpenter asserts that there is further need for continued research focused on the concept and application of effective collaboration.

From a similar perspective, Harris et al. (2017) point out that in nations such as Finland, where there is a culture of professional trust and collaboration, educational systems flourish. Subsequently, the potential for professional learning communities to provide opportunities for teachers to develop innovatively may lead to improved learner outcomes. Yet even though there is now an expanding interest in school cultures where professional learning communities are nurtured and where shared leadership prevails, there is more to be learnt about how, for example, Victorian school leaders develop professional learning communities to create teacher agency.

**Train the Trainer model**

By way of contrast to the plethora of information concerning professional learning communities, the use of the *Train the Trainer* model in formal professional learning programs is less well known. Nevertheless, this model has been widely used as the means to engage teachers in professional learning in Victoria such as in the *Early Years Numeracy Program* (State of Victoria, 2001) that was a part of the *Early Years Strategy* developed by the Education Department of Victoria. Little (1993) noted several disadvantages of the model and there is a scarcity of information in support of it, although Borko, Elliot and Uchiyama (2002) reported on a Kentucky study where the model was in use.

Little (1993) argued that policymakers potentially view the Train the Trainer model as financially expedient since it suits short-term goals and suggests that since the training model relies on outside experts to introduce teachers to new practices, it represents an oppositional approach to problem solving that will not
ultimately realise reform agendas. Moreover, Little contended that this training model is a poor example of professional development in that professional learning is treated as a low-intensity enterprise, since intellectual and emotional engagement are both minimal. As an alternative, Little advocated collaborative learning contexts where the focus is effective practical teaching knowledge.

Borko et al. (2002) investigated the use of the Train the Trainer model in four Kentucky schools during a time when standards-based reforms were implemented. Their case study was a part of a larger project in which the Train the Trainer model was a key aspect of extensive professional development programs in these four schools. The model involved on-site workshops across several schools, teacher-trainers as leaders and videos focusing on shared discussions and practice in task scoring. According to Borko et al, conflicting opinions of the participating teachers indicated that while some admitted that new skills were gained, others found the workshops boring due to the scripted, recipe approach.

Since the model was extensively resourced, and the training teachers were committed to the model, Borko et al. describe Kentucky’s efforts as effective, although they were not entirely convinced of the advantages of this approach and since they advocated alternative approaches for future professional learning. A main concern was the short-term benefits of using this model and the use of workshops and the focus on procedures, as an alternative, the researchers suggested long-term professional development with a focus shit to “on-the-job learning” (p. 986).

Despite the general lack of information to support the model, The Blueprint used the Train the Trainer method to train Victorian teachers to pass on information concerning PoLT and the new online system and software tool that generated report cards for parents. The final section of this part of the review will examine teachers’ access to professional learning through The Blueprint.

*The Blueprint: teachers’ professional learning*

The Blueprint addressed teachers’ professional learning in Flagship Strategy 5 in the provision of a *Professional Leave* program where annually, up to 460
Victorian teachers could apply for acceptance. In their application, teachers identified their own learning needs that aligned with the school’s improvement priorities and if accepted, they took leave away from their classroom duties. Examples of professional development include short intensive programs, mentoring or shadowing a colleague. Provisions for beginning teachers were also included:

**Flagship Strategy 5 Teacher Professional Development**

5a. Teachers to undertake teacher professional leave ranging from 4 to 10 weeks.
5b. Induction program for beginning teachers, complemented by

Even though The Blueprint stressed the building of leadership capacity for existing and aspirant leaders, far less attention was given to the professional learning needs of teachers. Yet, research has strongly stressed the centrality of teachers’ roles in interpreting and bringing about change, for example, during times of change, it can be argued that “the teacher is clearly the key” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996, p. 14) and there seems to be a disparity between the direction of The Blueprint towards developing leadership and the view that teachers are pivotal to change.

The strategy for the professional development of teachers outlined in The Blueprint was aimed towards individual development of “high-order” skills and expertise to become creative, innovative and flexible classroom teachers (State of Victoria, 2003, p. 21). The precondition was that teachers “bring their learning back to the school and to other schools so that the benefits can be shared across the system” (p. 21). In other words, individualised professional learning was conditional on teachers’ agreement to provide professional learning for colleagues in a sharing forum. How this was to be achieved was not stipulated. It is not known how this follow-up professional learning was undertaken and whether it contributed to schools’ improvement since to date, there is a scarcity of studies investigating this aspect of professional learning in Victoria.
In the main, professional learning is concerned with “teachers learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students’ growth” although this can result in them becoming both subjects and objects of learning and development (Avalos, 2011, p. 10). While The Blueprint required extensive changes in teachers’ practices from one perspective, enduring change will only occur when teachers’ thinking changes and when they have the relevant knowledge of practices to match their thinking (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd, 1991). Moreover, teachers require opportunities and time to learn how to incorporate new ideas into their practice and they also require differing learning opportunities to suit diverse learning styles (Hoekstra, Brekelmans, Beijaard & Korthagen, 2009). However, The Blueprint tended towards an approach in that teachers were required to search for professional learning and then deliver information with colleagues. To date, very little is known of the impact of this approach and the extent to which teachers considered it supportive for their professional growth.

2.2.3 Summary

This section of the chapter has examined the literature relating to two policy implementation strategies, school leadership and teachers’ professional learning, in order to understand how these strategies were negotiated through The Blueprint. The review demonstrated how The Blueprint was influenced by notions of leadership that were current at the time; however since then, there is widespread agreement that distributed, shared approaches to leadership are conducive to the development of effective schools.

The second policy implementation strategy explored concerned the changing of teachers’ beliefs and practice through professional learning. There is increased interest in reflective practices, particularly with the advent of video technologies. There is widespread agreement on the benefits of professional learning communities and these are dependent on school leadership focused on distributive practice.
2.3 Theoretical perspectives shaping learning, teaching, and assessment

Learners, as they encounter new situations, attempt to meld incoming information with their existing understandings. (Straits & Wilke, 2007, p. 58).

This literature review has explored dimensions of education policy reforms and two key implementation strategies including the role of school leadership and teachers’ professional learning. The review now turns to an exploration of contemporary conceptualizations of learning, teaching and assessment. Various theories will be presented and examined and although learning appears to be a simple process of melding new information with existing understandings, how this is achieved continues to interest researchers.

The relationship between learning and assessment has “been under the spotlight”, particularly in relation to how formative assessment is linked to improvements in learning (Hayward, 2012, p. 125). Yet from the learner’s perspective, Hayward points out that consultation with learners is both an “expectation and a right” and this perspective has been referred to a “third generation assessment” since it implies a relationship between teachers and learners (p. 133). As Hayward (2012) pointed out, it may be learners’ voices that will open up spaces where what matters in learning can be explored and hence, assist educators in aligning theories of learning with classroom practice.

Identifying what matters most in learning and assessment is not an easy thing to do, with educators being placed in the difficult position of transitioning between past traditions and contemporary practice (Earl, 2003). Moreover, recent developments in learning theories outweigh developments in assessment theories, since these have been relatively slow to develop over the same period of time (James & Lewis, 2012). Of interest is that The Blueprint responded to Earl’s (2003) approach to assessment soon after it was published and the emphasis on assessment reflects increased interest in assessment. Nevertheless, since assessment theories have a learning theory base, when teachers subscribe to a specific assessment model, they may unwittingly also subscribe to the underlying learning theory. This matters, because “some assessment practices are very much less effective than others in promoting the kinds of learning needed by young people today” (2003, p. 189), and policies such as The
Blueprint emphasise quality education for all students while The Education State (2017) similarly places great stress on equipping students with “knowledge, capabilities and attributes that will see them thrive” and have the “skills that industry needs” (p. 1).

As teaching, learning and assessment were The Blueprint’s primary focus, this section of the review opens with an examination of learning and teaching; constructivism is briefly examined as a lead up to an exploration of the meaning of the Zone of Proximal Development and how scaffolding strategies enhance the learning process (2.3.1). This is followed by the literature concerned with assessment and although there is a vast body of literature in this field, the review is narrowed to summative and formative classroom practices including formative feedback (2.3.2). The section closes with a brief summary (2.3.3).

2.3.1 Learning and teaching

As mentioned, one of the four components of The Blueprint comprised six principles of learning and teaching and was presented as the Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT, State of Victoria, 2004c). PoLT endured until the introduction of The Education State (State of Victoria, 2017a) and across the 14 years although the six principles remained unchanged, at various intervals, extra information was provided as elaboration. For example, an action plan for schools was provided, entailing school audits, reviewing and planning to “facilitate locally based decisions about learning and teaching” (State of Victoria 2004c, p. 42). This review intends to compare and contrast learning and teaching theories against The Blueprint’s approach to learning and teaching outlined in PoLT.

Over the last century learning theories have evolved from an emphasis on the behaviourist view that learning is the biological reception and acquisition of knowledge (Straits & Wilke, 2007) to a participatory view of learning that emphasises the construction of knowledge within a social and cultural context (Cobb, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1999). The behaviourist tradition promotes transmission, the learners’ passive acceptance, and replication (Straits & Wilke, 2007). Whereas, from a constructivist view, learning is active rather than passive, relies on verbal and non-verbal communications, and is conditional
on cognitive readiness, attitudes, and prior experiences (Akiba & Alkins, 2010; Mercer, 2013). These polarised views have generated a large amount of debate yet notably, Akiba and Alkins’ (2010) longitudinal study in schools in Brazil concluded that educators should keep an open view of learning since what we “think” we know has yet to be empirically established (p. 66). This stance is similarly voiced by Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) who advised researchers to avoid generalizing and instead to “ground observations across multiple settings and ... to assume vantage points” (p. 23). It seems there is agreement in the value of not over-simplifying approaches to learning, and for researchers to be mindful of community practices, and as Gutiérrez and Rogoff point out, how people participate in the practice under study.

**Constructivism**

Constructivist theorists promote the view that learning is a developmental process and that learners use multiple perspectives to construct knowledge. Scheurman (1998) for example argued “knowledge is constructed when students form their own interpretations of evidence submitted to them for review” (p. 6). From one perspective, constructivism is accepted as a learning theory since it encompasses the view that as learners encounter new experiences and situations, new information is melded with the learner’s existing understandings (Bush, 2006; Mercer, 2013; Straits and Wilke, 2007). To further this perspective, Straits and Wilke (2007) add that a constructivist approach to teaching may best be described as “less emphasis on” factual information and “more emphasis on” understanding concepts (p. 58).

The field, however, is beset by issues with language and it seems there are many different ways of referring to the fundamental principle, that is, that learning occurs through reflection on experience in collaboration with others. Learners connect new experiences to existing understandings and to support this contention, teachers may choose to use techniques and strategies based on Constructivism. Kirschner, Sweller and Clark (2006) promote the view that some learning theories (e.g., Discovery, Problem-Based, Inquiry-Based) can be grouped because they promote the same constructivist approach in learning by
Cobb (1999) writes of two trends encompassing the active construction of knowledge by students to add coherently to their existing knowledge and a second trend emphasises the socially and culturally situated nature of learning such as in mathematical activity. Nevertheless, in practice, depending on the lesson context and learning needs, teachers may use four approaches that are not necessarily exclusive and Scheurman (1998) contends that teachers may move between them:

- Transmitter role: behaviorism
- Manager role: Information processing and computer technology
- Facilitator role: Cognitive constructivism (developmental)
- Collaborator: Social constructivism (p. 7)

In taking the transmitter role, Scheurman suggested lessons may involve note-taking or responding to computer cues and that students are listening, rehearsing and reciting. When the teacher takes a managerial role, students may be engaged with critical reading tasks. If the teacher assumes the facilitator or collaborator role, scaffolding strategies may be used and peer-peer learning may be activated. The point made here by Scheurman is that within a constructivist learning environment, a range of underlying learning traditions have the potential to impact on planning and subsequent learning activities.

**Social constructivism**

Social constructivism emerged following Lave and Wenger’s (1991) construct based on the notion of *situated learning*. Participation is central to situated learning such as when two or more learners collaborate to problem-solve and has implications on whether the curriculum is student-centric or is based on teaching. Lave and Wenger differentiate these curriculum approaches to note:

A learning curriculum: is viewed from the perspective of learners and evolves out of participation in a specific community of practice. It is essentially situated and cannot be considered in isolation.

A teaching curriculum: structures the resources for learning. It evolves out of participation in a community of practice. It is an external view of what knowing is about (p. 97)
Since this initial construct, Wenger (2000) has since argued that in a social learning system, knowing is a matter of displaying competencies in social communities, since “we each experience knowing in our own ways” “it is in this interplay” of our experiences that learning takes place (p. 226). Moreover, learning experiences are a set of practices that “come into play at the intersections among teachers, students and content” (Boaler, 2002, p. 244). Hence, Boaler argued that the focus on practice is consistent with situated theory, and has implications for professional development and curriculum in that “broad teaching and curriculum approaches” are an important consideration in differentiating between effective and ineffective practice (p. 244).

From a social constructivist view, learning as not out there and independent of the learner rather, it is the learner’s active participation in the development of conceptual knowledge and, “to understand how individuals are embedded in the social world, it is necessary to grant that meaning is more than a construction by individuals” (Rogoff, 1999, p. 81). The participatory view is particularly emphasised in adult learning in situations where adult students collaborate to integrate new with existing knowledge. In this context, Straits and Wilke (2007) took the view that constructivism is a learning theory rather than a technique, since it builds on prior knowledge, authentic contexts, and it encourages thinking, social discourse and negotiation.

In taking up the issue of curriculum, that is, what is taught, and connections to teaching and learning, Goldman and Pellegrino (2015) suggest that a coherent system guided by contemporary theories of learning is a necessary precursor for educational achievement and also, the reduction of disparities in achievements. Although what is taught in schools is important, a priority, suggests Mercer (2013), is an understanding of how the curriculum is taught. Mercer argued that constructs involving the “social brain” require more research particularly in relation to the notion that “our brains are ‘social’ in that they have been designed, through evolution, to enable us to reason together and get things done” (p. 149).

Mercer’s interest in the social brain is founded in how learning may be socially activated such as through appropriation (talking and sharing), co-construction of
new and robust strategies and, transformation that involves reasoning, problem-solving, and self-regulation (p. 155). For example, a study of teachers undertaken in Mexico, found that when teachers arranged conditions for students to exchange ideas and use problem-solving strategies collaboratively, the students achieved well and the teachers were considered to be “effective” in their teaching (p. 159). Similarly, Boaler (2002) argued that there needs to be a conscious shift away from what “students cannot do” to what “schools can do” to make the educational experience more equitable for all students (p. 241).

Sociocultural approaches involve the transfer and translation of cultural knowledge in the context of learning and teaching, where shared and individual activities are internalised to become learning (James, 2017). This view of learning “goes beyond” other notions concerned with the acquisition of knowledge or the application of established knowledge (p. 407). The sociocultural theory involves creativity or knowledge creation and the learner may access tools and artefacts, which may be shared as the process of internalization progresses. Accordingly, the tackling of new problems can be shared with others to create a “cycle of externalization, internalization and externalization” (p. 407).

Although PoLT does not claim allegiance to any particular learning theory, it promotes the view that the learning environment is supportive and productive in a “wider social sense” and since this theme perpetuates throughout the document, it could be assumed that a socio-constructivist view is adopted (State of Victoria 2004c, p. 1).

**Zone of Proximal Development**

A key feature of socio-constructivist learning, Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), an influential development, is based on the view that all learning is derived from experience and the parallel involvement of language. Others have since extended and expanded the theory of ZPD in order to further explain the process of asymmetrical learning collaborations between learners and teachers (Bliss, Askew & Macrae, 1996; Daniels, 2001; Lerman, 2001; Verenikina & Chinnappan, 2006). Bliss et al. (1996) expanded on this to explain
that when children enter ZPD, their thinking and reasoning skills tend to align with the adult’s thinking and further, that children’s appropriation is dependent on what the teacher makes available. In other words, teachers attempt to teach an idea and students make the best understanding that is possible at that time. Essentially, the ZPD involves a collaborative, problem-solving interaction between the learner and an adult or peer, where an identified gap in learning is closed. Since the task is beyond the student’s capabilities, Vygotsky (1978) explains ZPD as a method of learning when,

the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (p. 86).

The uniqueness of this learning process requires the teacher to assist the learner to internalize new information and this process may be referred to as knowledge consolidation (Verenikina & Chinnappan, 2006, p. 522). Following the teachers’ encouragement, various outcomes may eventuate as the learner attempts to construct meaning (Bliss, Askew & Macrae, 1996; Lerman, 2001). In assessment, the ZPD has a centre and a periphery and the zones are not entities but instead are “dynamic interactions between children and adults” (Fleer, 2015).

However, possibly the most significant aspect of ZPD is the interactive moments that develop as the learner and teacher actively negotiate a positive shift in learning and when the teacher uses various scaffolding techniques to further assist the acquisition of new knowledge. Moreover, James (2017) asserts that “mastery of tools of the mind”, as advanced by Vygotsky, takes place in the ZPD in two key steps; first, plotting a learner’s development to encourage deep, rich knowledge, and second, assessing the learner’s response.

A recent Australian study focused on how teachers intensified their efforts to modify their assessment practices by focusing on ZPD moments during social interactions (Fleer, 2015). The lessons involved the students generating handwritten letters and adding them to existing envelopes in a picture-story book. Fleer stressed the activity evolved into a social and “cultural-historical” situation focused on the students’ development and that the students’ letters appeared more “real” than the existing “ideal” letters published in the book.
According to Fleer, cultural orientations motivated the children to write the letters and the teachers adapted their assessments to suit the students’ developmental stages. The study, conducted over two years, identified the teachers’ struggles with tensions between the traditions of formative and summative assessment. The teachers’ struggles included, for example, contradictions between state-based assessment requirements and children’s actual learning experiences; the conceptualisation of assessment interactions as part of an assessment pedagogy; and the notion that the “assessment lens” may be moved away from an individual to a collective where others are included (p. 242). Fleer’s study utilised several hours of video-recorded data as well as interviews and significantly, its focus on child–teacher interactions and the teachers’ interview commentaries has drawn attention not only to intentional changes to assessment practice, but also to the ways in which teachers consider theoretical perspectives as the means to shape their teaching.

**Scaffolding**

Scaffolding, a teaching practice initially proposed by Bruner in 1983, arose from Vygotsky’s initial conceptualization of the ZPD. The ZPD has been described as a gap and to close the gap an interactive episode may form a scaffolded intermediary bridge to enable the learner to access and interpret new information. PoLT refers in Principle 1.4 to scaffolding as “acknowledging students’ progress and scaffolding learning to maximize success” (State of Victoria, 2004c, p.3). The component in the principle is not elaborated and the meaning of *scaffolding learning* appears somewhat blurred. Nevertheless, since it is a crucial element in the teaching and learning process, it is relevant to explore various perspectives. For example, Shotter (1989) explained the scaffolded structure as temporary and that it acts as an aide by the learner until the new information has been taken on and understood. Similarly, Fleer (1990) placed the child at the centre of the process while the role of the teacher is to act on the child’s responses and to “listen” to the child to understand their thinking, then to “sympathetically challenge the child to modify, develop or extend those ideas” (p. 121).
During interactive episodes involving scaffolded strategies the use of language and questioning has the power to impact on the child’s capacity to respond (Shotter, 1989). Teachers’ expertise is pivotal, since children may misinterpret information. Consequently the teacher’s role is vital in ensuring children have opportunities to make explicit their thoughts, that teachers model ways of using language, and that children have the capacity to articulate difficulties (Rojas-Drummond & Mercer, 2003). In this context, the integration of teaching and learning is accentuated and can be as simple as asking a child questions about why they had “gone about an activity in the way they had”, since such questioning stimulates reasoning and guides the child to explain their perspective (p. 102).

A research project undertaken in Victoria: *Researching Numeracy Teaching Approaches in Primary Schools* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2004) revealed and explained the range of interaction patterns used by teachers in scaffolding interactions. Based on the view that teaching and learning are an integrated process and quality interactions are a key feature, Siemon (2003) pointed out that educational success and failure, may be explained by the quality of educational dialogue rather than being just the result of the intrinsic capability of individual students or the didactic presentational skills of individual teachers (p. 100).

The project encompassed a range of key considerations in the teaching of numeracy such as teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and whole-school collaboration in professional learning; but the main thrust of the findings centred on the use of scaffolding practices as the means to improve students’ learning outcomes. The action-research process, including classroom observations and the collection of student interview data, led to the identification of 12 differentiated scaffolding strategies used by the teachers as they interactively engaged with their students. These strategies are based on, for example, seeking information from students, challenging students, questioning sequences, and flagging gaps in understandings (p. 3).

While the above project proffers practical support for teachers as they interact with students in their daily teaching work, there is widespread agreement of the
importance of continued research focused on scaffolded learning. Scaffolding in learning requires knowledge and skill development for both teachers and for students, since children require support in learning how to be interactive (Mercer, 1996). Additionally, Rojas-Drummond and Mercer (2003) argued that for teachers’ questioning to be of educational value, then children need opportunities to learn how to talk effectively and how to develop specific dialogical strategies. In-depth questioning clarifies where students are in their learning and serves to identify starting points and whether or not misconceptions are evident (Masters, 2013).

Scaffolding should not always be seen as an individualised interaction, but it is a normal, holistic environment where teachers are responsive for supporting learner autonomy and learner self-motivation (Anghileri, 2006). Further, the first level of scaffolding begins with the environment, then progresses to individualised dialogue and finally is resolved in conceptual thinking.

Given that scaffolding has captured interest as a significant learning and teaching strategy, a call for teachers to have a range of opportunities to develop skills and expertise has emerged (Siemon, 2003; Verenikina & Chinnappan, 2006). Siemon (2003), for example, emphasised the development of specificity in the use of the language and knowledge of scaffolding practices and, the links to “the ways in which teachers give feedback to students that focus on the learning” (p. 171). From another perspective, Verenikina and Chinnappan (2006) recognised the need for early career teachers to build scaffolding skills in order to move on from basic techniques to the more complex. Similarly, Bliss, Askew and Macrae (1996) stressed that scaffolding is a difficult teaching strategy to master and further, teachers require opportunities to develop specialised knowledge. Implications arising here involve the need for ongoing, quality professional learning that focuses on teachers’ capacity to differentiate between the use of specialised knowledge and pseudo-interactions that are less effective in supporting the learning process. This study’s interest in interactive moments between teachers and students and, in particular, observations of feedback moments involving in-depth questioning and the possible use of scaffolding techniques, is supported by
for example, Anghileri’s (2006) view that the first level of scaffolding is the classroom setting followed by interactive dialogue such as feedback.

The literature reviewed here indicates clear trends in realising the importance of interactive dialogue, teachers’ use of differentiated scaffolding strategies, and the creation of environments where children can learn to be interactive and collaborative.

**Learning pathways**

While most discussions focus on the traditions of learning theory, Masters (2013) pointed out that fundamental to learning and teaching is the notion that learning progression or “growth” or “development” or “improvement” occurs as learners acquire new skills and deeper levels of knowledge (p. 23). Learning progression provides a systemised mapping that teachers can track and monitor and for students, new learning may be built on existing learning pathways. Dawson and Stein’s (2008) study sought to understand how assessments could be used to examine how science students were learning the concept of energy. The researchers were keen to isolate how conceptions develop over time and they framed their research using the following developmental perspectives

- The developmental pathways through which concepts typically and optimally develop
- The particular subconcepts required to construct adequate understanding at each new development level
- The range of subconcepts required for optimal understandings
- Effective methods for developing these concepts
- Accurate and reliable assessments of conceptual development that can be used by classroom teachers (p. 91).

The above stance is particularly significant since it draws together the development of concepts and assessments, and indicates an integrated approach to learning, teaching, and assessment. To expand on this notion, Dawson and Stein presented and elaborated on, a complex, cyclic model incorporating a collaborative relationship between the teacher and student as well as “embedded” assessments and interactions (p. 92). In collaboration with science teachers, the researchers developed “teasers” or questions and a rubric system for scoring student responses (p. 101). Although the researchers identified some
problems with the study, levels or sequences of learning were revealed and developed into a framework comprising leveled, hierarchical descriptors of energy, force and gravity. In applying this framework, one teacher said she felt she “understood the sources of students’ confusion and felt more empowered” to meet students’ needs “where they are” (p. 100). Seemingly, this experience drew on an integrated approach in learning, teaching and assessment since according to Masters (2013), learning is an active process that builds connections and interprets new information. Employing frameworks developed within an actual classroom setting supported and empowered teachers who were initially challenged by the issue of students’ varying starting points and how they progressed through the learning sequence.

**Small group focused teaching**

How teachers organise their students in various grouping arrangements has become a contested area due to the traditions of ability grouping compared to mixed-ability groups (e.g., Boaler, Wiliam & Brown, 2000; MacIntyre & Ireson, 2002; Mercer, 2013). Ability groups may be defined as “a practice founded upon the idea that students have relatively fixed levels of ability and need to be taught accordingly” (Boaler et al., 2000, p. 631). However, researchers agree that small group learning is beneficial whether it is teacher-led or peer-led; researchers warn however of the dangers of placing students in groups according to their perceived abilities such as diminished learning opportunities (Baines, Blatchford & Kutnick, 2003; Blatchford, Kutnick, Baines & Galton, 2003; Boaler et al., 2000; MacIntyre & Ireson, 2002; Oxford, 1997).

Several studies over the last two decades have focused on various aspects of grouping arrangements and there is evidence to show that ability grouping may have a polarizing effect (Boaler et al., 2000) and that in contrast, mixed-ability grouping may have positive effects on learning. Wiliam and Bartholomew’s (2001) UK study, for example, found that in the case of ability grouping, the teachers did not allow for differing student needs, whereas the teachers did allow for differing needs when they taught mixed-ability groups. Boaler et al. (2000) argued that this polarization effect impacts on students with perceived
high abilities because expectations are higher and similarly impacts on students with perceived low abilities and this is because expectations are lower.

From another perspective, a study undertaken by Webb and Mastergeorge (2003) found that high levels of interaction and collaboration contributed to favourable outcomes in the solving of mathematical problems. They also found that when the students had multiple opportunities to engage with peers and with their teachers, they were more likely to seek help and to offer help to their peers. Other benefits of mixed ability groups include high levels of motivation, opportunities for negotiation and decision-making (Tolmie, Topping, Christie, Donaldson, Howe, Jessiman et al. 2010). Tolmie et al. (2010) similarly found from their study that meaningful discussions between group members resulted in productive exchanges of ideas and hence, students’ collaborative skills improved as well as enhanced, deeper learning (p. 188). Hattie, Masters and Birch (2016) offer yet another perspective to argue that while ability groups are not helpful in the teaching of mathematics, they may support the teaching of reading.

In relation to the effective teaching of numeracy, a landmark study carried out in the United Kingdom identified and described in detail three key orientations to teaching, the connectionist orientation, the transmission orientation and, the discovery orientation (Askew, Rhodes, Brown, Wiliam & Johnson, 1997). The study results demonstrated a clear but complex connection between teachers’ belief systems and their practice. According to Askew et al., each orientation has substantially different applications and benefits for students, for example the connectionist orientation ensures collaborative interactions between teachers and students, the transmission orientation provides opportunities for accuracy and explicit explanations and, the discovery orientation provided the means for students to be innovative in their tasks (p. 47). The researchers suggest that teachers may wish to examine their practice by using these descriptors and that knowledge of these orientations may support teachers in making appropriate choices when planning and applying their numeracy teaching.
In Victoria, and over the last two decades, various policy initiatives have encouraged teachers to manage their practice by using approaches that involve a mix of whole class teaching and small group focused teaching. A prescriptive approach was advocated by for example, the Early Years Numeracy Program (State of Victoria, 2001) that was part of the Early Years Strategy (2000–2004).

In practice, teachers were urged to place students in a grouping arrangement based on their mathematical “ability” and described as “like-needs” (p. 38).

This approach became less prescriptive when The Blueprint was introduced, since PoLT recommended the use of strategic groups and for teachers to arrange the classroom to ensure opportunities for collaborative engagement were enabled. The latest policy initiative The Education State (2017) appears to avoid a prescriptive approach and instead has introduced terms such as high-impact teaching strategies that involve team teaching and micro-teaching although the underpinning assumption may well be that teachers may choose to use various grouping strategies such as those based on perceptions of student ability.

This part of the section has contrasted and compared the field of literature on learning and teaching with the learning and teaching recommendations outlined in the PoLT component of The Blueprint. Underpinning PoLT, although not directly stated, is a theoretical approach based on socio-constructivism. Within this theoretical construct, ZPD and scaffolding are key strategies; however, apart from a brief reference to scaffolded learning, these were not located in PoLT.

Although small group focused teaching is concerned more with classroom management, PoLT advocates strategic grouping arrangements where students are responsible group members and have roles to play. Similarly, the research agrees that ability grouping is beneficial when students have responsibilities and that the grouping of students based on ability is not overly conducive to learning.

### 2.3.2 Assessment

Educators assess students to learn about what they know and can do, but assessments do not offer a direct pipeline into a student’s mind. (Pellegrino, 2005).

As mentioned, The Blueprint introduced a theoretical approach to assessment in the Assessment Advice and PoLT and as well, it introduced a measurement tool
known as the Progression Points where, for reporting purposes, teachers used a scaled, numerical continuum to judge students’ achievements against the standards outlined in VELS. The theoretical approach, based on Assessment for/of/as Learning (Earl, 2003) introduced a new way for Victorian teachers to think about assessment, since it focused on the purpose of assessment as well as “balance” in using these three approaches (p. 27). As Earl suggested, this shift was a “revolution” (p. 15) and the “preferred future” includes the view that assessment is integral to learning (p. 21). For Victorian teachers the promotion of this overall approach indicated a shift from previous requirements based on the administration of various diagnostic tools in Literacy and Numeracy, and teacher judgements against the standards and benchmarks outlined in the CSF (Board of Studies, 1999, p. 6).

This part of the review will examine differing aspects of assessment and while the main consideration is teachers’ practice, the practice of using state or nationwide testing is considered to a lesser extent. First, an overall picture of assessment is briefly explored to understand how Victoria’s policy The Blueprint aligns with assessment trends. Next, a recent debate is examined to consider the relationship between assessment and learning; this debate remains unresolved, however it is relevant to consider the sustained effort by researchers to engage with the issues. To follow is a brief exploration of the meaning of summative assessment and then a substantial exploration of formative assessment including formative feedback and praise as feedback. The section then examines the Assessment for/of/as Learning. And although this conceptualization was introduced close to two decades ago, the field is divided in that while some consider assessment in terms of summative and formative assessment, others consider it as Assessment for/of/as Learning. This division has implications for Victoria because while The Blueprint advised teachers to consider theories associated with Assessment for/of/as Learning, the latest policy The Education State (2017) refers to assessment as summative or formative.
**Trends in assessment**

Since Earl's (2003) publication of the three assessment approaches, Victoria and other governments have adopted the Assessment for/of/ as Learning to promote a consistency across and within schools. The Canadian government, for example, promoted the approach in a substantial document to provide a justification for changes in assessment practice; a detailed account of the theoretical construct based on the purpose of assessment; and support and resource structures such as ideas for professional learning, and the roles of school leadership. The Canadian government acknowledged the various existing assessment approaches undertaken across the provinces (p. viii) and provided suggestions for the provinces in taking up various strategies for professional learning such as action research, study groups, electronic conferences and assessment audits (pp. 75-76).

In Victoria, Earl's (2003) assessment approach prevailed, as outlined in The Blueprint, until the most recent policy reform (The Education State, 2017a). This latest policy has incurred a shift in assessment approaches towards an emphasis on theories of summative and formative assessment and evidence-based practice. Prior to the latest reform policy, Masters (2013) called for a “unified” approach to assessment based on five guiding principles, although it is not evident whether or not the five principles influenced the policy,

1. Assessments should address domain-based learning.
2. Assessment methods should be selected according to the capacity to provide useful information.
3. Responses to assessment should be based on task criteria such as the use of rubrics.
4. Assessment evidence should be used to draw conclusions regarding student learning within the domain.
5. Feedback and reports of assessment should show where learners are in their learning at the time of the assessment (pp. 7-8).

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7 Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education (WNCP) (2006). Rethinking classroom assessment with purpose in mind: assessment for learning, assessment as learning, assessment of learning. Developed by Dr Lorna Earl and Dr Steven Katz in collaboration with the WNCP team members. [www.wncp.ca](http://www.wncp.ca)
Masters justified the “urgent” call for assessment reform to explain that assessment needs to be conceptualized as the process of establishing where learners are at their time of their learning (p. 64). This approach relies on evidence gathering where the learning begins at the domain and is assessed using task rubrics; evidence-based conclusions follow and these are fed back to the learner with appropriate feedback. According to Masters, this unified approach eschews prior approaches where divisions caused issues such as overly dominant views of assessment methods and, “under this unified conceptualisation of assessment, many of the popular dichotomies and distinctions of the field become less relevant” (p. 6).

Assessment entails purpose and practice, a variety of contexts, theoretical underpinnings, and “the enduring issues of validity and reliability” (Gardner, 2012, p. 4) although, assessments are only an estimate of what students “know and understand” (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001, p. 2). When teachers use classroom assessment to support learning, they fulfill the educational purposes of assessment (Pedder & James, 2012). However, when policymakers intervene they tend to create and place emphasis on “high stakes accountability environments” (Pellegrino, 2005, p. 10) with an inevitable rise in issues and tensions.

Gardner’s (2012) principles of assessment have similarities to Masters’ (2013) principles but Gardner (2012) also included aspects such as student engagement and meeting standards. For example, assessment should improve learning and enable progress, it should be explicit and relevant, it should be integral to teaching and engage and motivate students, and although assessments are approximations, standards should be met (p. 105). Central to Gardner’s argument is that effective assessment activities are essential to promote thoughtful questioning, self- and peer-assessment, explicit assessment criteria, and formative feedback. In promoting quality assessment and the above principles, Gardner urges teachers to cover the learning domain as much as possible and to interpret and provide a reasonable picture of the student’s “achievements across their whole learning” (p. 113).
In support of an assessment approach based on situated learning contexts in which students learn side-by-side and collaboratively, Morgan (2000a) argued that assessment should be localized rather than given over to external assessors. This approach requires a shift from the positive assumptions that learning is discoverable and measurable and that assessment processes are benign and beneficial (pp. 225-226). Indeed, assessments based on measurement have had implications in The Blueprint since teachers were required to make judgements of student learning using graded scores against the curriculum standards in the application of Progression Points. This expectation appears paradoxical since although The Blueprint advocated a three-prong approach to classroom assessment and although assessment of learning was included, the use of standardized measurement procedures was avoided and the focus was on the teachers’ use of summative assessment (State of Victoria, 2004a).

**Assessment and learning**

Although there is a correlation between learning and assessment theories, it should be “stronger than to date” (Baird, Andrich, Hopfenbeck and Stobart, 2017, p. 318). According to Baird et al., the literature has been less than explicit in grounding assessment theories on existing learning theories, and that in an idealized conceptual model there is a continual cyclic movement between learning theory, assessment theory, assessment design, and outcomes. A consequence is a “backwash” effect in that there is an impact of assessment on teaching and learning (p. 319). This backwash effect is visible through international tests based on psychometrics where measurement is considered useful and in classrooms where the dominant approach based on Assessment for Learning is dependent on the individual teacher’s interpretation of the curriculum and pedagogical content knowledge. To strengthen the relationship between learning and assessment theories, Baird et al. call for the prioritization of educational objectives rather than prioritizing high-stakes testing data since assessment data is “detrimental” when used to signify learning (p. 340). In support, Broadfoot (2017) points out that such tests become extremely powerful due to the heavily weighted importance given to the test data and the inevitable attempts to make international “comparison of performance” (p. 416).
The issue of high-stakes testing has dominated debates and discussion due to the influence of this practice across nations. To counteract the effect, Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith (2012) argued for the rights of the student and how they are positioned by “testing and accountability priorities” (p. 76). In Australia, the impact of high-stakes testing is that teachers use practice tests and anticipate forthcoming test questions, because of the “lack of information about expected qualities of performance”, or how the tests relate to learning in the curriculum (p. 69). Additionally, Au (2007) argued that the impact of high-stakes testing has predominately narrowed “curriculum content to those included in the tests” and consequently, knowledge has become fragmented into “bits and pieces” (p. 264).

Petour (2017) takes another view of the work of Baird et al (2017) to suggest that the political argument could be “better” developed and “less scattered” (p. 433). Alternatively, Petour advises that policymakers should not have sole responsibility for choosing a specific learning theory or construct but instead, all the educators and other “actors’ involved should have input and be connected to what society may consider is “valuable learning” (p. 438). Similarly, James (2017) argues for a balanced approach and that there is a further need for the development of assessments to ensure coherency with socio-perspectives on learning. Moreover, psychometric approaches have relevance and that all assessments should complement each other to offer “complete accounts of students’ achievements” (p. 411).

Wiliam (2017) contends that the reason for a lack of connection between learning theories and theories of assessment is because of the differing intentions and further, that developments in the field are “driven by internally focused challenges” in that many authors have attempted to portray their own views as being significantly different to views expressed by their “predecessors’ (p. 396). As a counterpoint to the argument put forward by Baird et al. (2017) in relation to policymakers’ attention to how tests are developed, Wiliam suggests that a more important consideration is, because different tests have different results, it is difficult to draw conclusions. The most significant factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows and a focus on evidence justifies the term “assessment” in assessment for learning (Wiliam, 2017, p. 400). Yet,
Broadfoot (2017) warns that while constant surveillance and intrusive interventions may capture “evidence of attainment” there is a possible threat to the student’s privacy and this is similarly the case with powerful assessment technologies (p. 421). Likewise, Schoenfeld (2017a) argues that formative assessment is problematic due to the idiosyncrasies of teachers’ beliefs and practice; however, this may be resolved through the use of instructional materials that provide prescriptive “lesson packages” known as Formative Assessment Lessons (FALS) (p. 373). According to Schoenfeld, the use of FALS supports teachers and provides consistency, although there is a scarcity of research to support these claims.

More than a generation ago Broadfoot (1994) noted an increase in formative, learning-integrated assessment with an increased emphasis on validity. A decade later, Broadfoot and Black (2004) called for a redefining of assessment in a “new assessment paradigm” that meets the needs of the 21st century rather than a view of assessment bound by “outmoded” curriculum content and assessments focused on techniques (pp. 21-22). Five years on Broadfoot (2009) opined that a distinct lack of change in assessment thinking and practice is due to traditions and political expediency. He suggests that instead assessments should have the capacity to determine achievement widely across content and skills, in varying contexts and at many levels.

Broadfoot’s evolving perspectives reflect historical events and indicate that between 1994 and 2009 educational research that focused on assessment has been characterised by “messy, contingent, fragile” factors with a steady build-up of knowledge around teaching and learning (p. 635). Hence, Broadfoot (2017) calls for research that embraces tensions between theories of learning and purposes of assessment, and to “engage with the competing paradigms of assessment and psychometrics” (p. 415).

Central to Broadfoot’s (2017) argument is that assessment has a huge impact on teaching and learning due to its pivotal role and, in looking to the future, Broadfoot emphasises the role of technology, since there is a potential for stronger connections between the theories and practices of assessment.
However, Broadfoot also warns that new technologies may have a “stranglehold”, with people caught up in the “coils of a system” out of control (p. 422). This warning has implications for recent policies, such as The Education State (2017a) focused on assessment approaches that rely on ongoing data collection, analysis and interpretation.

**Summative assessment**

Researchers have defined the role of summative assessment as a useful process in understanding what has been learnt or not learnt (e.g. Harlen, Gipps, Broadfoot & Nuttall, 1992; Wiliam, Lee, Harrison & Black 2004). Essentially, summative assessment is the process of making judgements of student achievement up to a given point (Harlen, 2007b). Initially the terms *summative* and *formative* were useful in the context of evaluations of systems and gradually they evolved to the broader educational context (Scriven, 1967). Harlen (2007b) differentiated between the terms evaluation and assessment to show that while evaluation is concerned with other broader aspects of education, classroom assessment focuses on students’ achievement, and is a judgment based on learning goals for both individual students and student cohorts. The use of summative assessment to objectively measure student achievement against public criteria has various purposes such as cohort comparison; student ranking; or certification (Harlen, 2007b; Harlen & James, 1997; Klenowski, 1995; Sadler, 1989; Taras, 2005).

Summative assessment has been noted as useful for school policy decisions, tracking student cohorts, and curriculum planning (Klenowski, 2014). Indeed, the variety of ways in which assessments are carried out is determined by their purpose, as well as who conducts them and how the students’ responses are interpreted. Coinciding with the introduction of The Blueprint, Harlen (2005a, 2005b) argued that synergy between summative and formative classroom assessments was possible such as in situations where summative data is useful in building individual student portfolios, or when teachers provide feedback in summative comments concerning learning progress. The same evidence may
also be used in a formative assessment approach to inform teachers of the next learning step(s) required to move the learner forward.

From another perspective, Wiliam and Thomson (2008) warned of difficulties in systems that have been designed to serve three functions, such as summative, formative, and evaluative. Tensions may arise because one assessment cannot serve all three functions “adequately” (p. 59). While there is a large body of knowledge attached to the use of formative assessment in the classroom, teachers’ use of summative information may be overlooked even though much of their practice involves building summative data to create student profiles. Yet whatever the purpose, classroom assessment must “first be designed to support learning” (Wiliam & Thompson, 2008, p. 60).

**Formative assessment**

Although The Blueprint avoids using the term *formative assessment*, it refers to Assessment for Learning and in its *Principles for assessment* it urges teachers to practice *feedback* (State of Victoria, 2004c). Nevertheless, formative assessment differs from summative assessment. And because it is an overarching approach and because *formative feedback* is a key strategy of formative assessment, it is relevant to examine various perspectives before exploring formative feedback.

The practice of formative assessment has been described as elusive and enigmatic, perhaps due to the large array of possible qualitative interpretations and individualised applications in teaching and learning situations. Formative assessment is purposely interactive and informs teaching practice and, it provides students with information for improved learning (Black & Wiliam, 2012). Yet, it is in actual teaching moments where teachers identify the need for timely interactions and subsequently employ instructional skills to capitalise on these moments (Clark, 2011). In practice, teachers circulate to “make sense of” students’ responses, they interpret these in terms of learning needs and then take appropriate actions (Wiliam & Thompson, 2008, p. 67).

Ruiz-Primo and Li (2013) noted the extensive range of definitions of formative assessment and, these include Black and Wiliam’s (2009) focus on shared decision-making.
Practice in a classroom is formative to the extent that evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learners or their peers, to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or better founded, than the decision they would have taken in the absence of the evidence that was elicited (p. 9).

Wiliam and Thompson (2008) qualified formative assessment in relation to its function rather than referring to its purpose. The functional characteristic is based on the action of feeding back information to improve the performance of the system and in this context the assessment forms the direction of improvement (p. 61). Essentially, a causal effect results from a student being expected to work harder, whereas a formative effect is when a student knows how to improve. This qualification may also extend to an understanding of distinctions between the terms diagnostic and monitoring. For example, diagnostic assessment provides information about misunderstandings or misdirections, whereas monitoring is observational and is concerned with the extent of the learning activity. Accordingly, diagnostic assessments become formative only when the student has information on how to improve (p. 62).

**Formative feedback**

A prominent and highly researched function of formative assessment is formative feedback and aligned with Ramaprasad’s initial definition in 1983, according to Wiliam and Thompson (2008), this instructional function emphasized learning in relation to three aspects such as,

- establishing where the learners are in their learning;
- establishing where they are going; and
- establishing what needs to be done to get there (p. 63).

Wiliam and Thompson’s (2008) model (Figure 2.1) provides a coherent method to apply formative feedback although the question of how to provide feedback in a scaffolded learning context has rarely been addressed in the literature (Ruiz-Primo & Li, 2013). An advantage of formative feedback is that not only is it a scaffold for learning but it stimulates thinking (Wiliam, 2013). However, it is important to note that feedback is only considered to be formative when it is used by the learner to improve their learning.
Feedback becomes formative such as when meta-cognitive strategies are activated, and when students make links between a prior performance and new learning according to success criteria (Clark, 2011, p. 162).

The following model depicting formative assessment as five sequenced steps was designed to support teachers when employing formative feedback to support learning (Figure 2.1). The five steps may be used by the teacher, the student or by peers and when used in conjunction with the following three questions, there is adequate provision for teachers to apply the model in practice since they focus on, Where am I going?, How am I going? and, Where to next? (Wiliam & Thompson, 2008). Stand-out features of the model include the clarification and shared knowledge assessment criteria, eliciting information from the student using questioning techniques, and activating learning by using formative feedback.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where the learner is going</th>
<th>Where the learner is now</th>
<th>How to get there</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Clarifying learning</td>
<td>2 Engineering effective</td>
<td>3 Providing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intentions and criteria</td>
<td>classroom discussion</td>
<td>feedback that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for success</td>
<td>and other learning</td>
<td>moves learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tasks that elicit</td>
<td>forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evidence of student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>understanding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peer</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sharing learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intentions and criteria</td>
<td>4 Activating students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for success</td>
<td>for one another</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learner</strong></td>
<td>Understanding learning</td>
<td>5 Activating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intentions and criteria</td>
<td>intentions and criteria</td>
<td>students as the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for success</td>
<td>for success</td>
<td>owners of their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>own learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.1** Aspects of formative assessment (Wiliam & Thompson, 2008)

Similar to the above model of formative feedback (Wiliam & Thompson, 2008) Hattie and Timperley's (2007) model also posed the three questions including, Where am I going? How am I going? and, Where to next? (p. 87).
Hattie and Timperley also use other terms, that could be considered extraneous to actual feedback practice, for example, *Feed Up*, *Feed Back* and *Feed Forward* (p. 87). To justify the terms, they argue for instance that Feed Back is a dimension of the question often asked by students, *How am I going?* (p. 89). However there seems to be an issue caused by different spelling, including “feedback” (p. 89), “feed-back” (p. 89) and Feed Back (Figure 1, p. 87). Adding to the complexity is the model’s use of “Four Levels” (p. 87) to describe the influence of feedback. According to Hattie and Timperley, “providing and receiving feedback requires much skill by students and teachers” (p. 103) and, that feedback need to “clear, purposeful, meaningful, and compatible with students’ prior knowledge and to provide logical connections” (p. 104). Perhaps a simplified model could better explain this stance.

Table 2.3  **A model of feedback (adapted from Hattie & Timperley, 2007)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>To reduce discrepancies between current understandings/ performance and the desired goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The discrepancy can be reduced by</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased effort and employment of effective strategies OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Abandoning, blurring, or lowering the goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing appropriate challenging and specific goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assisting students to reach them through effective learning strategies and feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effective feedback answers three questions**

1. **Where am I going?** ................. *Feed Up*

2. **How am I going?** ..................... *Feed Back*

3. **Where to next?** ..................... *Feed Forward*

**Each feedback question works at four levels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task level</th>
<th>Process level</th>
<th>Self-regulation level</th>
<th>Self level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How well tasks are understood/ performed</td>
<td>The main process needed to understand/ perform tasks</td>
<td>Self-monitoring, directing and regulating of actions</td>
<td>Personal evaluations and affect (usually positive) about the learner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two studies in New Zealand investigated the use of feedback across several schools (Brown, Harris & Harnett, 2012; Harris, Brown & Harnett, 2015). Brown et al. (2012) focused on modes of feedback, feedback providers, and feedback
timing, and found that the 518 participating teachers overwhelmingly endorsed the view that assessment and feedback together supported improved learning and the ‘type, content, timing, complexity and accuracy of feedback contribute to its effectiveness’ (p. 970). The second study, conducted by Harris et al. (2015), investigated the feasibility of using Hattie and Timperley’s (2007) feedback model. Harris et al. found an absence of students’ self-regulatory feedback in peer assessment whereas instead they tended to focus more on task and process feedback. The study also noted that the model required refinement to reduce the “challenges in using the model”, perhaps by adding sub-categories of feedback to enable teachers to identify these with their feedback practices (p. 276).

Results from the above two studies confirm the proposition put forward by Ruiz-Primo and Li (2013) that there is a gap in the literature in relation to what is known about teachers’ feedback practice. However, Leahy and Wiliam (2012) suggested that in the implementation of formative assessment, problems that may arise concern teachers’ existing practice and the possibility that they hold strong beliefs in relation to how grades motivate students. Given that professional learning communities have the power to support teachers during change processes. Leahy and Wiliam affirmed this argument in their structured model set up in UK schools to enable teachers to meet formally and discuss innovations such as formative assessment. An issue arising from the study was the teachers’ and schools’ reluctance to prioritise professional learning focused on formative assessment. This suggests that research focused on the use of formative feedback in schools may not be an easy process due to resistance to either participating in professional learning or alternatively, resistance to adopting the innovation.

This study intends to observe and note teachers’ use of feedback by referring to Shute’s (2008) typologies generated by the feedback messages identified in a synthesis of several studies. After Kulhavy and Stock (1989), Shute (2008) argued that since feedback types basically consist of verification and elaboration elements, effective feedback thereby converges on both these elements.
Verification is defined as the simple judgement of whether an answer is correct, and elaboration is the informational aspect of the message, providing relevant cues to guide the learner toward a correct answer (p. 158).

A model of Shute’s (2008) feedback typology is presented in two tables to differentiate between the six main types and the six elaborated feedback types (see Table 3.10). To summarise, the six main typologies include,

- No feedback: there is no indication of correctness of learner’s response.
- Verification: informs learner of the correctness of a response.
- Correct response: informs learner of the correct response without elaboration.
- Try again: “repeat-until-correct”.
- Error flagging: highlights errors without providing correct answer.
- Elaborated (general term covering six types) (p.160).

The Elaborated feedback type has six sub-types, in brief:

- Attribute isolation: elaborated feedback with explicit information.
- Topic contingent: reteaching or feedback with a focus on the topic.
- Response contingent: feedback with a focus on the learner’s response.
- Hints/cues/prompts: feedback to guide the learner in the right direction.
- Bugs/misconceptions: error analysis and diagnosis, provides information.
- Informative tutoring: feedback that presents verification, error flagging, strategic hints, how to proceed without providing correct answer (p. 160).

Soon after The Blueprint was introduced, Shute’s typology model was the only form of feedback categorization available and also provided were several guidelines on how to use feedback to “enhance learning” (pp. 177-180). For example, the advice “focus feedback on the task, not the learner” was sourced from earlier research (e.g., Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Narciss & Huth, 2004). Another guideline adopted from Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, Kulik and Morgan (1991) advises teachers to remove uncertainties between performance and goals so that learners have information concerning their progress. Shute (2008)
argued that although there is no best feedback type although, when feedback is targeted, objective, focused and clear, then it has the potential to improve learning and to enhance teachers’ teaching practice to the extent that “the learners are receptive and the feedback is on target” (p. 182).

Smith and Higgins (2009) drew attention to the issue of an over-emphasis on teachers’ questioning in contexts where formative interactions have been encouraged or expected. In their UK study the researchers video-recorded some 29 lessons in literacy and numeracy. The analysis focused on the types of questions the teachers asked such as open-ended and closed. They defined open-ended questions as a situation where the teacher must accept more than one answer and to seek further possible solutions from the other students. In contrast, closed questions are evident when only one solution or response is accepted. To frame their analysis they used the I-R-F sequence (p. 491) where the questions served to initiate (I) a response (R) and this was followed by feedback. The study’s findings showed that the teachers’ intent in asking questions was pivotal in framing subsequent feedback. Moreover, the teachers used conversational techniques and responded directly to the students’ responses to questions. And this ensured the students were able to focus on their thinking rather than attempting to predict questions or the teachers’ intent and further, Smith and Higgins suggested that this natural, conversational approach resulted in more effective teaching because it inspired student learning.

**Praise as feedback**

As mentioned, feedback becomes formative when it used by the learner in the learning process. However, the use of the term feedback can be confusing. The Blueprint, for example, refers to feedback while simultaneously describing it in a formative context (State of Victoria, 2004a, p. 2). Moreover, by way of contrast to the interactive processes of formative feedback, where students have the opportunity to be involved and to make choices concerning their learning, Tunstall and Gipps (1996) suggested that another form of feedback could be provided by the use of praise, rewards or penalties. Their study, in the United Kingdom, involved asking young students questions about their teachers’
responses to their work in order to understand the students’ perceptions of feedback. The findings indicated that in the main, the teachers’ evaluative responses were positive and to a lesser extent, the teachers’ responses were negative and demonstrated disapproval. Several positive responses involved praise and indicated approval, for example: “very, very good”, “good girl/ good boy” (p. 196). Negative responses from teachers included “not enough”, “do it again”, “poor work” and, “naughty boy” (pp. 198-200).

Similarly, a recent study in Australia focused on teachers’ and students’ use and perceptions of praise (Burnett & Mandel, 2010). The researchers observed non-targeted praise such as, excellent, well done; negative feedback such as, that’s not good enough; effort feedback such as, you’re working hard on your reading; and ability feedback such as, you’re really good at maths (p. 145). The findings revealed that teachers consistently used positive praise focused on ability and effort, although a small percentage of teachers used negative comments such as: That’s not good enough. Students in the study reported that teachers praised behaviors such as “being good, sitting up straight” (p. 148); for completing work on time and trying their best; and for goal achievement and effort. In relation to the effect of praise, the students reported feeling good, feeling proud, and the general agreement was that they liked the praise and wanted more.

The role of praise in feedback is contentious and, as Brown, Harris and Harnett (2012) noted, differing perceptions have arisen from a number of studies. For example, some researchers consider praise to be low-level feedback and that it lacks enough information to move students forward (e.g., Brummelman, Thomaes, Orobio de Castro, Overbeek & Bushman, 2014; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 1989; Shute, 2008). Others consider that praise can enhance motivation (e.g. Black & Wiliam, 2009) and, another view is that praise may improve self-esteem (Irving, Harris & Peterson, 2011).

In studying the effects of praise on young children, Zentall and Morris (2010) identified the inconsistent use of generic and non-generic praise for example, “good boy” for succeeding at a task and then “you worked hard” for repeating the same task (p. 157). They concluded that although inconsistent praise may
promote positive feelings there is minimal effect on children's levels of persistence.

The relationship between praise and self-esteem has captured researchers' interest due to the earlier work of Butler (1987) and Mueller and Dweck's (1998) study. Brummelman, et al. (2014) note that by adding the single word *incredibly* changed non-inflated to inflated praise with a consequential and detrimental effect for children with low self-esteem (p.732). Wiliam (2007) observed that while verbal praise increased students' interest and attitudes, “such feedback” had little if any effect on performance (p. 1074). However, the research indicates that teachers’ use of praise is pervasive. The extent to which teachers currently rely on praise as feedback is not well known and there is a need for robust investigations to delve into the impact on learning.

**Assessment for/of/as Learning**

The Blueprint took up the widely recognised use of Earl's (2003) conceptualization of assessment and advised teachers to make use of a balanced approach that incorporated Earl’s notion of Assessment for Learning, Assessment of Learning and, Assessment as Learning (see Table 2.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Reference Points</th>
<th>Key Assessor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Learning</td>
<td>Judgments about placement, promotion, credentials, etc.</td>
<td>Other students</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment for Learning</td>
<td>Information for teachers’ instructional decisions</td>
<td>External standards or expectations</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment as Learning</td>
<td>Self-monitoring and self-correction or adjustment</td>
<td>Personal goals and external standards</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assessment for Learning**

Ausubel (1968) stated that the most important single factor that influences learning is “what the learning already knows” (p. vi). A recent shift is illustrated in Wiliam’s (2017) work where he builds on this principle and adds the
observation that results of instruction are impossible to predict, to explain that this gives rise to the need for assessment for learning. Moreover, while others have traced the origins of formative and summative assessment in terms of learning theories but Wiliam eschews this approach to instead assert that assessment for learning “entails no commitment whatever to theories about what happens when learning takes place” (p. 400).

While some scholars use the term assessment for learning and others prefer to use formative assessment, it’s relevant to make distinctions since as Wiliam suggests, formative assessment refers to the functions the assessment serves whereas assessment for learning describes the purpose behind the assessment (p. 400). Wiliam stated a preference for the term formative assessment because it fits “existing assessment theory” and inferences and interpretations are valid when summative assessments have consistency while formative assessments are validated in terms of the “consequences for student learning” (p. 401).

Klenowski (2009) argued that the ways in which these words and definitions are interpreted, such as in education policies and teachers’ practice, often reveal misunderstandings of “principles and distortion of the practices that the original ideals sought to promote” (p. 263). According to Klenowski, other emerging issues have identified situations where being seen to embrace the concept is important when in reality, “superficial” or mechanical practices prevail and ignore the need for the students’ active engagement (PoLT, p. 263). Klenowski highlighted situations in which language focused on, for example, “decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there”, may be interpreted as the need for frequent tests. Consequently, Klenowski strongly asserted that the primary aim of assessment for learning is to contribute to the learning and further, that performance on a test does not signify that learning has occurred.

To distinguish between the terms, assessment for learning and formative assessment Swaffield (2011) considered the functions, and support for students (see Table 2.5). Swaffield pointed out that the word “assessment” stems from the
Latin verb *assidere* and refers to *sitting with a child*, and hence, an interaction that precludes a test situation.

The picture of someone sitting beside a learner, perhaps in dialogue over a piece of work, represents much more accurately assessment as a support for learning rather than assessment as a test of performance (p. 434).

**Table 2.5** Comparative assessment terminology (Swaffield, 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment for learning</th>
<th>Formative assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A learning and teaching process</td>
<td>Is functional and guides further learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned with the near and immediate future</td>
<td>May span a long time interval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful for learners and teachers</td>
<td>Useful for learners, teachers and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students engage with agency and autonomy</td>
<td>Students may be passive recipients of teachers' decisions and actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned with how to learn as well as specific learning intentions</td>
<td>Concentrates on curriculum objectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sitting with a child*, for assessment purposes, signposts the pivotal role of interaction, and the opportunities for teachers to become increasingly aware of individual students’ learning and their potential learning needs (Earl, 2003). This learning and assessment activity signifies the important role played by the teacher in Assessment for Learning in identifying the next steps in learning. Swaffield (2011) emphasized the importance of sitting *with* a child rather than peering over their shoulder or “looking down on” them, since roles and relationships are established within the context of assessment for learning (p. 440). These roles, noted Swaffield, are pivotal because the students are engaged in the process and adopt a sense of agency. In particular, students come to understand quality and assessment criteria by comparisons and feedback is not passively received; rather it “stimulates reflection and is acted on” and ultimately, they evaluate their own learning (p. 440).

Teachers are the central characters in “Assessment for Learning” because they use pedagogical knowledge and personal knowledge of the child to identify particular learning needs (Earl, 2003, p. 24). This notion is also is reflected in the Assessment Reform Group’s (ARG, 2002) definition of Assessment for Learning.
Assessment for Learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there (pp. 2-3).

Willis (2011) proposed a similar definition although, the addition of the term “regular flow” provided an enhanced interpretation since it took into account the students’ learning autonomy.

Assessment for learning is defined ... as evaluative practices within the regular flow of teaching and learning with the purpose of informing and improving student learning to enhance learner autonomy (p.401).

Klenowski (2009) offered an enhanced view of the everyday practice of assessment for learning where students, teachers and peers seek, reflect upon, and gain information from dialogue and observations that supports student learning. Moreover, personalized interactive moments have the potential to enhance a two-way flow that not only supports student autonomy, but also communicates important information to the teacher (Willis, 2011). Black and Wiliam (2009) proposed four key characteristics of formative assessment that link learning and assessment:

1. Formative work involves new ways to enhance feedback between the learner and the teacher, in turn requiring new modes of practice.
2. Effective learning requires active student involvement.
3. For assessment to function formatively, the results have to be used to adjust teaching to learning and the approaches used to do this.

Other views have described distinctions, Stiggins (2005) for example, argued that assessment for learning (AFL) emphasises the knowledge gained by teachers when students achieve curriculum standards. Additionally, Stiggins noted that students could have more “control” and also, have a belief in eventual success if they keep trying (pp. 327-328). Pedder and James (2012) expanded on Stiggins’ view to argue that when AFL is promoted, teachers and students are accountable to themselves for the learning experiences since AFL practices depend on autonomous decisions. When teachers opt to take up the challenge of using AFL, Pedder and James suggest that there is a change in perceptions of the teaching
role from a prescriptive approach to the use of strategies that constructively engage students. In this approach, students are no longer “subjects” but rather “co-constructors and animators of collective teaching and learning processes” (p. 37).

Although, as Baird et al. (2017) suggest, the terms formative assessment and assessment for learning are often used interchangeably (p. 336), the research suggests that there are clear and crucial distinctions. However, ongoing disagreement continues to blur the field; for example in the US the term formative assessment is in common use whereas many other nations commonly used assessment for learning.

**Assessment as Learning**

Earl (2003) defined Assessment as Learning (AaL) as an extension of AfL, emphasizing the individualised role of the student in contributing to the learning process as a link to assessment. Essentially, Earl promoted AaL as the means for students to be active assessors of their learning, and consequently it is a meta-cognitive process where students monitor their learning and use feedback to make adjustments. Clark (2011) expanded on this to add that in using AaL students co-reflect on their learning with peers, and they may also set goals and evaluate their learning with peers. As Earl (2003) noted, Assessment as Learning is the ultimate goal where students are “their own best assessors” (p. 25).

Although the AaL is concerned with self-monitoring approaches, others view student self-assessment as a dimension of Assessment for Learning (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2009; Clark, 2012; Harlen, 2007b; Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005; Wiliam, 2007; Willis, 2011). The Blueprint promoted AaL as an equally important approach to assessment. However, the lack of agreement obscures the positioning of Assessment as Learning as an assessment approach in its own right.

**2.3.3 Summary**

This final section of the review has explored the relationship between teaching and learning and in the context of socio-constructivism, because The Blueprint’s
focus on teaching and learning emphasised a contemporary approach based on socio-constructivist theories. Since The Blueprint introduced innovative and contemporary assessment approaches it was important to examine these, especially to compare and contrast perspectives of summative assessment, formative assessment and formative feedback.

2.4 Chapter conclusion

This literature review has been structured in three core themes: educational policy; policy implementation strategies; and learning, teaching and assessment in order to inform the question of how teachers respond to educational policies. From the examination of these three themes, a number of key ideas have emerged.

The review opened with a theme focused on relevant aspects of educational policy such as global influences, policy enactment, and change imperatives. It drew on what is known in relation to possible intersections between educational policy initiatives and those who implement them in classrooms (i.e. teachers). While the research remains quite sparse, there was sufficient evidence to show that without relevant and opportune research, assumptions are likely to perpetuate in relation to how teachers respond to policy initiatives.

Educational policies are influenced by global trends such as political ideologies that emphasise market forces, performativity and competition. While nations have the option to borrow or lend educational policies, the literature has shown that this trend is not always conducive to improving education and that alternative options are possible. Other influences on policy direction were found to be perceptions of school effectiveness and the prevailing call for educational improvements.

The second theme explored policy implementation strategies. A comparison between the research on leadership and the leadership component of The Blueprint indicated a disparity. A distributed, caring leadership approach has been found to be supportive of educational change whereas a managerial approach is less effective in supporting teachers as they face the challenge of changes to their practice. Of all the various ways open to teachers in their pursuit
of professional growth, the overlap of shared leadership with professional learning communities has been shown to be the most effective, particularly in the context of change.

The final theme drew on theoretical perspectives to understand developments in learning, teaching and assessment. Since teaching practice is central to teachers’ work, this review compared contemporary views with those outlined in The Blueprint. The literature provides evidence to suggest that The Blueprint, was aligned with contemporary assessment theory when it appeared in 2003, but since then, other more unified approaches have been devised (e.g., Masters, 2013). Since The Blueprint the recent policy, as it is presented in The Education State (State of Victoria, 2017b) advocates assessment practice involving summative and formative assessments and has avoided the use of terms such as Assessment for/of/as Learning (Earl, 2003). This turn around suggests that although education policies introduce innovation, reforms may well be influenced by contemporary assessment theories.

Educational policies in Victoria have increasingly intensified on assessment as a means for educational improvement, and this follows a worldwide trend where performativity, quantifiable measures and targets are emphasised. Meanwhile, the developing research literature pertaining to how teachers respond to educational policies has identified discrepancies in policy interpretations and policy enactment. To date, this research has predominately focused on policy initiatives such as The Blueprint, school leaders, teachers, and pedagogy including classroom assessment. As a result there is a gap in the Australian literature in regard to the impact of policies on teachers and their practice. This study aims to address this gap by exploring teachers’ lived experiences of changes imposed by policy initiatives.
Chapter Three

Methodology: Conducting the Research

3.0 Introduction

The research reported here is concerned with how teachers respond to changes imposed by government policy initiatives. The research investigated how teachers’ assessment practices changed following the introduction of the policy known as: The Blueprint for Government Schools: Future Directions for Education in the Victorian Government School System, herein known as The Blueprint. This policy initiative introduced major changes in curriculum, teaching and learning approaches, assessment and reporting. The specific component of the policy explored in this research is Flagship Strategy 1: Student Learning. The Education Department of Victoria has had several name changes and will thus be referred to hereafter as the Education Department.

The research questions posed for this study include:

5. How did the introduction of The Blueprint impact on teachers’ knowledge and attitudes towards assessment in Literacy and Numeracy?

6. What forms of Literacy and Numeracy assessment practices were typically used in the primary years of schooling and to what extent were these reflected in the assessment practices advocated in The Blueprint?

7. To what extent did teachers use formative feedback as an integral part of their teaching?

8. What supports or inhibits the implementation of assessment policies in schools.

The chapter will open with the theoretical rationale for the overarching methodological approach used in this study and a case is presented for the use of a qualitative, ethnographic case study and a case for this is presented (3.1). Next, the research design is described and justified in terms of the methods used to collect data, and the participants (3.2). The third section describes the analysis methods that were specifically created for this study, including how these were merged using various triangulation techniques (3.3). The chapter closes with a brief summary (3.4).
3.1 Theoretical framework

This thesis is premised on the belief that school education is a social and cultural experience offered within the “boundaries” of an education authority (Freebody, 2003, p.9). Within these boundaries, educational practices become a function of schooling where other functions manifest so that schools become dynamic institutions. The position of teachers within schooling is unique since they are empowered with specific pastoral, skilling, and regulatory roles (Hunter, 1993). However, while the work of teachers revolves around the educational needs of students, it also involves professional engagement with progressive and contemporary pedagogical concerns. There is an imperative for this research to consider teachers’ perspectives as they respond to education policy initiatives. The section opens with a discussion of the meaning of qualitative research (3.1.1). This is followed by an exploration of the meaning of ethnographic research including a brief discussion of case study and why it is applicable to this study (3.1.2).

3.1.1 In search of the “qualitative”

Paradigms, or interpretative frameworks, guide beliefs about abstract entities, theories of existence, the nature of knowledge, and as discussed here, research methodology. Two dominant paradigms, based on qualitative research and quantitative research have guided researchers although, as Hammersley (2012) argues, finding distinctions between them is “far from straightforward” (p. 2). Hammersley suggests that the identification of features offers comparative perspectives since qualitative research is characteristically interpretive and based on human activity, words, and riddle-solving, while quantitative research explains outcomes through frequencies from empirical evidence.

Historically, quantitative research and qualitative research have been regarded as paradigms; however, Bryman (2008) argues they are not paradigms since they are not normal science disciplines. Instead, he opts for the use of a term such as pre-paradigm because paradigm suggests a divide, distinctness and also “incompatibility of approaches” (p. 15). This shift in terminology allows for a sense of compatibility between the two approaches whereas continued
emphases on differences will possibly “exaggerate the differences between them” (p. 14).

Distinguishing characteristics of the quantitative approach are that data is based on the measurement of variables and that analyses of these data can prove or disprove theories (Cresswell, 2005; Leavy, 2017). By contrast, by attending to details, qualitative research uses an explorative, interpretive approach aimed towards the generation of meaning (Freebody, 2003). Moreover, while quantitative research fits a functionalist approach in the pragmatic use of statistics, qualitative research uses a subjective, interpretivist approach (Bryman, 2008). The two approaches are not mutually exclusive and there is a place for mixed methods for examining the world (Bryman, 2008; Cresswell, 2005). In this sense, rather than the division of two opposing camps, converging research methods in multi-method approaches may assist researchers in tackling societal issues. Bryman (2008) eschewed terms such as paradigm incompatibility and instead takes the following perspective:

At the technical level, the differences are more to do with the character of the data generated by the research methods associated with quantitative and qualitative approaches and their relevance to different kinds of research questions or roles in the overall research process (p. 15).

In the field of education, recent trends indicate increased emphases on evidence-based data in educational reform decisions (Fullan & Donnelly, 2013; Hargreaves & Braun, 2013). Solutions to educational crises, for example, include demands for evidence on which policies work, and this in turn directs policymakers towards further increases in evidence-based research (Hammersley, 2008). On the other hand, and to a lesser extent, governments have also required expertise in subjectivity and inductive theorizing (Mabry, 2008). To understand these developments, cross-disciplinary projects have the capacity to employ action-research methodologies.

Freebody (2003) suggests the term qualitative research is somewhat “slippery” since it has differing uses and shifting conceptual nuances. Moreover, since people construct their own subjective meanings, the development of qualitative research grew out of a need for subjectivity; and in the context of social
phenomena, it was a way to give the ‘underdog’ a voice rather than the oppressor (Mabry, 2008). For this research, the notion of a nuanced approach held appeal since a teachers’ voice was a priority, particularly as teachers grapple with changes to their practice. Hence, this study is premised on the belief that meaning is constructed through inductive, nuanced interpretations and that the use of a qualitative approach posits data as the means for delving deeply to explore its diversity and its normality (Freebody, 2003).

3.1.2 Ethnography

Ethnographic research attempts to capture culture and the observations of people in their natural, everyday settings and subsequently, how to portray how people make meaning in their lives (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). As a research practice, ethnography is a field of study where descriptive accounts are inductively analysed and interpreted, and the product is generally presented in the form of prose and a product earns the label “ethnography” only when the “intended product is ethnography” (Wolcott, 1990, p. 47). Essentially, ethnography is a process that describes and analyses the “practices and beliefs of cultures and communities” (Freebody, 2003, p. 75).

The origins of ethnography can be found in the work of lone anthropologists who conducted longitudinal, psychologically oriented field studies in remote locations. Immersing themselves in tribal communities and cultures, the work of anthropologists focused on the transfer and expansion of their new found understandings to the complexity of modern, western societies (Angrosino, 2007; Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). As a methodology stemming from unique traditions and particular histories, ethnography has reached a zenith in the breadth of its applications in a wide range of fields and methodologies. A recent example is illustrated in Pinsky’s (2015) research on close-up interview methodologies where interview interactions were seen “as only one part of a series of other possible interactions between researcher and participant” (p. 281). As well as the potential to interactively observe people in everyday settings, other qualities of ethnography include opportunities for multiple methods of data collection; the prospective development of a portrait of social interactions; and flexible time arrangements involved in researcher visits to the participants’
settings (Angrosino, 2007; Cresswell, 2005; Jeffrey & Troman, 2004; Sangasubana, 2011; Wolcott, 1990). Consequently, the work of an ethnographer is primarily people oriented and the process that follows includes participation in the continuing dialogue to define and redefine it both as a “process and a product” (Wolcott, 1990, p. 47).

Ethnomethodological observations yield a structured, objective product mediated by the subjective perspective of the researcher and accordingly may push themselves towards new research frontiers (Adler & Adler, 1987). In so doing, sensitivity and skills will further develop and consequently, Adler and Adler argued that each new research builds on sets of experiences in a process of continual improvement.

Angrosino’s (2007) use of the term *symbolic interactionism* referred to observations of people as active agents where the researcher may have complete or partial participation with the observed group. In these studies, the researcher becomes the *research instrument* through which information is collected and recorded (Murchison, 2009, p. 13). This researcher-participator approach differs substantially from research methodology adopted in fields such as psychology, where Murchison points out the researcher uses a detached observation technique to avoid possible researchers’ influence on variables or subjects.

Ethnography methodology may alternatively entail a non-participant strategy where the researcher observes from a distance and avoids interactions and influential actions that may alter the subjects’ behaviours (Gobo, 2008). Since this strategy prioritises observations as the primary source of information it seemed the most appropriate strategy for this study. I resolved to observe “from a distance” as far as was possible in the confines of the anticipated classroom settings and within the milieu of face-to-face interviews. In this context my aim was to be involved *on the sidelines* while simultaneously maintaining detachment. Gobo describes this as a balance between “involvement” and “detachment” such as when researchers keep within social norms while at the same time keeping a “distance” (p. 6). Similarly, researchers should avoid excessive or direct impact
on involvement with the group but also their role is not to merely cipher observations (Fine, 2015).

Central to the adoption of ethnographic strategies is a personalised approach. O Riain (2009) suggested that at the heart of the matter is a “thinking, feeling, sensuous person” and that an ethnographic account is similar to a personal journey through particular situations and the embodiment of the ethnographer’s experiences (p. 292). In this study, it was paramount to shape the cases using a sensitive but detached approach to ensure the emotions, beliefs and ideas of the people involved were accurately communicated.

In adopting ethnographic strategies, data analyses generally involve research moments that lead researchers to investigate crucial elements or they lead to other directions (Murchison, 2009, p. 171). These moments are central to the emergence of major themes in the data that may be coded or sorted by categories in a diversity of ways and in this study, I used these methods to ensure key elements of the data were coherently organised. Using this type of systematic data treatment allows for checks on reliability and although the messiness of the data may seem contradictory, so Murchison suggests that further ordering and restructuring the flow of information may prove fruitful (p. 181). O Riain (2009) argued that in auto-ethnography, the experience of the researcher is communicated through the writing experience and, that it is the dominant form of learning.

The ethnographer’s personalized learning is only part of the process of ethnographic study and this embodied experience is a vehicle for collective learning, not the collective learning itself (p. 302).

According to Freebody (2003), educational ethnographers have argued for a reconceptualization of ethnography with a focus on texts as the product and attention to the complexity and richness of people’s lives. In this context, the researcher and the reader make links between the text and the world that is being written about (p. 79). Hence, attention is given to critical comparisons, contrasts, historical links to the past, and the instinct to move from the part to the whole in terms of broader theoretical perspectives. The progression of
educational ethnography over the last five decades has led to new ways of understanding the world and that historically, by the turn of the century

ideas about culture and society were no longer what they were ... No longer could culture be viewed as the property of social groups, bounded, determined, and internally coherent, and the kinds of ethnographic findings in earlier years could no longer be guaranteed (Yon, 2003, p. 423).

According to Scott-Jones (2010), the importance of ethnographic snapshots is that ethnographers believe in making a difference to people’s lives by “getting out there” and uncovering “hidden” social worlds (p. 27). Hence, in this study it was important to provide a forum for participants to voice their opinions, perceptions and professional concerns and the ethnographic methodology provided the means for this to eventuate.

**Case Study**

Ethnographic studies tend to concentrate on broad, sweeping perspectives of society to identify and examine larger cultural issues and elements. Whereas, case studies focus on particular instances and potentially, from detailed documentation, theoretical insights begin to emerge (Freebody, 2003). Case studies attempt to refine ways in which practice is theorized. And in educational research, case study methodology has gained prominence and popularity over recent decades and,

teachers are always teaching ... in particular places and under conditions that significantly shape and temper teaching and learning practices  (Freebody, 2003, p. 81)

Case study hypothetically posits researchers within an inquiry mode where reflections on educational practices are possible in situations of real-life contexts. Burns (2000) described case study methods as a bounded context where an investigation of complex issues may result in in-depth understandings. Additionally, case study methods employ tools where rich, subjective data is examined to find plausible interpretations whereby the field’s knowledge base is enhanced (Burns, 2000). Features of case study methods include an intended plan; opportunities for unpredictable events; judgements where no simple
answer is available; and reflection that paves the way for the basis of a new intention (Freebody, 2003, p. 82).

Burns’ (2000) use of the term *portmanteau* aptly described case study methods since, although a single unit is investigated, multiple data collection tools and techniques may be involved. A single case study usually involves an extreme or unique case whereas multiple case studies focus on cross-case issues from which comparative data characteristically emerges (Yin, 2006). Yin recommended the use of multiple data sources since triangulation methods in analysis potentially corroborate evidence and where the emergence of divergence and convergence indicate strong academic rigour.

Case study research employs comprehensive methods and multiple sources of data may include observation methods such as direct observations and recording, or non-observational methods such as interviews or focus groups (Morgan, Pullon, Macdonald, McKinley & Gray, 2017). Observation methods enable researchers to see “what people do” rather than “what they say they do” (p. 1061) and may be used to cross check or verify claims. Consequently, this study has used both observational and non-observational methods because it was crucial to collect direct evidence by using video recordings, as well as to provide opportunities for the participating teachers to recall and describe their practice. Using multiple sources provided a clear chain of evidence that was analysed inductively to generate cross-case themes. Morgan et al. suggest that this data collection and analysis process provides opportunities for revealing explanatory themes and to subsequently gain new understandings.

This study has drawn on the distinctive feature of case study method in an attempt to document the story of the participants in action in a naturalistic environment. The study recognises that cases are not only situated but are bounded entities and also that a case may be a bounded system such as an institution or a collection (Stake, 2009).

This study, underpinned by a qualitative, ethnographic case study approach, intends to investigate a small sample (six) of teachers’ responses to a specific policy reform known as The Blueprint. Essentially, it is concerned with how
people’s working lives are altered and by taking an ethnographic snapshot of people experiencing change, this research will ultimately reveal and frame these experiences. The next section will describe the research design.

3.2 Research design

This study has adopted an ethnographic case study approach in order to advance in-depth knowledge and understandings within a complex context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Freebody, 2003; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2006). Ethnographic case studies investigate the particular within a broader sociocultural context and, according to Simons (2009), case study is “widely accepted as a research approach for evaluating complex educational innovations in specific contexts” and “social educational phenomena in general” (p. 13). Within the broader context of educational change, this study investigated teachers’ experience of change through the lens of their assessment practice. The decision to adopt an ethnographic case study was guided by the following prospects unique to the study for example,

- a focus on social life and culture across and within educational sites
- multiple data sources
- analyses process that aimed for saturation and multiple perspectives
- application of a supportive stimulated recall strategy and,
- adoption of systematic and self-reflexive strategies.

In carrying out an ethnographic approach, researchers may either be non-participatory or in this case, maintain a participatory relationship by staying in the setting and making observations (Gobo, 2008). Similarly, Murchison (2009) suggested that the mainstay of ethnographic strategies is the participant-observer approach, since researchers have direct experience with observations and interviews. Additionally, researchers can pick up on behind-the-scenes events that add richness to understanding particular contexts.

For this study, I considered how to represent the teachers’ voice as they experienced change through the bigger picture of policy reform. The use of surveys was rejected since as Cresswell (2005) noted, surveys help to identify
trends across large cohorts but response rates may be low and they do not provide flexibility for participants when responding to questions. Qualitative research is rarely straightforward and, in the search for relevant literature to focus my thoughts, it seemed that in a “fumbling act of discovery” (Hamilton, 2005, p. 288) a qualitative research framework seemed achievable. My background teaching experiences and prior research experience supported the realization that there was a great deal to learn about how teachers respond to policy initiatives that propose changes to their existing assessment practices. To investigate this phenomenon, it became apparent that multiple sources of data collected from a small sample of teachers would best support the study.

Section 3.2.1 describes how the study was set up and provides a summary of key data sources used in this study. A rationale for the use of purposeful sampling and an introduction to the schools, principals and teachers who participated in this study is given in 3.2.2. This is followed by a detailed account of how classroom observations and video recordings were undertaken (3.2.3), how the interviews were conducted and organised (3.2.4) and the artefact collection (3.2.5).

3.2.1 Setting up the study

This study sought the participation of a small sample of primary teachers and principals working in schools in Melbourne. It required research based on data collected in classroom observations, interviews and artefacts to build a multi-faceted dataset that would support verification and credibility. Freebody (2003) has advised researchers to sequence research methods so that data may be distilled and the findings “disseminated” for “scrutiny and challenge” (p. 28).

Protocol processes were put in place to gain permission from the Victorian Education Department to undertake research in the public schooling system. Ethics approval was similarly sought from RMIT University. The two institutions granted approval for the study and a timeline was constructed to recruit schools and participants and to carry out data gathering processes. The timeline for the setting up procedures in 2006 are detailed in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1  
Timeline: research plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March-June</td>
<td>Research proposal/Ethics protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June-August</td>
<td>School and teacher recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Data collection schedules negotiated with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Teachers: Interview One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October-November</td>
<td>Videotaped classroom observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November-December</td>
<td>Teachers: Interview Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Principals: interview artifacts collected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.2 Introducing the participants and schools

To recruit participants I used *purposeful sampling* due to the established parameters, such as teachers and principals, who worked in the public sector and are bound by government policy. The participants were employed at urban, public primary schools in metropolitan Melbourne. In accordance with the requirements of the then Education Department in Victoria, which are tied to the University's Human Research Ethic Committee’s formal clearance to proceed, invitations to participate were issued through the school principals. Yin (2006) suggests that cases should not be considered controls for each other and that in case study research “you do not manipulate ... or control any real-life events” (p. 115). The purposeful sampling approach used in this study's research design sought “information-rich” sources rather than producing representative samples (Moore, Lapan & Quartaroli, 2011, p. 253). Since case studies are bounded entities (Stake, 1995), this study required participants whose professional lives were bounded by similar characteristics in that they were employed in the public sector of primary schools in Victoria.

I approached twenty-three principals in person, by telephone and in writing and responses ranged from very enthusiastic, that is, very interested in being involved to negativity, that is, not interested in the research. Most principals did their utmost to encourage their staff to participate and on one occasion I was invited to deliver to the teaching staff a brief representation of what the study
entailed. At the close of the recruitment, four principals agreed to come on board and they negotiated with staff to participate in the research and with their encouragement and support, six teachers agreed to participate. The four public primary schools represented a cross section of metropolitan Melbourne and were located across the eastern and southern suburbs. Using pseudonyms to protect anonymity, the following table shows the four schools and the ten principal and teacher participants (Table 3.2). The location of the schools is relative to Melbourne CBD.

### Table 3.2 The four schools, principals and teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wallaby Park</td>
<td>Inner East</td>
<td>Phillip</td>
<td>Barbara, Helen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakea Gardens</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>Colin</td>
<td>Robert, Ann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumnut Ridge</td>
<td>Outer East</td>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>Nikki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silverleaves</td>
<td>South-east</td>
<td>Keith</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The four schools**

Wallaby Park, located in an affluent, inner eastern suburb and surrounded by leafy parks and streets had a mix of buildings comprising a long-standing two-story brick edifice that formed the administrative wing and several classrooms, and a number of relocatable classrooms fitted out with a range of practical amenities. Hakea Gardens was located further east than Wallaby Park and the surrounding homes indicated a mixture of incomes and affordability, the school was awaiting reconstruction and the classrooms were in poor condition. In the outer east and close to the Dandenong Ranges, since the school known herein as Gumnut Ridge was undergoing re-construction, the students were temporarily housed in re-locatable classrooms that were of low quality. The fourth school, known here as Silverleaves, was located in a south-eastern suburb within a migrant area where the housing facilities were typically low socio-economic. The school building was about 50 years old and very little maintenance had been
carried out, classrooms were small and outbuildings were used as teaching facilities.

*The principals*

The four principals were all male, in the same age group and apart from Barry the other three had considerable experience in the principal role.

*The teachers*

Of the six participating teachers, five were female and one male; their ages ranged from late twenties to early fifties (see Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3 Six teachers: roles and experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Years of teaching</th>
<th>Year Level 2006</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Leadership roles</th>
<th>Career aspirations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Hakea Gardens</td>
<td>Coordinator: OHS</td>
<td>Classroom teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Hakea Gardens</td>
<td>Leading Teacher: ICT Coordinator: 3 / 4</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>Wallaby Park</td>
<td>Coordinator: 1 /2</td>
<td>Leading Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wallaby Park</td>
<td>Leading Teacher: Mathematics &amp; Science Coordinator: 3</td>
<td>Not stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>Silverleaves</td>
<td>Shared Coordinator: 5 /6</td>
<td>Leading Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>Gumnut Ridge</td>
<td>Coordinator 5/6</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two of the teachers had Leading Teacher roles and all six had Coordination roles such as Level Coordinator or Curriculum Coordinator. Pseudonyms, years of teaching experience, Year Level at the time of the study, leadership roles and stated career aspirations are summarised in Table 3.3.

**3.2.3 Classroom observations**

The purpose of the classroom observations was to explore teachers’ assessment practices in Literacy and Numeracy. The observations involved video recording
and this provided not only firsthand experience of the classroom activity, but also the opportunity to review the events on multiple occasions. Video recording enabled a view of the bigger picture of the lesson as well as closer views of the myriad of details that make up classroom activity and as Simons (2009) has suggested,

ethnographic case studies focus on a particular project or programme, though still aspiring to understand the case in its sociocultural context and with concepts of culture in mind (p. 23).

In using the hand-held video camera, I was able to appear more detached and as time went on, the participants became more comfortable with the process. Capturing real-life events in sequence and in context was crucial and as Knoblauch & Schnettler (2012) point out, video recordings have the capacity to “register on-going social activities in a very detailed way that preserves its sequential organization” (p. 337).

**Protocol**

In this study, the intention was to capture teachers’ actions rather than to concentrate on the students and the protocol was strictly adhered to in terms of permission to video-record the teachers and the students. The parents of all student members of each class group and the participating teachers were asked to sign the relevant permission form required by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee. The teachers were very diligent in ensuring the students returned the forms, and all forms were scrutinized and checked against the class roll. Parents of the children were provided with a plain language statement containing details of this study, contact numbers and an assurance that only the researcher and the child’s teacher viewed the respective video-records.

The teachers were provided with plain language statements in relation to the intentions of the video recordings. Since the videos were used as a basis for stimulated recall of specific episodes, schedules for videoing and the timing of the second interviews were negotiated face-to-face and confirmed by email. Prior to each classroom visit, I emailed the teachers to re-confirm the agreed schedule dates and times. The teachers all agreed that video observations record
at least one Numeracy and one Literacy session, preferably two of each. Table 3.4 shows the agreed schedule and the amount of Literacy and Numeracy observational sessions recorded on video during October-November, 2006. The videos were stored in several DVDs, coded for each teacher, labelled and dated.

Table 3.4 Classroom observations: the lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Numeracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Writing: brochure&lt;br&gt;Reading</td>
<td>Measurement: make a possum model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Reading and Literacy contracts&lt;br&gt;Reading and Literacy contracts</td>
<td>Number: adding &amp; subtracting&lt;br&gt;Measurement: capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Literacy tasks&lt;br&gt;Reading</td>
<td>Number: division&lt;br&gt;Measurement: money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Writing: grammar&lt;br&gt;Reading</td>
<td>Number: subtraction&lt;br&gt;Chance &amp; data: graphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Writing: narrative&lt;br&gt;Reading</td>
<td>Number: games&lt;br&gt;Mixed rotational tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>Speaking &amp; Listening: group presentations</td>
<td>Measurement: area/proportional reasoning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The intention of using observations captured on video includes:

1. To have an accessible, unchanging record of events as they occurred in the real-life contexts of the classrooms
2. For my own reflection and interpretation of the complexity of events
3. For the teachers to replay, reflect upon, and respond in individually tailored interviews
4. To converge video data with the other data sources in order to gain an unfolding, fulsome picture of each case.

Benefits of video-recorded observations

In taking up the above third point, the opportunity for the teachers to reflect on their own practice was a unique feature of this study. At the time the use of video technology for professional learning purposes was relatively rare and it’s not surprising that potential recruits for this study were wary of their practice being
captured on video. At the time, research on the use of videos was scarce although a recent upsurge in scholarly interest has focused on the multifarious uses of videos in educational research. The following brief review of recent literature considers the usefulness of video as a method for teachers to recall and reflect on their practice and make adjustments if required.

Tripp and Rich's (2012) study involved a number of teachers who reviewed and analysed their own practice. The researchers report on a heightened sense of awareness amongst the teachers who felt accountable for their own actions in making modifications to their practice. Tripp and Rich concluded that the teachers’ desire to change and to feel accountable for that change was a “powerful change agent in itself” (p. 739). Similarly, Sherin and van Es (2009) found from two studies they conducted that the participating teachers had ample opportunities to review and gain new perspectives on their practice. During multiple viewings of their own practice, the teachers became more aware of ways of noticing and interpreting their teaching activity. Sherin and van Es concluded that the videos were a powerful influence in modifying teaching practice.

Another study investigated the use of a video club where groups of teachers reviewed their practice and the researchers noticed that the teachers’ focus in discussions shifted from teacher behaviours to increased attention on the students’ actions and ideas (Sherin & Han, 2004). The video club strategy was initially useful for collaboration, however the teachers also used the videos to review specific teaching events in attempts to reflect on and learn about teaching. Five years later, Sherin and van Es (2009) carried out another study of a video club and reported on successful stories of the positive impact on practice. The study had a “bidirectional” influence in that the video clubs influenced the teachers’ instruction and vice versa and drew attention to multiple aspects of teachers work (p. 33), and as one participant reported: “What it's done for me ... it's enable me to really listen and to try to understand what students are saying” (p. 32).
Studies undertaken by Muir and Beswick (2007) and Muir, Beswick & Williamson (2010) also captured teaching activity on videos and subsequently, teachers used the videos to reflect on their practice and to make appropriate modifications. Muir et al. (2010) noted that in their close-up study, the teachers were able to “look back and make sense” of their teaching activity and to discuss specific events they noticed (p. 141). Moreover, Muir and Beswick (2007) suggested that reflection without using video recordings is limited and far less objective, whereas their case study points out the benefits of using video footage where researcher probing assists “teachers to reflect more deeply on their practice” (p. 81).

The use of stimulated recall following reviews of video recordings has now become more widely accepted as an effective mentoring or research tool. Stough (2001) explained that Benjamin Bloom initially used audiotapes in lectures as a method of reviving memories (p. 2). According to Stough, the method later transferred to video recordings and was useful in studying teachers’ practice, since teachers were asked to review their own video recorded practice and retrospectively self-report on their thought processes. Stough’s report involving video recordings and stimulated recall illustrates that teachers were comfortable with the process since they disclosed reflective thoughts and emotions on targeted episodes. According to Stough, prompt questions such as: What were you thinking here? were useful in stimulating deep responses from the participants and Stough points out that while researcher comments were minimized teacher comments were maximized.

**Camera work**

I was responsible for all the camera work and, tracking the teachers was a relatively easy process when they took up certain positions, although there were difficulties when they roved, since their movements and pauses were unpredictable. Possibly the most difficult part of the camera work was in following unpredictable events as the teachers moved around their classrooms, and simultaneously keeping the lens trained on the teacher rather than the
students. The focus of the observations was on interactive moments between the teachers and their students although these episodes were not always predictable.

By trialling various distances, I found that mid-shot ranges tended to provide sufficient coverage and to also include discreet, appropriate footage of the students. Luff and Heath (2012) recommended mid-shot ranges as a means to capture more than one person at a time although in this study, even with a built-in microphone, some of the children’s commentary was at times difficult to discern. In all, the video-recorded data comprised approximately 40 hours and, the teachers received DVD copies of their own recordings in preparation for the second interviews.

**Viewing guide**

Prior to the second interview, the teachers were given a *Viewing Guide* to support their private reviews of their own videos. Prompts were included in the Viewing guide to direct attention to their assessment practice and to aid recall for the second interview. The following points and questions present an overview of the Viewing Guide and spaces were left so that the teachers could make notes:

**Viewing Guide**

- Look for assessment strategies that you had already planned to undertake
- Look for incidental teaching/assessment episodes
- What was your purpose when roving?
- What can you notice about your strategies when teaching a small group?
- Look for an assessment strategy that you are really pleased with
- Is there any assessment strategy or teaching approach you would prefer to modify or change in any way?
- Are there other assessment strategies you use that were not captured on the videos?

**3.2.4 The interviews**

Interviews were conducted with all of the participants in order to collect audio-recorded data that would later be transcribed. The interviews provided the participants with a forum to respond to a number of questions concerning their
beliefs, thoughts, perceptions, understandings and professional practice, and also to build a researcher–participant rapport.

The interviews contributed a large amount of data to this study and provided insights into participants’ beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and practice. As a data-generation method, Freebody (2003) emphasises that interviews are a “dynamic” form that provides an awareness of the “individual’s constructed social worlds” (p. 137). Moreover, interviews are a form of social action where the interviewer and the interviewee “re-encounter and re-produce” social order (p. 137). Resonating with me as the interviewer in this study are Freebody’s three key concepts that relate to shared knowledge and language; questions that help to shape the interviewees’ thoughts; and that responses are accounts rather than reports (p. 137). Various passes are employed in data generation during interviews, such as the management of turn-taking, sequences such as question-answer and, moment-to-moment episodes (p. 143). In the interviews, these passes and episodes were evident and even though the questions were structured, the interviews took on a fluidity that responded to specific moments. Freebody notes that interviews give naturally occurring data; but he also points to the importance of how people conduct themselves, and how consistency and relevance are established (p. 168). I saw my role as supporting the interviewees in guiding them towards expressing their accounts of the phenomena under investigation and their observations or accounts of their experiences.

Altogether, I conducted 16 face-to-face, audio-taped interviews. As part of the agreement to participate in the study, the 11 participants generously committed time and effort to the interviews. The interviews were semi-structured in that they were guided by sequenced, pre-planned questions; however, at times, extra questions were added for clarification or when more information was needed. Some questions asked the teachers to provide a rating out of 10 with zero being the lowest and then the next highest. This strategy was useful when seeking “gut reactions”; the teachers often chose to elaborate, and consequently the interviews had fluidity rather than inflexibility.
Dates and times were negotiated face-to-face and confirmed by email shortly before the interview. Each interview was timed for one hour and audio-taped using an ipod device with a microphone attachment. The timeline for the interviews is shown in Table 3.5. Interview One with the teachers was conducted prior to the classroom observations and Interview Two was conducted post classroom observations to enable stimulated recall technique. The interviews with the principals were conducted in November and December. Next, the interview recordings were transcribed by using multiple replays, exact wording and phrasing were carefully transcribed and printed copies were prepared in readiness for analysis.

Table 3.5 Interview schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Teachers: Interview One</th>
<th>Teachers: Interview Two</th>
<th>Principals: Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>03/10/06</td>
<td>12/12/06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>04/10/06</td>
<td>06/12/06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>05/10/06</td>
<td>05/12/06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>13/10/06</td>
<td>15/12/06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>17/10/06</td>
<td>13/12/06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>18/10/06</td>
<td>13/12/06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24/11/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28/11/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29/11/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>01/12/06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher interviews**

All teachers participated in two interviews conducted in their classrooms and they were all very generous with their responses. The first interview was intentionally focused on background information and knowledge of The Blueprint, for an overview of the themes see Table 3.6. This was a rapport-building process and the teachers were given a copy of the questions prior to the interview. The initial questions focused on the teachers’ professional experiences, career aspirations, leadership roles and their preferred curriculum areas. The questions then began to deepen in relation to their knowledge of The
Blueprint and their attitudes to assessment practice. Following this first interview were the scheduled classroom observations that were video-recorded prior to the second interview.

Table 3.6 Interview One: Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background information</strong></td>
<td>Teaching experiences, roles, leadership roles, professional learning, career aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Blueprint: Sources of information</strong></td>
<td>Use of website, access to professional learning, School-based communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes to policy</strong></td>
<td>Opportunities for school-based decisions Team decision making Efforts to access The Blueprint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of Assessment Advice</strong></td>
<td>Own interpretations Access to The Blueprint information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes to assessment practice</strong></td>
<td>Current practice, influences, trialling innovations Purpose and features of assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes to reporting</strong></td>
<td>Effort and time Experiences with new system and Progression Points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second interview was structured differently to the first interview in that it comprised four commonly asked questions to stimulate recall of their assessment practice, followed by individualised questions focused on one-to-one interactions with students (see Table 3.7). In the meantime, following the video-recorded observations, the teachers had agreed to watch their own videos. Included towards the end of the interview were further questions concerning The Blueprint, since due to time restrictions these were not included in the first interview. The teachers were not given a copy of the questions prior to the interview although the Viewing Guide (3.2.3) provided insight into questions that were planned. Stough (2001) has advised that during stimulated recall interviews, the question “What were you thinking?” provides respondents with the opportunity to pause and consider their practice. The second interview followed this advice, particularly when considering the individual one-to-one interactions. Examples of the individualised questions include, What criteria do
you use to group the students in reading? and In your roving, what was your main focus?

Table 3.7 | Interview Two: Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recall of practice</td>
<td>What did you see? What would you change? What were you pleased with? Do you use other assessment strategies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualised questions</td>
<td>Interactions/ interventions/ teaching approaches and strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Blueprint: influences</td>
<td>On practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to change</td>
<td>Willingness to modify/ alter practice advice for policy makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Blueprint</td>
<td>Knowledge of content Extent of implementation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Principals’ interview**

The questions for the principals’ interviews were organised in four categories, concerning The Blueprint, assessment practices in the respective schools, leadership roles in relation to disseminating policy information, and attitudes towards changes to professional practice, see Table 3.8.

Table 3.8 | Interview: Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Blueprint</td>
<td>Dissemination Professional learning Impact on assessment Extent of implementation Knowledge of content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment practice</td>
<td>Typical practices in the school Assessment practices requiring improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Leading Teachers involvement with The Blueprint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The change process</td>
<td>Attitudes to The Blueprint Attitudes across the school to change and The Blueprint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews with the principals served to two purposes, one of these involved validation of the teachers’ interview responses and, the other served to provide relevant background information concerning for example, assessment practices in the schools, policy dissemination, local strategic plans for improvement, and, professional learning opportunities for the teachers. The principals generously responded to the questions and they welcomed this research opportunity in their respective schools.

### 3.2.5 Artefacts

The purpose of the artefact collection was to have verification of other data through the scrutiny of relevant information concerning schools’ assessment policies; curriculum planning; assessment planning and other assessment documentation. The artefacts provided vital backup and served to affirm both the claims made by the participants in the interview responses and, of the classroom observations.

The principals were asked for their schools’ assessment policy documentation; however, this was either overlooked by the principal or was non-existent. The teachers were asked for copies of weekly and term program plans, assessment documentation, such as test samples and records, and four teachers provided considerable copies of their documents (see Table 3.11).

Although the documentation contained important information, it also served as a means to verify and corroborate interview responses. To manage access to the 90 documents, I created six folders, one for each of the teacher participants. The two teachers at Wallaby Park provided portfolio samples, these were teacher-judged against the Curriculum and Standards Framework 11 using the three phrases: *Above the level, At the level, and Below the level*. Three teachers provided observational notes such as students’ work samples and oral reading. The two teachers at Wallaby Park provided yearly *Assessment Schedules* outlining the agreed plans across the level; this was sectioned into terms and apparent types of assessment, labelled as Assessment *for* Learning, Assessment *as* Learning, and Assessment *of* Learning.
At the close of the data gathering procedures, the study had generated transcripts of 17 interviews; summaries of identified interactive episodes employed in the second interview; and I had sorted the artefacts in preparation for scrutiny. The data were systematically organised and ready for analysis. The research design afforded this study an opportunity to use multiple data sources that were generously provided by the participating teachers and principals. Data was systematically collected and stored appropriately. The interviews were carefully transcribed to preserve the integrity of the data, and several episodes of the video recordings were also transcribed, dated and stored. The artefact collection was carefully compiled and stored. Altogether, the data sources yielded a large collection of interview responses, video recordings of classroom observations, and artefacts.

3.3 Data analysis

This part of the chapter presents the data analysis. It describes the methods I created in the search for patterns and themes across the data, and it outlines the triangulation techniques used to converge the analyses of the three data sources. The section opens with a discussion of qualitative data analysis and an overview of the methods used in this study (3.3.1). Then I describe the analysis plan that was undertaken in five overlapping phases (3.3.2).

3.3.1 Qualitative data analysis

The analysis for this study had two intentions, firstly to understand and interpret the data for each case individually and secondly, to undertake a cross-case analysis to identify general themes and patterns and to align these with emergent patterns from the principal interviews. Keeping in mind the need for a sense of transparency and trustworthiness, I will outline and explain the analysis techniques.

Stake’s (1995) suggestion that data analysis may begin on first impressions holds resonance for me in relation to meeting with the participants, and the first-hand experiences in videoing their teaching practice and listening during the recording of the interviews. Although the interviews were transcribed and videos recorded classroom observations, these also served as a means for my
recall of the reality of the experiences. Indeed, the beginning and the end points of the analysis process are not easy to pinpoint. Moreover, it is a process where all the data is taken apart, sorted, categorized, examined, and placed in an orderly manner so that, as Stake (1995) noted, interpretations and generalizations emerge. The process also involves a large amount of reflection in an intuitive process that searches for meaning by continual re-reading, deep thinking and then “understanding creeps forward” (p. 73).

Recursive actions could be described as the hallmark of qualitative analysis and as mentioned, and for this study, they served as the means for me to fully engage with, and be immersed in, the data. In ethnographical case study analysis, there is an interplay between the “exploration of the site” and the questions guiding the study (Freebody, 2003, p. 76). Mayring (2015) suggests that qualitative content analysis is softer than quantitative processes where “inter-code agreement” holds particular significance (p. 372). These notions guided my decision to reject the use of computer software programs, since I needed to be immersed in the data and to construct a process that best suited this study's intentions. Hidden within the data were complexities that required teasing out and exploring in a recursive process. I wanted to re-hear voices, re-see classroom observations, and revisit my observational experiences.

Commonly-used qualitative techniques serve to ensure findings and claims are robust and have trustworthiness, yet the actual methods used are far from explicitly described. From the start, suggestions such as Mayring’s (2015) would have been helpful in developing the understanding that analysis involves reduction, explicating, and structuring such as in the formulation of categories. At the time, however, my search for clarity was not satisfied, yet it became increasingly obvious that I needed to plan my own strategies. The following qualitative techniques enabled me to move from organizing the data to distil the data and then to find adequate and convincing solutions to the study questions:

- search and identify specific interactive moments; align interview responses to videos and to the artefacts;
- note, patterns of recurring practice;
• category and theme construction, pattern development across and within the cases; and
• triangulation and cross checking across and within the cases.

In the generation of the transcripts, I found that my familiarity with the text developed with an intensity that proved expedient when I needed to search for evidence. This informal engagement with the interview transcripts afforded time to consider theory orientation, and my attention was naturally drawn to saliences in what was said and at times, not said; and the symmetry and asymmetry between the teachers’ claims and the principals’ opinions. For example, the teachers commonly claimed that formative assessment practices were important yet conversely the principals were of the opinion that summative practices dominated across the school. I intuitively knew that differing points of view across the participants indicated a need for further investigation and teasing out in order to reach an understanding of paradoxical situations.

When taking apart the data I simultaneously re-read, reviewed and re-lived the data collection experiences and, multiple replays of the videos allowed the development of in-depth familiarity with the sequencing of events in the episodes, particularly since I had already observed them first-hand. Scrutiny of the artefacts was not quite as straightforward due to the varying types, and understanding the content and intentions of each document.

3.3.2 Analysis plan

Analysis was carried out in five phases and the steps in each phase were systematically undertaken to ensure all the data were examined. The first phase was completed soon after the classroom observations in order for the construction of individually designed questions for the second interview. This part of the video analysis focused on interactive episodes identified in the classroom observations. The phases are summarized and the steps are shown in Table 3.9, followed by detailed descriptions of each of the phase procedures: the first and third phases are grouped together.
Table 3.9  
Data analysis: sources and steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1     | Videos                       | 1. Identify and note assessment and feedback practices  
|       |                              | 2. Construct individual questions for Interview Two                        |
| 2     | Interview One  
Interview Two  
Principal interviews | 1. Data manipulation: cutting, sorting, pasting, labeling  
2. Synthesis: re-reading, notations, summaries, cross-checking |
| 3     | Videos                       | 1. Multiple viewings; hand-scribed notes, tallies and summaries  
2. Transcriptions of interactions  
3. Teaching and assessment approaches identified and noted |
| 4     | Artefacts                    | 1. Compilation, sorting, tallying.  
2. Content/ teaching/ learning focus  
3. Curriculum usage/resources  
4. Assessment planning  
5. Across case comparisons |
| 5     | Data merging:  
Across cases & principals  
Within case & principals | 1. Key themes/ patterns  
2. Comparisons  
3. Similarities/ differences |

**Phases 1 and 3: Video analysis**

The video analysis was conducted in both Phase 1 and Phase 3. The analysis for Phase 1 was solely for the purpose of designing individualised questions in preparation for the second interview. Phase 3, however, comprised in-depth analysis of the teachers’ practice with a focus on assessment in particular. The video data presented a somewhat daunting challenge since from the array of complex classroom events I needed to decide which episodes would contain relevant information for this study. At the time, the literature search was largely unhelpful although since then the field has expanded. Luff and Heath (2012), for example, have acknowledged the range of problems in analyzing videos such as the selection and transcriptions of particular fragments as well as the challenge of presenting the manipulated video data:
Video has helped … to reveal the detailed ways in which many everyday activities are produced and made sense through social interaction, there are still a great many unresolved analytic and methodological challenges facing researchers (p. 275)

The question of how to manipulate the video data into text form proved to be the first challenge but, the process gradually became easier. I decided to analyse the videos case by case, since I needed to devote my thoughts to one person at a time until I had reached saturation point. I found that foregrounding the process with the two research questions concerning assessment practices and feedback was helpful in keeping a focus. Since classrooms are complex social settings, there were many distractions. Surprisingly, one distraction was my emotional response and I realized that keeping an objective perspective was not always easily achieved.

The process of unpacking the video content involved note-taking and categorizing lesson sections such as the introduction, body of the lesson and concluding segments. I developed coding systems and I let the material guide the reductive process. The next step was to record the data in an accessible format and I drew up folio pages to organise spaces, so that as I watched the video I could note occurrences. The spaces were labelled according to how the teachers organised their lesson, such as introduction, main lesson body, and conclusion. I also added other categories such as roving to interact with students, small group focused teaching, and the amount of teacher and student movement in the lesson (see Appendix 1). I found tallying was helpful in recording patterns of behaviour such as repeated instructions. Essentially, my search was for interactive formative feedback episodes and these were located and reviewed several times. I next searched for a strategy to ensure that although the feedback forms differed across cases, I needed a common framework to analyse the feedback content. Shute’s (2008) feedback typology seemed the best available option (see Table 3.10). Although since then, other typologies have been proposed, for example, Gamlem and Smith (2013). As mentioned, praise was included in the analysis even though it is omitted from Shute’s typology.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No feedback</td>
<td>Refers to conditions where the learner is presented a question and is required to respond, but there is no indication as to the correctness of the learner’s response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verification</td>
<td>Also called “knowledge of results” or “knowledge or outcome”. It informs the learners about the correctness of their responses (e.g., right-wrong, or overall percentage correct).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct response</td>
<td>Also known as “knowledge of correct response”. Informs the learner about an incorrect response and allows the learner one or more attempts to answer it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try again</td>
<td>Also known as “repeat-until-correct” feedback. It informs the learner about an incorrect response and allows the learner one or more attempts to answer it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error flagging</td>
<td>Also known as “location of mistakes.” Error flagging highlights errors in solution, without giving a correct answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborated</td>
<td>General term relating to the provision of an explanation about why a specific response was correct or not and may allow the learner to preview part of the instruction. It may or may not present the correct answer see below for six types of elaborated feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribute isolation</td>
<td>Elaborated feedback that presents information addressing central attributes of the target concept or skill being studied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic contingent</td>
<td>Elaborated feedback providing the learner with information relating to the target currently being studied. May entail simply reteaching material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response contingent</td>
<td>Elaborated feedback that focuses on learner’s specific response. It may describe why the incorrect answer is wrong and why the correct answer is correct. This does not use formal error analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint/cues/prompts</td>
<td>Elaborated feedback guiding the learner in the right direction, e.g., strategic hint on what to do next or a worked example or demonstration. Avoids explicitly presenting the correct answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bugs/misconceptions</td>
<td>Elaborated feedback requiring error analysis and diagnosis. It provides information about the learner's specific errors or misconceptions (e.g., what is wrong and why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative tutoring</td>
<td>The most elaborated feedback this presents verification feedback, error flagging, and strategic hints on how to proceed. The correct answer is not usually provided.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The episodes containing feedback were transcribed first by hand and then typed line by line in sequence, and teacher comments and students’ responses were
included. Next, the various episodes were analysed according to the teachers' use of praise and Shute's (2008) typology. The use of this technique provided a comparable, overall view across the six cases of the types of feedback used by the teachers as well as an in-depth perspective of how each teacher participant used feedback in their assessment practice. The large assemblage of detailed notes of the events of each lesson and several transcriptions of interactive feedback situations were ready for analysis. The video data had successfully been taken apart and re-constructed according to the sequence of events and placed, as text, in categories in readiness for the synthesizing processes (see Appendix 2). Table 3.11 presents a summary of the video data across cases to compare the Numeracy lesson approaches, types of questioning used by the teachers, one-to-one interactions between teachers and students and, the types of assessment practices.

### Table 3.11 Across case: numeracy lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numeracy</th>
<th>Lesson approach</th>
<th>Questioning</th>
<th>1-1 interactions</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Numeracy games</td>
<td>Open-ended</td>
<td>1-1 Interventions</td>
<td>Possum models evaluated against stated criteria Praise for effort/creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual task</td>
<td>and individualised</td>
<td>Formative feedback Scaffolded teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with set criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choice of materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of measuring instruments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Instructional Daily “Tables” test</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Repetitions of instructions Corrective discussions</td>
<td>Worksheet: Students line up to wait for teacher correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Teacher directed class game Worksheets</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>1-1 Corrective discussions</td>
<td>Worksheet: Teacher roved to correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Teacher led demonstrations Instructions re process</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>1-1 Corrective discussions Focused on processes and one solution</td>
<td>Teacher roved to check students’ compliance with task instructions Teacher correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Student-led games Rotated groups Teacher-led small group focus</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>1-1 Interventions focused on corrections</td>
<td>Teacher correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>Instructional Tables test Group task</td>
<td>Repetitions/closed</td>
<td>Focused on groups</td>
<td>Peer and teacher evaluations Rewards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A similar table was also prepared for the teachers’ Literacy lessons in order to identify similarities and differences across the cases and, as well to identify and compare patterns between the literacy and numeracy lessons (see Table 3.12).

### Table 3.12 Across case: literacy lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numeracy</th>
<th>Lesson topic</th>
<th>Questioning</th>
<th>1-1 interactions</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ann      | Writing: create a brochure  
          Spelling games  
          Reading: small group focus and independent Literacy contracts (various tasks) | Open-ended and individualised | Formative feedback  
          Scaffolded teaching | Brochure: Rubrics criteria and student self-assessment  
          Teacher correction of the contract tasks  
          Notations |
| Robert   | Spelling tasks  
          Reading: small group focus and independent Literacy contract (tasks) | Closed | Repeated instructions  
          Error flagging | Teacher correction, verbal and written |
| Helen    | Spelling program  
          Various tasks  
          Reading: small group focus | Closed | Repeated instructions  
          Error flagging  
          Compliance rewarded | Teacher correction |
| Barbara  | Reading: small group focus  
          Rotated tasks across the class  
          Spelling: small group focus | Closed | Repeated instructions  
          Error flagging | Teacher correction |
| Lucy     | Student-led games  
          Rotated groups  
          Teacher-led small group focus | Closed | 1-2 Interventions focused on accuracy in reading and writing | Teacher correction |
| Nikki    | Speaking and listening: group presentations of projects | Repeated, closed | Focus on group behaviours  
          Compliance rewarded | Peer and teacher evaluations  
          Rewards |

Using the above two tabled summaries, a further reduction occurred by placing the observed numeracy and literacy assessments in another table, so that it was possible to identify similarities across and within the cases (see Table 3.13). A further refinement of lessons summarized in Tables 3.11 and 3.12 occurred by drawing on the instances of feedback observations. These were tabled so that
patterns of feedback could be identified across and within the cases (see Table 3.14).

**Table 3.13**  
**Across case: literacy and numeracy assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Literacy assessment</th>
<th>Numeracy assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Criterion based</td>
<td>Criterion-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher correction of tasks</td>
<td>Praise for effort/creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Teacher correction</td>
<td>Worksheet: Students line up to wait for teacher correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Teacher correction</td>
<td>Worksheet: Teacher roved to correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Teacher correction</td>
<td>Teacher roved to check students’ compliance with task instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher: later correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Teacher correction</td>
<td>Teacher correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>Teacher evaluations: written and verbal</td>
<td>Peer and teacher evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Rewards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.14**  
**Across case: feedback in literacy and numeracy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Feedback in literacy</th>
<th>Feedback in numeracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Guided reading: ongoing for each student</td>
<td>1-2 Interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roving: individual support</td>
<td>Formative feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback and scaffolded teaching</td>
<td>Scaffolded teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Focused on re-teaching/ repeated instructions</td>
<td>Repetitions of instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Corrective discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus: processes and one solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Focus on re-teaching</td>
<td>1-1 Corrective discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Rare but the few were focused on re-teaching and error flagging</td>
<td>1-1 Corrective discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Focused on processes and one solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Guided Reading: feedback and scaffolding</td>
<td>1-3 Interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roving: re-teaching, some feedback</td>
<td>focused on corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>Not observed</td>
<td>Focused on groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Phase 2: Interview analysis*

The analysis procedures for this study required the interviews in a *static* form since as Lapadat (2000) notes, the written form is final and can be “quoted,
sorted, copied, and inspected” (p. 204). The transcript process included false starts, interrupted thoughts, dysfluencies and ambiguities, since I wanted to ensure everything that was said was recorded. As Lapadat (2000) notes “spoken language is structured and accomplished differently to written text” and in this sense, a verbatim version induces quality rather than a false economy of words:

Verbatim transcription serves the purpose of taking speech, which is fleeting, aural, and heavily contextualized within its situational and social context of use, and freezing it into static, permanent, and manipulative form (p. 204).

Eventually the transcripts shaped the raw data from speech into text through listening, typing, and noting of speech details such as emphasis and prosody.

The interviews were labelled with the teachers’ respective pseudonyms, and sorted according to Interview One, Interview Two, or Principal. Every question was numbered in sequence and italicised, and followed by the response in roman font. This strategy ensured that although all the interviews had a numbering system beginning at one, the headings ensured the interviews were distinct from each other. The interview responses were abbreviated for example, Lucy 1:2 referred to the first interview and the second response, whereas, for the principals interview commentaries I used the pseudonym and interview response number, for example, Barry:2.

A key feature of qualitative analysis is the sorting and categorizing process and since I had determined to be immersed in the data, the process involved a hands-on manipulation of the printed transcripts. A priority was to cut, re-group and paste the responses within question themes, these became categories, and the teachers were allocated a colour code that remained consistent throughout (see Figure 3.1). The transcripts were then sliced apart and across the participants, and responses were grouped according to the questions or questions themes. The colour coding, slicing, sorting, pasting and labeling continued until every teachers’ response was placed within a category and, note-taking and summaries were added to the folio page. At the end of this process, the interviews had been taken apart, manipulated and re-constructed. I then had a collection of folios containing labelled, highlighted and notated categories in readiness for synthesizing into summaries. This hands-on process ensured I was immersed in
the data, and from this position I continued on with summarizing and tabling the results. Next, I tackled the principals’ interviews and in using the same process, I used colour codes and themed categories to reorganise the data. This enabled comparisons with the teachers’ responses (see Appendix 3).

Figure 3.1 Example: colour-coded responses according to question themes

**Phase 4: Artefacts analysis**

As mentioned, the teachers contributed copies of varying amounts of planning and assessment documentation; however, none of the principals provided school-based assessment policy documentation. The artefacts served as a means to collaborate interview evidence; they provided evidence of The Blueprint implementation via curriculum usage and also served to indicate the prevailing assessment practices. For each of the teachers, I compiled lists of the document types according to curriculum planning, assessment planning, and assessment data. Table 3.15 presents a summary of the compilation and the teachers’ contributions.
### Table 3.15  Artefacts: teachers’ documentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Curriculum planning</th>
<th>Assessment planning</th>
<th>Assessment data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ann</strong></td>
<td>Week and term plans</td>
<td>Week and term plans</td>
<td>Large range of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Copies of a range</td>
<td>formative notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of formal tests</td>
<td>and summative test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student self-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Robert</strong></td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>One spreadsheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of test results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Helen</strong></td>
<td>Week and term plans</td>
<td>Yearly schedule</td>
<td>Several test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Copies of a range</td>
<td>results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of formal tests</td>
<td>Formative notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Copies of common</td>
<td>Teacher evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>assessment tasks</td>
<td>of assessment tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barbara</strong></td>
<td>Week plan</td>
<td>Yearly schedule</td>
<td>Several test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and gradings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lucy</strong></td>
<td>Week and term plans</td>
<td>Term plans</td>
<td>Formative notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and summative test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nikki</strong></td>
<td>Week and term plans</td>
<td>No planning</td>
<td>Summative test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Copies of a range</td>
<td>results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of formal tests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phase 5: Merging the data**

The final phase of the analysis involved merging the data by the use of inductive thinking in the formulation of structured and refined categories. The intention of this procedure is to arrive at unbiased descriptions and understandings in regard to the material (Mayring, 2015). There were two guiding criteria that shaped my thinking including, letting the material guide the emergence of themes such as through reductive strategies and identification of recurring patterns and, foregrounding the analysis with the study’s aims in investigating assessment and feedback practices.
After working through the material and arriving at an end point where no more categories could be found, the logic of the categories was checked for clarity and to ensure there was no overlapping. Categories included, for example, curriculum usage, knowledge of The Blueprint content, and usage of the new reporting system. To gauge the extent that VELS was used to plan, curriculum evidence was summarized according to the data source and aligned with the results (see Table 3.16).

**Table 3.16**  
**VELS usage: across case**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Interview data</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Teachers’ claimed curriculum usage change: CSF11 to VELS | 1 teacher: VELS  
3 teachers: CSF11  
2 teachers: non-committal |
| **Artefact data** | |
| Teachers’ curriculum usage | 1 teacher: VELS  
5 teachers; CSF11 |
| **Principal interview data** | |
| Principals’ opinions: teachers’ curriculum usage across school | 1 principal: VELS for English/Maths  
3 principals: CSF11 usage |

To assemble brief summaries in folio pages of assessment practice within cases and across the four schools (see Appendix 4), the information includes

- Curriculum planning including VELS or CSF usage
- Lesson organization including instructions, students’ task time
- Task instructions approaches such as motivational techniques
- Learning tasks including task differentiation, open-ended solutions
- Questioning strategies used for individual students and the class
- Roving techniques
- Formative assessments, including feedback to students
- Summative assessments

Next, to gain an overall view of all data sources in relation to assessment, I created a typed, tabled summary of the teachers’ interview responses; the principals’ views, the video evidence and, the artefacts (see Table 3.17). This provided the means to view an overall picture of assessment practices and also the means to cross-check for emergent patterns. In using this technique,
inferences were possible, for example, as to why the teachers’ comments have similarities or differences with the principals, whether or not the teachers’ comments matched the videoed observations and their documentation and, whether observations noted similarities and differences in the teachers’ practices.

Table 3.17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher interviews</th>
<th>Principal interview</th>
<th>Video evidence</th>
<th>Artefacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann: use of formative and summative assessments. Use of formative feedback</td>
<td>Summative practices dominate</td>
<td>Formative strategies dominate</td>
<td>A range of planning and assessment documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert: use of tests and test results</td>
<td>Summative practices dominate</td>
<td>Daily tests</td>
<td>Summative test results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen: use of formative notes, tests and summative test results</td>
<td>A range of assessment practices</td>
<td>Formative note-taking</td>
<td>Formative notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara: tests and summative test results</td>
<td>A range of assessment practices</td>
<td>Teacher correction</td>
<td>Common assessment tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy: formative feedback, tests and summative test results</td>
<td>A range of assessment practices</td>
<td>Formative feedback</td>
<td>Summative test results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki: use of a range of formative and summative approaches</td>
<td>Summative practices dominate</td>
<td>Peer and teacher evaluations</td>
<td>Summative test results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Verification was an important consideration because any irregularities needed to be checked, teased out and interpreted. For example, Barbara’s practice was limited to summative practices yet the principal at the school claimed the teachers in his school used a “range of assessment practices”. This was a puzzle that needed closer examination and a re-reading of interview data to understand why this anomaly occurred. By using this technique I was able to see cause and effect and to take account of factors that dominated or were submerged. Since
this thesis used the lens of assessment practice to make inferences concerning teachers’ responsiveness to change, this technique was crucial in the formation of the “reasonableness” of subsequent interpretations (Mabry, 2008, p. 221). The data analyses processes were systematically undertaken using recursive and reflective techniques that afforded the emergence of patterns and themes. Cross-checking was useful since it provided the means to verify various claims and statements.

**Merging technique: What is important to me?**

Although the process so far had revealed a large number of results, I developed a merging technique to understand what was important to each of the teachers. This was possible due to my intense familiarity with the data throughout the previous analysis processes. For each teacher, I searched through the interview responses that had explicitly and implicitly expressed their views on what they felt was important. Next, and from the point of view of each teacher, I formulated an umbrella question and three sub-questions,

- What is important to me?
- How do I practice summative assessment?
- How do I practice formative assessment?
- What do I think about change?

I partitioned two folio sheets into columns and rows and each cell had a purpose according to the above questions (see Appendix 5). For each teacher I made several notes of interview responses and noted the interview response/s that applied. When searching through the interviews I identified repetitions and emphases, and these were then collated and placed in the relevant cells. Likewise, when teachers, for example, made repeated or significant comments about prioritizing correction, the comments were placed in the cells dedicated to summative practices. Gradually the cells were filled with the relevant information and an analysis emerged based on the evidence of what was important to each teacher in relation to their profession, their assessment
practices, and their thoughts around change. For example, it was clear that Lucy loved her teaching job, she was passionate about helping children with high English language needs, that she relied on her correction techniques, she believed in conforming to change expectations, and that it is the school’s responsibility to keep teachers informed of policy information.

This technique revealed significant data in a form that could be interpreted and understood in multiple ways. To verify the interpretations, I repeated the technique using a perspective focused on the following umbrella question and sub-questions,

What is important to me?
Why?
How do I interact with my students?
My teaching and assessment practice

The search for this information required an intense scrutiny of specific interview responses and, although the search revealed what was important for each teacher, it also revealed anomalies. For example, one teacher claimed she did not use grading even though her documentation contained a large amount of numerical results and the students were placed in ability-based groups for focused teaching. As I searched, I made several summaries that enabled interpretations of what each teacher felt was important in relation to their assessment practice, their approach to interactive teaching and their attitudes to change.

In a final assemblage step in Phase 5, I drew a triangle for each teacher. In the centre I noted stand-out characteristics, at one corner I noted meaningful classroom observations, in another corner I noted key interview response themes and, the third corner was dedicated to the views of the respective principal (see Appendix 6). This final summary was helpful in drawing together significant patterns and characteristics and reductive strategies created summaries, which were combined in various ways to reveal similarities, patterns, and anomalies.
Data reduction

The large amount of data derived in this study required systematic reduction processes and also, accurate recording methods of the procedures. Mayring (2015) describes a technique known as *Qualitative Content Analysis* as a standard analysis procedure (p. 365) and the technique resonates with the procedures that were undertaken to analyse this study's interview and the video observational data. According to Mayring, standard analysis procedures apply a qualitative -interpretative step as well as the analysis of frequencies (p. 366). This study's analysis built on a comprehensive overview of the “base material” since understanding the overall case is a priority (Stake, 1995, p. 373). Although patterns may be known in advance due to the research questions, patterns may also emerge “unexpectedly from the analysis” (p. 78) and for this reason, an open-ended approach was adopted in the data analysis for this study.

a) Interviews: qualitative-interpretations

The content of the teachers’ interviews was first examined separately to identify patterns and repetitions as well as stand-out responses and, summaries further reduced the interview content. Next, in an across-case context the summaries were aligned to identify commonly occurring patterns and stand-out differences. The data was further reduced by summaries and placed in categories such as access to The Blueprint information and, the use of curriculum for planning. A similar process was undertaken for the principals and categories of information related to, for example, policy dissemination in their schools and, assessment practices in their schools.

As Stake (1995) noted, “researchers reach new meanings about cases through direct interpretation of the individual instance and through aggregation of instances until something can be said about them as a class” (p. 74). The progressive dissections of the responses and categorized summaries reduced the content and provided opportunities to view the overall picture as well as the parts, that is, the individual teachers’ responses. Mayring describes this process
as “inductive category” since it is a system that requires an open-ended approach (p. 370).

b) Interviews: Frequencies within the responses

A tallying system was used to locate and aggregate frequencies in the responses. For example, the amount of times the teachers referred to tests, or to specific practices such as correction or to feedback. The results of the tallying provided opportunities to analyse the teachers’ priorities, or what they thought was important in their practice. Indeed, what the teachers thought to be important became a focus of the analysis and was noted and summarised in the folios (see Appendix 5).

c) Classroom observations: qualitative-interpretations and frequencies

Reducing the material of video-recorded classroom observations required a process that was specific to this study and combined an interpretative approach with observed frequencies. Multiple reviews of the videos supported a deep familiarity with the content and I decided to sort and organise the lessons into sequenced sections such as lesson introduction, lesson body, and lesson conclusion. The sectioning process was recorded in the folios and as each lesson was reviewed, I used notes and tallies to record events and frequencies of recurring events. Detailed transcriptions were also made to note the dialogue occurring in many of the videos. This transcribing process supported a deepening understanding of what was occurring since classroom activity is often complex and composed of multifarious activities. Eventually, it was possible to identify and prioritise teaching moments such as in the use of motivational techniques, and importantly, the use of feedback from the teachers to the students. Although time-consuming, the procedures generated for this study sought to ensure a fair and rigourous analysis of the teachers’ observed assessment practice. In particular, it was crucial to identify feedback instances for appraisal and the descriptions in the individual case studies.
d) Artefacts: qualitative-interpretations and frequencies

The teachers’ assessment, assessment records and curriculum planning information were kept as raw data although lists and brief summaries reduced and described the materials. The summaries focused on amounts and types of assessment to differentiate between the use of summative and formative practices including the possible involvement of the students. The teachers’ assessment records were used in the search for correspondence since it was possible to identify the frequency of summative test usage and to compare this result with the frequency of formative, observational notes. The curriculum planning documents indicated the extent of the use of mandated resources (e.g., VELS), as well as the extent that assessment was considered as integral to curriculum planning. The summaries and lists provided the opportunity to cross-check data within the cases, across the cases, and across the four schools.

The following model shows the sequenced, reduction processes that were undertaken for all interviews and the video-recorded classroom observations (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2  Reductive process model
3.4 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has presented the details of the study’s ethnographic case study orientation and design. The study design enabled the research questions to be pursued systematically and coherently in a carefully considered plan. It brought together epistemology, methodology and methods yet, is also synchronously expressed the ways of an individual researcher. The research questions required a path of inquiry that adhered to widely acknowledged qualitative methods as well as the formulation of methods that best suited the study’s purpose.
Chapter Four
Portraits, Policy and Practice

4.0 Introduction

This chapter will report on the results of data analysis and will identify key conclusions pertinent to the study. Prior to analysis, the data were manipulated, and combined in various ways using triangulation methods in order for data reduction and sense-making. These methods were described in detail in Chapter Three. To differentiate between the individual case analysis and the cross-case analysis, this chapter has two major sections. The first of these is: Portraits since it presents detailed descriptive, analyses of the six participating teachers and their practice. The second major section, Policy and Practice, presents a cross-case analysis and includes the four principals. The analysis considers comparisons to the policy pertinent to this study, The Blueprint.

The first major section opens with portraits of the six cases, the participating teachers. To fit the scope of the study and to streamline analysis, the teachers have been placed in pairs, making three paired groups:

1. Two early-career teachers
2. Two Leading Teachers
3. Two Experienced Teachers

Lucy and Nikki were paired since they were both early-career teachers who were the same age and had the same amount of teaching experience (4.1). The second pair includes the two Leading Teachers, Barbara and Robert who were paired due to their leadership status (4.2). Helen and Ann were then paired, since they were a similar age and had a similar amount of teaching experience (4.3). The paired portraits are presented in according to themes and the first involves introductory background information including observed teaching approaches and situates the teachers in the context of their respective schools. The background information also includes career aspirations and professional learning experiences. Descriptions of their teaching approaches are drawn from interview responses combined with observations captured in the videos. A
second theme is concerned with detailed descriptions of the teachers’ assessment planning, observed practices, including feedback interactions. The analysis drew on data from the teachers’ assessment documentation, videoed observations, and interview responses. Each paired account is finalized with a summary.

The next major section, Policy and Practice draws on a cross-case analysis to generate an overall picture of the teachers’ assessment practice (4.4). A comparative analysis draws on patterns of assessment practice and how the teachers’ practice is connected to their beliefs, opinions and understandings of assessment. Included are the principals’ views (4.4.1) to provide an across schools analysis of assessment practice (4.4.2), followed by a brief summary (4.4.3). The chapter then turns to a focus on The Blueprint (4.5) and the ways in which the teachers responded to The Blueprint’s strategies including information dissemination and professional learning opportunities. The final section reports on how the teachers negotiated The Blueprint (4.6) in terms of their attitudes to change and the impact of The Blueprint on their professional lives, followed by a brief chapter summary (4.7).
Portraits

This section presents the results of the analysis of the six case studies. The cases are paired in order to present detailed descriptions of the participating teachers’ teaching approaches and assessment practices. Each paired account begins with background information concerning teaching experiences, career aspirations and other general and relevant information. Evidence for the descriptive teaching approaches is derived from the videoed classroom observations, the teachers’ documentation and their interview responses. In-depth analyses of the teachers’ assessment practices focus on the extent that formative feedback was observed in their practice. Each paired account closes with a brief summary focusing on the extent that the teachers’ practices align with the assessment component of The Blueprint.

4.1 Early-career teachers: Lucy and Nikki

Lucy, at the school known herein as Silverleaves, and Nikki, at the school known herein as Gumnut Ridge, were both aged in their late twenties. Although both teachers had eight years of teaching experience, for the purpose of this study, they have been grouped together as early-career to make a distinction with the other two groups of teachers. There were significant differences in what Lucy considered important compared to Nikki. Lucy’s first choice was to remain a classroom teacher and she said,

    I really love the contact with the kids and I’m happy to take on extra responsibilities ... and yes, maybe a Leading Teacher would be good (Lucy, 1:12).

Whereas, Nikki had aspirations towards being a principal since she said,

    I would still like to teach. I think there’s a lot more I can get out of it, but eventually I would love to be an assistant principal and then move into being a principal. I’d like to see a lot more females step up into that role and that’s always been my goal (Nikki, 1:9).

While Lucy’s main commentaries centred on her approach to assessment and the tools she prefers, Nikki tended to relay her interpretations of how The Blueprint assessment information was aligned with her practice. What was important to Lucy was her actual practice whereas, for Nikki, what seemed important was the capacity to interpret and to articulate assessment policy. Lucy said she felt the
pressure to change to The Blueprint’s recommendations, but she felt the language used and content of the policy were too complex. Nikki on the other hand said she was ready and willing to adapt to The Blueprint’s advice, but it seems she was held back by an absence of adequate professional learning opportunities.

From the start, the two teachers expressed high interest in the forthcoming video experience, since they both felt it would help them improve their practice. They clearly enjoyed working with their classes of Years 5 and 6 and they expressed their passion for teaching. It was obvious that over the year, these two young teachers had developed friendly and cordial relations with their students, and on many occasions they paused to make jokes and laugh along with their students.

The two teachers’ physical working conditions were difficult in that the space in Lucy’s classroom was confined and Nikki’s classroom was a run-down detached ‘portable’. Lucy’s students used computers for Literacy and Numeracy tasks while the students in Nikki’s class had no access to computers due to local technical issues.

Most of Lucy’s students were from non-English speaking backgrounds and many had recently arrived in Australia from various overseas nations. To support their integration and English, the NESB students had specialized, funded help and at times aides assisted students in the classroom. In Lucy’s classroom the children were very interested in the video-recording while the students in Nikki’s class tended to ignore the video process. Nikki said her students had experienced difficulties prior to her arrival and, she explained that their attitude to cooperation and learning was negative. Nikki said that over the year she had worked to modify the students’ attitudes by involving them in the instigation of an anti-bullying policy in the school, and she said that as a result there had been a turnaround in behaviours,

The parents are rapt, the community’s positive. We’re seeing less incidences of bullying because it’s being modeled. The kids are feeling like they have a say with the anti-bullying task force. They’ve written a pamphlet with my help (Nikki, 1:42).
Lucy and Nikki had leadership roles in their teaching teams; Nikki was team leader in her school. At Silverleaves, Lucy was an assistant team leader, the team leader being a male colleague. She tended to defer to the leader and downplayed her role as shown in the following comment,

There's two of us doing it (curriculum leadership) and one of the teachers is more experienced. So I'm just, we're co-ordinators, but I sort of follow him a little bit more (Lucy 1:4).

In contrast, Nikki described herself in her current role as dynamic and innovative and that she aspired to become a Leading Teacher in a bigger school as soon as possible. She was very aware of the hierarchical status of teachers, since she described team members as "under her" and that they were happy to follow her lead.

Even though both teachers had career aspirations, their professional learning experiences appeared more sporadic rather than planned. Neither Lucy nor Nikki had specifically experienced programs aimed towards leadership training and programs specifically based on The Blueprint were minimal. Lucy had completed a three-day course in training for the PoLT (Principles of Learning and Teaching) and she said that there was nothing new in the content of the principles,

I have done the training, but in terms of impacting. What am I trying to say? The teaching that goes on in this school intuitively, you know, some of the practices we do any way. You can relate what you do and say: that's Principle One (Lucy, 2: 60).

The majority of Lucy's professional learning was centred on Literacy in the Middle Years (Years 5-9), which she said was her passion,

I feel more comfortable with Literacy. And I think because of the NESB background of the school that we try to build that up. I focus on literacy because it's my preferred curriculum area (Lucy, 2:36).

Nikki was far more evasive in commenting on her professional learning experiences and instead of providing details she said she had done some Middle Year programs. She had attended Regional cluster briefings for The Blueprint and said: “Because I’m in leadership level, I get to go to all the stuff” (2:69).
Although Nikki also remarked on the inadequacy of the cluster meetings, since they only considered sharing what other schools had implemented rather than her suggestion at the meeting that focused on schools’ individual action plans. Nikki considered action plans to be crucial and that the “changeover” to The Blueprint will “polarize” people who “are willing to accept the changes and improve themselves” and she added, “I think it’s going to be a real watershed, educationally speaking for many people” (Nikki, 1:22).

In relation to professional reading and acquiring The Blueprint information from the Education Department’s website; Lucy said she only read documents provided by her school’s leaders and she was not interested in researching The Blueprint via the internet. Nikki said although she didn't access professional reading materials, she followed up all The Blueprint’s website information.

> I find it for myself. I look on the website. I’ve read through the assessment modules ... people can just look up PoLT and read it for themselves, and really, it's not rocket science is it? In that respect I take on ownership for the level of professionalism that I exhibit (Nikki, 1:21).

During the year, Silverleaves and Gumnut Ridge schools had undertaken the implementation of The Blueprint’s online reporting system for English and Mathematics. Consequently, Lucy had participated in workshops at the school to learn the use of the reporting software applications. In comparison to the school’s prior reports to parents, Lucy felt the new system was inadequate because the information was less specific in commentaries even though the Progression Points were “wordy” (Lucy 1: 35). Additionally, Lucy said the new reporting system required a larger time commitment and that assessment was now based on achievements according to the Progression Points, she said “You have to be more thorough in knowing exactly what the students can do ... for the Progression Points, because that’s what it’s all based on” (Lucy, 1: 35).

Nikki’s experience in the use of the reporting software differed from Lucy’s in that she said teachers at the school had minimal preparation time.

> We really only had one session where it was presented ... and it was fly by the seat of your pants given the timeline we had ... we were just handed a box the night before with everything in it ... now you go home and compile it ... I usually like to have reports highly
organised ... so I find it extremely stressful when you are handed a box ... and fill in the details ... and collate ... I think that is taking people’s goodwill a little bit far (Nikki 1: 34-35).

Given that The Blueprint had been introduced since 2003-4 and that the new curriculum and Assessment Advice had been in place for the previous year, it was surprising that both Lucy and Nikki had not had access to professional learning concerning these two major aspects of new policy. Instead, the emphasis was on training for the reporting system and Lucy’s training as a PoLT leader.

**Teaching practice**

Although, in both cases, planning documents referred to the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) curriculum, in practice, the use of VELS was not obvious. Although Lucy’s term planner referenced VELS (see Appendix 22) she said she preferred the previous curriculum (CSF11) since it was “so much simpler”. Unlike the term plan, prepared by the Years 5 and 6 teaching team, her weekly planning guide made no reference to VELS. Nikki’s weekly plan appeared to be based on VELS and she was keen to try contemporary teaching approaches, such as those based on social behaviours and, in particular, their collaborative efforts when working in a small group situation.

Lucy and Nikki were keen on the videoing of their practice and expressed an interest in improving their practice. Lucy’s passion for Literacy clearly transferred to her students who responded well to her questioning, to her motivational lesson introductions, and to her helpful support in small reading group teaching sessions. The more capable students confidently took part in independent reciprocal reading groups and were helpful and supportive of each other. Apart from the introductory games, her Numeracy activities were process-driven and involved rotating group work. The students’ high levels of engagement with the games indicated a willingness to find solutions although when I asked her why she had reduced the time for this part of the lesson, Lucy replied, "I think they were getting a little bit noisy ... time and noise factor ... even though they were enjoying it" (Lucy, 2: 47)
Nikki’s literacy program, although not observed, involved process-driven activities such as the use of the SRA Reading Laboratory that had been first devised as a programmed and leveled reading kit in the 1950s. Evidence in her planning documents indicate that Nikki’s literacy teaching did not involve a Middle Years approach that was contemporary at the time and thus seemed incongruent with her claims as a progressive teacher in the interviews.

Nikki had planned and organised a problem-solving Mathematics activity that continued over three days and also involved a socially-organised approach based on groups that Nikki referred to as Tribes. The Tribes of four students worked on a solution to a mathematics problem requiring the use of measurement skills and proportional reasoning. Even though the task required particular mathematical skills, Nikki’s emphasis throughout the activity focused on collaborative decision making and team cohesion and she seemed less interested in whether or not the students understood the proportional reasoning that was needed to solve the mathematical problem. It seems she expected some of the more proficient students to “scaffold” students experiencing difficulties with the required skills, “For some individuals, the task was quite challenging. But one of the greatest things that task does, it scaffolds. The stronger students scaffold the weaker ones” (Nikki, 2: 27).

For the two Mathematics lessons in Lucy and Nikki’s classroom, the teaching of strategies and support for students who misunderstood basic concepts was not observed. The introductions to the lessons differed in that while Lucy’s students were fully engaged in games based on mathematical strategies, Nikki’s students underwent testing in multiplication “tables”. The body of both lessons also differed in that while Lucy’s students worked their way through rotating groups such as completing worksheets or a set of unrelated problems, Nikki’s students worked in groups to solve one problem. For most of the time, both teachers were distracted from the main aim of solving the mathematical problems by such matters as the use of the English language, or the need to collaborate within a group.
Lucy said she preferred the previous curriculum (CSF) although the term planning documents included references to VELS. Nikki’s curriculum planning referred to VELS; however, her assessment planning was dominated by summative practices. The planning documentation of both teachers indicates an early transitional stage in the adoption of VELS.

4.1.1 Assessment: planning and practice

Assessment practices differed greatly between the two teachers and evidence was drawn from the large amount of assessment documentation, from their interview responses and from the videoed observations. In the interviews, Lucy’s responses were often less than confident in comparison to Nikki, who confidently spoke of assessment in contemporary terms. Yet in practice, Lucy’s confidence and developing expertise was obvious in her interactions with the students and in particular, her use of formative feedback, scaffolding techniques and teaching interventions. Her developing expertise was similarly obvious in the range of assessment documentation such as in formative annotations (see Appendix 18), class profiles, student self-assessments (see Appendix 16) and, the use of Rubrics criteria for assessed tasks. Lucy openly reflected on her “over-use” of testing in Numeracy, such as when forming “ability” groups (Lucy, 2: 26), and she said she often preferred intuitive observations of students’ learning. In recalling her assessment practice following the videoed observations, Lucy stressed her use of monitoring and observations that occurred informally in her classroom and she considered assessment an important part of her practice.

Assessment guides my teaching, something that you actually do like correcting their work. Knowing exactly what the kids can do and what they can’t do. Feedback is so important, verbal feedback all the time, and praise, knowing that they’ve done a good job (Lucy 1: 66).

In contrast, when asked to explain the terms Assessment of/for/ as Learning, Lucy faltered and found it difficult to articulate her thoughts since she said, “Assessment for Learning? Oh gosh … well probably … oh gosh … well basically guiding our teaching I guess” (Lucy, 1: 24).

Lucy’s annotated notes in Literacy comment formatively on her students’ reading progress focus on fluency, attempts at unfamiliar words, expressiveness,
re-reading and so on. Her notations in Numeracy, however, tend to focus on factual knowledge and processes rather than deep conceptual understandings. This pattern was similar in her monitoring; in Literacy, Lucy used individualised supportive scaffolding while in Numeracy she corrected the students’ work with a pen. Lucy used a great deal of praise as feedback in phrases such as, “Good, good, good” or “I like it”. In the interviews she commented on the importance of verbal feedback, for example, “I think it is just so important, just verbal feedback all the time” (Lucy, 1:66). Lucy said that she believed verbal feedback was helpful in “knowing” how to help a student and yet, while she used praise as feedback, she also had an understanding of how interactive moments may provide her with information in relation to student learning. It seems that Lucy’s understanding of the term “feedback” was generic in that it incorporated her use of praise as well as formative information gained in face-to-face interactions with the students.

Feedback tells me where I should be when I know, OK, that this child hasn’t understood something. Then I can go in a different direction. And I think it just … even when you’re discussing, when you’re sitting with the children and listening to them read or something, you can say: OK, well I know that this child needs acceleration, or this child need remedial work (1: 67).

During the videoed observations, and according to Shute’s (2008) typology, three feedback types were observed and they include Correct Response, Error flagging and, Try Again.

**1. Correct response**

The following example was captured during the Guided Writing, small group episode where on this occasion, Lucy provided Karam with an affirmation of the correct response,

Lucy: A genius. What’s a genius?

Karam: A smart person.

Lucy: Yes, a very smart person.

Use of the Correct Response feedback type was prevalent in her Numeracy lessons, and as mentioned, Lucy appeared focused on the students’ finding correct solutions or a single solution to mathematical problems. In this instance,
Lucy’s feedback focuses on the process of finding an average number and funneling Ali, the student, towards stating the correct solution,

Lucy (to Ali): How do you find the average of something? So what number do you divide by five to give you 20?

Ali: 100

Lucy: So you’ve got to find five numbers that add up to…?

Ali: 100, that’s easy.

Lucy: Yes.

2. Error flagging

Lucy occasionally flagged errors although in the following instance, she also used a prompting technique to encourage Brett, a student, to independently write the word secret

Lucy: Remember how we expanded on our sentence, that brief sentence? (Pause while Brett begins to write his sentence). Hang on before you start, what sort of lab?

Brett: Secret. Can’t write “secret”.

Lucy: Can you sound it out?


Lucy: Excellent! Dr Evil was in his secret science lab. Is that the end of the sentence? What do we put at the end? I’m going to read over it to make sure everything is spelt right. EVILL? Is that how we spell evil?

3. Try again

Lucy often used the *Try Again* feedback type when prompting the students in their learning. In this example, Lucy has used prompts to support Ahmed’s comprehension of the text he was reading during a Guided Reading episode:

Ahmed: Angie wanted to have a part.

Lucy: Not just any part. What part did she particularly want? Look through the book, what part was she waiting for?

Ahmed: Angie wanted...

Lucy: Just say it, Angie wanted…?

Ahmed: Angie wanted to have Dorothy as a part.
Nikki’s assessment practice differed from Lucy’s in that her documentation was all based on formal tests and the summative responses to the observed Numeracy task; she administered a daily multiplication tables test, and there was no evidence of verbal, formative feedback in her practice. Thus Nikki’s practice differed greatly from her claims in the interviews, and she often responded in ways she thought were consistent with the language and terminology employed in the Assessment Advice.

In recalling her assessment practice videoed during observations, Nikki focused on her apparent expertise in monitoring, the use of deep and challenging questioning, feedback skills, and her physical stance in relation to the students. She noted the lack of student self-assessment but said that normally occurred. In contrast, my observations found that her questioning was, in the main, superficial and repeated across the lesson, that she used testing, and her use of rewards was central to her teaching approach. The students earned points for task completion and task compliance and the points system culminated each week in an overall reward where winners could choose their own activity, and celebrated at the weekly meeting of all Year 5 and 6 students. Figure 3.2 is a replication of the rewards conditions of the Numeracy task that Nikki presented to her students. These conditions appeared to be non-negotiable since there was no input from the students.

### Points will be awarded for:

1. Accuracy of measurements
2. General presentation of the city
3. Quality of:
   - Clear speaking
   - Amount of information
   - Response to questions and issues that are raised
   - Use of all Tribe members in your presentation
4. The way you have worked together as a Tribe

**Figure 4.1** Numeracy task criteria
Nikki considered that assessment had to be “quantitative” because “you can measure it” and since she said “the children understand when they have achieved it and when they need to continue working (Nikki, 1: 48), this seemed to add weight to her belief that assessment requires the use of measurement and standardized achievements. On the other hand, Nikki also stressed that assessment had to be meaningful and ongoing although my observations suggest that these claims were superficial, since her actual practice verified by her assessment documentation is best described as summative rather than formative. An example of her summative assessment approach may be seen in Appendix 17, a combined peer and teacher summation of the mathematics task. Interestingly, Nikki’s focus is on the “design” of the two dimensional city rather than on the mathematical concepts that were required to complete the task.

Even though Nikki rated feedback as 10 out of 10 in importance, other than the use of rewards as a form of praise, formative feedback was not observed. Instead her comments typically focused on her interpretation of what the students had done; for example some of her comments to various students include

- You’ve done well. Perfect.
- That’s an interesting concept. If you want to interpret the houses as houseboats, that’s fine.
- Good. Well done.
- You’ve looked at this like a realistic Monopoly board.
- That’s very clever.

Nikki and Lucy held differing attitudes to diagnostic testing such as the Early Years Numeracy Interview. Nikki said she had no experience or expertise with the Interview, whereas Lucy felt that it would be helpful for the NESB students. Both teachers relied heavily on formal tests and Nikki’s assessment documentation included a great deal of numerical test results in Literacy and Numeracy. The video observations identified a daily routine of Times Tables testing where the students were expected to learn, by using rote methods, several multiplication facts and rewards were used for correct responses. Nikki espoused a view of formative assessment practice yet, in reality, her practice was characteristically based on summative processes.

Both teachers referred to the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) when planning yet in practice, the use of VELS was not obvious. Lucy said she
preferred the previous curriculum (CSF11), since it was ‘so much more simple’ and while Nikki was keen to try contemporary teaching approaches, these were not necessarily related to the curriculum.

4.1.2 Summary: Lucy and Nikki

Lucy and Nikki were paired due to the same amount of teaching experience, and coincidentally they were both eager to review the videos of their practice. Attitudes to assessment differed, as did their practice and assessment documentation. Although both taught Years 5/6, Lucy used diagnostic tests since the results provided detailed information for further teaching, whereas Nikki’s relied on formal tests and a reward system.

The two early-career teachers presented differently in interviews and in practice, and yet both were passionate teachers, keen to learn, and were at a stage in their career where new policies had the potential to inspire and motivate the development of their pedagogical expertise. Nikki held the belief that she had already adapted to the teaching and assessment advice outlined in The Blueprint, yet there was no supporting evidence that this was the case. In contrast, there was sufficient evidence to indicate that Lucy had unintentionally begun to implement parts of The Blueprint, such as Assessment for Learning, yet she was largely unaware that this was the case.

4.2 Leading Teachers: Barbara and Robert

Barbara and Robert are paired because both held Leading Teacher roles, and had similar approaches to teaching and assessment. Barbara had 23 years of teaching experience and she had been appointed as Leading Teacher to Wallaby Park five years prior to this study. Barbara taught a Year 3 class and her responsibilities included Year 3 team coordination and the school’s Mathematics curriculum. Robert had eight years teaching experience, was new to the Leading Teacher role and he taught a Year 3 and 4 class at Hakea Gardens. His Leading Teacher role included the coordination of the Year 3 and 4 team, management of the computer system, and the leadership of Information Technology across the school. What seemed important to Robert and Barbara was the esteem derived from their Leading Teacher roles even though they described the role as onerous.
and demanding, as something that took a large amount of time. Robert said daily issues in the school interrupted his usual classroom duties,

There’s not a day goes by without someone stopping me to say they have a computer problem. And most mornings I’m lucky to get to my classroom within fifteen minutes of walking in the door (Robert 1: 23).

Barbara said that her leadership role in Mathematics was “tricky” because other colleagues had similar roles such as Early Numeracy Coordination or Middle Years Coordinator,

The Maths leadership is quite tricky, you know, being in the middle ... and to facilitate the Early Years Coordinator’s needs and the Middle Years Coordinator’s needs. But finding the demarcation line of the roles is pretty tricky, and it still is sort of an ongoing process (Barbara 1:2).

The implication in the above two commentaries is that both teachers may not have been coping well with their leadership roles as well as their normal classroom duties. Barbara said that she found it difficult to collaborate and felt that the leadership roles in the school lacked definite guidelines. In relation to her guidance as a coordinator, Barbara said that in the past, the teachers in the school worked their way through text-books and that through her leadership, the mathematics teaching in the school had improved: “You know, the way I teach maths is probably different to how most others do it” (Barbara 1: 3). This was a somewhat confusing statement because the underlying implication was that Barbara felt her teaching of mathematics was superior. However, in all her lessons Barbara used a didactic, teacher-centric approach as evidenced in her she continued tendency to ask the students to supply factual answers to her questions, since the students carried out the same task at the same time, and every task was teacher-corrected. Barbara’s focus on the students’ academic performances was evident in commentaries such as,

It’s about knowing your general performance of who usually delivers, and whether they’re working at an optimum, and whether you need to ask a bit more of them (Barbara 2:9).
Teaching practice

Robert’s teaching approaches for the two observed Numeracy lessons were instructional; every student completed the same task at the same time, and Robert monitored, checked and corrected the students’ work. From my observations, Robert’s focus was on procedures, processes and on the results of a daily program\(^8\) that tested the students’ speed in knowing the answers to multiplication questions such as “four times eight”, or “two times two times six”.

Robert said he was “good” at motivating students yet both Numeracy lessons lacked the capacity to hold the children’s interest and both lessons involved lengthy task introductions where Robert’s focus was on the repetition of procedural concerns. Robert’s instructional techniques dominated and he stated his expectations for all students to achieve the same end result, and many of his instructions began with the following phrases,

- What I want to talk about ...
- I want you to tell me ....
- I’m going to ask you to ...
- I don’t want you to ...
- And I want it to be ...
- Now you need to ...

Despite Robert’s claims that he preferred to make use of open-ended tasks, the two Numeracy lessons were far from an Inquiry Learning\(^9\) approach. Even though Robert asserted that his preference was to teach in the Middle Years (Years 5-8), the videoed observations found no evidence that any of his teaching approaches were based on Inquiry Learning strategies, nor was there any evidence of open-ended tasks even though he believed that his expertise was well-developed in relation to this approach.

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The thing I am best at, are rich tasks and open-ended activities. Maths in particular, it's really good in that regard, and Reciprocal Reading, where you're not just relying on the teacher to do the majority of the controlling (Robert 2:58)

Further, there was no evidence in Robert’s literacy lessons that the students experienced Reciprocal Reading\textsuperscript{10} approaches in which students took control and managed their small group reading task. Instead, Robert engaged in teacher-led multiple, small group reading lessons. The students were grouped according to their perceived reading ability and Robert’s perceptions were based on graded results following a raft of standardized literacy tests undertaken at the start of the year. Although he referred to the lessons as \textit{Guided Reading}\textsuperscript{11}, in fact they could better be described as a Round Robin approach since the observations found that the students took turns to read aloud from the same passage of reading material. Robert interrupted the students’ reading several times to re-read aloud or to explain lengthy facts but there was little evidence to suggest that he instituted Guided Reading methods.

Similarly, Barbara referred to her small reading groups as Guided Reading but there was no observational evidence that this method was used. Instead, the students read aloud as Round Robin and Barbara directed the students’ reading behaviours and actions. Similar to Robert she interrupted several times to re-read, impose a large amount of factual information, or to flag errors. Every group read from the same non-fiction text, \textit{Australia’s National and Marine Parks}, and it was clear the text was beyond the capabilities of many of the students. Barbara later explained that all the students needed the factual information for a forthcoming classroom project. Even though she was aware that many of the students experienced various difficulties with the reading the passages in the book, she stressed the importance of the students familiarity with the content. In the hearing of her students, Barbara addressed the camera to explain the reason for using the book.

\textsuperscript{10} State of Victoria. (2001a). \textit{Literacy and Learning in the Middle Years: Major Report on the Middle Years Literacy Project}. Deakin University, Faculty of Education Consultancy and Development Unit, Department of Education, Employment and Training Victoria.
Well that was a bit challenging for that group. That was our third standard group. But the content of this will set up the ‘Expert research’ groups. And so while it was a bit challenging, it’s important they become a bit familiar with the text. (B1).

One of the main similarities in the teaching approaches used by Barbara and Rob was that they appeared to take on “steering” role since they provided a number of instructions and, they expected the students to comply. For example, both teachers used long sequences of factual questioning interspersed with explicit tasks directions and, both teachers stated the expected end result of the task. A key noticeable difference however was that Barbara’s students were acquiescent and completed their tasks with very little peer-peer communication while Robert’s students were often distracted, playful, and at times unruly.

Despite Robert’s multiple explanations in the Numeracy lesson many of the students were confused and required Robert to re-explain. The task required the students to select items from shopping catalogues that added to $10,000, or within $5.00 of that amount. The students needed knowledge of rounding-off, estimation, addition and subtraction of three digit numbers yet none of these processes were mentioned in the lesson introduction. Instead his instructions included the following

- I want you to purchase a minimum of 10 items
- You can share with a partner. How much can you have if you join with a partner?
- If you combine with a partner, your maximum change is still $5.00.

The students’ confusion was in part due to the over-lengthy explanations as well as the expectation of conceptual development beyond their scope. Robert continually referred to the task as being concerned with decimals and money and he didn’t seem to realise that money is not decimal notation.

Barbara’s Numeracy task involved the use of a calculator, estimation, rounding off, and the subtraction of three digits although, several students were confused and unsure of how to proceed. Barbara was not concerned with the students’ confusion and instead she focused on the use of a “strategy” to ensure an advantage over the partner. She asked questions such as whether or not they
understood the task requirements and on every occasion, the students all answered with a “Yes”. The following excerpt has been transcribed from the video and indicates Barbara’s instructional method, her focus on one solution, and the students’ responses.

Barbara: What you’re going to do is an activity that involves the calculator. You have to select a number from Group A and put it into your calculator, better still put it into your brain calculator ... and you have to subtract a number that you select from Group B ... and the difference will be your score. Everyone get that so far?

Students: Yes

Barbara: You strike out those numbers and then it will be your partner’s turn. Everyone understand so far?

Students: Yes

Barbara: Can you think of some strategies of what you need to do? Only a few people with their hands up. Five people have already put themselves in a situation of advantage. And we’re not going to pick your brain. We haven't got enough people thinking ... (more explanations) Does everyone get it? ... Does everyone understand? Rightio, what’s the target? The most number of points or the least number of points? Phoebe?

Phoebe: The most.

Barbara: Right, the most number (DVD:B3).

Barbara referred to the task as a *game* and told the students they were “savvy” if they scored an advantage but she ignored students who needed assistance. Later, in her reflection of the lesson she commented favourably on those who were “savvy” and she dismissed students who were unable to understand the task.

some students are savvy now to the fact that if we’re playing a game, there’s not going to be the randomness that might be first apparent. If they used a rounding off technique they would obviously be able to identify all the three point chances. See I reckon that was demonstrated in the DVD. And there'll be those that got it and those that you know, [it] just passes them by (2: 28).

Barbara claimed that the students had “done a lot of subtraction algorithms” and didn’t admit or realise that the task required complex three-digit subtraction processes that may have been beyond some children. Instead, her focus was on her perception of the competitive nature of the task and the academic attributes of some students, because she said the students were “academically very proud and very competitive” (Barbara 2: 19).
Throughout the Numeracy and Literacy lesson in both Barbara’s and Robert’s classrooms it was clear that the tasks were beyond the scope of many of the students yet they both persisted in pursuing a finished product. They both made several judgmental comments in relation to the students but lacked the capacity to assess their learning needs, and also to adjust the tasks and their teaching approaches to cater for the diversity of needs. Barbara, for example, was very focused on standards and in her Numeracy lessons, students who didn’t finish the task within the time limit, continued to work through their recess break until it was completed to her requirements.

There’s some accountability about a standard to be achieved and if that’s not met then they know that the consequence will be that they have to repeat the task to they’ll have to stay in at playtime and finish it off (2:13).

Barbara’s students received her approval and reward points for task completion and saw it as her role to approve or disapprove of the students’ work efforts, and is evident in her comment, “The students know when they do a good job. We tell them when they are, and we tell them when they’re not” (1:18).

Similarly, Robert made several judgmental remarks, and several occasions he paused in his teaching to address the camera to loudly say that “Tom” (student) was “reluctant” to complete tasks, “That’s a reluctant learner. It’s not about not knowing, it’s about not wanting to. So he’s going to stall and take forever” (DVD: R2). Robert also said within the hearing of his students that one of his students was a “natural mathematician” because her responses to the Times Tables Challenge test questions were always accurate and speedy and, he said that this form of testing was important, ”because you don’t want to have to be figuring out what eight times six is and taking five minutes to do it when you have to work out 86 times four” (Robert 2:28).

4.2.1 Assessment: planning and practice

Barbara provided samples of formal tests and test records and portfolio assessment tasks whereas Robert overlooked providing any samples and their interviews indicated that they considered that assessment’s sole function was summative. Similarly, the classroom observations found that in both cases,
factual questioning tested the students’ recall and as mentioned, Robert’s students undertook the daily tables test. Barbara said that I hadn’t “seen assessment time” in that I hadn’t observed any of the scheduled testing.

It wasn’t assessment time; it was the beginning of a Unit time. We’d been on school camp in terms of what we would do in a main assessment time ... because you didn’t see a whole host of what we do ... and that’s just the issue of when you were available (Barbara 2:5).

Barbara believed that many of her assessments were “worthwhile” and provided information in relation to achievements.

Assessment has to be relevant, accurate, and informative and offer some sort of direction for future learning and offer the opportunity for everyone to take stock of what has been achieved and what needs to happen. We were warned by the principal to not put too many things in the portfolio and we did way too many things and we’re trying to get smarter about the variety we’re putting in and making sure each piece is properly worthwhile (Barbara 1:19).

Despite her capacity to describe the relevance of assessment, there was no indication that she used formative assessment. Moreover, Barbara was unable to identify or recall any assessment strategies in her practice and instead, she avoided the first question in her second interview, “Oh, mostly informal, routine, everyday sort of ones. There wasn’t formal assessment done over the process of those DVDs” (Barbara 1:1). When asked to describe a stand-out assessment strategy she generally uses, Barbara described her tendency to be “opportunistic” and she elaborated in terms of her expertise. By focusing attention on her perceived expertise, she avoided the question and instead focused on decision-making abilities rather than recalling specific assessment strategies, “I’m fairly ready to change a planned program, you know, to deviate if it looks like it’s going to be particularly useful and valuable” (Barbara 2:3).

Robert also had difficulties in recognizing his actual assessment practice captured in the videos even though the daily testing provided a clear indication. Barbara and Robert flagged errors in the students’ work but they didn’t seem to realize they were assessing the students’ work in order to re-teach or to correct with brief comments. Even though the teachers had been provided with a viewing guide to assist while watching the videos, both were nonplussed by the
recall questions and Robert said, when asked to describe one of his assessment strategies he said,

Drawing blank to be honest, at this point of [sic] time (Robert 2: 3).

When asked if he had noticed an assessment strategy he was proud of, and that he usually undertakes, he said that assessment is “walking around the class” and, he also said “I don’t know that there's any that stands out to me. For me, the assessment strategy itself is walking around the class” (Robert 2:4).

Robert’s description of key features of assessment (first interview) emphasised the importance of testing and benchmarking. He said that student self-assessment was concerning with one-, two- or three-star ratings but that the students usually gave themselves a lower ranking than his ranking. Robert said that student self-assessment was concerned with confidence, “So it’s about their confidence and boosting enthusiasm at the same time, so that’s definitely important” (Robert 1:60).

In relation to diagnostic testing, and in particular the Early Years Numeracy Interview (EYNI), Barbara and Robert held divergent views. Robert said he was a “fan of it” although there was no evidence that he used it. Barbara’s response was scathing in that she claimed the EYNI was mathematically invalid, a massive impost on time, and inappropriate and inaccurate.

We didn’t get anything like the value of it that we should have; it was a lost opportunity ... and the presumptions that it makes ... and even when we high-jacked the hardware and took it to the next question ... the computer hardware wouldn’t let us record the message ... it just doesn’t give a professional process to be a bit creative with it ... and that was really annoying ... I haven’t used it for a while and I wouldn’t bother either (Barbara 2:31).

Barbara’s attitude aligned with her prior comments concerning tensions in the school’s leadership and also in her invested interests in the school’s benchmark testing program, which she had designed and implemented across the school. However, Barbara claimed that she didn’t “grade” the students, “Grading, no, we don’t, we deliberately don’t” (Barbara 1:28). However, the Literacy lessons all involved ability grouping, and she said these were formed based on the results of reading and spelling tests; the groups were publicly labelled as the following,
Barbara said that since two top reading groups were indistinguishable they undertook a spelling test and those who scored well were placed in the Top group. She was unconcerned that reading and spelling require different knowledge and skills and instead she justified her actions in terms of test results.

All of them did really good comprehension and reading scores. I had 15 students who had perfect test reading scores and so the only way to separate them was to place the good spellers in the top group. So spelling became a focus for the second group. I told them all they were above the expected standard (Barbara 2: 8).

Similarly, Robert used ability grouping for literacy based according to the aggregation of test results. Colours were used to as group names but in the classroom, and in the students’ hearing, he used terms such as “top end” group or “middle” group. He claimed that students had “deficits” and that it was his role to fix them.

I might have been working on a group and I want them to look at pronouns, make links between the character’s name and then the he/she. They’re aware of it; that might already be an identified weakness. I might be looking for skills that they’re missing and each of the groups is different. And they’re actually grouped not according to ability but according to deficit. I’m looking for what they’re missing. What can I put in; how can I help them solve that problem? (Robert 2: 1).

Not only did Robert identify deficits he also believed that students had strengths and weaknesses and that it was appropriate to say to a student: “Ok, you’re doing this task. This is your strength, but there’s still a weakness here” (Robert 2:3).

Robert considered that students’ learning was measurable, and defined by boundaries since he said: “I think it’s really important to pre-test so you know where they’re coming from and where they finish. That’s a real key to your reporting” (Robert 1: 83). This belief is evidenced in the amount of numerical data of several mathematics tests placed in a spreadsheet arrangement (see Appendix 12). In regard to reporting to parents, Robert considered himself as fully accountable and that his opinion was crucial to the reports.
I think the teacher's opinion because they know the students. You know exactly what they’re on about. Where they’re coming from; what their weaknesses are. I think I could write a report off the top of my head without even looking at my data. And then go back and say: Yes, ticked all those boxes. You’ve just got to know your kids; that’s vital (1: 76).

**Feedback**

Across the two cases formative feedback was not observed. In the interviews, they both rated feedback highly but did not apply their opinion to their practice. Barbara made no comment on feedback but Robert considered it to be a one-way interaction and, he said,

You've got to give them feedback. You've got to be able to talk to them. And they've got to know you are genuinely concerned for what's going on with them and what they need to do to improve. And they're not going to listen to you otherwise (1: 89).

Robert roved while the students completed their tasks and spent a great deal of time with just a few students using re-teaching and repeated instructions for the task. Gabi for instance, misunderstood the instructions and it was clear she didn’t understand the concept of rounding off to the nearest $5.00. Robert was more concerned with her starting the task and the finished product and he was unaware that the task was beyond her capabilities.

Robert to Gabi: Gabi, what don’t you understand? Do you understand cutting and pasting? What are you worried about? You know about having a go. Just do your best. It doesn’t matter if you don’t get it right the first time. That's good sometimes. If you get it wrong, you start again. You learn from your mistakes. Everybody learns, even me. You find a TV in the catalogue, or a bag, or shoes.

Gabi: I don't get the five dollar bit.

Robert: I want you to spend ten thousand dollars. Try and get close to ten thousand dollars. But if you don’t, it’s OK.

Gabi: But what about the five dollars?

Robert: It's about adding up accurately and how to spend money. You've got to budget. Don't worry about the five dollars. Just get close to ten thousand (DVD: R2)

In Barbara's lessons, there was a large amount of publicly announced error flagging. One-to-one interactions were rare and when they occurred, Barbara focused on re-teaching or correcting errors. Using Shute's (2008) feedback typology altogether, the following feedback types were identified and tallied.

Correct Response: 18 occurrences, for example,
Barbara to Gemma: How is our data organised? Gemma?

Gemma: In graphs or tables

Barbara to Gemma: In graphs or tables (B2)

Error flagging: 11 occurrences, for example,

Barbara to Tom: If the principal came in and looked at your work, would he be able to interpret it?

Tom: No.

Barbara to Tom: How could you help the principal interpret your graph?

Tom: No response (B2)

Try Again: 3 occurrences. The following example shows that Barbara expected Adam to repeat his work after flagging his error,

Barbara to Adam: I’m wanting to see if you can accurately table the information. Whether you can represent the information we’ve come up with in some sort of format so that someone can look over your shoulder and see a graph or a table that represents all of that. Adam looks like he’s going to be repeating his work. This list gives us information but it’s in data format, so if you keep writing the list Adam, you’re going to repeat it. I want it represented in a visual way with labels and headers on it so that someone who comes into the room will have a good idea of what everyone thought about those activities (B2).

Praise and rewards were given sparingly as a form of approval and usually to the same students while many students were ignored, Barbara explained her use of rewards as something the students were “responsive” to and, she said,

I use a smiley face sticker and they know exactly how big the smile is and the little grumble face and all the rest of it. That goes on everything, and they’re very responsive to it (Barbara 1:28)

The threat of punitive measures if work was not completed, appeared to compel the students to complete their tasks and several students seemed anxious to complete their tasks in the given time. Barbara didn’t appear aware that the time taken to provide the task instructions was overly long and reduced the students’ actual time to complete the task.

4.2.2 Summary: Barbara and Robert

Barbara and Robert were paired due to their status as Leading Teachers and even though they stressed their status, their attitudes and pedagogic practices demonstrated an abrogation of their roles. Both teachers were of the opinion that their teaching expertise was well-developed yet data confirms that instead, they used: instructional methods; there was a lack of stimulating resources;
there was no consideration for motivational strategies; ongoing judgments focused on their perceptions of students’ abilities; and there was a lack of concern or awareness of students’ learning needs.

Barbara and Robert seemed to consider assessment only in terms of the summative function and this was evident in their practice as well as their interview commentaries. Their attitudes to change were similar in that they saw no need to modify their assessment practice and they firmly believed that what they were doing was exemplary. This may in part explain their lack of interest in, and dismissiveness of, The Blueprint. Although since they had leadership roles, there was a responsibility that required a professional attitude that demonstrated a willingness to adapt to the changes outlined in this initiative.

4.3 Experienced teachers: Helen and Ann

Helen and Ann were paired together since they both were experienced teachers and each had close to 20 years of teaching experience. Helen taught a Year 1 & 2 class at Wallaby Park and Ann had a Year 3 & 4 class at Hakea Gardens. Helen said she would like to gain a Leading Teacher position, possibly as a Literacy Coordinator. Ann said her career option was to remain a generalist classroom teacher and that she loved to teach Literacy and she said, “Literacy's always been my strength, especially Reading. I used to love reading a story and then innovating on it or just doing some activities from the book” (Ann 1: 8).

Helen and Ann had participated in a large number of professional learning programs focused on the prior government initiative, the Early Years Strategy, and they were highly experienced in the teaching and assessment approaches. For both teachers, these strategies were an important feature of their assessment practice. Helen carried out a Running Records diagnostic test during the observations and she said it was a daily occurrence in her practice. Ann also said she used Running Records frequently and that she trusted the diagnostic features of the test. Similarly, both teachers frequently used the Early Years Numeracy Interview. Ann said she particularly favoured the Growth Points because they provided information for the formation of her small group Numeracy teaching.
Helen provided details of her participation in the Professional Leave\textsuperscript{12} program; she said she had investigated a number of reporting to parents systems in various schools and she had also researched a commercial Spelling program that she considered appropriate for the school. Helen praised the program and she felt there was adequate time to instigate changes in the school.

I was interested in taking Professional Leave and was highly encouraged by my principal, and in doing that we met the needs of the school. We had the time to write properly, we had time to research properly, we had time to trial it, go back, change it, bring it back to staff and everyone had input into it. And it was wonderful (Helen 1: 44).

In relation to professional development focused on The Blueprint, Ann had participated in one on-site program concerning the online reporting system and Helen had participated in a three-day training course to become a PoLT trainer. Helen had already presented on-site PoLT training and she said that because three of the principles had been “covered”, the school had implemented the strategies, “We actually had to come back and do PD on PoLT with our staff, and so we’ve covered Principles 1, 2 and 6 already” (Helen 1:14). However, Helen was disappointed with the three-day PoLT course since her explanation focused on the lack of support in managing the in-service in the school.

We should not be expected to do the train the trainer model in all aspects. I think it’s very difficult for teachers to go out and have professional development and then come back and present it in the same way as the professional presenter. I think our team did a very good job in presenting PoLT but we were not given the preparation time to manage the program (Helen 2: 127).

\textit{Teaching practice}

Although Helen and Ann had both participated in a number of similar Early Years professional development programs, their teaching approaches differed substantially. Helen’s approach was didactic, controlling, and not overly stimulating since on several occasions groups of students were distracted. There was an expectation for student compliance and on several occasions the boys were admonished for what she considered to be noisy or unruly behaviour. For

\textsuperscript{12} Professional Leave Program: availed through The Blueprint funding. Teachers took 6-10 weeks leave from their normal duties to pursue professional learning that brought benefits to their school’s priorities for improvement.
example, she persisted in using phrases to control behaviour including the following instructions.

- Thank you to those sitting on bottoms, you are doing exactly the right thing
- I want you to cross your legs and pay attention to the front
- Sit up straight
- Hands on heads and listen
- You’re doing this now
- Eyes to me. *Children's response: Eyes to you*
- I’m just looking at all the good things you are doing.

In one of the Numeracy lesson, students who completed their written worksheets satisfactorily were permitted to play freely in the ‘shop corner’. Helen seemed unaware of the learning the students experienced as they played with toy money and grocery items: instead she admonished “noisy” play. The organisation of the two Numeracy lessons revolved around two groups: the Grade Ones and the Grade Twos who completed the more advanced worksheets. The approach centred on *closed answer* problems where only one pre-determined solution was possible.

In contrast, Ann's Numeracy lesson involved an open-ended problem, which was preceded by a game where all children had the opportunity to succeed. The problem involved the construction of a model Leadbeater possum according to specified criteria based on real-life dimensions and weight. The students chose their own construction materials, used a range of measurement devices such as spring balances and measuring tapes, and moved freely around the classroom to accomplish their task. Unlike the students in Helen's class, every student was engrossed in their task, and freely communicated with their peers and with their teacher. Ann showed great interest in the students’ model-making and their measuring skills, and she used comments and questions in individualised interactions such as,

- Can you show me what you did?
- How much does your possum weigh? What is the actual weight meant to be?
- Your possum is looking good. Has he got eyes and feet?
- Oh dear, your possum is under-nourished.

For the Literacy lessons, both teachers followed the Early Years Literacy approach that began with share time to introduce the topic and tasks, small
group activities and focused teaching, ending with share time that focused on the students’ learning and task products. Helen also undertook tightly structured Spelling lessons based on Gentry\(^{13}\) phases of Spelling outlined in a program that she had introduced to the school (see Appendix 10). While Helen’s Literacy lessons were formally structured and appeared to run like clockwork, the students seemed to be just following directions rather than demonstrating levels of interest and motivation. Ann on the other hand used various motivational techniques to capture her students’ interest such as reading from a booklet that students had created and collated using *Who am I?* poetry that contained the students’ clues so that others could guess the name of an animal. At the close of each of Ann’s Literacy lessons, she led discussions that focused on the task, their responses and what they thought they had learnt.

Differences were apparent in the teachers’ techniques in Guided Reading. Helen took a business-like approach and she said that for one group she was monitoring fluency and expression (see Appendix 20) and she believed that learning to read was concerned with “moving” through levels or stages.

> This group has just become fluent, comprehension especially. This group’s been very slow at moving each stage all the way through, so definitely the fluency and the comprehension of the text (Helen 2: 12).

Ann was similarly focused on fluency and comprehension in the Guided Reading groups. However, as she explained it, she was interested in whether or not the students were gaining meaning from their reading. At several points, the videos show Ann getting close to the student and asking specific questions or asking for the student to re-read small sections of the text. These interactions appeared to scaffold learning and affirmed to the student that Ann was acting as a guide as they practised their reading, rather than as an instructor. Ann explained this technique as being “connected” to the child and that she monitored by tracking and observing eye movements.

\(^{13}\) Gentry, J. R. (2001) Teaching Spelling in the 21st Century  
While Helen’s students were given specific text parts to read out loud and in turn, Ann’s students selected their own part of the text to read. As they read, Ann closely monitored, she said this was to ensure they understood what they were reading aloud and she said, “When I feel a child’s understood, we have a little chat about the text so I can check they understood the meanings of all the words and that they are not just barking at print” (Ann 2: 65).

Overall, Ann’s lessons held a vibrancy and flow that was not as evident in Helen’s classroom. Both teachers took a highly structured approach yet while Ann’s students were invited to participate in tasks and activities and to celebrate new learning during share time, Helen was focused on the norms of behaviour and the expected task outcomes rather than on stimulating learning experiences for her students.

4.3.1 Assessment: planning and practice

Helen and Ann were equally thorough with assessment as seen in the large variety of documentation and by their focused commentaries in the interviews. Their documentation processes were similar in that the samples they provided included formal tests and numerical test data, portfolio assessment tasks, annotated checklists, learning plans for individual students, Early Numeracy Interview profiles, and Running Records. Helen provided samples of portfolio tasks and assessments (see Appendices 13-14) and she said that as team leader, her role was to ensure the teaching team complied with ensuring all portfolio tasks were completed. Additionally, Helen enthusiastically described the school-generated mathematics benchmark tests that were undertaken twice yearly, she felt the results provided key information in relation to the children’s learning (see Appendix 11). The portfolio tasks and the benchmark tests were clearly described in the Yearly Assessment Schedule (see Appendix 21) and Helen didn’t seem to be overly aware of the large amount of testing that was expected of the Year 1 and 2 students.

Helen preferred the use of pre-tests and tests and she rated them as nine out of a possible 10, and even though she graded the results she rated grading as slightly lower in importance, at eight out of 10. Of the school’s testing schedule for
Mathematics, she said the coordinator had generated tests based on the CSF benchmarks and that they showed “weaknesses” (see Appendix 11) and, she said, “What they don’t know, we can re-teach and consolidate their understandings. So that helps our maths groups as well” (Helen 1: 64).

Helen’s testing at the start of the year provided results for her Literacy groups although as mentioned in Numeracy the students were grouped according to their Grade. She said that the Numeracy grouping arrangements were based on what had been “covered” in the curriculum and she said that because she was the Coordinator she knew what the “Preps didn’t do last year and what they need to cover” (Helen 2:35).

Helen’s approach to grouping students for Numeracy differed from her approach in Literacy where she believed students were working at their level. In describing her strategy for forming the Literacy groups, she revealed her beliefs about learning, and that it was about “moving” students onward from one level to the next.

The Running Records dictate the grouping arrangements and I look at all the criteria including comprehension. My observations of them and my questioning, the work I’m getting from them, the depth of response from them. And not just barking at print because I think comprehension’s a real issue. So we’ve been going out rather than shooting them up, we don’t want to move them up too quickly, but make sure they’re really solid before moving them on (Helen 2: 11).

Initially, Ann also said that testing was very important “You need to assess at the start, know where the children are at, before moving on. And then assess towards the end so you know if they got there. So pre-testing and post testing are important” (Ann 1:56). However, further into the interviews, Ann revealed her dissatisfaction with specific tests such as the statewide testing system Assessment Improvement Monitor (AIM), because she felt it was a waste of time and some formal tests were traditionally scheduled in her school (see Appendices 7-9). Alternatively, she preferred individualised assessments and that she likes using Rubrics, since they provide clear “goals and expectations” (Ann 1:56).
In relation to the recognition and identification of assessment strategies captured by the videos, Helen said she noticed she had administered a Running Record, that she had made roving observations. She was particularly pleased with her checklist annotations for the Reading groups that she said she “got the idea from a colleague” (see Appendix 20). The videos also captured a large amount of written and verbal correction. However, Helen didn’t identify these as forms of assessment.

When Ann was asked to describe assessment strategies she had noticed in her videos initially her descriptions were indirect, for example,

Well really a lot of it, most of it, was observation, direct observation of what the children were doing. And having some sheets handy to quickly jot down notes but a lot of it is mental notes that I record later (Ann 2: 1).

Ann also said she recalled a student self-assessment based on criteria (see Appendix 15) as well as her monitoring of the students’ Literacy tasks (see Appendix 19). As the second interview progressed, Ann’s responses became confident and more descriptive such as when she commented on her strategies she used in the Guided Reading episodes for example,

The frog story... the students were telling me how they understood the story and we had meaningful discussions. There were good insights then. Callum spoke about frogs he had seen in Queensland. I was checking to see they were all focused, reading for meaning, self-correcting, monitoring their reading and acknowledging punctuation. I noticed that Mark was drifting off, barking at text, so I cued him in to get him back on track, then he read really well (Ann 2: 7).

Even though both teachers were equally thorough in documenting their assessment practice, Ann stood out as having the capacity to recognise and comment on specific assessment strategies captured in the videos. In contrast, while Helen spoke confidently about assessment in the interviews, she only recognised some of her strategies, and failed to mention obvious actions such as her verbal and written correction.
Formative feedback

Both teachers said that feedback was very important and while Helen rated it as eight of a possible 10, Ann rated it as nine out of 10 and she said, “I think feedback to the students is the number one thing” (Ann 1: 56). The videoed observations confirmed this belief since there were several instance of face-to-face interactions involving the use of formative feedback. Analysis of the instances identified combination of questioning, prompting, verification and the use of scaffolded approaches. Ann’s use of questioning sought to stimulate deeper thinking and she expected the students to respond with relevant explanations in relation to how the task was completed. For example, in the numeracy task where the students made a model of a real-life possum, Ann asked questions with the following beginnings such as “Can you show me...” and, “How did you...”. The observed effect was that the students were engaged in a discussion of their understandings of the task requirements and the expected outcome.

In an example captured during Literacy, the students were asked specific questions in relation to their brochure concerning Healesville Sanctuary including such as “Where does this pathway go?” Ann’s questioning approaches opened several interactive instances with the students and focused on the assessment criteria for tasks. In the Guided Reading episodes, Ann’s feedback focused directly on reading strategies, for example, in the following exchange with Mark, Ann verified that he knew the meaning and context of the words entire and emerge.

Ann: Do you know what entire means?
Mark: Yes, their whole life.
Ann: Their whole life, keep reading ... Ok, so emerge is?
Mark: Come out.
Ann: Yes, that's good (DVD: A1)

In each episode, Ann’s use of feedback was formative in that she used the information for further teaching. It was also unique in each episode since it depended on specific student needs as well as the context of the required learning, such as in the use of measurement tools, or in relevant reading skills.
By way of contrast, even though Helen rated feedback highly, her practice belied the rating, since interactions captured in the videos focused on corrections and errors rather than on existing understandings and scaffolded teaching. Helen's feedback strategies were clear in the videos and these were aligned with Shute’s (2008) feedback typology’s including:

- Correct response: verbally and on multiple occasions
- Error flagging in comments and phrases such as: You should have… What’s wrong here? You need to write…. 
- Re-teaching when students’ first written response was incorrect, Helen re-explained the process required to obtain a correct solution
- Try again: students were required to repeat part of a task to adjust errors or incorrect solutions.

Helen also used praise and admonishments as a form of behaviour management and was weighted favourably towards the girls who appeared to be more compliant than the boys. For example, Helen used the following phrases to indicate her disapproval and in this respect, she fed back information to the student about their social behaviours.

- Boys are you being sensible or silly? You need to stop and think about it.
- Connor, you’re on a warning now: you are interrupting us again.

Admonishments directed towards the boys were commonplace and the following exchange between a Year 2 boy, Ben, and Helen shows her concern for what she considered to be acceptable behaviour.

Helen: Ben, I want you to look at me, I want you to turn around and look at me. During this session, I saw you running, I saw you walking off as I was speaking to you. Do you think your behaviour is appropriate? You’re on a warning OK? You’re on a warning now (DVD: H1).

Praise and rewards were also used although on every occasion, girls were the recipients. At the end of lessons, the Best Group was awarded smiley stickers and a Happy Cloud poster. In every case, behaviour was the focus rather than task criteria, Helen said for example, “Good thinking, Mandy” and, “Best group award goes to these three girls because they worked and read beautifully”.

4.3.2 Summary: Helen and Ann

Helen and Ann were paired together due to their similar teaching backgrounds yet they demonstrated very dissimilar career aspirations and teaching and assessment approaches. Helen appeared very focused towards gaining a promotion to Leading Teacher yet, her leadership style appeared resolute even when her team members requested changes to the teaching team's assessment decisions, “Sometimes we as a team make changes to our planning and I do make the changes that they are requesting. Other times I have to say ‘No, I’ve listened to what you have said but this (a portfolio assessment task) is important, we can’t change it” (Helen 1: 53).

Observations found that Helen's teaching was based on an instructional, transmissive approaches and on many occasions she appeared to have an inflexible attitude to modifying tasks for her students that may have had differentiated learning needs. By contrast, Ann's teaching approaches appeared flexible and focused on the immediate learning needs of the students. Ann's use of formative strategies such as formative feedback and scaffolded teaching were noticed in several interactive moments with individual students and in her use of annotations. Overall, the students in Helen’s classroom worked through their tasks in almost a clockwork-like manner and Helen strived to ensure tasks were completed to her satisfaction. Ann on the other hand accepted and acknowledged her students’ efforts in their learning while continuing to provide encouragement and stimulating challenges.

The two teachers both indicated a high level of interest in assessment and while Helen believed she had already practised the practices outlined in The Blueprint, Ann was largely unaware that her practices were in line with The Blueprint. Helen was a PoLT leader, yet the training had not succeeded in altering her attitudes towards assessment, nor had she changed her practice. This suggests that in the case of these two experienced teachers, The Blueprint missed the opportunity to acknowledge their existing expertise and, to build on this expertise to ensure the teachers had the confidence to pursue changes to their daily practice.
Policy and Practice

This section presents an analysis across the six cases of assessment practices, attitudes to assessment, and understandings of assessment practice. The case study portraits above in sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 entailed detailed descriptions of the six teachers’ actual assessment practice in relation to their interview commentaries, and classroom observations. This part of the chapter comprises three parts and the first of these reports on assessment practices across cases (4.4). The second part presents the results concerning responses to The Blueprint in relation to communications and professional learning (4.5). Next are the reports on the analysis of how The Blueprint was negotiated by the teachers and principals including attitudes to change and the impact of The Blueprint on assessment practice (4.6). The chapter closes with a brief summary (4.7).

4.4 Assessment practices: across cases

This section will begin with the principals’ views on assessment in their respective schools, including areas for improvement (4.4.1). Next, the teachers’ ideas are expanded upon to include prior professional influences; their opinions of key features of assessment; their attitudes to trialling new ideas; their needs or wishes; and their interpretations of the terms Assessment of/ for/ as Learning (4.4.2). The section concludes with a brief summary (4.4.3).

4.4.1 The principals: views of assessment across the four schools

Data for analysis was drawn from the principals’ responses to three questions and even though initially asked, none of the principals provided any evidence of policies specifically addressing assessment in their respective schools. The three interview questions include,

- Can you describe the assessment practices commonly used by the teachers in your school.
- What improvements to assessment practice would you prefer to occur in your school?
- What is the extent of uptake of the Assessment Advice in your school?
In responding to the first question, the four principals all commented on the prevalence of testing and one principal mentioned “summative and formative tests” although he didn’t elaborate on this unusual terminology (see table 4.1).

Without exception, the principals considered that assessment practices in their schools required improvement and their commentaries are summarized in Table 4.1. Interestingly, the principals all focused on specific assessment tools as the means to improve the teachers’ practice and not considered was the professional support required to make changes. Moreover, the focus on tools also excluded the need for an overall strategic plan although Barry mentioned the need for consistency across the school. Barry also mentioned that the Assistant Principal in his school was generating an assessment schedule but it only contained itemized tests and excluded a visionary statement and achievable goals through the use of a variety of assessment practices. Keith’s response was very supportive of his teachers’ efforts in assessment and enthusiastically described the various types of testing procedures. Even though he said that no improvements were necessary, incongruently he wanted more teachers to include students’ opinions such as in student self-assessment.

Table 4.1   Principals: assessment across the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Existing assessment practices</th>
<th>Suggestions for improvements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keith</td>
<td>Summative practices, e.g., pre- and post-tests; standardized tests; diagnostic tests; Teacher-devised tests</td>
<td>No improvements in required in the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>Diagnostic tests, Formal tests</td>
<td>Consistency across the school Use of assessment to inform teaching Higher student learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip</td>
<td>A range: checklists, notes, summative and formative tests</td>
<td>Student feedback: post-test, for teachers to listen to student feedback on the test result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin</td>
<td>Formal tests</td>
<td>Reduce amount of tests Increase strategic observations Be aware of differing learning styles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results shown in Table 4.1 indicate that various tests were prevalent and to gain a picture of their views on the uptake of the Assessment Advice, the principals were asked to describe the extent to which they were used in their respective schools (see table 4.2). Keith and Barry declared their lack of awareness of the component, two principals said it had partly been taken up and the fourth said that uptake in his school was high. It is therefore surprising that given their leadership duties, two of the principals were unaware of the component and one stated that the Assessment Advice had been partly taken up by classroom teachers in his school.

Table 4.2 Principals: uptake of Assessment Advice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Uptake of Assessment Advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keith</td>
<td>No uptake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unaware of the Assessment Advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>Part uptake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unaware of the Assessment Advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip</td>
<td>High uptake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assumed good uptake due to an on-site “presentation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin</td>
<td>Part uptake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The career-minded teachers have engaged with the Assessment Advice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.2 Across case: assessment practice

Results for this section are derived from interviews, classroom observations and the teachers’ documentation, taking into consideration the teachers’ views and attitudes toward assessment as well as actual practice. The section opens with the influences of prior professional learning on existing assessment practice. This was an important result, since the teachers were very aware that their preferred assessment practices had been shaped by their prior learning opportunities. Next, is a comparison of the teachers’ views of key features of assessment and their actual practice including their assessment documentation. The alignments provide verification while contrasts show anomalies between
what the teachers said and what was observed in the video recordings. To follow is an analysis of the teachers’ attitudes towards trialling assessment including the extent of support provided for experimentation with new strategies. This part of the analysis also includes the teachers’ willingness to access and use the VELS curriculum support materials provided online by the education department. Next are the responses to the question regarding an assessment “wish list” and the results are indicative of the teachers’ ideas of what might be possible. Then the results of the teachers’ prioritised assessment strategies are included to show the rated responses to various assessment strategies. Since The Blueprint had introduced an approach to assessment based on for/of/as learning, the teachers’ interpretations are reported. Even though details of the teachers’ usage of formative feedback were reported in the case study portraits, the results are summarized to provide an overall picture of how formative feedback was used across cases. Finally, since the teachers used questions to assess student knowledge, their strategies have been collated and reported.

Influences of professional learning on existing assessment practice

In the first interview, the teachers were asked to rate and prioritise prior professional influences on developments in their assessment practices and the results are summarized in Table 4.3. The choices included off-site professional learning programs and large-scale conferences, personal research and professional reading, through contact with peers and colleagues on-site and in network meetings, and on-site professional learning programs. The results do not show identifiable patterns but instead highlight variations in opinions and this strongly suggests that teachers have various, preferred means of learning.

Table 4.3 Teachers’ preferred options for professional learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Off-site PD</th>
<th>Personal research</th>
<th>Peers</th>
<th>On-site PD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Key features of assessment, observations and documentation**

The teachers were asked to describe two or three key features of assessment and their responses have been aligned with classroom observations of their actual practice as well as their assessment documentation (see table 4.4) plus the summarized data supports explanations of how the teachers’ commentaries were aligned with their practice.

There are three significant results in relation to the teachers’ opinions of key features of assessment. The first is that the majority commented on the tools of assessment rather than purposes or functions. Secondly, without exception, the teachers all stressed the importance of testing, and this was confirmed by the dominance of test samples and test records in their assessment documentation. Thirdly, in the main, teachers’ opinions of key features differed substantially from classroom observations although Ann and Lucy both stressed the importance of feedback and this was observed in their practice. The majority of practices were aligned with classroom observations. Ann, for example, mentioned the importance of feedback, and this was observed in her practice and further confirmed by her annotations. Robert emphasised tests and the videos confirmed that this also involved daily testing. Helen noted the importance of testing and this was confirmed by observations such as in her spelling lessons and, the high prevalence of tests, test schedules and test records in her documents. Lucy mentioned that she considered the correction of student work was important and feedback and, this was matched the observations in that Lucy used both verbal and written corrections on several occasions.

Nikki and Barbara mentioned the quantifiable aspects and this was aligned with their practice in that Nikki used daily multiplication tests and, Barbara employed several lines of questioning to test the students’ factual knowledge. Further, both Nikki and Barbara’s documentation indicated a high prevalence of tests, test schedules and test records. Nikki’s focus tended to be on the achievement of outcomes since she said that the students needed to “understand when they’ve achieved it (an outcome) and when they need to keep working” (Nikki 1: 48).
Table 4.4  
Assessment: key features, practice and documentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Key features Interview responses</th>
<th>Observations: video-recorded</th>
<th>Teachers’ documentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Formative feedback</td>
<td>Formal and diagnostic test samples, test records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal tests</td>
<td>Note-taking</td>
<td>Assessment planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rubrics criteria</td>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
<td>Checklists: Annotations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use of checklists</td>
<td>Student self-assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interactive monitoring</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Corrections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Task criteria</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Praise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Formal tests, benchmarking, diagnostic tests, student self-assessment</td>
<td>Corrections</td>
<td>Spreadsheets of test scores</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tests: written</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer testing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Error flagging</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Factual questioning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Formal and diagnostic tests</td>
<td>Corrections</td>
<td>Formal and diagnostic test samples, test records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benchmark tests</td>
<td>Praise, rewards and admonishments</td>
<td>Assessment planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Note-taking</td>
<td>Portfolio samples</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Checklists</td>
<td>Assessment schedules</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Error flagging</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Re-writing student work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Standards achievement</td>
<td>Corrections</td>
<td>Formal test samples, test records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>Praise, rewards and admonishments</td>
<td>Assessment planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be informative</td>
<td>Error flagging</td>
<td>Portfolio samples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide direction</td>
<td>Ignoring incorrect responses</td>
<td>Assessment schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comparisons</td>
<td>Factual questioning</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Test results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Correction</td>
<td>Corrections</td>
<td>Summative test records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal feedback</td>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>Formative annotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>Formative feedback</td>
<td>Assessment planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interactive monitoring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>Quantitative and measurable, ongoing and, meaningful</td>
<td>Peer assessment</td>
<td>Formal test samples, test records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Summative assessments</td>
<td>Student self-assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tests</td>
<td>Peer written assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Teacher written assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment criteria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trialling new assessment ideas

In regard to experimentation with innovative assessment practices, the majority of teachers were very wary and either expressed a lack of interest or said they did not feel encouraged to trial new ideas. Those who responded positively tended to consider longstanding assessment practices as new or innovative such as the use of Rubrics criteria, “I like the idea of rubrics and we’re starting to use them” (Lucy 1: 69). Helen said she liked a specific commercial spelling program she had researched and introduced to the school and, she seemed to believe that an introduction of a standardized program was an innovation, “I’m highly encouraged by management to try new things and that’s why we implemented the Spelling program” (Helen 1: 64).

Although two teachers felt dissuaded by colleagues to experiment yet they said they were occasionally interested in trialling other assessment approaches and, one said she was willing to trial the online Sample Unit of Work. In relation to these support materials, when shown a copy of Pulling Strings: Level 3, some teachers were unaware of the support, while other responses were either in negative or, the question was avoided. Overall, there was very little interest in accessing the support materials and trialling them to strengthen their understanding of VELS, for example while Robert claimed he hadn’t seen “that one”, Barbara said she preferred the prior CSF support materials.

Assessment “wish list”

The teachers were asked: If you had an assessment “wish list” what would be on the top? The majority of responses focused on the need for more time to carry out their usual assessment routines, for example,

- To have more time and to have a Literacy Coordinator (Helen 2: 106).
- I would wish for time (Robert 2: 67).

VELS: Sample Unit, e.g., Pulling Strings, Level 3. These were developed to support teachers implement VELS and alignment with various strategies for assessment.
Barbara said she would have liked the addition of a standardized, online maths test, “A really good online Maths test that would grade kids above or below the expected standard that is administered by the Education Department” (Barbara 2: 46). While Nikki appeared surprise when asked the question, “What do you mean by that? I’m quite happy with it (her assessment practice)” (Nikki 2: 52). Although the purpose of this question was to provide the teachers with an opportunity to perhaps consider introducing innovative practices, the results indicate their thinking remained focused on their usual assessment routines. This suggests that the teachers were not yet ready to consider changes to their assessment practices and in the main, they opined the lack of adequate time to carry out their normal assessment routines. They seemed unaware that modifications could also include swapping one practice for another to ensure more efficient time management.

**Prioritising assessment strategies**

The teachers were asked to rate the importance of specific assessment strategies and tools and they used ratings from zero-ten with 10 being the highest frequency. To make sense of the data, the results of their responses were totalled and then averaged to find the mean numbers out of 10 for each assessment practice, and then placed in order as shown in Table 4.5.

Confirming previous results, the teachers believed that tests and assessment tasks were highly important and that grouping by ability was also very important. Although formative feedback scored highly, as noted in the case descriptions, it was not in common usage. One teacher, Nikki awarded 10 out of 10 to most of the strategies while the other five teachers considered that a high rating was 7, 8, or 9 out of 10. Although student self-assessment was considered important, this was not observed and, the teachers’ responses indicated that it was considered to be a judgement rather than a reflective moment. Robert, for example, said his students awarded themselves a star rating. Four teachers considered peer assessment unimportant and rated it very low while Robert said it was “dangerous” because the students align it with popularity.
Table 4.5  Teachers: importance of assessment strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment strategy/tool</th>
<th>Mean score /10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal tests</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment tasks</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student grouping by ability</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student self-assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative Feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic tests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checklists</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubrics</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer assessment</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregation of test results</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in the above table suggest that teachers’ beliefs are not necessarily aligned to their practice. For example, they believed tests to be important and these dominated their practice yet, they also said feedback was important but it was not in common use.

Assessment for/of/as Learning

The following question was posed in the first interview after lead-up questions concerning their awareness of The Blueprint information.

Do the terms Assessment for learning, Assessment of learning and Assessment as learning mean anything to you?

Four responses were brief and provided minimal interpretations and two were relatively longer but not overly accurate and two responses were highly critical, for example,

Oh no, I think that’s all just big words. How about you just say student reflection, anecdotal records, or meeting goals and standards? (Ann 1: 28).

They are jargon, thought up by someone who is a master of jingoism basically. And who really cares about those terms? They’re lovely titles but ask a parent what they think about...
Barbara’s response focused on curriculum content delivery and achievements and although her description contains some of the assessment language used in The Blueprint, it appears only partially accurate. For example, she said,

Assessment as learning is the students reviewing their own performance... Assessment of Learning is the diagnostic, it gives a really clear idea of content that’s been delivered to them and the standard they’ve achieved ... Assessment for learning is all of it really and indicates further planning (Barbara 1: 10).

Helen brushed off the question by stating that she understood the terms because she was a PoLT trainer, although there was no indication in any of her responses that she understood the terminology. Nikki described the graphic triangle used in the Assessment Advice and said she had applied it to her teaching. Lucy was flustered by the question and said that Assessment for learning guides her teaching, that Assessment as learning is where the children take responsibility, and Assessment of learning is what the students can do. Overall, these results indicate that the six teachers were poorly informed of the terminology and the underpinning understandings of the three terms. This is hardly surprising given that professional learning had been limited to two of the teachers becoming PoLT trainers, and given that, as noted in the previous case reports, the teachers avoided accessing the online The Blueprint information.

**Formative feedback**

Although the six case-study portraits detailed formative feedback usage, this section has drawn the results together to provide an overall picture (see Table 4.6). There is compelling evidence in Table 4.6 to show that even though all six teachers made positive statements concerning the importance of formative feedback, in fact only one teacher, Ann, used it in both Literacy and Numeracy practice and one other teacher, Lucy, used it in Literacy but not in Numeracy. It is worth noting that the two teachers who used formative feedback also used various scaffolding strategies even though this was not a focus of this study. It is also important to note that when formative feedback was used, the teachers’
responded naturally and intuitively to each student rather than using scripted ideas.

Table 4.6 Across cases: formative feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview commentaries</th>
<th>Classroom observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ann</strong></td>
<td>Strong belief in the importance of feedback and rated it highly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Robert</strong></td>
<td>Claim: feedback is important and rated it highly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Helen</strong></td>
<td>Claim: feedback is important and rated it highly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barbara</strong></td>
<td>Claim: feedback is important and rated it highly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lucy</strong></td>
<td>Strong belief in the importance of feedback and rated it highly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nikki</strong></td>
<td>Claim: feedback is important and rated it highly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teachers’ questioning strategies**

The video-recorded observations found that across cases the teachers’ questioning techniques were variable while within cases, apart from one teacher, questions in Literacy and Numeracy followed similar techniques. Across cases, the majority used closed questioning techniques where the teachers expected the students to conform to expected answers, solutions or responses. In three cases, the questions were based on factual recall of prior learning and it seems the teachers were focused on verbally testing the students’ knowledge. In one case, the questions were rapid-fire and although students were repeatedly asked to give a “show of hands”, many of the same “hands” were usually ignored. In this case, incorrect responses were ignored and there was no follow-up. Stand-out results include Ann’s and Lucy’s questioning approaches in literacy and, Ann’s open-ended questions in numeracy that encouraged deeper engagement by the students.
Table 4.7  Questioning strategies: whole class and individual interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole class</th>
<th>Individual students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ann</strong></td>
<td>To stimulate recall and thinking Open-ended questions</td>
<td>To encourage deeper thinking Varied and individualised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Task focused questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Robert</strong></td>
<td>For fact recall Closed questions Single solutions and expected responses</td>
<td>Fact recall, task instruction recall No variation to fit individual student needs Closed questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Helen</strong></td>
<td>Fact recall Closed questions Single solutions and expected responses</td>
<td>Re-teaching, teacher correction Closed questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barbara</strong></td>
<td>Fact recall Closed questions Single solutions and expected responses Error flagging Ignore incorrect responses</td>
<td>Fact recall, task instruction recall Approach: no variation to fit individual student needs; error flagging Closed questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lucy</strong></td>
<td>Literacy: motivation, student recall of prior learning and experiences Open-ended questions</td>
<td>Literacy: encourage deeper thinking/ feedback/ scaffolding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Numeracy: focused on task instructions Closed questions</td>
<td>Numeracy: focused on the correct solution Closed questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nikki</strong></td>
<td>Fact recall Questions focused on what was wanted by the teacher Closed questions</td>
<td>Repeated questions, no explicit attention to the mathematics component Closed questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, and across cases, the teachers' approaches to questioning either the whole class, small groups or individual students varied but within the cases, approaches were similar. This suggests that teachers had varying expertise and knowledge of questioning techniques and they invariably followed familiar practices. Evidence derived from the teachers' second interviews has indicated that they were largely unaware that their questioning techniques were a key part of their assessment practice, suggesting that their knowledge of the purpose and function of assessment was not well-developed.
Assessment practices not captured on videos

In the second interview and in relation to their reviews of their videos, the teachers were asked whether or not they carried out other assessment practices that were not captured at the time of the observations and all six teachers answered in the affirmative. Testing was stressed by five of the teachers including: formal tests and benchmark tests; diagnostic tests such as Running Records; and portfolio assessment tasks. The one exception was Nikki, who said that on reflection she would have preferred to include a student self-assessment in the observed Numeracy task. The results affirm previous results, for example, in Table 4.5 and the principals’ views that a variety of testing forms were prevalent across the four schools.

The use of assessment information

Towards the end of the second interview, the teachers were asked a range of individualised questions that focused on the details of their interactions with the students and the usage of their collective assessment data. The teachers’ responses showed a large variation yet in each case their commentaries reflected and affirmed their teaching and assessment practices captured in the videos. For example, Robert said his students didn’t fully understand the Numeracy task focused on Measurement and Capacity. This was affirmed in the videos that captured Robert repetitively issuing confusing instructions for a task involving Capacity comparisons of water in containers, such as: “Is that half as big? Is that twice as big? Is that a half?” Robert said that he had administered a pre-test and a post-test and he said the difference in the results was “incredible” (Robert 2: 85).

Lucy said that all of the information she garners over the weeks is useful for hersummations and ultimately her reports to the parents, she said,

I listen to the fluency in their reading, the correct pronunciation and because of the ESL background you have to write in terms the parents understand (Lucy 2: 103).

Ann expressed the view that she enjoys tracking individual students and that positive feedback always “encourages a child” (Ann 2: 172). Helen said she preferred double blocks of time so that she can have “more time” although her
emphasis was on her teaching time rather than on the students’ learning. Helen’s response stands out due to her focus on time rather than on student learning. Barbara said that the tasks captured in the videos did not generate useful evaluative information such as for reporting to parents, because the Numeracy task “is sort of stuff that’s already known” (Barbara 2: 54). This response also stands out due to the repeated teaching of Numeracy topics and the assumption that the children understood the mathematics involved. Nikki’s responses to various questions concerning the usefulness of her assessment data focused instead on her questioning techniques.

I did not plan the questions I needed to ask in order to generate the most amount of assessment material ... I don’t consciously think about questioning and I’ve had a couple of teaching students ask me how ... and I just seem to be able to get it (Nikki 2: 20, 24).

Overall, the teachers interpreted interview questions differently and while most attempted to answer the question, others avoided it and commented on something other than the question. The results also suggest that the majority of teachers undertook lessons already planned, whether or not they were relevant to the students’ learning needs and that connections between learning tasks and assessment were not well understood.

**Synthesis: classroom observations of teaching and assessment practice**

A tabled summary of the observed video-recorded lessons includes brief descriptions of lesson approaches, the question types, the extent of individualised interactions with students, and the range of observed assessment practices (see Appendix 23). The teachers’ approaches to the lessons ranged considerably in that while some employed a range of motivational resources and inquiry-based learning, others tended to rely on repetitive instructional methods in transmissive techniques (Askew, Brown, Rhodes, Wiliam & Johnson 1997). The transmissive technique focuses on reproduction and student learning results from explanations of methods, while in the main, interactions tend to be question and answer exchanges based on the replication of correct solutions (p. 33). Askew et al. argued that these approaches to teaching are orientations based on belief systems and the results here suggest that while some teachers’ beliefs were based on the connections made by students, such as between the
motivational resources, the learning activity and the outcome, others held beliefs based on the perceived need to transmit information.

Question types employed by the teachers either involved open-ended questions and these are aligned with the lessons that also used motivational resources and an inquiry-based approach. Similarly, the individualised interactions also matched the teaching approaches since the teachers who employed and open-ended approach also engaged in several individual interactive moments. Whereas those who relied on transmissive approaches were less inclined to engage with the students in interactive discussions.

Assessment practices ranged considerably in that the teachers' whose lessons were open-ended and inquiry-based tended to engage the students in the development of assessment criteria such as in the use of a Rubrics model. By contrast, other teachers who employed a transmissive approach also used teacher-centred methods based on corrections and single solutions to problems.

This overall analysis has shown that various teaching approaches and assessment practices appeared to be strongly influenced by their beliefs and were based either on the traditions of transmissive methods or other orientations that were generally student-centred. There are deep connections between beliefs and practice and these connections are strong indications of the teachers' individualised attitudes to how they plan and implement assessment in their classrooms.

4.4.3 Summary

The results reported in this section have presented an overall picture of assessment practice across the cases and include comparative analyses such as, between the six teachers, between the teachers and the principals. The teachers' observations of their own assessment practice varied considerably and, the results suggested that the teachers had a great deal of difficulty in identifying their own assessment strategies. The results of the videoed observations highlighted patterns of existing assessment practices and, the interviews revealed various beliefs concerning assessment practice.
4.5 The Blueprint

This section will report on access to professional learning specifically concerned with The Blueprint in an across case analysis. Data is drawn from each of the participants’ interview responses including the principals of the four schools. In using across-case analysis, an overall picture will be generated in order to understand how the six teachers acquired information and knowledge of The Blueprint. As previously mentioned in Chapter One, the Education Department expected schools to generate an action plan to implement The Blueprint (State of Victoria, 2004c). Yet analysis of the principal’s interview data strongly indicates they were unaware of this expectation and subsequently there were no individualised plans available. Instead, the principals all spoke of existing improvement strategies and strongly indicated that their school’s resources were directed towards achieving their individualised goals.

4.5.1 Access: online communications

As mentioned in the first chapter, the primary source of information concerning The Blueprint was through the Education Department’s website, known at the time as SOFWeb. The use of the electronic medium to announce major reforms and to publish policies was new to Victorian schools and the interview data strongly indicates that apart from Nikki, the other five teachers not only disliked this communication method but also avoided accessing the website. Table 4.8 presents a summary of the teachers’ ratings concerning how often they accessed SOFWeb to gain The Blueprint information. They were asked to rate from zero out of 10 how often they accessed each of the four components, with 10 being the highest rating. The total column to the right shows the total amount of ratings for each teacher. The total column at the base indicates the amounts for each component including accessing the VELS support materials.

The table shows that of all the components, VELS scored the highest rating but at 25 out of a possible score of 60, access was very low. The lowest score was 13 out of 60 for the PoLT component, indicating lack of interest in, even dislike of, policies communicated online.
### Table 4.8 The Blueprint: access to information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VELS</th>
<th>VELS materials</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Advice</th>
<th>Reporting System (RS)</th>
<th>PoLT</th>
<th>Total/50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total/60</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from Nikki, who said it was her responsibility to research The Blueprint information, the next highest total rating was by Robert, but at 28 out of a possible 50 his ratings are quite low. Helen rated zeros for all the components because she said that the leaders in her school downloaded and printed the information they thought she needed. The next total lowest rating was from Barbara at 8 out of a possible 50; this implies a lack of concern for being well informed as part of her Leading Teacher role. Overall, online access to The Blueprint information was exceedingly low and this result aligns with the teachers’ commentaries that, apart from Nikki, indicated disinterest and a dislike of online communication.

#### 4.5.2 The Blueprint and teacher’s professional learning

As mentioned in Chapter One, The Blueprint (Flagship Strategy 5) made provisions for 460 teachers per year to apply for Professional Leave. In 2006, Helen was one of the successful applicants and she undertook leave from her classroom duties to investigate reporting formats, and to research and trial a commercial Spelling program for the school. Although her Professional Leave was not specifically concerned with the components of The Blueprint, nonetheless it was made available through Flagship Strategy 5. In relation to The Blueprint components, Helen and Lucy had participated in the off-site PoLT training program, and Robert had attended a large-scale briefing concerning the
Reporting to Parents system, as described in the first chapter. Lucy and Nikki had experienced various amounts of on-site training for the online reporting system. In all, from 2004 to 2006 there had been minimal opportunities for the teachers to participate in professional learning specifically concerning The Blueprint. The four principals reported on their schools’ existing professional learning commitments as shown in Table 4.9. In their commentaries, all four principals keenly described how their respective schools’ needs were addressed by strategic planning. For example, Phillip said that his school’s Action Research project based on Inquiry Learning had been a “real bonus” (Phillip: 23) and Keith also praised his school’s Action Research project plans to investigate how Literacy and Numeracy Aides can best support teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Improvement strategy plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keith</td>
<td>Silverleaves</td>
<td>English as a Second Language: Action research project across the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>Gumnut Ridge</td>
<td>Literacy, Numeracy, Assessment, Student well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip</td>
<td>Wallaby Park</td>
<td>Thinking Curriculum, Inquiry Learning, Action research project across the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin</td>
<td>Hakea Gardens</td>
<td>Literacy, Numeracy, Student well-being, Interpersonal Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This result indicates that the schools already had existing commitments focused on achieving strategic plans with associated professional learning such as in the Action Research projects. The introduction of The Blueprint required extra commitments from schools and it seems they were less than willing to ensure staff was supported in implementing all the components of The Blueprint.

**Online communications**

All participants were asked their opinion of how well they believed they were informed in regard to The Blueprint and the results indicate a number of
discrepancies. The first of these is that as shown in the case study portraits, in their program planning and in their practice, implementation of The Blueprint was barely evident. Yet the results in Table 4.1 indicate excessively low access occurrences to The Blueprint information and teachers’ commentaries in the second interview indicate varied levels of being informed. For example when asked how effectively The Blueprint information had reached each teacher, they responded variously in that some teachers said it was very effective while others opined that it was ineffective.

- Information has been effective because another Leading Teacher makes sense of it and delivers it in ways that are suitable but information via the monster online I rate as two out of 10 (Barbara 2:48).
- I would say very effectively because I’m at leadership level. If I was just a classroom teacher I would say zero out of 10 and now we’re all getting too tired to absorb it anyway (Nikki 2: 69).
- How effectively? I’d say minus 8. They always give us information after the event (Robert 2: 81).
- Oh 10 out of 10 (Helen 2: 122).
- I would rate it as 5 out of 10, compared to where I was at the start of the year (Ann 2: 161).
- Four out of 10 (Lucy 2: 83)

The above responses strongly indicate that apart from two teachers, the majority felt poorly informed. This is in part due to their disinclination to access online information but possibly the main concern is the distinct lack of professional learning provisions. Since the interview with the principals followed the second interview with the teachers, they were asked to describe the normal dissemination methods used in their schools and to rate the effectiveness of the methods. Without exception, the principals rated effectiveness of their schools’ communications as highly as 8 out of 10 and they said the methods of communication included briefing meetings, intranet communications and, on-site professional learning programs.

In relation to the dissemination of The Blueprint information, the principals’ commentaries were compared to the teachers’ comments and ratings. For example, Keith considered that his staff was very well informed due to the
dissemination processes in his school: “because it is so important, we have multiple meetings, so everybody does hear the message” (Keith: 5). Yet Lucy, at his school, rated the extent of reaching her at 4 out of 10 and she avoided accessing the website. Colin said that it was the Leading Teachers’ role to attend “heavy duty professional learning programs” so that they can organise focus groups and trial “some of the ideas” (Colin: 37). Colin also considered that the Leading Teachers in his school were committed to being well informed and yet, he seemed unaware that Robert, a Leading Teacher in his school, avoided online access to The Blueprint.

I think that some people are just professionally committed and they see it as their job. And there are others who are astute enough to see that future opportunities won’t arise unless you’re very competent at this material (Colin: 32)

Phillip rated dissemination processes at his school as highly effective and moreover, he appeared to assume the teaching staff was well informed due to the “people who disseminate information brilliantly and address the whole staff” (Phillip: 3). Helen, a teacher in his school, felt she was well informed and rated information dissemination as 10 out of 10. Barbara, the Leading Teacher at the school said that due to her colleague’s efforts, she felt well informed whereas information communicated on the website was, in her opinion, ineffective.

Barry the principal at Gumnut Ridge rated information dissemination effectiveness at 7 out of 10 and he said this was because the Leading Teachers communicated it at staff meetings. Nikki, who said she was “in leadership”, stated she was well informed because she accessed the website and had attended some Regional briefings.

These results indicate that while the principals enthusiastically described the effectiveness of all communications in their schools, the majority of the six teachers felt they were poorly informed. Across the schools, there was a distinct lack of strategic planning to ensure teachers not only had access to information, but also to adequate professional learning provisions.
**Professional learning programs**

Of the two PoLT trainers, only Helen had organised on-site PoLT training and as mentioned, she was dissatisfied with the resourcing and she felt inadequately prepared. Lucy was not overly motivated to provide the required onsite training and she said that PoLT was “basically an affirmation of what you're already doing” (Lucy 1:6). Robert had only attended a Regional briefing but as a follow-up he was expected to organise on-site professional learning workshops for his colleagues. Like Helen, he also experienced difficulties, since he felt inadequately prepared and he described insufficient resourcing for this expectation and he said, “I wasn’t armed with all the knowledge at that point, because we hadn’t done the training on software” (Robert 1:37).

The principals at Helen’s and Robert’s schools seemed unaware that there were difficulties in presenting professional learning, since Phillip, at Helen’s school, said presenters had done a “brilliant” job and Colin at Robert’s school made a similar statement endorsing the work of the Leading Teachers.

In relation to the dissemination of The Blueprint information, the schools were under-prepared despite directions from the Education Department to generate action plans (State of Victoria, 2004c). The Education Department asked schools to identify relationships between concurrent initiatives (p. 42) and yet it seems the principals were either unaware of this advice, or they chose to ignore it or the expectation presented too many difficulties for the schools.

### 4.5.3 Summary

The results here suggest that schools were expected to ensure teachers were well informed of The Blueprint information. However, the schools’ existing strategic plans for improvement, including professional learning, were prioritised and did not include plans to implement The Blueprint. Moreover, the principals assumed that the usual dissemination methods were appropriate for communicating The Blueprint information. The following discrepancies have been identified and summarised below.
• The teacher’s opinions varied greatly and were dependent on the extent to which they felt they were informed.
• The majority of teachers felt they were poorly informed and they were reluctant to research the online information.
• The principals held differing opinions to the teachers.
• The principals assumed that the Leading Teachers had effectively communicated information and consequently they assumed that their staff was well-informed.

4.6 Negotiating The Blueprint

The results presented in 4.5 focused on how teachers accessed The Blueprint and this section will present the analysis of results in relation to the teachers’ attitudes to change (4.6.1). Included are the results concerning the impact of The Blueprint on the teachers’ practice (4.6.2) and, to follow, is the participants’ advice for policymakers (4.6.3), then there is an analysis of the teachers’ perception of their workloads, accountability, and reporting to parents (4.6.4). The section concludes with a brief summary (4.6.5).

4.6.1 Attitudes to change

In the second interview, the teachers were asked to report on their own assessment practices previewed through the videos, including any notes they may have made using the Viewing Guide (3.2.3). The first three questions asked for commentaries on what they had seen and whether or not these were planned or incidentally occurring to suit teaching moments, and the assessment they were ‘proud of’. The fourth question was designed to elicit information in relation to their attitudes to change, as follows, Is there an assessment strategy you would prefer to modify or not use again?

Of the six teachers, only two provided responses that were relevant while the other four deflected and spoke of other aspects of their practice. Of the two whose responses were relevant, Ann said she was happy with her practice and implied that she preferred not to change anything while Lucy mentioned she would like to engage more with peer assessment strategies. In contrast: Helen
spoke of expanding on an existing and preferred strategy; Barbara spoke of her use of the same book for all the reading groups and justified this as necessary for further learning; Nikki described her body positioning when questioning the class; and Robert spoke of difficulties when correcting student work such as the long queue of waiting students. These results strongly suggest that overall, the teachers were not prepared to modify or change their practices and, that the four teachers who deflected their responses seemed surprised by the question even though they had prior knowledge since the Viewing Guide focused on their observations of their own assessment practice.

In relation to the question concerning an assessment practice or strategy the teachers were “proud of” although the responses varied, they were generally characterised by enthusiasm and a sense of pride. An exception was Robert who felt unable to articulate a strategy that stood out to him other than saying he “walked around the class”. He explained that he looked at their bookwork after class because he preferred not to rely on what he referred to as students’ “verbal responses” (Robert 2: 4). Helen however, noted her that her annotations during Guided Reading were important and Barbara confidently stated she was “opportunistic” because she felt she could “run with something that’s student driven” and she said, “I try to maximize those. And the kids always feel pleased that it’s their issue that’s driven it and so they’re more likely to be better engaged” (Barbara 2: 3). Nikki said that her questioning was a stand-out assessment strategy and she was proud of her questioning techniques since she said, “I actually sought to question those that I knew would find the task a bit more challenging. And I think it was really good” (Nikki 2: 3)

Ann was proud of her monitoring and checking all work as well as her interactions with individual students to gain “deeper, more meaningful discussions” (Ann 2:7). Lucy considered her observations and incidental interactions with students were successful. Of the six teachers, four responses were relevant to assessment strategies and the other two, Barbara and Robert, were more concerned with classroom management. Although Nikki was proud of her ‘verbal assessment’ practice, in fact, the classroom observations identified her questioning as superficial in that her questions did not concern the
Mathematical reasoning that underpinned the task. Instead her questions focused on how the cities were arranged on the poster sheet. Overall, the results suggest that the majority of teachers were largely unaware of classroom assessment outlined in *The Blueprint*, and only two teachers practiced assessment that involved incidental, interactive moments at the point of student need including practices such as interventions, and scaffolding techniques.

Another strategy used to uncover the teachers’ attitudes to change involved their professional learning experiences prior to and post *The Blueprint* and how these experiences had impacted on their existing practice. As mentioned, the majority of the teachers were disinclined to research professional reading in relation to the components of *The Blueprint* and only two teachers were PoLT trainers. Helen said her PoLT training had impacted her assessment practice, and throughout the two interviews she referred on many occasions to the influences of the Early Years Literacy, Early Years Numeracy, and Middle Years initiatives on her practice. Ann spoke enthusiastically of the Early Years Literacy and Numeracy, and she stressed the value of the assessments in relation to her practice. Barbara claimed to be influenced by Early Years Literacy even though the videoed observations found no evidence supporting her claim and in contrast, she severely criticised the Early Years Numeracy assessment. Even though Lucy was a PoLT trainer, she said the content of PoLT had not influenced her assessment practice and that instead, her approaches were based on Early Years and Middle Years Literacy programs. These results suggest that although prior professional learning programs had the capacity to influence the teachers’ assessment practices it seemed apparent that *The Blueprint* lacked a similar capacity in relation to instigating the implementation of innovative assessment practice.

In relation to the teachers’ willingness to make changes to their practice and to implement new assessment policies such as advised in *The Blueprint*, the principals were asked their opinion of the extent of uptake of *The Blueprint* by the teachers in their schools. Variously responses focused on motivated and interested teachers, career-minded teachers and, those who are passionate about their teaching work. Colin for example, said that the motivated teachers
are professionally committed and seek knowledge through as many sources as possible. Keith believed that professional learning initially influences teachers who take up new ideas quicker than others and further, they make a commitment to that new idea. Phillip spoke of one of his Leading Teachers as being very well informed and that teachers who are quick to take up new ideas want to “perform at their best level and they want to have others performing at their best level for the sake of the children” (Phillip: 49). Like Keith, Barry also said that professional learning instigates motivated teachers and that they find support from the Education Department. Overall, the results show two distinct perspectives in that the principals believed that motivated teachers are ready for change and are supported by professional learning. Whereas, the teachers relied on their experiences gained in professional learning as a motivational factor in the change process.

4.6.2 Impact of The Blueprint on practice

Across the interviews, all participants were asked to rate and comment on the impact of four components of The Blueprint in relation to the implementation of VELS, PoLT, the Assessment Advice and online reporting system. The results reported here concern rated opinions where 10 is the highest possible rate and zero is the lowest. In relation to embracing VELS as the new curriculum the principals and the teachers gave rated opinions (see table 4.10). Three principals gave high ratings but were only partially aligned with the teachers’ ratings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.10</th>
<th>Embracing VELS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principals’ ratings</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teachers’ ratings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin 10/10</td>
<td>Ann 4/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith 9/10</td>
<td>Lucy 7/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip 9/10</td>
<td>Helen 10/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry 2/10</td>
<td>Nikki 8/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Curriculum usage is compared to CSF or VELS uptake in Table 4.11. The results comprise the teachers’ rated views of their curriculum planning usage; their
opinion of whether VELS or CSF is applied in practice, and from evidence that was found in the teachers’ curriculum planning documents. Four teachers rated their usage of VELS highly and the planning documents only affirmed this claim in one case.

Table 4.11  
Curriculum usage: CSF or VELS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VELS usage</th>
<th>Practice: CSF or VELS?</th>
<th>Planning documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>4/10</td>
<td>CSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>8/10</td>
<td>CSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>8/10</td>
<td>VELS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>CSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>5/10</td>
<td>CSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>8/10</td>
<td>CSF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The principals’ comments on VELS uptake and usage were brief and not elaborated and subsequently, the principals appeared poorly informed of the extent of VELS usage across their schools for example,

- They’re more into VELS now, definitely with planning (Golin: 16).
- They are using VELS (Keith: 17).
- They still draw on CSF (Phillip: 25).
- They mainly use the CSF but there are discussions around melding it with VELS (Barry: 23).

Awareness of the Assessment Advice elicited similar results between the principals and the teachers (see Table 4.12). The teachers were asked to describe their interpretations of Assessment for/of/as Learning, and the majority of responses indicated low knowledge and poor understandings of theoretical concepts concerning assessment.

The principals were asked to rate their school's responsiveness to the Assessment Advice and responses varied greatly. This suggests that from this across-schools sample, there was lack of consistency in how schools responded to the Assessment Advice. Keith had no awareness of this component of The
Blueprint. The results suggest that given the lack of consistency across schools, it is not surprising that the teachers lacked the capacity to coherently and confidently describe their understanding of Assessment for/of/as Learning.

### Table 4.12 Assessment advice: views and awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Principal’s views</th>
<th>Teachers’ awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Colin     | 6/10: Teachers’ largely unaware | Ann: low awareness  
|           |                   | Robert: low awareness |
| Keith     | 0/10 Principal unaware so assumed teachers were unaware | Lucy: low awareness |
| Barry     | 5/10 Teachers largely unaware | Nikki: some awareness |
| Phillip   | 8/10 Teachers very aware | Barbara: minimal awareness  
|           |                   | Helen: some awareness |

The teachers were also asked to rate their awareness of and comment on PoLT and the results are presented in Table 4.13. Only two teachers rated their awareness and they differed greatly from 10 to 5 out of 10 and interestingly, both Helen and Lucy were PoLT trainers. In all, the comments lacked detail and the responses tended to be mechanical rather than enthusiastic.

### Table 4.13 PoLT: teachers’ views

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratings</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ann     | No rating  
|         | It’s more the actual teaching isn’t it? |
| Robert  | No rating  
|         | It’s a kind of wishy washy statement |
| Helen   | 10/10  
|         | POLT pulls in line with VELS and what we’re already doing. And the assessment in POLT is really good. |
| Barbara | No rating  
|         | A lot of it is not new. A lot is good practice and what best suits most students and you make sure you do a mix of it. |
| Lucy    | 5/10  
|         | I have done the training but in this school we do some of the practices anyway. |
| Nikki   | No rating  
|         | I don’t think it is earth shattering. This is what we all should be doing. |
Since the online reporting-to-parents system was due to be fully operational in schools by the end of 2007, it was relevant to ask the participants for details of their usage of the Progression Points and the extent of implementation. Across the schools, two had begun to implement the online system and two were holding back until 2007. Colin and Phillip said they preferred to wait until 2007 because they knew of many schools that had experienced difficulties in 2006. Keith’s school had begun implementation and he said the teachers were very familiar with the use of the Progression Points. Barry’s school had also begun to use the reporting system and he claimed the teachers were also very familiar with the Progression Points. The teachers rated their understandings of how to use the Progression Points and they also provided brief comments on usage (see Table 4.14).

The tabled results show that two teachers claimed to be confident although their school had not yet implemented the system, and this seems unusual. Three teachers implied they were not yet confident and of these, Lucy’s school had already begun implementation, suggesting that although she was expected to use Progression Points, she felt under-prepared.

**Table 4.14**  Progression points: usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Usage claims/ interview commentaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>2/10</td>
<td>“I think they’re on a continuum”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>4/10</td>
<td>“I’ve made a conscious effort”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>“Very, very, very confident”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>No rating</td>
<td>“They are easy to use if you’ve got a sense of it. Not a problem”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>4/10</td>
<td>“Next year I will be more confident in using the Progression Points”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>No comment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6.3 Participants’ advice to policymakers

Since The Blueprint required the teachers to change their curriculum usage practice, they were asked for their opinion on issues that may have arisen. Ann, Robert and Helen commented on the time needed to become familiar with VELS; Lucy said the language of VELS was too complex and that the Progression Points expected too much from the students; Nikki pointed out the lack of connectivity between CSF and VELS including supportive links; and Barbara criticised the Mathematics domain of VELS and she said the assessment lacked the facility to grade students. The teachers were also asked to provide advice for the Education Department in relation to the introduction of new policies. The responses varied and included the need for printed materials; improved professional learning programs including equal access; the provision of adequate support materials from the start; and an improved funding model for disadvantaged students.

In contrast, three principals praised the policy, while one principal considered the expectations for teachers were “massive” (Phillip: 69), and the others said, for example,

- I think it’s a fantastic initiative (Colin: 45).
- I have to say it’s probably the most effective initiative in terms of actually generating into real change (Keith: 53).
- It’s probably been one of the most successful initiatives (Barry: 41).

On the other hand, the principals were also asked the extent that teachers had made adjustments to their practice to include VELS, and the new assessment and reporting expectations. Their responses were less enthusiastic and pointed out issues such as those they identified in the reporting-to-parents system, to those reported above, for example,

- Minimal right? And I’m not saying that as a criticism (Colin: 11).
- Enormously. We’re trialling the new report system but it’s a bigger task that people in government understood. It’s a massive learning curve especially in terms of using the software. We have only reported on Maths and English so far and that’s a big enough task (Keith: 12).
- We’re in a transition phase and there were so many hiccups with the reporting system. I don’t think teachers have a full understanding of how the final
assessment is decided and some will get quite a shock next year when high-achieving students are suddenly ranked as 'C' (Phillip: 19).

- It's difficult for me to say without being in the classroom, but it's not very high. Our building program has taken a lot of my time (Barry: 21).

### 4.6.4 Workloads, accountability and reporting

In the first interview, the teachers were asked to explain how accountable they felt in relation to their assessment practice and student outcomes. They all had firm beliefs around being highly accountable and while some mentioned being accountable to the students’ parents, school targets were also mentioned. Ann felt strongly that the teachers in her school were often blamed for poor student outcomes. She said this was unfair because the school had a large number of students with disabilities and student outcomes were therefore low.

The students come out as under-performing, and we get the flack for that. And I feel that's a bit tragic (Ann 1: 49).

Robert said he was “massively accountable to the parents first of all” and his elaboration included details of testing and benchmarking and he stressed the importance of “ticking the boxes” (Robert 1: 51). Helen’s response emphasized the importance of meeting school and Education Department targets and that if students did not meet the targets then she believed that repeating a year was appropriate (Helen 1: 51). Barbara emphasized that accurate records were essential, especially if teachers dispute students’ capabilities. Lucy’s response was brief but she also focused on reports and targets. Nikki interpreted the question as a focus on her leadership qualities and she said she sought feedback from her team.

The question of accountability is linked to whether or not the teachers received helpful feedback from the school community. Four teachers, Robert, Helen, Barbara and Lucy all said they received supportive feedback from the school’s leadership and from colleagues, while Ann and Nikki both felt discouraged by the lack of supportive feedback. Apart from Helen and Barbara the other four teachers all reported that the Education Department did not provide them with feedback in any form. Helen said that Regional consultants visited the school but
she didn’t elaborate of possible feedback while Barbara noted that test data from the Education Department had provided “gratifying” feedback (Barbara 1:51).

All six teachers spoke at length on their workloads in relation to report cards. Without exception, they described extensive amounts of time taken to collate student data from work samples and testing; and transferring this information to the report card and across the teachers, the total ranged from 166 hours to 200 hours. Lucy and Nikki estimated their report writing time as 200 hours and 180 hours, the highest levels across the teachers and significantly, these two teachers had begun using the latest online reporting system. These results indicate that prior to the use of the online system, the teachers’ workload in report writing was extraordinarily high and that the inclusion of the new system increased this level.

A related question to the issue of report card workloads was how the new system had impacted on the teachers’ assessment practice. Ann said that her although her assessment practices had not yet had an impact she could envisage future impacts. Robert stated his assessment practices had not altered and he added that he believed his existing practice was “quite good” (Robert 1: 40). Helen said she had begun assessing against VELS and that her assessment practices had “aligned with VELS” (Helen 1: 27). Barbara’s response deflected from the question and instead she spoke of “VEL-ifying” the curriculum, implying that her curriculum planning referenced VELS (Barbara 1: 31). Nikki who had begun to implement the new system said she hadn’t changed her assessment practices. Lucy, who had also begun the new report card system said her assessment practices had modified and that she needs to change her practices to fit the Progression Points. She felt that the students were required to achieve according to the Progression Points.

I have to change my way of assessing so that I am getting them to achieve what they need to achieve to meet the Progression Points (Lucy 1: 27).

Aligned with the above result was the question of whether or not the teachers felt under pressure to change their assessment practices. Ann emphatically affirmed she felt under pressure to change while Nikki emphatically said she felt
no pressure, yet the two teachers did not elaborate on their responses. The other four all said they didn’t feel pressure but that they knew the report card required implementation. These results strongly suggest a common denial that pressure to conform existed and that the teachers were unaware of the future impact of the report card on their assessment practices.

A question that focused on decision-making processes asked for opinions on whether or not the teachers influenced school policymaking and whether or not they felt obliged to follow school policies. Ann said that the leadership made decisions and she had opportunities for input, and she added that she disagreed with some of the Year 3 & 4 team decisions in relation to extraneous testing. Robert deflected the question but said that he felt obliged to follow school policies. Helen said she had the opportunity for a large amount of input and that as a result, she felt very obliged to follow the decisions. Barbara deflected the question and spoke instead of the hierarchy of power in the school. Lucy felt she had minimal input and that she felt obliged to follow policy. Nikki spoke of her leadership role and said she had a large amount of input but that she didn’t feel obliged to follow the decisions. This suggests that across the six teachers, only two felt ownership of policy-making decisions in the school; however, while Helen felt very obliged to follow the decision, Nikki didn’t feel the same obligation.

4.6.5 Summary

The analyses presented in this section has focused on how the participants have responded to The Blueprint in relation to their attitudes to change; the impact of The Blueprint on their practice; their workloads, feelings of accountability, and their possible ownership of the decision-making process in their respective schools. The principals’ views have been included as a representation of their school’s direction and also to represent their opinions. In order to extrapolate an overall result, the principals’ views have been compared against the teachers’ views.
4.7 Chapter conclusion

This chapter sourced data for analysis through structured and semi-structured interviews with all participants; through videoed classroom observations; and through the collection of planning and assessment documents provided by the teachers. The data were reduced and manipulated for analysis in order to present the results meaningfully and logically. When relevant, primary data was included such as in specific commentaries provided by the participants, to support the analyses. At times, clear results have emerged and in other instances, unclear results are indicated. However, they are equally significant in highlighting consistencies and inconsistencies.
Chapter Five

Crossing the Boundaries

5.0 Introduction

This study investigated the experiences of a small sample of Victorian teachers as they grappled with changes to their practice advocated by large-scale policy reform. In particular, the study has investigated the teachers’ experiences of The Blueprint, a policy reform that introduced sweeping changes to curriculum, teaching methodologies, assessment and reporting. The Blueprint continued from 2003 to serve as a policy directive until the latest reform, The Education State, (2017a).

This thesis recognises that in the schooling system, change is an ongoing process, yet imposed change can potentially challenge existing conditions since it can place extra workloads on teachers, while simultaneously expecting a high yield from schools. These expectations are an ongoing problem posed by large-scale reforms and this study recognises and acknowledges the challenges that confront teachers as they face various change dilemmas.

The qualitative methodology employed in this study was well-suited to the nature of the investigation and the research design allowed for an appropriate diversity of data collection methods that was obtained within a reasonable timeline of events. The extensive data collection required the development of analytical tools unique to the study at the time. In particular, it required an exhaustive, cross-referencing process linking observational, interview and video data. The emergent results clearly identified consistencies and inconsistencies that were elaborated through comparative portraits and across-case comparative perspective.

In relation to The Blueprint, the research questions focus on the teachers’ existing assessment practices; their beliefs and attitudes to assessment; changes to classroom assessment practice; and in regard to schools and teachers, factors that inhibit or support policy reforms. This chapter will draw on the results and
link the findings to the literature in order to address the research questions and then a more detailed discussion follows.

This chapter revisits and addresses the research questions using the key findings of the study (5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4). Next is a discussion of the findings linked to the literature that informed this study (5.5).

5.1 Research question 1:
How did the introduction of The Blueprint impact on teachers’ knowledge and attitudes towards assessment in literacy and numeracy?

Since this question refers to the teachers’ knowledge and attitudes to assessment rather than practices, data sources for this question are derived from the two interviews across the cases as well as the teachers’ assessment documentation. Across the stages in the interviews, the teachers were asked to describe their knowledge of assessment in relation to current assessment theories; their identification of their own assessment practices after viewing their videos; and their views on trialling new approaches. The teachers’ planning documentation was relevant since it had the potential to indicate knowledge of assessment such as in planning for summative or formative practice; the extent to which assessment was integrated with planned tasks; and the extent to which students were involved in self-or peer assessments.

5.1.1 Attitudes to assessment

The teachers’ attitudes towards assessment filtered through several of their interview responses, the videos and their documentation and, overall, the results point to attitudes focused on retaining existing practices rather than making changes to practice. According to Darling-Hammond (1990) policies do not fall in a vacuum, they land on other policies and in this study, the six teachers’ attitudes towards assessment had been shaped by former policies, local traditions, professional learning experiences and, personal preferences. Former policies, which had particularly influenced attitudes towards the use of specific assessment tools and summative practices, include,
a) Early Years Initiative that emphasised diagnostic tools for assessment, and

b) The Schools of the Future that introduced formal, statewide tests and expectations that teachers would use standardized judgements of student progress against the curriculum

Local traditions across the schools enabled the six teachers to develop a sense of autonomy with assessment decisions in which they made decisions as a team, they led decision-making within the team, or they agreed with existing conditions. The majority were not overly interested in trialling new practices and they felt there was never enough time to complete their usual practices. The absence of assessment policies in the schools heightened the prevailing sense of autonomy, and this contributed to the development of a common mindset towards keeping the status quo. Hence, in this study, attitudes towards assessment infer the practices valued by the teachers, the practices they felt comfortable with, the practices they considered trustworthy. In every case, the teachers’ attitudes towards their own practice indicated a sense of satisfaction and there was little evidence to show that they saw a need to change or make modifications.

This study finds that attitudes towards assessment remained unchanged since the teachers were satisfied with their existing routines and the introduction of The Blueprint had little impact on attitudes since there was no evidence indicating that they felt persuaded to change or modify their practice.

5.1.2 Knowledge of assessment

The response to this section focuses on the teachers’ views of the key features of assessment; their interpretation of assessment for/of/as learning as outlined in The Blueprint; their assessment planning; and their capacity to identify their own assessment practices following their viewings of the videos.

a) Key features of assessment

The teachers’ view of the key features of assessment centred on diagnostic assessment tools, standardization and student achievements rather than on
formative and summative functions currently known at the time (e.g., Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & Wiliam, 2003; Klenowski, 1995; Sadler, 1989). Typically, responses include: “A key feature of assessment is benchmarking, we have benchmarks and these particular tools that we use from Prep to Year Six”. Since prior policy initiatives had stressed the importance of diagnostic assessment tools, summative testing and teachers’ judgments it is not surprising that the teachers’ language and knowledge reflected these emphases.

b) The Blueprint: assessment for/of/as learning

The teachers’ various interpretations of assessment for/of/as learning advocated in The Blueprint indicate inconsistencies in understandings and a general misinterpretation of the three differing functions described by Earl (2003). The teachers’ attitudes to the assessment component were negative in that some were dismissive, or lacked interest, while others were complacent in that they considered they understood the component. Since there was no formal provision for professional learning for this component, it is not surprising that the teachers had negative attitudes and that they described various interpretations of the terms.

c) Planning for assessment

As mentioned, across the schools there was an absence of policies devoted to assessment and that generally, there were ad hoc arrangements. This was evidenced in the teachers’ planning documentation where assessment was either excluded or placed as an “added” activity. In the few documents that included assessment planning, it was generally based on the prior curriculum traditions. This suggests that for the majority of the cases, the teachers considered assessment as an extra activity rather than an integral part of learning (Black et al., 2003).

d) Recognition of own assessment practices

Across the cases, the teachers found it difficult to recognise their own assessment practices and on several occasions prompting was useful in supporting their responses. There was a common tendency to consider
observational techniques as an assessment practice and while observations are fundamental for assessment it appears that the teachers were familiar in describing their assessment approaches such as roving, noticing and using checklists. Even though the classroom observations identified many instances of verbal and written correction, the teachers did not identify this as an assessment strategy.

Although the use of videos to notice, reflect on and recall assessment practice was new to the teachers, the Viewing Guide provided prompts to support the teachers in identifying their own assessment activity. Yet, they all experienced difficulty and were unable to identify their strategies without extra prompts during the interview. This was compounded by the inability to differentiate between instructional practices and assessment practice. For example, roving, questioning and observational techniques without engaging in any form of intervention were thought to be assessment practices: “I covered the class well, there was even coverage of everyone ... the way I questioned and challenged them”. Another teacher focused on her “opportunistic” behaviours in responding to students and that she “deviated” from the lesson plan. Another teacher mentioned her physical stance and her tendency to pay more attention to the students to her right while a third teacher mentioned the importance of roving: “it’s part walking around the class”. These findings indicate that commonly, knowledge of the purpose and function of assessment was not well developed due to the inability to identify their own practice and also due to an inability to differentiate between assessment practice and teaching approaches.

Overall, the study has found that The Blueprint had little or no impact on the teachers’ attitudes to assessment and as well, there was minimal knowledge of assessment in terms of purpose and functions. Although The Blueprint advocates the assessment for/of/as learning approach commonly, the teachers’ perceived assessment as an added activity, apart from daily teaching. They were disinclined to relinquish familiar assessment routines and as one teacher said: “From the way I assess, The Blueprint hasn’t changed me a great deal. I think I am progressive in how I go about my assessment practices”. This comment typified the teachers’ attitudes in that most perceived their practice as up-to-
date yet incongruently, they had difficulties in describing or identifying their various assessment practices.

5.2  Research question 2:
What forms of literacy and numeracy assessment practices were typically used in the primary years of schooling and to what extent were these reflected in the assessment practices advocated in Blueprint 1?

This study has found that the majority of teachers used the same forms of assessment practice in literacy and numeracy. As Darling-Hammond (1990) has noted, successful change processes require policymakers to take into account existing practice, and as well, to consider how new ideas will be posited within existing contexts. Evidence for this section is derived from the teachers' descriptive accounts of their assessment practices; and the observations of assessment practices captured in the videos; and the teachers' documentation.

5.2.1 Existing assessment practice

Across the schools the teachers reported the use of literacy and numeracy assessment practices based on summative practices such as formal or daily tests. The results of the tests were recorded in the teachers' documentation and all six teachers said the test results were used to grade the students into ability groups for Reading and for reporting to parents. Accountability was emphasised by all six teachers and they seemed very concerned in relation to accuracy in their reporting procedures. For example, a typical response includes: “I think I'm massively accountable to my parents. Everything we do is important so I make sure it is written down and can back up what I’m going to say”. For all six teachers, assessment was closely connected to reporting to parents and in most cases it seemed to be the driver for their assessment practice.

Assessment documentation

Assessment documentation was found to be either planning or large amounts of test results and checklists associated with completed work samples, such as for portfolios. Planning for assessment was scant and mostly associated with the prior curriculum (CSF). In commentaries on their planning, the teachers
generally referred to, and emphasised the curriculum and it appears that planning for assessment was not considered as important. One teacher said: “If I see there’s a need for a Running Record I’ll build that in to my planning” and this indicated an awareness of the need for assessment planning however this was an exception.

In one school a yearly assessment schedule indicated a large amount of scheduled formalized testing, further establishing that this form of assessment dominated in that school. The records of assessment results of the two teachers at the school included a large amount of numerical detail although there was very little evidence of how this information was to be used. This suggests that although the teachers undertook the schedule, there was little or no evidence as to the schedule’s purpose other than the teachers’ claims that the results were necessary for reporting to parents.

Overall, the large amount of documented evidence provided by the teachers indicates that summative practices dominated and there was very little evidence to show that their documentation was used for any purpose other than reporting to parents. Since the Assessment Advice in The Blueprint advises that programs should be designed to accommodate assessments, particularly in relation to purpose and goals and not be an added extra, this study finds that the teachers documentation practices were not aligned with The Blueprint.

Classroom practice

Classroom assessment practice included various strategies captured in the videos as well as others not observed but reported by the teachers as routine practice such as the regular formal tests, diagnostic tests such as the Early Years Numeracy Interview and Running Records. According to the principals, summative practices dominated and, as mentioned, the teachers’ carried out assessment as an additional activity. The comment from one teacher: “It wasn’t assessment time … you didn’t see a whole host of what we do … we did assessment at the end of the second term” seemed to typify the majority of teachers’ attitudes and usual practice.
The teachers’ claims that student self-assessment was important was not verified in their practice since close to sixty hours of videoed observations failed to identify this practice as a common occurrence. Although one teacher used peer assessments, she was unable to identify this as one of her assessment practices. PoLT briefly refers to peer assessment but the emphasis is on the provision of an assessment tool for monitoring purposes.

Factual, closed questioning dominated in the majority of cases and, in every episode, students were expected to provide a correct solution or response. Similarly, this also occurred in the daily Tables test and for both of these practices, the teachers were unable to identify them as part of their assessment practice. The PoLT component of The Blueprint advises the use of open-ended questions for interpretative responses rather than superficial contexts.

Across the cases, assessment criteria rubrics were minimally in use although in one case it was a regular occurrence. The Assessment Advice emphasizes the importance of explicit and clear assessment criteria so that students know what they are expected to achieve. The two teachers did not identify their use of assessment criteria as part of their assessment practices and this finding indicates a significant gap between the teachers’ practice and The Blueprint policy.

Note-taking was used minimally although the teachers who were observed taking notes emphasised its importance for monitoring and the tracking of learning. Others said that they recognised it as important yet they were not observed taking notes. PoLT briefly mentions checklists as a useful tool however the practicalities of note-taking are omitted in both PoLT and the Assessment Advice and instead broader approaches are described. This suggests a need for clarity beyond merely using phrasing such as information gathering or reflecting on evidence since the teachers valued note-taking as a practical skill in their assessment practices. As with the other practices noted above, the teachers did not identify note-taking as part of their assessment practices.

Formative feedback was observed as part of classroom practice and is addressed in 5.3.
Overall, classroom assessment practice minimally reflected The Blueprint recommendations and significantly, after watching their videos, the teachers were unable to identify the practices described above as part of their practice.

**Assessment data: usage**

Views on assessment data commonly focused on the measurement of student achievements and although the following comment relates to questioning techniques, there is an indication that there was a belief that assessment data were primarily concerned with amounts and measurement rather than a source of information: “I did not consciously think of questions to generate the most amount of assessment data”.

In relation to the use of Progression Points, The teachers all said they understood how to use the Progression Points even though only two schools had begun implementation of the new reporting system that year. For example, despite the school’s decision to delay implementation until 2007, one teacher claimed to have integrated the Progression Points into her assessment practice. At the time she stated: “I have begun to fully implement the Progression Points because I re-designed the (school’s) Maths benchmark test to align with VELS, what children should be doing at the end of Grade One”. This appears to be an anomaly since the use of the Progression Points required an in-depth understanding of VELS that was not evident in the teachers’ curriculum planning, practice, or commentaries. Moreover, neither PoLT nor the Assessment Advice refers to the use of Progression Points even though the use of Progression Points requires access to teachers’ summative judgements.

The Assessment Advice advocates a balanced approach to assessment that incorporates end-of-cycle judgements; formative approaches when teachers make inferences about student progress; and student engagement in monitoring their progress. Yet, there was a lack of cohesive connections between the assessments required for reporting and the information provided in PoLT and the Assessment Advice.

Overall, it is not surprising that the teachers were content to maintain their existing assessment practices since the information provided in The Blueprint
presents confusing messages around the need for a balanced approach while simultaneously expecting teachers to expend a large amount of their time and effort in making summative judgments for the report cards. This study finds that although The Blueprint required teachers to use Progression Points as an assessment tool, the absence of back-up information in PoLT and the Assessment Advice is a glaring omission.

5.3 Research question 3:
To what extent did teachers use formative feedback as an integral part of their teaching?

The Assessment Advice and PoLT refer only to feedback rather than formative feedback and although Shute (2008) used the term feedback, Clark (2011) defined formative feedback as occurring when students meta-cognitively make links to new learning. At the time of The Blueprint’s introduction, the term constructive feedback was in common, everyday use such as in PoLT (2004c). PoLT emphasizes the importance of timely feedback although there is no definition and instead it is described as comments on students’ work, the provision of assistance, and clarification.

5.3.1 The use of formative feedback

Across the cases, formative feedback was minimally used even though every teacher claimed that it was an important assessment strategy. Since one teacher undertook formative feedback in both literacy and numeracy, it could be assumed that her expertise was more developed than the description provided in PoLT. For example, instead of comments on student’s work, the teachers’ feedback was explicit, individualised and appeared to have a positive effect on the students and their learning. In many instances, the feedback interactions led to scaffolded teaching such as in the use of measuring tools or in deeper understanding of texts.

The teachers did not share the same concept of “feedback”. Some considered it to be praise, and some thought it was more concerned with the need for students to listen to the teachers’ advice. Since PoLT described feedback as commentaries on student work, it could be that some teachers may have interpreted this as the
need to flag errors. Feedback was also considered by another teacher to be questioning and although questions are a part of the feedback process, as Clark (2011) has noted, the students’ meta-cognitions need to be activated in the feedback process.

Given the absence of definitive information in relation to feedback provided by The Blueprint, it is not surprising that this study finds that formative feedback was only minimally implemented. Across the cases it was not an integral part of the teaching, learning and assessment practice.

5.4 Research question 4:
What supports or inhibits the implementation of assessment policies in schools?

Analysis if data indicated that there were four factors which affected the implementation of The Blueprint’s assessment policy. The first of these was related to strategic planning of the schools, in that the four principals were very focused on their individualised plans for improvements across their schools. As Darling-Hammond (1990) argued, policies land on top of other policies and in this case, The Blueprint was launched while schools were engaged in implementing their localized school plans (5.4.1). The next factor to be addressed related to teachers’ professional learning - there is widespread agreement in the literature that change is about learning and further, that teachers require a diversity of learning opportunities to understand and implement policy innovations (5.4.2). The third factor involves school leadership and while The Blueprint emphasised the development of school leaders, there is agreement in the literature that change processes require knowledgeable and strong leadership based on shared-decision making (5.4.3). The final factor that supports or inhibits the change process involves attitudes to change and subsequent implementation (5.4.4).
5.4.1 Strategic planning

Across the four schools, strategic plans for improvement were already in place. The principals’ commentaries indicated that all of these prioritized shared responsibilities focused on professional learning as the means to achieve the agreed and individualized school goals. By way of contrast, there was little evidence of strategic planning to introduce and implement The Blueprint.

While the existing plans for improvement addressed diversity of aspects of schooling such as curriculum, teaching and learning approaches - there were no specific details of assessment planning. One school had developed yearly assessment organizers and another school was in the process of developing a similar schedule and the participants seemed to believe that an imposed schedule encouraged consistency in assessment across their schools.

The four principals considered that classroom assessment in their school required re-vitalizing with progressive improvements, yet there was no recognition of the need for a definitive strategic plan focused on classroom assessment practice. Instead, the principals seemed to consider that assessment decisions were the teachers’ prerogative and it seems they were satisfied with this arrangement.

School-based traditions were held in high regard and there was a preponderance of attention towards grading student work against the previous curriculum standards. While some principals proudly described the “range” of assessment practices, their focus was on assessment tools rather than various approaches and some responses indicated their assessment knowledge required renewal.

Moreover, the principals seemed unaware that the introduction of the Assessment Advice and PoLT were opportunities to introduce innovative assessment practices into their schools. Existing school policies have the potential to provide essential building blocks and frameworks for further developments such as the implementation of contemporary and consistent assessment practices. This suggests that the principals had not yet perceived the possibility that The Blueprint had the potential to support appropriate changes to practice in their schools.
This study finds that since The Blueprint added an extra workload on top of existing conditions, there was very little planning in the schools to support The Blueprint implementation.

5.4.2 Professional learning opportunities

The four principals and the majority of teachers commonly agreed that professional learning experiences were invaluable for teacher growth. While the principals commented on the importance of linking professional learning experiences to the school’s goals for improvement they were also supportive of the teachers’ pursuance of particular interests. The teachers commented more specifically on how prior professional learning had positively influenced the development of their assessment practice, such as the diagnostic testing advocated in the Early Years Strategy. Overall, participants’ attitudes to professional learning tended to be positive, and there was evidence to indicate a career-long interest in continued learning.

In relation to the first few years The Blueprint was operating, there were scant opportunities for teachers to be involved in professional learning which specifically addressing the innovations introduced by The Blueprint. Only two teachers had participated in PoLT training and one teacher had attended a large-scale briefing related to the new reporting system. PoLT trainers and those who attended the reporting briefings were expected to relay information to colleagues, but they were critical of this expectation. As one teacher said: “We should not be expected to do the Train the Trainer model because I think it’s very difficult to go out and get professionally developed then come back and present it in the same way as the professional presenter”.

Even though the majority of teachers had previously shown great interest in developing their skills in a diversity of professional learning based on policy innovations, they were not given the opportunities to develop their knowledge and expertise with the assessment components outlined in The Blueprint. Schools were left to their own devices, as one principal said: “We’ve had a lot of discussions about the Progression Points and we have staff working in teams”. Later he added: “We’ve provided a lot of PD in the school for assessment and
reporting and VELS, and there's a lot of stuff on the website”. But the evidence indicated that the teachers were disinclined to access the website and also although schools organised workshops and programs, the teachers’ knowledge and understandings of The Blueprint were very limited.

The study finds that an inhibiting factor in implementing assessment policies such as outlined in The Blueprint is an absence of planned, diverse and meaningful professional learning specifically addressing the assessment innovations.

5.4.3 School Leadership

Although the principals’ positive descriptions of The Blueprint indicated their fidelity to the Education Department and although they had participated in the initial large-scale briefings, there appeared to be an absence of commitment to implementation. Compounding this issue were various unfounded assumptions concerning policy communication methods, and the principals’ sketchy knowledge of The Blueprint.

The Blueprint: dissemination

The principals described a range of everyday and formalized strategies used to disseminate information, and it was assumed that The Blueprint information was also disseminated in this manner. A key aspect of the communications process was that Leading Teachers were thought to be effectively handing on information using top-down transfer methods. Although one principal spoke of focus groups, there was no mention that strategies such as professional learning communities had been developed to cope with the challenge of ensuring teachers were well acquainted with The Blueprint components and that they felt confident to implement the policy innovations.

Collectively, it seems to have been the case that the principals believed that The Blueprint had been well communicated to staff and that the Leading Teachers were effectively managing professional learning. However there is a large amount of evidence to show that the teachers were largely unaware of the
content of The Blueprint and further, that they were disinclined to access The Blueprint information, particularly through the Education Department’s website.

This study finds that the dissemination methods in the introductory years of The Blueprint were ineffective and inhibited policy implementation.

**The Blueprint: awareness**

According to Crawford (2012) school leadership requires more than a one-dimensional approach and Fullan (2010) points out that in the context of change, there is a need for a resolute approach to ensure teachers are on-side. In this study, the principals’ awareness of the content of The Blueprint appeared minimal, one principal for example was not overly aware of the Assessment Advice. There was evidence that they understood the workings of Progression Points and the reporting software program but they were less knowledgeable of VELS, PoLT and the Assessment Advice. For example, one principal believed that it was possible to align the CSF with VELS even though the curriculum frameworks differ considerably. Even though the principals had initially attended large-scale briefings for The Blueprint, their working knowledge of the components indicated a need for further professional learning to become more engaged to lead the schools towards effective implementation.

Meanwhile, the principals commonly appeared to expect that the Leading Teachers in their schools were very aware of The Blueprint since they made comments such as: “Yes, they’re all up to speed”; and “the Leading Teachers have embraced VELS 100 per cent”. This suggests that the principals believed that the teachers were solely responsible for getting their schools to operate according to The Blueprint. This was compounded by the principals’ superficial knowledge of The Blueprint’s components.

The principal' disconnection with The Blueprint components could be explained by the absence of effective professional learning focused not only on The Blueprint components but also on effective and meaningful ways to lead implementation. The study finds that this apparent distancing from The Blueprint is an inhibiting factor to effective policy implementation since
leadership knowledge and deep understanding of innovations is essential to support teachers’ implementation efforts.

5.4.4 Attitudes to change

Analysis of the interview data revealed the participating teachers’ attitudes to change. The teachers were willing to participate in further professional learning programs and there were several indications that prior professional learning had shaped their assessment beliefs and practice. However in relation to changing their existing assessment practices, this was not as readily acceptable to the teachers since they were satisfied that their respective existing practices were effective and trustworthy.

The teachers spoke favourably of prior professional learning experiences and mentioned that it had broadened their teaching expertise and stimulated new options. By way of contrast, there was wariness in their attitudes to the innovations outlined in The Blueprint in that they knew that ultimately there would be changes to their familiar practices, for example: “I think what we do with assessment is good. But I think we’ll have to modify our practices somehow”. The teachers felt comfortable with familiar practices and there was little motivation towards adopting The Blueprint components.

The principals favourably described The Blueprint in terms of the best policy for a long time yet the absence of connectedness, the lack of planning implementation and the misinterpretations of the policy content portray a different story. This study finds that attitudes towards the uptake of changes outlined in The Blueprint were generally negative and this impeded the early implementation of The Blueprint.

Overall, with respect Research Question 5.4, although there were many factors pointing towards the need for an early acceptance of The Blueprint, there were several factors appearing to inhibit policy implementation. These inhibiting factors included the absence of action-based implementation plans across the schools; the absence of a diversity of professional learning programs directed towards supporting teachers to implement The Blueprint; school leadership that assumed The Blueprint was effectively disseminated, that all actors were well-
informed, and that it was the teachers’ responsibility; and the prevailing wary attitudes to changing existing assessment practice.

5.5 Discussion

This study’s investigation provided the participants with an opportunity to express their views, and their beliefs in relation to classroom assessment and to their professional practice. Teachers’ conceptions of assessment in particular are important because they influence how they teach (Brown, 2004). From the start, this study monitored the passage taken by teachers as they experience substantial changes in their professional lives. Linda, for example, when faced with the challenge of making a series of required changes to her practices responded unpredictably and with an vehemence that was out-of-character with her usual demeanour (see Preamble). At the time, the pressure of expected changes to her working life was too much for Linda and, while the teachers in this study were far more reserved than Linda, across the cases there is evidence of discomfort with the change experience.

5.5.1 Policy drivers

The teachers in this study were primarily concerned with their own assessment practices within the context of team membership and, they spoke unreservedly of their Year level teams as collaborative, cohesive teams. Like the layers of an onion, the teachers’ inner core or sphere comprised their beliefs, their attitudes and their practice. The next layer encompassed their close colleagues, the school, and the wider community. The outer layers concerned directions imposed by the Education Department such as in policy initiatives and policy reforms. As the distance from the inner core increased, so did the distance between teachers’ practice and policy directives yet, the paradox is that the teachers are the prime implementers of pedagogic policy (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000; Fullan, 1989; Singh, Heimans & Glasswell, 2014).

The teachers were not greatly concerned with the bigger picture of change and although in the words of one teacher change was a “given”, the teachers were clearly practice-focused. There was a general lack of awareness of the importance of their role in affecting changes imposed by policy reforms even
though the literature emphasizes the pivotal aspect of reforms through the restructuring of teachers’ work (Gitlin & Margonis, 1995).

Even less on the teachers’ horizon was that policy agendas tend to fall in line with global trends. In effect, teachers try to push reforms away while reformers attempt to pull teachers into line. In this study, the teachers avoided confrontation with The Blueprint by a disinclination to seek information and to seek professional growth. Essentially they pushed the policy away from their immediate orbit of practice. Gitlin and Margonis recommend that instead of a situation where policymakers create push-pull cycles, teachers need to be given the authority to teach in ways they find “educationally defensible” and that educational administrators should support teachers in their professional work such as curriculum planning and innovative pedagogy (p. 403). This study found that the teachers’ professional work was not supported by the changes outlined in The Blueprint since schools and teachers were left to manage professional learning using the outmoded and ineffective Train the Trainer method.

The literature acknowledges policymakers’ issues where perpetual global cycles of borrowing and lending policies tend to dictate education policies in efforts to expedite reforms (Brenner, Peck & Theodore, 2010; Lewis & Hogan, 2016). Although this study has not investigated the sources of information that led to the development of The Blueprint, the agenda for reform clearly states the need to address economic issues, and coincidentally, economic issues are influenced by neoliberal ideals focusing on marketization, competition and performance (Blackmore, 2010; Gulson, Lewis, Lingard, Lubienski, Takayama & Taylor Webb, 2017). This suggests that The Blueprint’s education policy is, as Gulson et al (2017) have pointed out, a manifestation of “global neoliberal policy imaginaries and reform movements” (p. 1). The amplification of economic issues and the need for academic performance imply a connection to neoliberal policies and this leaning has been further amplified in the latest policy, The Education State (State of Victoria, 2017a) where targets, accountability and performance expectations are clearly articulated.
Nevertheless, making sense of policies is challenging for teachers and Morgan and Xu (2011) argued that although policies may be ambiguous, some policies may be more persuasive and powerful. The problematic issue of policy translation in this study manifested not only in the majority of teachers’ beliefs that they had already implemented components of The Blueprint but also in attitudes concerning the inevitability of their compliance. Policy translation involves a “process of invention and compliance” in that teachers are captured by the policy then they change it but ultimately policies may change them (Perryman, Ball, Braun & Maguire, 2017, p. 1). This study’s findings point to several misinterpretations caused by ineffectual and inadequate professional learning opportunities, poor management of policy dissemination and an absence of resolute school leadership focused on supporting teachers to implement The Blueprint.

In this study there were inklings that teachers were keen to become conscious consumers of professional learning in that they identified ways in which they preferred to participate in learning and there was sufficient evidence to suggest that they had taken up a range of professional learning programs resulting in subsequent changes to their practice. Nations such as Finland are less interested in using policy to manifest change in teachers and focus instead on a welfare state approach where teachers are held in high regard and have extensive opportunities to continue to grow professionally (Hargreaves, 2009; Sahlberg, 2007). Indeed, there is a wide disparity between The Blueprint’s approach to professional learning and a nation such as Finland. Sahlberg points out that Finnish teachers are “conscious, critical consumers of professional development where upgrading is seen as a right rather than an obligation” (Sahlberg, 2007, p. 155).

### 5.5.2 Teachers as learners

As Fullan (1989) noted, change is about learning and this notion underpins the core of this study where the introduction of The Blueprint expected that teachers would learn to acquire new skills and knowledge that deeply affected their practice. However, as Hargreaves (2005) pointed out, in the context of
educational change, teachers do not respond in the same way. Likewise, the teachers in this study all responded to the change expectations in various ways. For example, there were attempts of early policy adoption and one teacher said in relation to being informed of The Blueprint: “I look on the website and I try to educate myself and I am probably taking on some ownership”.

The majority of teachers were unwilling to change their practice or to seek new learning since, preferring to maintain familiar practices. One teacher referred to the older generation of teachers in her school who were unwilling to change their practice and Hargreaves (2005) referred to early adopters of reform efforts who may provide initial leverage for change in the school. However, in this study, unwilling attitudes were not necessarily connected to generational issues since the majority of teachers were wary of change, regardless of their age.

Nevertheless, there was sufficient evidence to show the teachers were willing to participate in professional learning even though there was little on offer in relation to The Blueprint. The literature acknowledges that teachers require differing modes of learning contexts that stimulate growth and encourage the development of expertise and reflection (e.g., Little, 2006; Morgan, Tsatsaroni & Lerman, 2000). Linear models, such as the Train the Trainer model are rejected because they assume a causal effect that starts with a professional learning experience and ends with apparent changes to teachers’ beliefs and practices. Instead, interconnected models that stream teacher engagement with reflection and enactment are preferred (e.g. Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002; de Vries, Jansen & Grift, 2013).

Although professional learning activities may aim to change teachers’ beliefs and practice however there is a presumption that these changes will inevitably result in improved student learning (Guskey, 2002). The scope of this study did not include the impact of teachers’ practice on student learning since the focus was on teachers’ learning to change rather than on changing or improving student learning.

A stand-out finding concerns the teachers who, at the end of the line, either tended to resist change, evade it, or interpret it in ways that made sense to them.
From a policymakers’ perspective, it is extremely difficult for policy to change practice and change is, as McLaughlin (1998) suggests, a problem of the smallest unit. Accordingly, how teachers interpret policy and how it is transformed in practice is dependent on the “response of the individual at the end of the line” (p. 72). The literature acknowledges that the change process is complex and requires time (Wood, 1995) and it is apparent from this study’s findings that a renewed approach is required in considering how teachers respond to policy initiatives.

Hence, in the context of teachers as learners, I propose a model that considers how teachers tend to respond to policy initiatives with the objective of supporting the planning of professional learning programs. The literature suggests that taking into account teachers’ prior learning is a significant step in instigating change and the proposed model takes this notion further by adding knowledge of how teachers may be responsive to the uptake of professional learning focused on policy initiatives.

The model, based on a structured, two-way frequency table centres on Respondent Tendencies, the rows represent practice while the columns represent policy awareness, see Figure 5.1. While labels are used in the four cells they represent tendencies and are not meant to be definitive characteristics.

**Patron**

A Patron’s tendency may be described as where the practitioner is aware of policy content and is willing to take-up the policy initiatives. In terms of professional learning, this respondent requires deeper knowledge and opportunities to engage in supporting others during the change process.

**Novice**

The Novice tendency may be described as a positive enactment of policy without insider knowledge of the policy. In other words, expertise had already developed prior to the policy innovations. In regard to professional learning opportunities, accessing deeper knowledge of the policy content to gain verification that there was a balanced alignment could support a Novice practitioner.
**Resistor**

*Resistor* refers to the tendency to be very aware of the policy innovations but there is no effort to enact the policy. Janas and Boudreaux (1997) refer to types of resistance such as *Yes But* where acceptance seems possible but action fails to take place; or *Yes-yes*, where there is complete acceptance but also fails to take action. To overcome this situation and to support teacher growth, professional learning based on shared agreements (Janas, 1998) and acknowledgement of existing practices is recommended.

**Avoider**

*Avoider* refers to negative responsiveness that shuns new knowledge and also avoids changes to existing practice. Avoidance incorporates two types of resistance such as *No Way* where there is no effort to disguise refusal and *Not Now* where ongoing procrastination hinders policy take up (Janas & Boudreaux, 1997). This tendency may require a strong network of collegial support where the practitioners feel empowered to make decisions and as well, an understanding of the underlying issues such as workloads, time, resourcing.

The issue of resistance to change is rarely discussed in the literature however the findings in this study indicate there was evidence of passive resistance, by some school leaders and some teachers. However, resistance needs to be regarded positively and not be overlooked because as Gitlin and Margonis (1995) argued, in the push-pull cycle of reform efforts, resistance can signify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The proposed model therefore offers an insight into how practitioners may respond to policy and recommends that planning for professional learning requires diversity and meaningful experiences for teachers who are the primary implementers of changes to practice.
5.5.3 Towards a framework: Assessment and Learning in Practice

In this study, the teachers’ understandings of assessment centred on their practical activities such as scheduled tests, portfolio work samples, and to a lesser extent, assessment criteria. The Blueprint’s introduction of a theoretical concept of assessment was new to the teachers and since there was very little professional learning to support this new learning, the teachers were disinclined to engage with the concept. As mentioned, they valued their practice and were disinclined to make changes and significantly, one of the teachers in this study noted, new innovations need to make connections to what is already known and practiced by teachers and this requires deeper understanding through continued research.

This study has illuminated a number of tensions that filtered through in various commentaries, such as a dissatisfaction with some of the assessment tools; misalignments between assumptions made by the principals and the teachers’ actual practices. Sometimes there was a lack of confidence in trialling new approaches, and a perception that more time was needed to carry out their usual
practices. For the participants, The Blueprint represented an extra workload and rather than relinquishing established routines and traditions, the teachers and principals commonly believed that maintaining existing practices was necessary.

The theoretical approach advocated in The Blueprint, based on Earl's (2003) theories is currently not mentioned in the latest reform, The Education State (2017a), signifying yet another change in policy's direction. These changes take in to-and-fro swings from the Schools of the Future notion that the purpose of assessment is either summative or formative, then to The Blueprint’s recommendation that the purpose of assessment is founded in Assessment for/of/as Learning (Earl, 2003), then back again to The Education State’s promotion of assessment as either summative or formative.

These terms “summative” and “formative” were not commonly used in The Blueprint and as mentioned, across PoLT, the Assessment Advice and the reporting requirements. The general lack of clarity and cohesiveness in the assessment recommendations is problematic, particularly for teachers who have had very little access to professional learning. Likewise, the absence of comparative descriptions of the differing notions is reflected in the teachers’ misinterpretations and misunderstandings of assessment theories current at the time. Although the practical concerns of connecting and integrating teaching approaches and assessment tools are addressed in the Sample Units, the teachers were largely unaware of these models and had not commonly accessed them to support their understandings of how to implement VELS.

Likewise, feedback was variously mentioned across PoLT and to a lesser extent in the Assessment Advice and although the teachers were adamant that it was important, there was scant attention to the provision of feedback. This gap is an example of the literature’s assertions that teachers variously interpret policy initiatives and that they cannot simply absorb policy information through osmosis (e.g., Hill, 2001; Stone, 2012). This study’s findings that feedback was not well understood signify a need for further research, especially in relation to the latest Victorian reform that specifically emphasizes the use of formative feedback that makes learning “visible” (State of Victoria, 2017c).
Although the promotion of feedback in the latest reform comprises various helpful tips there is scant theoretical clarification in that the terms feedback or effective feedback are in use rather than formative feedback and there is little attention given to the known concept that feedback becomes formative when specific strategies are engaged (e.g., Clark, 2011). Similarly, this study's findings also signify the importance of teachers’ appropriate and spontaneous responses to intervene in student learning activity. However the Education State’s promotion of feedback as an informal strategy linked to the reporting process appears to downplay its formative purpose. This could be misinterpreted particularly if, as this study found, there is scant professional learning back-up to support teachers. There is a danger that in the translation of ideas, mutation can result from prior learning (Stone, 2012).

The reliance on existing, procedural traditions common in this study is explained by Masters (2013) as due to a lack of a conceptual framework, also commonly found in this study. Across the schools, the absence of assessment policies indicates, as Masters suggests, circumstances where assessment practice has not commenced with “research-based understanding”. Perceptions that assessing factual knowledge rather than deeper understandings was common practice for the teachers in this study and Masters explains this as a situation where there is consensus to focus on information about a domain (p. 61).

What is needed, suggests Masters, is a coherent system focused on establishing “where learners are in their learning” and for progress to be monitored including the provision of timely, formative feedback. Another practical strategy that was minimally observed in this study is the use of assessment criteria with meaningful and explicit guidance for students to know what they are expected to achieve as well as the quality of their work. James (2017) emphasises the importance of qualities that meet judgements based on the criteria while Masters (2013) points out that in practice this engages teachers in making connections between learning domains and inferences about student learning.

Overall, this signifies that assessing students’ learning during learning rather relying too heavily on gathering data after a learning cycle has implications for
how teachers perceive the function and purpose of assessment. Recent literature has highlighted the debate concerning the domination of psychometrics approaches and the idiosyncracies of formative approaches (Baird, Andrich, Hopfenback & Stobart, 2017; Schoenfeld, 2017a) and it is not surprising that teachers tend to hold tight to the familiarity of traditions of summative testing rather than launching into formative approaches where highly variable results may arise (Schoenfeld, 2017a). Nevertheless, James (2017) calls for a cohesive approach to assessment based on a socio-cultural perspective on learning to provide an “alternative” for capturing “high quality outcomes and performance” (p. 411) and in consideration of a practical approach that incorporates everyday terminology I therefore propose a new framework for classroom assessment:

**Assessment and Learning in Practice**

Figure 5.2 presents a conceptualization of assessment as a unified approach that encapsulates two distinct approaches when classroom assessment practice focuses either on end-of-cycle learning and is termed *Assessment of Learning* (Earl, 2003) or on during-the-learning process, and is termed *Assessment in Learning*. Both are integral to classroom teaching practice although the differing purposes, functions and timing, distinguish the two approaches.

**Assessment of Learning**

As shown in Figure 5.2, this assessment approach has the distinction of being placed at the end of a cycle of learning when learning goals had been established and the means to achieve the goals made explicit in prescribed criteria. Curriculum standards are referenced and judgements of student progressions are compared to the standards. For teachers, Assessment of learning involves planning, and the selection of appropriate and diverse evidence, such as student reports and accounts, projects, formal and diagnostic tests, group tasks and portfolio work samples. Teachers may use moderation strategies to decide on how judgements are made according to criteria against specific or generic standards. Summations may involve, to varying extents, teachers, students and peers. For students, Assessment of learning provides opportunities for reflection
on what has been learnt, the acknowledgement of learning gaps, and new goal-setting.

**Assessment in learning**

Assessment in learning is distinct from Assessment of learning since it occurs spontaneously during the learning process when student are interactively engaged in adapting to, modifying, or constructing new knowledge. The purpose may be informally diagnostic when others make intuitive yet knowledgeable judgements concerning the need for supportive and timely interventions. Or, formally diagnostic in the use of specific assessment tools designed to illuminate and draw on students’ understandings or use of problem-solving strategies.

Reference points differ from Assessment of learning since they depend on negotiated, task-specific assessment criteria rather than standards-specific criteria. Prior to the task, students need to have opportunities to understand what is expected for the specific task, rather than a generic, broad overview of the learning domain. Teaching approaches differ greatly to Assessment of learning and, planning concerns the management of time and knowledge of the learning domain so that questioning and interventions are relevant and meet the students’ learning needs and, the action taken is during the learning process. Features of the model include,

- the use of open-ended questions that require students to reflect on their understandings of the topic;
- formative feedback that is received and moves the learner forward in their conceptual knowledge;
- making inferences about learning within the boundaries of the learning domain, or topic;
- the use of scaffolded teaching strategies that support the students as they grapple with new concepts;
- the opportunity for students to work on improvements such as through editing, cross-checking, verifying new learning, affirming by aligning new knowledge with prior knowledge;
• the opportunity for students to use various strategies to reflect on their new learning such as in discussions with peers and teachers, graphic representations, drawings, writing, note-taking.

Evidence of Assessment in learning may involve verbal or written summations, reciprocal dialogue, and annotations following students’ verbal accounts, explanations and justifications for their reasoning. Overall, this proposed framework responds to the findings of this study that illuminated a need for an accessible, relevant and practical approach to classroom assessment. The teachers in this study asked for “plain English” in regard to assessment terminology and as far as possible, this framework satisfies this request. This proposed framework also responds to the call for reform (James, 2017; Masters, 2013) and the significance of this framework is underpinned by the teachers’ perspective rather than by a perspective based on measured outcomes. The four questions placed at the top of the proposed framework serve to link Assessment of learning and Assessment in learning and are useful in supporting both approaches. They may be asked by either the teacher or the student and include:

• What do I know? (teacher or student)
• What do we know? (teacher and student/ student and peers)
• What can I do now? (teacher or student)
• What can we do now? (teacher and student / student and peers)

The four questions are derived from prior assessment frameworks in which similar questions are used to support approaches, see for example Wiliam and Thompson, 2008 (Figure 2.1) and Hattie and Timperley, 2007 (Table 2.3).
### Assessment of learning

| Purpose: | End-of-learning cycle  
| Comparative  
| Inform planning/ interventions |
| Reference: | Prescribed criteria  
| Standards |
| Teacher action: | Summative feedback, verbal/written summations, reports, accounts  
| Planned monitoring  
| Drawing a conclusion |
| Student action: | Acknowledge learning gaps  
| Reflection  
| Goal setting |
| Evidence: | Formal and diagnostic tests  
| Collections of work samples over time  
| Reports and summations  
| Projects/ assignments |

### Assessment in learning

| Purpose: | Spontaneous/interactive  
| Diagnostic  
| Timely interventions |
| Reference: | Negotiated criteria  
| Task/domain specific |
| Teacher action: | Formative feedback  
| Scaffolded, timely strategies  
| Drawing a conclusion/ making inferences of learning progressions within a domain |
| Student action: | Self-monitoring/ editing/ improving  
| Learning adjustments  
| Reflection |
| Evidence: | Reciprocal dialogue  
| Reflective practice  
| Timely observations and annotations  
| Student explanations/ justifications |

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**Figure 5.2** Framework proposal: assessment and learning in practice
5.5.4 Future prospects: closing the gap

As mentioned, The Blueprint’s case for reform identified the need for improvements to schooling across Victoria due to “variations” in student outcomes across and within schools (State of Victoria, 2003, p. 9). This study’s findings align with the identified variations in that across and within schools, although assessment practices appeared *ad hoc*, patterns of consistency were apparent in the domination of standardized, summative assessment practice. Australia has continued to fall behind internationally due to an obsession with being the best of the best, rather than focusing on equity and taking into account the needs of individual and schools (Sahlberg, 2014). Although governments have a challenging role in guaranteeing good education, the emphases on standardization has narrowed the curriculum, diminished innovation and steered teachers towards teaching to predetermined tests and results (Sahlberg & Oldroyd, 2010). To improve this situation three key conditions are vital in sustaining a knowledge society that contributes to social and economic progress which include:

- renewing the conception of knowledge
- understanding innovation and,
- enhancing social capital through schooling (p. 289).

This suggests that although The Blueprint aimed to improve schooling, international comparisons indicate that gaps in student outcomes have widened and that Sahlberg’s (2014) allusion to equity is warranted. Moreover, this study identified a dissonance between professional learning provisions for teachers and the emphasis on educational leadership, suggesting an inattention to equity. Although the educational leadership strategy has been lauded internationally (Elmore, 2007; OECD, 2007) there has been no follow-up study to indicate the success or otherwise of The Blueprint’s leadership strategy. Elmore (2007) described Victoria’s leadership improvement strategy as powerful and coherent and that it defines the “leading edge of improvement strategies internationally” (p. 7). By way of contrast, this study has found that the inadequate provision of professional learning focused on The Blueprint not only severely hindered early
implementation of the components, but also negatively influenced the teachers’ attitudes towards adopting the policy recommendations.

Two decades ago, McLaughlin (1998) questioned why policy reforms are not implemented as planned. And although this is in part due to top-down approaches (Darling-Hammond, 1990) and to policy misinterpretations (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011), solutions to this question have begun to filter through. This study, for example, found that The Blueprint failed to induce teachers to change practice even though they knew that ultimately it was a “given”. Fullan (2010) suggested that incentives are an ideal strategy to get “the vast majority of teachers on-side”, that is, active engagement in policy enactment (p. 66). The majority of teachers in this study believed that policy enactment required adding to their existing workloads by, for example, aligning VELS with the CSF, and this was due mainly to deficient professional learning focused on how to understand and develop expertise in VELS usage. This study also identified that existing practices were not acknowledged, and that the teachers were expected to accept and adopt new practices. For example, one teacher said: “I would have liked the Education Department to have used more links to what we already know and I’m always gob-smacked that we do it with kids but we don’t do it when we’re educating educators” and as one principal said:

I think teachers are disappointed in not being consulted. It’s imposed from above. The Department says they have consulted with teachers, but you’ll find that most teachers feel they haven’t been part of the process. And so there’s not that level of ownership. That’s why perhaps, some teachers are not as enthusiastic to take on board all these massive changes we’ve had now for many, many years.

These findings resonate with Spillane, Reiser and Reimer’s (2002) observation that teachers’ prior beliefs and practices pose challenges to reform, because their “extant understandings” may interfere with their ability to interpret and implement reform. Yet, taking this view may influence policymakers to perpetuate the notion of “policing the teacher” (Thompson & Cook, 2014, p. 700) where the monitoring of teachers results in an over-emphasis on quality teaching and the discourse of “teacher-as-problem” that manifests as repetitious which leads to repeated calls for improvement (p. 703). Significantly, The
Blueprint and the latest reforms, The Education State (2017a) both stress the need for improvement and while this may be the case, using the teacher-as-problem logic tends to become “habitual” (p. 710) and may be seen in terms of a “global panopticism” where teachers are held accountable for low student outcomes (p. 713). However, as Sahlberg and Oldroyd (2010) suggested, since teachers are key to necessary change, eliminating the gaps between policy formulation, teachers’ professional learning and classroom practice require innovative thinking about reforms and policy implementation, rather than perpetual attempts to change teachers.
Chapter Six

Vistas and Prospects

6.0 Introduction

This final chapter draws the thesis to a close and presents a conclusion (6.1); recommendations (6.2); the limitations to this research (6.3); and implications for further research (6.4).

6.1 Conclusion

This study is the first of its kind in Victoria to use an ethnographic case study methodology to examine the experiences of teachers as they are being asked to introduce profound changes to their practice. The study evolved from my experiences as a teacher and in my leadership during times of substantial change, and my desire to provide a forum for teachers to express their views of change experiences. The study highlights the struggle teachers have with expectations of policy reform implementation and the impact of inadequate strategic support.

Evidence has been presented showing that the six teachers who participated in the study felt very satisfied with their existing assessment practice but they found it very difficult to either assimilate new ideas or acknowledge that alternative assessment strategies exist. They thought of assessment in terms of tools rather than in terms of functions or purpose; and since they had poor conceptions of summative and formative assessment theories, it is not surprising they were challenged in understanding the theory based on Assessment for/of/as Learning. Yet the policy reform expected teachers to adopt this theory and to implement it without substantive professional learning support.

For the reporting component, the policy initiative also required teachers to judge student achievement against standards in the new curriculum using a numerical scoring system. With little to guide them, the teachers were expected to implement a complex assessment system which required a balanced approach as well as to implement a new reporting system based on teacher judgements and scoring. Compounding this issue was the expectation that a new curriculum
would be implemented although the lack of professional learning support hindered the teachers’ knowledge and curriculum usage.

While the new curriculum and the advice for assessment were substantial changes, overarching these was the introduction of six detailed teaching and learning principles. Professional learning for these important principles involved a Train the Trainer method that failed to motivate the trainers and had very little impact on the six teachers’ practice. Although the policy innovations called for many changes, the absence of adequate professional learning opportunities at the regional and local levels made it unsurprising that the teachers in this study felt overwhelmed.

The study’s findings have implications for policymakers, and for policy initiative strategies such as school leadership and professional learning opportunities. Policy translation, interpretation and eventual implementation are problematic for teachers and as shown in the literature (e.g., Louis, Murphy & Smylie, 2016; Thompson, 2017) a shared, caring approach by school leaders can alleviate some difficulties. Moreover, the use of the proposed model (Figure 5.1) may help professional learning providers understand that teachers have various starting points and that existing practices require acknowledgement as important indicators of teachers’ existing knowledge and understandings - particularly of assessment practices. Morgan and Xu’s (2011) view that the introduction of reforms to schools is a social phenomenon rather than located in the “psychology of teachers” (p. 22) has a great deal of resonance with the findings in this study due to the allocation of blame that manifested in the teachers’ strong feelings of accountability for students’ learning outcomes.

Under circumstances where the culture of blame prevails, as in this study, teachers tend to feel distanced from policy initiatives and disinclined to make changes in their professional practice. Another approach might be to take a view of education based on equity, democratic perspectives and a culture of trust where teachers, school leaders and school communities work together to create and build a broad vision of what it means to educate children in a changing society. Conclusively, when economic issues and a culture of blame impede
policymakers’ vision for change, then schools and teachers feel disinclined to engage with the policy initiative, to the point of avoidance.

School leadership requires leaders who resolutely distribute leadership responsibilities so that shared decision making becomes embedded in the school’s culture. Fundamental to the success of policy initiatives is a leadership network armed with relevant knowledge concerning contemporary understandings of teaching, learning and assessment. However, when policy initiatives focus on leadership attributes, career advancements and managerial roles, policy implementation is diminished. Leadership in schools also entails teachers as leaders who generally have a higher status role with professional responsibilities tied to high levels of expertise in teaching, learning and assessment. Implicit in this leadership role is that policy uptake is a given, including the early resourcing of policy information. The evidence in this study demonstrated that the principals were disassociated from The Blueprint, and they made assumptions concerning the expertise of the teacher-leaders. This was compounded by an abrogation by the teacher-leaders of their responsibilities.

Tied directly to school leadership is professional learning, since good school leaders build and develop professional learning communities that stand together when facing challenges proposed by policy initiatives. If policymakers sideline professional learning or provide token programs primarily based on top-down methods, they do so at their peril. Acknowledging the extent of the range of existing practice is essential, as is the recognition that teachers have differing orientations to learning and differing professional learning needs. The case portraits in this study point to varying attitudes to professional learning and willingness to engage with professional learning. Embedding reflective practices and collaborative environments in a diversity of programs gives due regard to teachers as they work together to build their professional expertise. Under these conditions teachers would have the opportunity to develop the capacity to make distinctions between partial uptake of policy initiatives and full uptake, and to identify alignments with existing practice and policy components. Resources for local, strategic planning could have supported the development of professional
learning communities focused on a shared vision of implementation of The Blueprint.

Victorian teachers have long been required to comply with various methods of measuring student learning for reporting purposes, to fulfill requirements for high-stakes testing and to inculcate formative assessment strategies into their daily practice. If the quality of formative assessment practice is to improve, it needs to be prioritised over the need for meeting targets, measuring learning by numbers and a focus on competition. One-to-one formative interactions are crucial to teaching and assessment practice and while the recent focus on formative feedback is helpful; strategic planning for professional learning is required to support teachers in developing expertise with this complex practice. In an interview, one of the experienced teachers acknowledged the importance of feedback: “Feedback, that’s your number one thing”. This same teacher had developed the capacity to apply her belief in practice while others said it was very important yet for various reasons they were unable to provide formative feedback to their students. Clearly, the participating teachers had varying views and attitudes towards assessment and The Blueprint’s introduction did not have an impact on the teachers’ knowledge of, attitudes to and practices with respect to, classroom assessment.

While education policies continue to espouse the view that quality in teaching practice should be consistent across states and nations, unless this view is followed up with coherent strategies to support teachers, then inconsistencies will continue to prevail.

6.2 Recommendations

In the context of change to teachers’ professional practice proposed by governmental policy reforms, I present the following recommendations:

1. Victoria’s contextualized, local educational needs should be a justification for policy initiatives, rather than an agenda focused on the need for an improved economy, accountability and performance targets. The literature acknowledges the challenges faced by policymakers. However, there is also a strong recognition that because there is a decline in the
trust of teachers’ capacity to make curricula and assessment decisions, policy reforms tend to over-prescribe fundamental teaching, learning and assessment approaches. While excellence in educational outcomes and quality teaching is desirable, as shown in countries such as Finland (Sahlberg, 2007), these ideals are achievable when policy approaches focus on equity, and opportunity, and broad, holistic approaches to dealing with curriculum and assessment.

2. The teaching profession is foundational to change imperatives outlined in policy initiatives and, as Fullan (2010) noted, teachers need to be persuaded to be on-side, rather than off-side. The proposed, integrated model: Responding to policy initiatives (see Figure 5.1), demonstrates four possible ways that teachers may respond to initiatives and has the potential to remind policymakers that teachers’ differing responses may affect the uptake of policy initiatives. The model also indicates that teachers have varying needs in relation to professional learning involving policy initiatives. Hence, there is a crucial need for systemic strategic planning to cater for a range of professional learning prior to policy initiatives roll-out. Post roll-out, professional learning programs should be reviewed and updated to ensure there is a continued focus on teachers and their changing needs. The literature has confirmed that teachers learn best when actively involved, such as in professional learning communities, and hence top-down, hierarchical methods should be avoided.

3. The proposal for a new assessment framework: Assessment and learning in Practice (see Figure 5.2), aims to rectify the gap between teachers’ understandings of assessment and theoretical considerations. There are several calls for a unified approach and assessment reform and the framework proposal is responsive to the needs of practicing teachers, to strong recommendations in the literature (Harlen, 2012; James & Lewis,
2012; Masters, 2013; Wiliam & Thompson, 2008), and importantly, to the findings derived from this study.

6.3 Limitations to this research

As mentioned in the Preamble (p. 1), the finalizing of this study was delayed due to major health problems. However, the delays also provided increased opportunities to search and explore a large amount of literature, which illuminated the way forward. This also impacted on interpretations since it was crucial to acknowledge and identify the available when the study's data were collected.

The study's small sample afforded the opportunity for an in-depth, ethnographic approach and although the findings led to the generation of a proposed integrated model (Figure 5.1) and a proposed framework for assessment (Figure 5.2), larger-scale research is needed to explore the efficacy of both models.

This study undertook a comprehensive review of six teachers’ assessment practice by collecting data using video technology, interviews and artefacts. During the course of analysis it became clear that the video analysis was a difficult and complex process. This was due to classroom activity that was at times unpredictable and variously paced. At the time, literature searches were largely unhelpful due to the scarcity of video recordings in classrooms and the available articles didn’t provide analysis guides. However, I persevered until I found a coherent and consistent method to unpack the overlapping episodes captured in the videos.

Similarly, unpacking the interview transcripts was time-consuming; however, this in itself was a bonus because even though I felt extremely familiar with the data, there was always something else to be found.

Seeking recruits for the study was difficult because teachers were very reluctant to be videoed, and also because some schools were reluctant to be engaged with research and researchers. At the eleventh hour, seven teachers volunteered although one had to drop out due to being on leave in term four when the data were collected.
I assumed that even though the teachers were provided with a Viewing guide when reviewing their own practice, they would easily identify their own assessment practices. However, they lacked the capacity for this and significantly, this became a finding in itself. It would be interesting to understand why the teachers were unable, for example, to realise that their practices such as commenting on students’ work, or the use of assessment criteria, are assessment strategies.

Another assumption was that schools had assessment policies, but this was not the case and the principals either ignored or overlooked my request. The lack of assessment policies meant a modification to the analysis process, since there was only verification from the principals concerning assessment practices in the schools.

There were substantial recruiting difficulties and even though many principals were very keen to have staff participate, there was obvious reluctance among many teachers. Their reluctance was possibly due to a number of reasons such as a lack of interest in participation in videoed classroom observations, lack of experience with, and understandings of the importance of research, or they felt they didn’t have the time or energy to participate.

This study entirely relied on the goodwill of the participants and it is through continued partnerships between schools and researchers that we can move forward in our efforts to understand learning, teaching practice and the challenges teachers face due to policy reforms.

### 6.4 Implications for further research

This study has identified several areas that would benefit from further investigation however to keep within the scope of this study, the following recommendations stand out as worthwhile and achievable.

**Video technology: for reflective practice**

A unique feature of this study was the opportunity for reflective practice afforded to the participating teachers using video technology. Recent research in
Europe has reported gains in teachers’ development from reviews of their practice captured on video. As already shown in the literature (e.g., Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Hollingsworth & Clarke, 2017; Schoenfeld, 2017b) teachers could continue to benefit from similar experiences and the research could focus on teachers’ learning gains; students’ learning gains; and interactive moments between teachers and students.

**Overlapping roles: Leading Teachers**

This study emphasised the role of leadership during profound educational changes and the literature confirmed that the translation of policy continues to be problematic for schools and teachers. Very little is known about how professional learning communities utilise Leading Teachers as supportive, knowledgeable and resolute leaders in the adoption of, and implementation of policy initiatives. Action research investigations have the potential to unlock this knowledge, particularly in the context of the latest reform strategy introduced to Victoria’s schools, *What is the Education State?* (State of Victoria, 2017a).

**The proposed model: Responding to policy initiatives**

This model (Figure 5.1) has the potential to inform all practitioners and policymakers concerned with professional learning. In adopting the underlying concept in the proposed framework, that teachers respond variously to policy initiatives and therefore require differing forms of professional learning, all stakeholders in professional learning could be well placed to provide substantial programs that cater for varying learning needs. Further research, particularly action research, could be conducted to investigate teachers’ learning needs prior to the take-up of new policy initiatives.

**The proposed framework – Assessment and Learning in Practice**

This framework (Figure 5.2) has the potential to unify assessment practice and theory so that teaching and classroom assessment are perceived as integral, deeply connected components. This study identified a wide gap between theoretical underpinnings of assessment and teachers’ understandings of
assessment. In part, this was due to the familiarity of local traditions and a disinclination to relinquish these traditions. An absence of professional learning opportunities, and a general lack of agreement in the literature might also have contributed to this state of affairs.

Future research such as action research could focus on the application of the framework so that schools may develop holistic, and workable assessment policies; so that professional learning has a consistent and cohesive focus; so that curriculum planning incorporates assessment planning; and so that teachers feel confident in articulating connections between their daily assessment practice and the underlying theory concerning assessment’s function and purpose.
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www.wncp.ca


http://ebookcentral.proquest.com


Appendix 1

Example: video observations

Literacy lesson
Appendix 2
Example: Final video summaries, Literacy lessons
Appendix 2 (cont)

Numeracy lessons

Comparisons: Literacy and Numeracy
Appendix 3

Example: Principal/teacher interview alignments
Example: Cross-case evidence, observed assessment practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Cross-case evidence</th>
<th>Observed assessment practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baleine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5

Example: What’s important to me?/ Formative assessment practice/ summative assessment practice/ attitudes to change and The Blueprint

Numbers= Interview responses
Appendix 6

Example: Final assemblage

Data sources merged: video observations, interviews, principals’ interview

Tensions/anomalies/alignments identified
Description

Test of Reading Comprehension (TORCH, ACER)

Purpose: TORCH is developed to investigate, interpret, determine and understand the students reading comprehension skills. The TORCH results help to compare the performance and measure progress of the students.

www.australiaeducation.info

TORCH materials consist of standardized test copies, score keys, answer sheets, norm tables, and individual and group reports.
## Appendix 8

### Ann's literacy test data

**Literacy Testing – Class Summary Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Level</th>
<th>Torch (enter Torch score)</th>
<th>Writing Sample</th>
<th>SA spelling test</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TCU</td>
<td>LSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

05/12/06

**Description**

Teacher generated

Numerical records consisting of nine students' literacy test results.
Appendix 9
Ann’s “Waddington” spelling test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>S.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Feb 06</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>8.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher:** M
**School:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>r</td>
<td>o</td>
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<td>l</td>
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<td>b</td>
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<td>s</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

“Waddington Diagnostic Reading and Spelling Tests”

Commercially produced

Claims to derive “reading and spelling ages”

Appendix 10
Helen’s “Gentry” spelling test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Child’s spelling</th>
<th>Semi-phonetic</th>
<th>Phonetic</th>
<th>Transitional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>monster</td>
<td>The boy was eaten by a monster.</td>
<td></td>
<td>MTR</td>
<td>MOSTR</td>
<td>MONSTUR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>united</td>
<td>Have you been to the United States?</td>
<td></td>
<td>U</td>
<td>UNITID</td>
<td>YOUNIGHTED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dress</td>
<td>The girl wore a new dress.</td>
<td></td>
<td>JRS</td>
<td>JRAŠ</td>
<td>DRES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bottom</td>
<td>A big fish lives at the bottom of the lake.</td>
<td></td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>BODM</td>
<td>BOTTUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hiked</td>
<td>We hiked to the top of the mountain.</td>
<td></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>HIKT</td>
<td>HİCKED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human</td>
<td>Miss Piggy is not a human.</td>
<td></td>
<td>UM</td>
<td>HUMN</td>
<td>HUMUN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single</td>
<td>An eagle is a powerful bird.</td>
<td></td>
<td>EL</td>
<td>EGL</td>
<td>EGUL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>closed</td>
<td>The little girl closed the door.</td>
<td></td>
<td>KD</td>
<td>KLOSD</td>
<td>CLOSSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jumped</td>
<td>The car bumped into the bus.</td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>BOPT</td>
<td>BUMPTED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>type</td>
<td>Type your story on the computer.</td>
<td></td>
<td>TP</td>
<td>TIP</td>
<td>TİPE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Description


Pre-test and post-test advice
Student self-correction procedures
Teacher’s word selection
Activities include: study of unknown words and word game
Appendix 11

Helen’s school-generated benchmark test sample 1

**Mathematics Assessment - Number**

**CSF11 - Level 2 - Established**

**Informal Fraction Language (MANUN203)**

- Draw a pizza and color one-quarter
- Draw a circle around half of the hearts

- Draw a line to show two halves of the triangle below
- Draw 6 balls and color one-third

**Use a Four Function Calculator (MANUN204)**

Individual teacher assessment:
- count things by adding the same number of objects at a time ☐
- use the constant function to produce skip counting sequences ☐
- use the calculator to show an understanding of place value ☐

**Description**

Test master copy

Test completed by all Year 1 and 2 students

Test generated locally by the teachers at “Wallaby Park”
### Appendix 11 (cont)

Helen's school generated benchmark test sample 2

#### Part 1

**Name:**

**Counting Patterns**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Groups of**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 fish makes □ groups of 3

#### Plus

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>5 + 4 =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>13 + 6 =</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| c | 4  
   + 3 5  |
| d | 4  
   + 3 5  |

#### Part 2

**Order the numbers and amounts of money from smallest to largest.**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>367, 256, 374, 109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>$1.75, $7.51, $1.57, $5.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Part 3

**a.** Color in the coins you would need to make 85 cents.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$2</td>
<td>$1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50c</td>
<td>20c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10c</td>
<td>5c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**b.** Color in the coins you would need to make $3.65

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>$1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50c</td>
<td>20c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10c</td>
<td>5c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 12

Robert’s numerical data of mathematics tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Given Name</th>
<th>Jul Mul &amp; Div</th>
<th>July Measurement</th>
<th>Aug Auto Resp</th>
<th>Aug Subtraction</th>
<th>Nov Auto Resp</th>
<th>Nov Subtraction</th>
<th>Nov Division</th>
<th>Nov Fraction</th>
<th>Nov Decimal</th>
<th>Nov Auto Resp</th>
<th>August 2023</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Abs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Description

Class data collection arranged by monthly tests and topics
Appendix 13

Helen's numeracy portfolio task and assessment

Description

Portfolio numeracy assessment task sample completed by all students and part of the annual reporting to parents' procedures at "Wallaby Park"
Appendix 14

Helen’s literacy portfolio task description and assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Title:</th>
<th>Fairy Tales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level: 2-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strand: Discipline and Inter-disciplinary Learning.

Domain: English and Information and Communication Technology.

**Task:** Pupils selected a Fairy Tale they were familiar with. They had to use the computer program “Inspirations” to retell the story in the format of a Story Map.

**Skills and Understandings:**
- Is able to recall and retell the Fairy/Folk Tale in sequence.
- Created links using arrows to indicate the direction of the Story Map.
- Varied presentation. eg. fonts, colors, pictures

**Task Assessment**
- [ ] Not at expected grade level
- [ ] At expected grade level
- [ ] Above expected grade level

**Attitudes and Effort**
- [ ] Improvement needed
- [ ] Satisfactory
- [ ] Good
- [ ] Excellent

**Work Habits**
- [ ] Worked with assistance
- [ ] Worked independently
- [ ] Needed direction
- [ ] Completed in set time
- [ ] Not completed in set time

**Description**

Portfolio literacy assessment task sample completed by all students and part of the annual reporting to parents procedures at “Wallaby Park”
Appendix 15
Ann’s student self-assessment

Task: Information Brochure - Term 4, 2006
The children were asked to make an information brochure about Healesville Sanctuary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My brochure is neatly presented.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I include three to six important pieces of information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I included more than six pieces of information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I set out my information in logical categories.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I included a simple map.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I completed my brochure.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud of my work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Description
The students completed a task involving the generation of a brochure and using the above template they were asked to assess their work.
Appendix 16
Lucy’s student self-assessment

Description

The students completed a project task and assessed their efforts by using the above rubrics and writing a comment.
## Teacher Assessment

### Assessment Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Score:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Grade 5/6

#### Australia – "I Love A Sunburnt Country"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs Improvement 1</th>
<th>Satisfactory 2</th>
<th>A Good Effort 3</th>
<th>High 4</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information and Detail</strong></td>
<td>Poor understanding of the task. Lacks detail.</td>
<td>Has answered some questions to show basic understanding.</td>
<td>Has a good understanding of the subject and has answered questions with a fair amount of detail.</td>
<td>Demonstrates an excellent understanding of the subject (more than required), providing detailed and accurate explanations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
<td>Layout disorganised. Needs to be more legible or clear. More relevant pictures or diagrams required.</td>
<td>Fairly neat and tidy. Some headings, pictures and diagrams included.</td>
<td>Very neat and tidy. Good use of labelled diagrams, and relevant pictures.</td>
<td>WOW! Excellent presentation. Well organized and of a high quality. Excellent use of borders, headings, illustrations &amp;/or pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation</strong></td>
<td>Many spelling/ punctuation/ grammatical errors.</td>
<td>Several spelling/ punctuation/ grammatical errors.</td>
<td>Some spelling/ punctuation/ grammatical errors.</td>
<td>Very few or no spelling/ punctuation/ grammatical errors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**: 8

### Comments:

Neatly presented project. Clearly set out. Pictures of places visited, + more detail was needed. Asked to find 2 natural + 2 man made features.
Appendix 17

Nikki’s: mathematics task: peer and teacher assessment

**CREATE-A-CITY**

**Tribe Name:** Hot dogs

**Tribe Members:**

**Tribal points awarded:** 30000

**Teacher Comments:**
I really liked the clear way in which Kate presented your information. She spoke clearly and provided very good justification for your city design. You all answer questions well!

**Tribe Evaluation:**

**Two things we did well:**
1. The speech. The facts about the city.
2. Creativity. We thought about a lot of things.

**Two areas we could improve on:**
1. The colours/pictures
2. Make the city smaller

**Description**

Teacher-generated template used by the teacher and the students to assess group responses to the mathematical task.
### Description

Teacher-generated comments following a Guided Reading lesson where the children read aloud from a selected text.

Lucy has noted goals for future learning (Where to next?)
### Description

Ann made notes of the students’ literacy “contract tasks”, the students independently completed nine different literacy tasks over two-three weeks.
### Appendix 20

Helen's literacy notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Simpsons</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Engaged in process</th>
<th>Predicts</th>
<th>Asks for clarification</th>
<th>Asks questions</th>
<th>Answers questions</th>
<th>Summary &amp; Author Inference</th>
<th>Able to use text relevant to lesson</th>
<th>Can follow oral instruction</th>
<th>Can follow visual cues</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Snap!        | Amanda | ✔️                 | ✔️       |                         | ✔️             | ✔️                |                             |                                 |                          |                        | "Self-correction; some progress."
|              | Hannah | ✔️                 | ✔️       |                         | ✔️             |                   |                             |                                 |                          |                        | "Self-correction."
|              | Maddy  | ✔️                 | ✔️       |                         | ✔️             |                   |                             |                                 |                          |                        | "Self-correction." |
|              | Lachlan| ✔️                 | ✔️       |                         | ✔️             |                   |                             |                                 |                          |                        | "Self-correction!"    |
| FOCUS        |        |                    |          |                         |                |                   |                             |                                 |                          |                        | "Needs practice; some progress." |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Flintstones</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Engaged in process</th>
<th>Predicts</th>
<th>Asks for clarification</th>
<th>Asks questions</th>
<th>Answers questions</th>
<th>Summary &amp; Author Inference</th>
<th>Able to use text relevant to lesson</th>
<th>Can follow oral instruction</th>
<th>Can follow visual cues</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Jupiter Spiders | Ella   | ✔️                 | ✔️       |                         | ✔️             |                   |                             |                                 |                          |                        | "Very expressive; some text reading."
| 3 Billy Goats Gruff | Georgetta | ✔️                 | ✔️       |                         |                |                   |                             |                                 |                          |                        | "Self-correction." |
|                | Zoe    | ✔️                 | ✔️       |                         |                |                   |                             |                                 |                          |                        | "Self-correction." |
|                | Jimmy  | ✔️                 | ✔️       |                         |                |                   |                             |                                 |                          |                        | "Self-correction." |

### Description

Using a teacher-generated template, Helen made notes during Guided Reading lessons.
Appendix 21
Helen: school-generated Assessment Schedule (Yr 1)

### Assessment Schedule- Grade One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Of Learning</th>
<th>Assessment for Learning</th>
<th>Assessment as Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Literacy</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Literacy</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Literacy/ Mathematics/ Integrated Studies.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Handwriting</td>
<td>- Observation Survey</td>
<td>Establish a reflective/journal with a view to including sections in the portfolio- mid and end of year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Running Records from P.M. Benchmark.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Mathematics.</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Mathematics.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Portfolio Task-</td>
<td>- Math Benchmark Test.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Math Numeracy Interview.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Integrated Studies</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Integrated Studies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Portfolio Task-computer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **• Literacy**         | **• Literacy**          | **• Literacy/ Mathematics/ Integrated Studies.** |
| - Portfolio Task.      | - Sails Literacy Charting Progress Kit.- (Running Records.) | Establish a reflective/journal with a view to including sections in the portfolio- mid and end of year. |
| **• Mathematics.**     | **• Mathematics.**      | |
| - Portfolio Task-      | - High Frequency Words-1-100- Early Term 2. | |
| - Portfolio Task-      | - Writing Analysis | |
| - Mid Year Assessment Test. | | |
| **• Integrated Studies** | **• Integrated Studies** | |
| - Portfolio Task- related to unit | | |

**Description**

School-generated yearly assessment schedule arranged term by term and organised in columns headed: “Assessment Of Learning, Assessment for Learning and Assessment as Learning”

Shown here are Terms One and Two for the Year One students.
## Description

A partial sample of the Yr 5 and 6 term planning document that was completed by the Yr 5 and 6 teaching team at “Silverleaves”.

The planning is based on the Victorian Essential Learnings (VELS) curriculum and indicates links between the standardized expected learning outcomes and teacher-generated assessment tasks (see Assessment column).
## Appendix 23

### Synthesis of observed numeracy lessons across cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numeracy</th>
<th>Lesson approach</th>
<th>Question types</th>
<th>1-1 interactions</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann Measurement 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Open-ended/ inquiry based</td>
<td>Open-ended individualised</td>
<td>Several episodes Individual needs-based</td>
<td>Possum models evaluated against stated criteria Praise for effort/ creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Number</td>
<td>Instructional Process-based Lengthy introduction Repeated instructions</td>
<td>Closed Funneled towards teachers expectation</td>
<td>Some instances but the focus on repeated task instructions</td>
<td>Teacher corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Number</td>
<td>Multiplication tables test</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Not observed</td>
<td>Numerical scores corrected using answer cards. Teacher recorded results. Praise for high scores Admonishment for low scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Measurement Capacity</td>
<td>Instructional Students’ use of containers Focus on processes and one solution and water</td>
<td>Closed Funneled towards teachers expectation</td>
<td>Repetitions of instructions Corrective discussions</td>
<td>Worksheet: Students line up to wait for teacher correction Students admonished for behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Measurement: Money</td>
<td>Teacher directed class game Worksheets</td>
<td>Closed Funneled towards teachers expectation</td>
<td>Corrective discussions</td>
<td>Worksheet: Teacher roved to correct and at times praise/ admonish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Number: division</td>
<td>Teacher led demonstrations Instructions re process Worksheets</td>
<td>Closed Funneled towards teachers expectation</td>
<td>Corrective discussions Focused on processes and one solution</td>
<td>Teachers’ verbal and written corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara Chance and data; graphing</td>
<td>Teacher led demonstrations Instructions re process Worksheets</td>
<td>Closed Funneled towards teachers expectation</td>
<td>Corrective discussions Focused on processes and one solution</td>
<td>Teacher verbal and written corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara Number: subtraction</td>
<td>Teacher led demonstrations Instructions re process Worksheets</td>
<td>Closed Funneled towards teachers expectation</td>
<td>Corrective discussions Focused on processes and one solution</td>
<td>Teacher verbal and written corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy Number</td>
<td>Games Students played against partners</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Helpful support for students</td>
<td>Teacher corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy Rotations/ mixed</td>
<td>Teacher led instructions</td>
<td>Closed Funneled towards teachers expectation</td>
<td>Teacher roving to re-teach. Focused on processes</td>
<td>Teacher corrected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki Measurement 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Teacher led instructions based on the learning approach and social obligations/ norms Group task</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Roving to ask same questions across the groups</td>
<td>Evaluations of group work against stated criteria. Peer and teacher: summative assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki Number</td>
<td>Multiplication tables test</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Public 1-1 interactions</td>
<td>Students used answer cards to correct. Teacher recorded results and praised/admonished student efforts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>