

## **CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

The concern of this thesis is to determine to what extent, through graduate studies in religious education teachers develop as critical religious educators. The nature of this study suggests that a case study method, within a critical theory paradigm, is one appropriate approach.

The argument of this thesis is that professional development, by way of university based graduate studies in religious education has the *potential* to foster in religious educators a heightened critical consciousness of the essential tradition of Christianity and a commitment to shape the future rather than reproduce the past. The specific programme which has been used in the study to investigate the claim is the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious) at the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus. A conceptual framework has been developed in Chapters 1-3 which provides a framework for testing the claim in relation to the instance being investigated. A number of key concepts have emerged that relate to the question, namely the essential elements of:

- . a critical theory of professional development;
- . a theory of transformative adult development and learning;
- . a revisionist approach to religious education.

The claim will also be tested from the data of Chapter 4. In that chapter an examination was made of the contextual factors that impinge on the case study, namely the:

- . Second Vatican Council
- . recent national documents on teacher education;
- . professional development policies for teachers in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn;

- . Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious) offered by the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus;

The thesis will be further tested from the empirical evidence from the data generated by the case study to establish what constitutes personal and professional growth for religious educators.

#### **1.0 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The problem is identified as the need to determine:

Whether in the light of increasing national demands for professional development, and significant changes in the Catholic church since the Second Vatican Council there is evidence that religious educators who engage in university graduate study develop as critical religious educators.

The particular site for the investigation of this problem is the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus.

Focus will be given to the research by exploring evidence to bring understanding to the following questions:

1. What counts as professional development for a religious educator?
2. What are the recent changes in religious education and to what extent does the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious) at Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus constitute desirable professional growth for religious educators?
3. To what extent is engaging in such a professional development program (i.e. the course at the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus) a form of personal religious growth?

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Epistemological Assumptions of a Critical Theory Paradigm

This thesis is located within the framework of a critical social theory paradigm informed by poststructuralism. The differences between these traditions have already been discussed. Comment has also been made, earlier in this writing, on how the traditions complement each other and contribute to this research. In common with research that uses qualitative methodology this work is based on a set of core philosophical assumptions, values and beliefs contributing to the conceptualisation of a particular view of human activity and society. Critical theory is underpinned by the philosophy of emancipatory epistemology and is based on the assumption ‘that social reality is created and sustained through the subjective and intersubjective experience of the actors in the scene’ (Ting-Toomey, 1984:169-170). Where ideologies legitimate a particular view of life and inform judgement a critical analysis of such ideologies, through conscious rationally self-informed decisions, can lead to freedom and the possibility of emancipatory action by producing critical knowledge.

While critical theory recognises technical and practical knowledge, and uses these forms as its raw materials, its main concern is with critical interest (Kenway, 1987:12).

Critical theory attempts to evaluate the contributions made to social knowledge by positivistic researchers, on the one hand, and by interpretive researchers on the other, and to find a way of synthesising them. It attempts to do this by placing both of these approaches in a broader and more enduring context, so as to assess their limitations and possibilities.  
(Bredo & Feinberg, 1982:272).

Critical theory research can generate discourse that emerges from the power relations between individuals and institutions. Implicit in this is the assumption that:

Subjectivity is not a coherent, unitary, rational source of self-knowledge but a historical and social construction temporarily formed across a shifting range of multiple, and often contradictory discourses.

(Giroux, 1990:84-85)

A critical theory perspective, therefore, accommodates a view of 'society as a human construction which is altered through people's progressive understanding of historically specific processes and situations' (Comstock, 1982:372). In this sense it provides for the self-creation, by humans, of their own thought and action and for the contribution they can make towards reconstructing society. Central to critical theory is a self-conscious awareness and an emancipatory cognitive knowledge that confront unrecognised social constraints imposed by theory and practice. The theory/practice mode that is necessary is a reciprocal one that confronts 'systematically distorted communication and thinly legitimated repression' (Habermas, 1972:371) that comes into being when action is restricted to the technical and practical domains. The reciprocal nature of theory and practice generates an emancipatory cognitive knowledge. Habermas (1972:301) refers to the knowledge and action that come from such a relationship:

The only knowledge that can truly orient action is knowledge that frees itself from mere human interest and is based on Ideas — in other words knowledge that has a theoretical attitude.

The critical approach refuses to accept that what is must be and seeks to redress circumstances by pointing to what could be possible. Therefore, it explicitly critiques the interest served by relations of domination; it points to gaps and omissions; it identifies 'disjunctions, incongruities and contradictions in peoples' life experience ... it focuses on critical-reflection coupled with action for change and is aimed at now self-understanding and a better understanding of the cause of unfreedom — both of which act as a stimulus for personal and/or social transformation' (Candy, 1989:7).

The process that facilitates critical self-reflection that leads to social reconstruction is called by Habermas (1974:18) 'rational argumentation' where individuals through a process of dialogue eventually make rational choices rather than decisions controlled by outside manipulation and coercion. The consequent knowledge is concerned with transforming ideas, and empowers individuals to act freely and responsibly on the basis of rational decision. According to Habermas such 'rational argumentation' is a bridge between theory and praxis. The discourse of critical theory aims at a critique of ideology through a critical awareness of factors that shape reification and alienation. The process in which critical theorems are tested through reflection is dialogical. Enlightenment from the process of reflection leads to liberation from contextual constraints, and also to authentic, communicable critical insights, self-control of knowledge and responsibility for knowledge. Such enlightened knowledge is based on an awareness of needs shaped by historical-social conditions and establishes new criteria for assessing values, making judgements and participating on one's own terms. The concern of this research is to address the problem perceived as the cause of lack of freedom: to examine to what extent the research participants gain emancipatory knowledge and are empowered to act as effective agents for transformation. 'It also involves the identification of structural and structuring phenomena which circumscribe meaning, apprehension and action, be they within texts, bodies of knowledge, or institutional and social processes' (Kenway, 1987:7).

The critical approach is not without its problems since it 'abandons any pretence at neutrality and ... seeks explicitly to identify and criticise dysfunctions, incongruities and contradictions in people's life experience' (Candy, 1989:7). It thus faces the problems associated with 'theorising [that] is concerned with broad social structures and struggles' (Kenway, 1987:15) and the assumptions one brings to it. The researcher of this study also acknowledges that caution must be taken not to confuse hermeneutical understanding of the problem with critical theory which 'put[s] itself and its opponents in a perspective outside the phenomenon criticised' (Ödman, 1988:63-64). A hermeneutical approach could neglect

dimensions in the immediate context of the problem and minimise, or leave unexamined, issues of power and constraint: it could favour individual rather than social change.

Even though critical theory research presents difficulties these are outweighed by the value it offers for serious research because its reflective, dialogical principles are a way to test theoretical perspectives. The criteria of rigour for accuracy and comprehensiveness, however, still apply and comment on these will be made in relation to the case study.

## **2.2 Critical Case Study**

The research method chosen for this qualitative work is a multiple case study of three groups of teachers. A qualitative case study was selected because it has the potential to yield rich information that illuminates understanding. It also 'identifies factors of interaction and make[s] sense of them in context' (Kenway, 1987:82). Thus it provides an approach to the problem of the research through empirical enquiry that:

investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.  
(Yin, 1989:23)

The rationale that underpins a critical case study has both strengths and weaknesses which come from the purpose of such studies to reveal 'the properties of the class to which the instance being studied belongs' (Guba & Lincoln, 1982:371). A case study can be used to identify evidence that cannot be discerned by traditional statistics. This consequently, makes the report more accessible and more easily interpreted by people who can apply ordinary processes of judgement to understand it. One further strength of the case study, within critical research, is that it is 'strong in reality' (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1980:59) and achieves

understanding of the participants' reality and allows for inductive theory building and, therefore, 'conclusions... arise from the data gathered and not from previously held concepts' (Liddy, 1992:71). The case study is 'an exploration of an individual instance of an example of a general question' (Golby, 1989:165-166) which acknowledges the specificity of the phenomenon: it also recognises that contextual factors relate to truth. A further advantage of a qualitative case study is the possibility of analytic or exemplar generalisations from the 'sample units [which] can act as typical representations of a class or group of phenomena' (Sarantakos, 1993:15). This claim is not meant to suggest that it is easy to generalise because evidence generated is restricted to particular contexts. However one situation can be used to help inform others. It is Stake's (1985:280) opinion that:

A researcher who tries to promote reader-made naturalistic generalisations usually tries to provide the elaborate information on which readers decide the extent to which the researcher's case is similar to (and thus likely to be instructive about theirs).

Amongst the weaknesses of case study methodology are the problems of ethical issues, such as anonymisation, as well as validity and reliability (comment on the latter will be made further on). In the case of anonymisation this research does not set out to either criticise or uphold the practices of any particular Catholic school system or university. The researcher acknowledges that it is always difficult, if not impossible, to guarantee privacy or anonymity for institutions that participate in qualitative research. Indeed in this case, by consultation and mutual understanding, it was not the intention to do so. The nature of the research and the participants' rights and the researcher's responsibilities were clearly negotiated, at the outset, with the appropriate authorities of the institutions; the results of the research will be made available to the parties concerned, namely, the Catholic Education Office (Canberra and Goulburn) and the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus. The researcher accepted the responsibility to present the material, accurately and fairly, in accordance with the theoretical perspective of the

study. While privacy and anonymity are almost impossible to ensure for institutions extreme care has been taken, by the use of pseudonyms and ethical procedures, to guarantee the basic human right of confidentiality for the individual research participants. This concern for justice has been a constant reminder, to the researcher, that all matters relating to ethical issues were to be treated meticulously and with integrity.

### **2.3 Research Participants**

The twenty one research participants for the individual interviews were primary school teachers employed in Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. An assumption underlying the decision to involve teachers as research participants was consistent with the principles of professional development discussed above relating to the ways in which persons create their own meaning, beliefs and behaviour. By examining the perspectives of participants the data were created which would allow inferences to be made about what these particular teachers knew and valued. This was in harmony with the purpose of the study which was to determine the outcomes of a particular professional development course in religious education. The teachers in this specific case could provide detailed and comprehensive data and evidence for a greater understanding of the particular problem. This, in turn, would have potential to expand and critique theories (Yin, 1989:21) such as those discussed in the earlier chapters of this thesis.

It was anticipated that as a bonus effect, of the dialogue itself, the participants would 'achieve self-knowledge and self-reflection which are therapeutic and effect a cognitive, affective and practical transformation involving a movement towards autonomy and responsibility' (Bernstein, 1976:199). Thus the research experience would itself contribute to the ongoing professional development of these religious educators.

Pseudonyms have been used to ensure anonymity for the participants and each teacher has also been assigned a code. The information in Appendix H (p.342) lists the groups, codes and pseudonyms as well as the age, teaching experience and course units the participants studied in the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious). Appendix I (pp.343-376) provides a brief biographical profile of each of the participants. The twenty one participants have been categorised in groups:

- Group 1:** Teachers who had just *completed* the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious) — or were enrolled for their final units.
- Group 2:** Teachers who were in the *first semester* of their studies for the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious).
- Group 3:** Teachers in this group *had not engaged in graduate studies in religious education*. They had volunteered to participate in a pilot project to trial a new curriculum document in religious education (*Sharing Our Story*)<sup>1</sup>. This was a professional development initiative of the Catholic Education Office of Canberra and Goulburn.

The inclusion of teachers at different levels in the course, as well as a group without the experience of the course, assumed that differences in the research participants would facilitate the discovery of useful categories and interrelationships in the data.

The participants in Groups 1 and 2 were selected, at random, if the university records showed they satisfied the criteria. Participants in Group 3 were nominated by the Principals in schools that were involved in the Catholic Education Office's pilot project: subsequently the researcher invited their participation in the study. In many cases the researcher had little, or no, previous

---

<sup>1</sup> Diocese of Parramatta. (1991). *Sharing Our Story*. Parramatta: CEO.

information about the participants in the groups. As Catholic primary schools are staffed predominantly by female teachers this is reflected in the student body of the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious) and consequently in the gender bias of the research participants of whom eighteen were females and three were males — a ratio that is, in fact, more favourable in respect of male teachers than the reality of their numbers on school staffs.

A group interview was also held with six recent graduates of the course (four males and two females). These participants were also selected at random from the records in the file of recent graduates. The members of this group were not research participants *per se*. The group discussion with them acted as a vehicle for checking the content and structure of the interview schedules to be used with the research participants in Groups 1, 2 and 3. Appendix J (p.377) lists information about the participants in the group interview. Appendix K (p.378) is the schedule used for the interview session: Appendix L (p.381) is a sample of data from the group interview.

### 3.0 RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

The research methods and design for this thesis flow conceptually and logically from the theoretical perspective of the conceptual framework established in Chapters 1-3 and from the methodology of a critical case study. Additional theoretical constructs, to explain the choice of processes for data collection, have come from several bodies of literature related to areas such as the use of:

- ***group interviews*** to generate preliminary understanding and insight prior to the finalising of instruments for the major research task;
- ***negotiated interviews*** with all members of Groups 1, 2, 3 to generate data from their experiences of the graduate course (Groups 1, 2) or the pilot project (Group 3);
- ***observation lessons*** (Groups 1, 3) as independent evidence of the participants' experiences: Group 2 members were not required to

give lessons as they had not studied any units from the professional studies strand (Appendix F: p.339).

*still photographs*, taken during observation lessons (Groups 1, 3), to act as stimulus for recall of facts.

The rationale for these areas of discourse, as well as the matter of triangulation as a measure of validity and reliability in this study, will now be discussed in relation to the research design.

### 3.1 Triangulation

The triangulation of interviews, observations and photographs as methods of data collection, as well as the triangulation of perspectives from a group of graduates and research participants, from different categories, was designed to ensure a multiplicity of perspectives from multiple sources of data. The use of triangulation also anticipated that having as much information as possible about the phenomenon, for the subsequent interpretation, would guarantee that, as far as possible, the danger of assumptions, bias and subjectivity (of both researcher and participants) would be avoided. It was also anticipated that multiple perspectives provided for findings to be checked from other sources. Triangulation is not *per se* more valuable than other procedures but it seemed desirable, from the complex nature of this study, to use it for a higher degree of validity and reliability (Sarantakos, 1993:155).

The researcher acknowledges that validity depends, to a great extent, on the quality of the instruments and their potential to provide accurate records. To address this matter of validity the content and structure of the instruments (Appendix M: p.382)<sup>2</sup> were finalised after trialling the proposed schedules with a

---

<sup>2</sup> This appendix is a record of the forms completed by research participant, Anita, Code 1.1, and a record of the transcripts of the negotiated interviews with Anita. It serves as well as a sample of the instruments used with all research participants for individual sessions.

small group of four participants who met the criteria as research participants. As a result of the trial sessions a few minor amendments were made to some of the language to make concepts more concrete. Three items were deleted to reduce the length of each of the interviews to a reasonable time (1½ - 2 hours per session): the purpose of the deleted items had already been addressed in other parts of the interview schedule. The use of both questions and projective techniques (Appendix M: Task 1; p.384) reflected the substance of the conceptual literature. They were designed to relate to areas such as the personal philosophy of the participant, theological concepts, methodology for religious education and the impact of the course. The inclusion of projective techniques was to counter an excessively rational emphasis from a conversation based interview (Hedges, 1985:86).

### **3.2 Negotiated Interviews**

The negotiated interview is not only a process but also a product, where the eventual transcript gives access to evidence from the world-view of the research participant.

Tripp (1983:32) speaks of co-authored and negotiated interviews as acts of creation where ideas will be formed, developed, created and modified from the perception of both the researcher and participants. He also proposes that they are an attempt 'to objectify subjectivity through a research strategy which recognises and acts upon the power relationship between researcher and researched.'

The dialogical and narrative nature of a negotiated interview can engage the research participant in a reconstruction of the past as well as a re-interpretation of events and experiences in a particular context. In the process of formulating responses that represent meanings, that they want to acknowledge, the research participants come to understand how they view their present world. Reflection in an interview is an opportunity for the interviewees to deal with the past and move towards an articulated sense of coherence and continuity (Mishler, 1990:427).

The decision to use negotiated interviews influenced the degree of structure for the interview as well as the nature of the final transcript. In advance the negotiation needed to be clearly bounded to establish at what stage the interviewee had the right to both comment on and negotiate the meaning of the successive texts of the interview. In essence Tripp (1983:42-43) takes the position, perhaps over-dichotomised, that there are two approaches to understanding the written text: exegesis and hermeneutics. Exegesis is concerned with meanings contained in the text itself and hermeneutics with the significance of the text to the reader. At the exegetical level of logic and structure the research participant can unpack the meaning by logical analysis; the researcher retains control at the hermeneutical level of understanding and interpretation. In the final analysis interviews yield words, not numbers and after interviews are transcribed and interrogated transcripts will both disclose and delete certain information (Tripp, 1983:35).

In all interviewing that adopts both informal as well as standardised open-ended variations in instrumentation, such as were used in this research, problems can arise. The informal variation can pose different questions to the interviewees and generate less systematic and organised data: the standardised open-ended variation while increasing comprehensiveness may constrain the participants and the opportunity to use more relevant statements may be missed. This research used both the above and while it was more difficult to avoid the hazards of the first variation a conscious effort was made to be flexible in the wording of the standardised questions.

### **3.3 Biographic Incidents**

This work has not engaged in research involving full scale biographic narratives. However the literature from the discourse of biographic incidents influenced the structure of the negotiated interviews. Comment, therefore, will be made on biography, as an epistemology, to the extent that its philosophy and assumptions underpin sections of the research design of this thesis. Aspects of

biographic epistemology have been used since it is essentially a qualitative task, in the light of critical theory, where nothing is taken at face value and ‘a contradiction is provided to invite learning’ (Wilson & Burkett, 1989:14). The approach has the epistemological potential for understanding that ‘is not only cognitive in character... [but expresses] ... affective selves ... beliefs, values, attitudes and feelings’ (Butt, 1987:156).

An appropriately designed interview schedule of questions that addresses a series of uniform biographical questions, that are pertinent to the particular activity, provides for indepth interviews to probe the understanding that the actors have of their experience. This has the potential to access past, often unexamined, influences and contextualise the present actions in a way that helps explain ideological and/or hegemonic constraints behind the events. Finger (1988:170-171), whose conceptual research relies on Habermas and Gadamer, claims that critical reflection by the adult on life experiences is a formative and learning process for the subject.

Butt & Raymond (1987:78-79,84) propose that biography can be seen as emancipatory when it raises consciousness and liberates the subject from ‘the dysfunctional structures of previous roles ... and relationships.’ Through a process of conscientization it constructs an etiology of one’s present reality and ‘propels the learner to action thereby integrating thought and action, theory and practice.’

Tripp (1988:98) suggests that approaches to biographic narratives can be either holistic or critical. The holistic approach attempts to look at the whole past, whereas the critical is concerned with relevant formative incidents, in a specific practice, which engages the actor in articulating, understanding and reconsidering ‘the past as a justification of the present.’ Some of the research strategies for this study were designed to help the participants deal with uncertainties, ambiguities and inconsistencies of their past reality and to gain interpretive insights about meanings (Berk, 1980:88).

A further advantage for this research came from the dialogical nature of an interview for gathering biographic details. This emphasises the importance of the

participant's personal conceptions and the language itself provides 'the conceptual categories which organise thought into predetermined patterns and set boundaries on discourse' (Bowers, 1987:116). Through this dialogue the participant comes to understand the relationship among antecedent, subsequent and consequent events.

Biography, as an epistemology has "integrative, synergistic and emancipatory potential" (Butt & Raymond, 1987: 84). Biographic epistemology is a dialogic process that is personal, intuitive and reflexive: it allows realities to emerge and the participant's voice to be heard in its alienated, reframing and contractual modes. It was, therefore, an appropriate component of the design for this study.

### **3.4 Negotiated Interviews with Participants**

The overall purpose of the interviews was to engage participants in reflection on the context of their current reality as religious educators; on their experience of their professional development through the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious) and on the impact of the intellectual literature of religious education and its associated disciplines. Because the religious educators work in church schools, it was important too, to have evidence about the participants' views on matters related to the institutional church as well as the reasons for their feelings and attitudes of alienation and disempowerment. The interviews also addressed the teachers' preferred styles of pedagogy, their perception of the role of tradition and the importance of the future.

The details about the interviews were explained to the participants when the initial contact was made. It was at this time that arrangements about the negotiated interview texts were clearly bounded. The nature of the text as a record, rather than a verbatim transcript, was made clear. The understanding was also established that the researcher accepted final responsibility for interpretation and significance.

Before the first interview, each participant received the forms for *Participants Background Information* and *Preliminary Reflection for Participants*

(Appendix M: pp.382-383). During the negotiated interviews the remaining procedures in Appendix M were used. Both the participant and the researcher had tape recorders which were turned off, if at any point during the interview session the participant requested clarification about the tasks.

After the interview a slightly edited copy of the participant's response was made to remove incoherencies and distortions that are inevitable in the spoken word. Every effort was made to preserve the language, images and concepts of the participants to avoid premature interpretive conceptualisation (Butt, 1980). The edited record was despatched to the participants to check for their understanding and response with a reminder that changes or amendments that the participants felt were necessary for the accuracy of the record would be negotiated. Most of the participants made comments and requested minor changes to remove ambiguity that had occurred, either because they considered they had not developed a response clearly enough, or to restate their position in language that extended or strengthened their meaning. When the amendments were incorporated in the text further contact was made with participants to check the descriptive validity of the negotiated text. The chance, by the participants, to examine the texts added methodological rigour to the data collection. The anticipation, on the part of the researcher that negotiation was an inherent risk and that information could be lost was in fact not justified. No substantive change was requested by any of the participants and the interrogation of the text, by the participants, added valuable reflective comments. It was also a further opportunity to ensure that the participant had reported beliefs, feelings and actions beyond those taken-for-granted.

### **3.5 Observation of Lessons; Photographs; Interviews**

The participants in Groups 1 and 3 had agreed that the researcher would observe a religious education lesson (Appendix O: p.421) and make a photographic record of instances within the lesson. This request was not made of Group 2 participants who were in the initial stage of their course. The follow-up interview

was stimulated by, and dominated by, the photographs. Appendix M contains also the process for the interview that followed the lesson. The process for recording these interviews was the same as for the initial interview session. The participants' recorded responses were also transcribed and negotiated according to the procedure used previously. The second interviews with the participants in Groups 1 and 3 aimed to avoid the criticism that a single interview limits the response. They also gave the participants an opportunity 'to deal with feelings roused... to unlock deeper levels of data content' (Lather, 1986b:264).

Photograph interviewing is defined as the technique of showing the interviewee the photographs of incidents in which they participated, to stimulate recall for the participants of perspectives and meanings (Templin, 1982:144). The use of photographs serves both as a monitor of change and, when consciousness is raised in participants, as an instigator of change. As a result, they recognise their increased knowledge and/or the unnecessary constraints that have limited their insights.

As a tool for recall, photographs act as a stimulus for participants to revisit experiences and information and to think and talk reflectively in a more holistic context to develop insights, improve understanding. If the photographs are not compatible with the subject's perspective and theoretical constructs, they can push analysis further. This dialogical reflection can become a 'process of ideology critique and self-reflection ... not just describing and understanding but achieving self-knowledge' (Jennings, 1986:14). There is a reliability built into a design that uses photographs because the evidence remains an 'undisturbed narrative image' (Wagner, 1979:165) and frozen graphic of the phenomenon. Of course such 'reliability' is confined only to the moment selected for recording through the photograph and presupposes the absence of technological tampering with the photographic product.

On a conceptual level the photograph interviews can be, and in this research were, a very productive stage that complemented the previous interviews with the

participants and encouraged factual statements to corroborate information given in those interviews. The photographs<sup>3</sup> allowed for a structured conversation — directed by open questions and verbal probes without the stress, on the part of the participant, of feeling interrogated. The participants were able, on some occasions, to take the lead in inquiry from the concrete and explicit verbal communication and graphic vocabulary constituted by the photographs; this countered the fear of the researcher appearing to be in control. The photographs dominated the interviews, sharpened recall and the dialogical interviews presented data from multiple perspectives and became another factor in the method of triangulation. While photographs can offer many advantages there can, however, be problems of objectivity and bias in the sample of incidents recorded. As a precaution more incidents during the lessons than were really needed were photographed and the choice of the ones chosen for discussion was left to the participant.

### **3.6 Group Interviews**

The group interview method recommended itself for this study because a group interview can provide greater scope, depth and insight than an individual interview; it allows more time for participants to think through their answers (Horwitz & Kimpel, 1988:52). They also can be used to prepare for, and extend, research schedules (Watts & Ebbutt, 1987:26) as well as to identify issues and concepts for subsequent interviews (Dawson & Caulley, 1981:61).

While one-to-one interviews allow greater possibility for the interviewer to be task oriented, the group interview has the advantage of a social dimension that provides an essentially social context. The social context helps participants to analyse their own attitudes, ideas, beliefs and behaviour with more penetration and, at the same time, obliges participants to take account of other people's views in framing their own responses (Hedges, 1985:71-73). The inherent risk is, of course, that social pressure may condition the responses and it can be difficult to know

---

<sup>3</sup> Samples of the photographs used for this research are in Appendix N:pp.418-420.

whether participants' responses are true to their own experience and beliefs. Measures were taken in this research to counter this, as far as possible, by incorporating tasks (Appendix K: Tasks 4, 5, 6; p.380) where individual responses were given.

Group interviews are basically conversational with the use of supplementary variations similar to those that were used in this research. Lederman (1990:117) suggests that the agenda cannot be rigid and restrictive but rather needs to be semi-structured and flexible. Opening questions are best designed to explore issues that demand less reflection and penetration and allow information to emerge in the language and understanding of the participants. While identified purposes of the research need to be addressed there must be a sensitivity to unanticipated data and flexibility to allow information to emerge in a different sequence from that anticipated.

Although not necessarily a representative sampling of a specific population the members of a group require some homogeneity to facilitate a common focus and understanding and a comprehensive exchange of views. The sense, in the group, of common interest, where participants are able to speak their mind and respond to ideas of others, not only helps participants to analyse their attitudes, beliefs and values as well as generate new ideas but provides tremendous potential for 'deeper probing and reciprocally educative encounter' (Lather, 1991b:77).

Group interviews provide a synergy which results in more than the sum total of what individuals alone could create. They, therefore, provide useful perspectives from a diversity of experiences, of the participants' struggles, feelings of empowerment and critical perspectives in relation to the concerns of a particular research.

### **3.7 Group Interview (Graduates)**

Before the two-hour group interview with six graduates of the Diploma of Education (Religious) material was precirculated (Appendix K: p.378). This was

intended as a stimulus and a broad outline; it did not aim to define the order of individual questions for the interview but was rather an outline of content. The first part of the session was in fact an open discussion directed by the questions attached to the quotation (Appendix K: Task 1; p.378) from the documentation for the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious) Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus (Appendix E: p.331). For the second task the mode of operation was again conversational. A concept map (Appendix K: Task 3; p.379) was developed by brainstorming for key words and phrases that emerged in the conversation; the relationship between the concepts was established in the form of propositions to explore and make explicit the group's understanding. To supplement the level of involvement that the participants could make as members of a group each participant registered his/her individual judgement (Appendix K: Tasks 4, 5, 6; p.380). The overall structure of beginning with a simple task to ones requiring more penetration was deliberate.

The purpose of the group interview was to access the impact, on the graduates, of the content and academic structures of the Diploma of Education (Religious). It also provided evidence of the themes and areas of concern that needed to be addressed in the individual interviews with the research participants. The interview was taped and then summarised to capture the essence of the responses. The summary was made by repeated listening to the tapes and from notes taken to support the tapes.

#### **4.0 ANALYSIS OF DATA**

To test the evidence, for this thesis, data were used from the conceptual framework (Chapters 1-3), the exploration of contextual factors that impinge on the study (Chapter 4) and the empirical data of the case study.

The processes for analysis of data were determined, in part, by a significant assumption relating to the contextual nature of the data and by the focus of the thesis. The assumption bears on the context-dependent meaning of the text which

emerged from interviews and as such ‘is a reconstruction of the past, shaped by the particular context of its telling’ (Mishler, 1990:427). It was, therefore, desirable to use the data in a way that acknowledged the connection between theory and real-world phenomena. The focus of the thesis is the critical consciousness of religious educators and the evidence for what constitutes a critical religious education comes from the perspectives and context of the experience of the research participants about how they view their present attitudes, beliefs, behaviour and change. From the evidence of the conceptual literature and of the empirical evidence the purpose is to determine what knowledge is transformative of genuine self-understanding, that is correlative to the personal and professional growth of the participants. The processes for analysis were chosen to maintain a dialectic between the data and theory and to make interpretation and meaning accessible for reflection and generation of theory. The aim was ultimately to deconstruct the texts ‘in order to understand the meaning and significance of what is being communicated’ (Grundy, 1991:4). This was done by exploring the assumptions, logic, images, consistencies and contradictions in patterns of speech in order to organise, describe, interpret and discern the implications of the data.

The successive steps in the process commenced with a protoanalysis of the unstructured data, for themes, theoretical constructs, categories and concepts that signalled ways of understanding and organising the data to find new meaning. This was followed by a preliminary use of categories for coding and then a revision of coding to identify units, clusters, patterns and to attach meaning. The application of these to the transcripts analysed the material to discover further data about such areas as attitudes, beliefs, behaviour, power relations, assumptions and insights. The next step, to transform the text into meaning, was to decide on the relationships amongst the categories and to establish a conceptually specified set of analytic categories (Appendix P: p.422) that appeared to emerge logically from the conceptual and empirical data, and to apply them systematically and rigorously for interpretation and implications. This was an intensive analytic strategy. The process was applied separately in the first instance to the data from each group.

The process was then applied across the groups to find interrelations among the concepts. When, or if, incongruent meanings emerged, the differences were pursued and accounted for, if necessary, by raising further aspects of the problem that needed to be dealt with through further questions.

At one stage of the analysis of the research data a computer programme for qualitative data analysis, *Nudist*, (Richards & Richards, 1991a; 1991b) was used as an alternative system for coding and retrieving already-processed text. Its operations manipulated the data around the indexing system for a complete analysis with as many categories and sub-categories as desirable. The flexibility of the system provided for reorganising and extending categories as theorising developed and for constant on-line access to categories. Thus modifications and revision of the indexing as further concepts and relational links emerged were possible. In this way the *Nudist* system contributed to a flexible search and retrieval process through procedures of interaction and integration between the textual record of the data and the conceptual constructs that were indexed by the researcher. *Nudist* has the potential to go beyond coding and retrieval of texts to shape the data and enhance techniques of theory emergence.

At this stage of writing there is a lack of critical literature on qualitative data analysis by computers (Richards & Richards, 1991a:237) so *Nudist* was used as a marginal and alternative approach only. In fact the researcher did not pursue that possibility as on-line theorising became inefficient and intrusive. The experience of the writer of this work suggests that it is from reflective hovering over the hard copies of whole text that theory is generated. The decision to limit the use of the computer program was made to avoid the negative consequence of substituting segments of retrieved text for the whole of the data. Fragmentation of the data seemed alien to the contextual nature of the data.

#### 4.1 Data Generated

The negotiated interviews and the photograph interviews accounted for sixty five hours of recorded responses and for 450 pages of negotiated texts. The

observation of classroom lessons yielded twenty hours of recorded data as well as 420 photographs. In addition to these data interpretive biographical profiles were prepared from the interview data as well as from information on the sheets that were completed by the participants. The group interview of two hours was recorded and a summary was made of the interview. Copies of all texts have been preserved. As previously noted one complete text, for Anita, 1.1, has been included in Appendix M (p.382). That appendix also contains three samples of the twenty seven photographic incidents of the lesson given by Anita. The ethical questions that relate to data, generated by qualitative research, are by their nature significant for the research participants and measures have been taken to address this. When the transcripts of the taped interviews were satisfactorily negotiated by the researcher with the participants, the content of the tapes was erased and in all hard copies of the data the research participants are identified by pseudonyms and codes.

## **CHAPTER 6: A REFLEXIVE PROCESS**

The task of this brief chapter is a reflexive process. It will reflect on what has already been written and indicate how the theoretical perspectives of the earlier chapters will test, and be tested by, the empirical data of the case study. By way of orientation to the second part of this writing what follows will show the part played by each chapter in forming the warp and woof of the tapestry of the thesis.

### **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE, AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS**

#### **1.1 Chapter 1: Transformative Professional Development**

It has been argued in Chapter 1 that the purpose of transformative professional development is to generate the acquisition of knowledge that is contextually relevant and constitutes for teachers the possibility of autonomy and responsibility for their personal and professional needs. It was likewise argued that for the religious educator there is little, or no, potential in knowledge, values and beliefs that are unexamined, unchallenged or unknowingly internalised. The critical religious educator will be characterised, rather, by examining the taken-for-granted nature of previously held assumptions, norms and beliefs. A corollary to this is that the adequate preparation of teachers must address the acquisition of non-alienating knowledge that is technical, practical and emancipatory. This calls for a capacity for self-reflection and action to ensure that a professional's knowledge is provisional and in constant need of reflection so that it does not become irrelevant, distorted and static.

A claim has also been made in Chapter 1 that teaching is 'a profession and its practice is founded upon a fund of knowledge that is organised into a systematic body of theory' (Scott, 1982:598) that constitutes the knowledge base of the profession. It can, therefore, be argued that in a society subject to rapid change

professional development, with a transformative agenda, will recognise that knowledge is not absolute. Collateral to this is that re-evaluation, through critical self-reflection, is essential to redefine and adjust knowledge so that it does not become dysfunctional in a changing world. Consequently the process of professional development for a religious educator is conceived as one that prepares teachers with the specialised cognitive content that makes Christianity intelligible. It also recognises the professional teacher as one who is consciously aware that professional competence, understanding and empowerment are related to the cognitive interests that constitute their technical, practical and emancipatory knowledge.

## **1.2 Chapter 2: Adulthood and Transformative Learning**

In Chapter 2 the claim has been made that the process of professional development calls for competence and maturity in both professional and personal knowledge and understanding because changes in any area of life relate to, and influence, changes in other areas of life. It was likewise argued that personal growth is never an accomplished fact but continues towards maturity. This happens as the adult comes to terms with tension and conflicts that are productive of change through the integration of past and present existential factors.

The parallels in the discourses of adult learning and a dialectical process of adult development pointed to an epistemological base for adult growth. The nature of knowledge that emerged was one that is non-static and is challenged to ongoing reassessment and renegotiation of questions and doubts in the light of new personal and social realities. A true reassessment and renegotiation requires the knowledge to be acted upon from a perspective that is conscious of the laterality between self and society — and in the case of this research between the individual and the church — to construct meaning through informed critical discourse with others. The relationship between critical professional education and transformation in individuals suggests that the degree to which critical education is effective will

impact, positively or negatively, on both the individual's professional practice and personal growth.

### **1.3 Chapter 3: Epistemological Shifts in Religious Education**

An analysis of the literature has shown that as a consequence of shifts in the philosophical stances underpinning theology, scripture and religious education the formulation of content knowledge calls for redefinition to accommodate the new perspectives and ultimately connect knowledge to action. The conceptual literature of religious education argues for knowledge that is practical, technical and emancipatory — knowledge for professional credibility, knowledge that is interpretive of tradition and knowledge that, as well as being informative and dialogical, is inseparable from the lived history of the learner and the society where it is communicated. The literature of religious education pointed to the emancipatory potential of a revisionist model of religious education. The revisionist model represents a shift in epistemology from a transmission of dogma to an epistemology that is critical, interactive and dialogical. The curriculum for such is two pronged: while the experience of the learner is important the educator must also make accessible the tradition of Christianity that is informed by the best contemporary research.

### **1.4 Chapter 4: The Context of the Case Study**

An examination of the factors that contextualise the professional development of teachers revealed that national policies and the policies of the Catholic Education Office of Canberra-Goulburn raised such questions as:

- to what extent do the national and employer policies for professional development constitute opportunities for teachers to accept

responsibility for, and gain control of, knowledge based on rational choices and aimed at emancipation for the teacher?

- to what extent are the policies directed towards equipping religious educators to reconstruct their role and be agents of change?

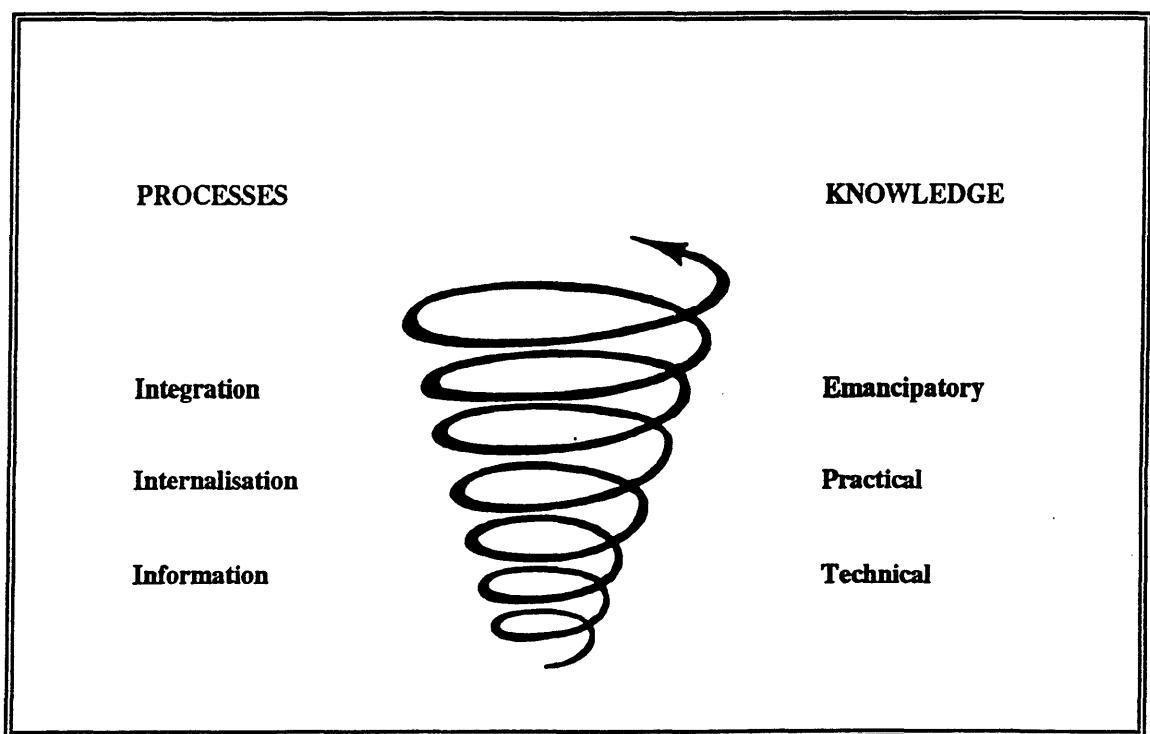
An analysis of documentation, related to the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious) at the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus, showed that this course had been designed to meet changes in personal, social and ecclesial needs. The focus and orientation of the course showed it to be one with potential to provide a reasonable base for critical professional development — with potential for its participants to grow intellectually, to challenge taken-for-granted knowledge and take emancipatory action.

### **1.5 Chapter 5: Methodology, Research Design and Analysis of Data**

The critical case study generated data from all three groups of participants. The data from these groups were analysed in the same way and then explored and interrogated for insights and perceptions they offered in relation to the problem that is identified as the concern of this thesis. The manner of arriving at the evidence through critical analysis and interpretation of the data has been described in Chapter 5. Here it was claimed that rigorous critical theory research can generate evidence from data gathered as an understanding of the participants' reality. It emerged that the research participants in Groups 1 and 2 had experienced the Graduate Diploma in Education (Religious) not as a single phenomenon but as a discernible series of processes. The data from the participants in Group 3 generated a story which differed dramatically from the experience of Groups 1 and 2. The outcome for Group 3 will, therefore, be dealt with briefly and separately in each chapter.

## 2.0 A SPIRAL PROCESS

The processes that were discernible in the data for Groups 1 and 2 were informing, internalising and integrating. These became operative as **information**, **internalisation** and **integration** and related to the cognitive interests for technical, practical and emancipatory knowledge (Habermas, 1972). Something of their interrelatedness is conveyed in Figure 9 (p.198) where each process has its own point on a spiral that swings upwards and backwards, through an unbroken line, and is matched at that point by a mode of knowledge. The spiral also conveys a visual message about the way the learner negotiates and renegotiates meaning in his/her life-world. A further visual message of the spiral is that professional development is incremental with no point of termination. It is an ongoing activity for which finality is elusive because out of each resolution of change the need for further change emerges.



**Figure 9: Processes and Knowledge**

### **3.0 GENERATING THEORY**

This thesis is concerned with epistemology from the perspective of critical social science and, therefore, the preparation of the religious educator has been considered in the light of the cognitive interest that constitutes the technical, practical and emancipatory interest of the teacher. Fundamental to critical theory is self-reflection that relates theory to practice and critiques the relationship between the individual and society. Knowledge from a social science perspective will also emphasise the historicity of social structures and will question and challenge constraining structures that control the individual or society by knowledge that is taken-for-granted.

Each of the chapters, in the second part of this writing has been allocated the task of discussing specific aspects of theory:

**Chapter 7** will develop a theory of the professional knowledge base of the religious educator: it will test and build upon the theoretical accounts of Chapters 1 and 4 against the empirical data.

**Chapter 8** will develop a theory of the transformative experiences of the religious educator: it will test and build upon the theoretical accounts of Chapter 2 and 4 against the empirical data.

**Chapter 9** will develop a theory of the professional practice of the religious educator: it will test the theoretical accounts of Chapters 3 and 4 against the empirical data.

### **4.0 A DIFFERENT VOICE**

It might be thought that what emerged from the data of Groups 1 and 2 was to be expected and inevitable. This was not so, as can be seen from evidence of the data of Group 3 which were in a different key. Therefore each of the Chapters

7 - 9 will incorporate a section called ***A Different Voice***. This will demonstrate the theoretical constructs that emerged, for Group 3, in contrast to those identified for the participants in Groups 1 and 2.

## CHAPTER 7: PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE BASE OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR

In this chapter the evidence for the knowledge base of the profession acquired by the participants through professional development will be examined and discussed in terms of knowledge constituted by technical, practical and emancipatory cognitive interests.

TECHNICAL	PRACTICAL	EMANCIPATORY
<b>Knowledge <i>for efficiency and competency</i></b>	<b>Knowledge <i>for critique and interpretation</i></b>	<b>Knowledge <i>for redefinition and reconstruction</i></b>

Figure 10: Professional Knowledge Base of the Religious Educator

Although an analysis of the responses from participants in Groups 1 and 2 yielded answers that were identified within the same conceptual categories (Appendix P:p.422) there was a difference in the extent to which members of each group considered their knowledge to be adequate. This, perhaps, was to be expected since Group 1 had completed the course and Group 2 participants were in the first semester of the course. The quotes used from the transcripts do not exhaust the evidence that could be used to support the issues under discussion and at all times many more examples could have been chosen if space had permitted further discussion. The evidence from the transcripts has been quoted in the language of the participant except for minor adjustments that were made for consistency in style.

## 1.0 TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE: EFFICIENCY AND COMPETENCY

Comment has already been made in earlier sections of this writing that professional development of religious educators argues for the necessity of addressing the intellectual substance of the cognate fields of their discipline such as theology, scripture and education. While it is not the researcher's intention to claim that specialised substantive knowledge alone will generate praxis it is her intention to argue, as Habermas (1972) does, that emancipatory knowledge cannot be argued for apart from knowledge that is constituted by technical and practical interests. The data showed evidence that knowledge, born of a technical interest, closed gaps in a professional's specialised knowledge and proved to be the essential starting point for the emancipatory knowledge experienced by the research participants. Firstly, therefore, in this section of the writing, the acquisition of information that is constitutive of technical knowledge, in the professional knowledge base of the religious educator, will be pursued in relation to the empirical data from the case study.

### 1.1 Technical Knowledge Base

The impact of technical knowledge can be supported by reference to comments made, for instance, by Geraldine (1.7)<sup>1</sup>, a graduate of the course who had spent some years as a missionary and had just returned to Australia. Her teaching of religion as a missionary was structured, content-controlled and prescriptive. Geraldine claimed the units on *Foundations of Theology* and *Foundations of Religious Education* had opened her eyes about the extent of change that had occurred during her absence from Australia during the years when she was working as a volunteer in one of the under-developed countries.

---

<sup>1</sup> References to participants' transcripts will be made in this manner. Geraldine (1.7) is a pseudonym for the participant who has been listed as the seventh member in Group 1 (Appendix H:p.342). The quote to follow is from page 7 of her transcript – hence (1.7;7).

*Foundations of Theology* gave me greater knowledge of what theology is today... and in *Foundations of Religious Education* I discovered the changes that have taken place in this subject.  
(1.7;7)

In fact Geraldine conveyed the impression that the possession of knowledge was a guarantee for her of professional security and her advice was:

I think it's a course that should be recommended to everyone who is a religious educator... because parents often ask you questions. I now feel that since this course I've got a better understanding of religious education and theology and how to prepare children for the future. If parents come and ask me I can give them the information that I know and I also now know what resources to use to assist them.

(1.7;12)

Marie (2.6) had grown up in a Catholic family and 'went along with the church'. She was just completing her second unit, and had written on her Scatter Chart (Appendix M: Task 1;p.384)<sup>2</sup> phrases such as 'more knowledgeable', 'enriched knowledge', 'more informed person'. These were her spontaneous thoughts about the consequence of the two units she had studied in her first semester. However, from an episode with a scripture lecturer, to which she referred, one senses that unlike participants in Groups 1 (e.g. Delma, 1.4;1) for whom 'things now all fitted together' Marie's information, at this point of the course, had not yet adequately clarified things for her. Marie reported:

[I]... sort of understood what she [the lecturer] was saying but I think I need to really do a lot more to understand ... so I think I'm at a very basic level and little windows are starting to open. I'm beginning to see what's out there and that's why I think religious educators ought to be doing this course and I've said this to people.  
(2.6;6)

---

<sup>2</sup> This coding indicates that the reference is to Appendix M:Task 1;p.384. References to information on Appendix M will be made in this way because Appendix M, as well as being a sample transcript, is a sample of the interview schedule used for all participants.

Although, when she enrolled in the course, Helena (2.1) had felt reasonably comfortable about teaching religious education the two units that she had studied had given her even more confidence:

The course is giving me content for the topics I teach in Year 6. I need more depth of knowledge for this grade and I'm already using some of the content knowledge from the units called *Christ in the Scriptures* and *Approaching World Religions*.  
(2.1;4)

The document for the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious) at the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus, (ACU<sup>3</sup>) shows that in fact the course was designed with substantive content as a particular outcome. The curriculum for the course (Appendix F:p.339) is presented as two-pronged: it must deliver relevant substantive knowledge and pedagogical skills as well as ensure that the religious educator is equipped to engage in critical reflection. That the course has delivered on the substantive knowledge is evident in many transcripts. One example is Elizabeth (1.5) who on her Scatter Chart (Appendix M:Task 1;p.384) uses three words, namely *education*, *knowledge* and *confidence* to summarise what she had gained. Elizabeth (1.5;17) had clearly chosen these words to describe how she saw herself as a religious educator, as a consequence of the course, because during the interview she described the course as a 'journey of moving from a point of hurt, frustration and guilt to confidence and freedom'. The gain of specialised substantive knowledge, that gave her an ability to explore and explain data, was referred to repeatedly by Elizabeth: the relation of knowledge to confidence was a noticeable theme throughout both interviews with her. In reference to handling discussions, with a conservative parish priest, Elizabeth had commented that she was aware that the course had given her knowledge and had removed some of her earlier frustrations:

I can now discuss [particular issues] with him because of the confidence I feel the course has given me. I feel I can take an

---

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this section of the writing the abbreviation, ACU, will be used to refer to the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus.

encyclical to him and present it to him in a very strong and convincing way with knowledge behind me... Before the course I would just have got more and more angry at him but now I have some knowledge I can discuss issues with him that I feel strongly about.

(1.5;6)

In relation to another aspect of her role Elizabeth (1.5:17) considered she had gained ground from being in control of content knowledge. She had discovered that her experience of low morale, and sense of crisis as a religious educator, had been replaced by confidence because she now had knowledge and a 'recognised qualification' that gave her 'a greater sense of ... ability as a religious educator'. The units in scripture, theology and curriculum had given her a confidence to teach new and complex things:

... my knowledge of scripture and doctrine from the course are important — it's foundational... I look forward to Christmas time this year when I'll be teaching the infancy narratives<sup>4</sup> in class. I'll get my notes out again and revise the meaning of the symbolism of the magi, the symbolism of the star and the manger and the shepherds. That was all very interesting when I learnt it in the course and I can give it to children now because I understand it.

(1.5;26)

A recognition that helpful knowledge was already making a difference, but also a conviction that more was necessary, is evident in Nora's (2.7) position after studying for one semester:

I've only completed two units — one called *The Modern Ecumenical Movement* and one on *Christ in the Scriptures*. I feel I have something to share with people in our parish discussion group... I realise there's a great deal more to learn but this much knowledge is a good starting point.

(2.7;2)

---

<sup>4</sup>

This is a reference to the Birth of Jesus in Matthew's gospel (Mt:2:1-12) and Luke's gospel (Lk:2:1-20). These texts are understood very differently when interpreted according to biblical scholarship that details such things as the genre of the pericopes in the scriptures.

The degree to which technical interest, that is concerned with facts and concepts of special disciplines, necessarily moves beyond instrumental action will always be uncertain. However the evidence from the transcripts is that for the participants their technical knowledge brought new criteria for understanding ideas and describing data. It also functioned as a catalyst to unmask assumptions about learning and to clarify previous knowledge, from multiple perspectives. This dimension is evident in the following comments made by:

Bernard (1.2) We looked at historical aspects of the church which had not occurred to me.. what the lecturer presented helped me to examine and challenge my beliefs – things that I had accepted for years and years.  
(1.2;2)

Judith (2.3) Another thing I found mind-bending since I started to study is the potential of Vatican II. I knew nothing about Vatican II because we seemed to have been kept in the dark... the knowledge from the course<sup>5</sup> has opened up all kinds of possibilities.  
(2.3;4)

Delma (1.4) The content of the course, like the jigsaw drawing (Appendix M:A.1.2;p.386), put things together for me and it made me realise why the church moves so slowly; you have to look at it from the perspective of history and yet I can understand the frustration of people wanting to give up because they think things are moving too slowly.  
(1.4;9)

Nora (2.7) Once you study, read and become aware of what could be ... and then experience the reality of knowledge in the church... it can be very frustrating.  
(2.7;1)

Anita (1.1) I've always been a bit of a silent rebel. I probably lacked the courage before because while I thought these things I wasn't able to articulate them. I now have the knowledge to defend my position.  
(1.1;395)

---

<sup>5</sup> This abbreviation has been used by the participants, and will be used throughout these chapters to name the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious) that is the specific course in which the research participants were involved.

Carmel (1.3) Structures annoy me at times but some of the units, e.g. *Theology of Sacrament* (particularly the historical development of sacraments) and *History of the Church* as well as *Foundations of Theology* gave me a sense of history and put some of the structures into perspective for me.  
(1.3;5)

The participants' interview transcripts conveyed a sense that they had moved from being either passive about knowledge that came from culture-bound texts and discourses, or were frustrated because knowledge that had been assimilated was now alienating them from others who had not had the opportunity to study. They had moved to a measure of control from the context of the course. The information gained from technical knowledge made them aware of their responsibility to pursue the intellectual substance of their discipline which they realised was not static but was being continually revised and defined by changes in society. Examples of this are articulated by:

Anita (1.1) For me now scripture and theology are sitting together more neatly because I am more enlightened than I was before. However, I do see the need for ongoing acquisition of knowledge and so on.  
(1.1;388)

Frank (1.6) My needs [for content] were certainly satisfied and the course even started me thinking that I want to do more in that area.  
(1.6;10)

There was an abundance of data in the transcripts that showed the course was effective in helping the participants bridge the gap between the knowledge the teacher had previously considered essential and the knowledge required to operate within a new philosophical framework. The causes of the disparity in the operative knowledge of the participants and the knowledge they needed, are reflected in the ACU document where it declared that

human beings are socially and historically interactive;

- . knowledge... [is] ... fluid, contextualised and never final;  
(Figure 8:p.165)

Some of the participants who experienced knowledge that helped them to discriminate the essential and operate with relevant knowledge were Bernard (1.2) and Carmel (1.3).

Bernard (1.2) The course put the past, present and future into a different perspective... I look at people I mix with on a day-to-day basis and wonder to what extent, by hanging on to out-of-date knowledge, they are ruining children's lives... It's now absolutely vital for me to have enough cognitive understanding of the topics I'm teaching. I'm not prepared to produce the platitudes that I heard myself for years...  
(1.2; 6,8,18)

Carmel (1.3) I think I can now discriminate... that many things came into the church because of political or social forces. To be Christians we need to be prepared for change and go back to the early centuries of Christianity. At the same time we need to be alert to contemporary issues, unless of course, contemporary thought says that nothing from the past should shape us... I certainly think that as adults we have to have an understanding of what we are saying so that we're not talking as fundamentalists.  
(1.3; 10,13,25)

Comment has already been made in Chapter 4 that the ACU course was designed to be intellectually rigorous to engage the students with current scholarship and critical understanding of substantive content for efficiency and effective practice. This is in harmony with a stated aim of the course 'to develop and broaden the professional and vocational skills of religious educators' (Appendix E:p.338). Kathleen (2.4) was one of the participants who knew she needed substantive content and she had enrolled in the course because 'when things bug' her she finds it important to look for information. The spontaneous feelings expressed on her Scatter Chart (Appendix M:Task 1;p.384) registered her anxiety in phrases such as 'in a turmoil with NO light', 'bogged down', 'so many

questions — so few answers'. However after studying three units her comment was that 'the opportunity to gain knowledge... helped me clarify my experiences as a religious educator'. Kathleen also spoke about the movement from confusion to knowledge that opened her mind

Now someone is giving me knowledge and opening my mind to it. To look into things that have bugged me is important... and when you were brought up to think that all you had to know were the seven deadly sins etc. it didn't really open up anybody's mind! But what I am able to do now is open up my mind to why things happened and the historicity of it.

(2.4;3,8)

It was claimed in the Introduction to this study that both accelerated changes in educational theory and a growing pluralism in theology had generated the need for religious educators to deepen their understanding of society and to master new professional insights. Likewise the documents of the ACU course (Figure 8:pp.163-166) showed the need for religious education to be presented with a history that is refashioned and renewed in the changing ecclesial and historical circumstances. The reality of the impact of accelerated change on theology was one of the first things that influenced Delma (1.4) who had enrolled in the course to update her religious education because 'as a professional' she could not teach on the knowledge she had

... when I first commenced the course and heard the language and terms that were being used in the lectures I was terrified by the vocabulary and felt like the people on that tight-rope

(1.4)

Delma's (1.4;8) theological and scriptural knowledge increased and she now found it much easier to teach religious education and is frightened when her peers, who did religious education at college twenty years ago, say that they do not need to update.

Imelda (2.2;2,12), who was doing the course for professional needs, had ranked, as a high priority for herself, outcomes such as 'awareness of current

movements in religious education', 'introduction to biblical scholarship' and 'contact with emerging theology'. Imelda has tertiary degrees in education and psychology and had wide travel and work experiences in places as varied as Paris, Turkey and Indonesia. In India she spent time in a Buddhist monastery — all this was part of the searching faith of an intellectually able woman. By mid-semester, when she was doing her second unit, Imelda 'thought something was coming together' and she had 'more understanding of what she might have been on about in religious education'.

When the language of religious educators is characterised by an absence of technical language of its cognate disciplines it runs the risk of reducing religious education to conceptual simplicity and becoming an aberration. On the other hand by possessing a technical knowledge base of worthwhile knowledge the discipline acquires an intellectual honesty and legitimacy. Many of the research participants' transcripts expressed a passionate appreciation for the impetus that content knowledge had given them towards feeling authentic and competent as religious educators — amongst these was Carmel (1.3).

Before the course Carmel (1.3;6,7,11,12,13,25,26), who is a purposeful and discerning kindergarten teacher, had all but given up teaching religious education because the programmes for the junior classes were 'full of love and share... butterflies and bunnies!'. For Carmel this meant 'religion was almost a non-subject' and she was constantly 'trying to add content' to give it respectability in the curriculum. Previously one of Carmel's fears had been the prospect of moving to a higher grade where she 'couldn't fob them [the children] off with butterflies and bunnies!'. She is confident that 'knowledge made a difference as [she] went through the course' and from her knowledge of scripture in particular she has 'certainly got rid of the silly rubbish [although] there's still some rubbish — but some is sillier than others!' The observation lesson Carmel gave to the six-year-olds focused on the message of the Creation text from the Book of Genesis. The skill with which Carmel presented the curriculum topic from the Genesis text avoided a fundamentalist approach and developed, at the children's level, the concepts of gratitude and responsibility for the environment. Carmel feels strongly about the benefits of her 'intellectual understanding of religion' and is challenging

the clergy 'to update' because 'the church did not, and still does not educate its people about changes'. Of interest, in these references to Carmel's professional knowledge base, is that satisfaction in, and effectiveness of, her teaching had been rekindled because intellectual knowledge had made a difference to her capacity to exercise her 'professional responsibility'.

Carmel was not the only participant who felt knowledge of the content of the religious education curriculum had given her professional integrity. Similar feelings of relief, that came from no longer operating in a vacuum but operating with the content knowledge of the discipline, surfaced in

- Lorna (2.5) You realise how much you don't know and wish you had time to read and do more.  
(2.5;4)
- Marie (2.6) ...there's just so much to know. To be a doctor and simply to diagnose a cold you need so much knowledge. The same is true of RE.<sup>6</sup>  
(2.6;9)
- Delma (1.4) I don't believe you can teach well without a grasp of the cognitive content although previously we tried to teach without understanding it.  
(1.4;25)
- Imelda (2.2) For me one of the benefits of the course is learning exactly what the church should be saying.  
(2.2;5)
- Frank (1.6) I had no knowledge although I'd been through a Catholic high school where we had discussions and debates but no doctrine. Our teachers weren't confident because they weren't specialists in R.E.  
(1.6;21)

Acquiring a specialised body of articulated knowledge and being challenged to rethink the purposes of religious education had energised the participants to invest time in extending that knowledge on behalf of themselves and others. There is evidence in the data that an important factor in this was the advantage of

---

<sup>6</sup> RE as used by the participants is an abbreviation for religious education.

pursuing their studies as members of a group of students with a similar interest. Inherent in the commitment they showed to gaining and sharing knowledge was their conviction, that since adult education in faith had facilitated the revision of knowledge in their own conceptual schemes, it was something that should be given a higher priority — adult education should be made possible for adult members of the church. This is explored below in the data of Bernard (1.2), Anita (1.1), Lorna (2.5) and Delma (1.4).

Bernard's (1.2;1,3,5,8) experience with the staff at the school, where he was a senior teacher, was one of apathy and open resistance to making any changes in religious education. When he joined the course he realised what a 'wonderful opportunity' it was to work with other students who 'were ready to dialogue, share ideas and develop a new understanding of cognitive content'. This experience of working with 'professional people' in the course and 'hearing a more rational level of talk' was in contrast to the outcome of his participation with people in the *Cursillo*<sup>7</sup> who 'were fairly traditional in their beliefs'. Bernard 'shied away' from the *Cursillo* members and considered they were 'in contrast to the people [he] met with during the course who were really and honestly struggling with their faith'.

Association with both students and lecturers had convinced Anita (1.1;405) that the support of a community was an important factor for learners. The 'courage and confidence', for Anita, came from the content knowledge that was made possible, in what she described as 'a supportive climate where you can face making changes'. In fact Anita had not expected 'to learn so much from other people in the course'. She had experienced freedom and a lack of constraint in the university community and was amazed that 'older lecturers' who had been able to engage in study 'were so different from people of their own age who had not had the opportunity'.

The need for the church 'to give people information', through adult education in faith, was a conclusion made by Lorna (2.5;1) after her first semester in the course when she had come in touch with so much knowledge about

---

<sup>7</sup> This is a movement in the Catholic church that attracts people who are looking for a greater community dimension to their religion. The input of the sessions is often very traditional doctrine and some of the group exercises can be fairly emotional experiences.

Christianity. Her hope was that others would get the knowledge she had gained and the benefits she ‘had enjoyed from interaction with people in the course’. Imelda (2.2;5) who ‘had learnt a lot’ likewise ascribed her learning to working with others on the group tasks. While Delma (1.4;3) reflected that although what she had gained was ‘dangerous knowledge’ she also regretted that ‘other people didn’t want to hear about it’. However, she realises they ‘haven’t had the chance for adult education in faith’ and believes that adult education in faith is a responsibility that should be taken up by the church.

Freire (1972) argued that the Brazilian peasants must discover themselves as lacking in objective knowledge and become aware of what they lacked, and how it could be acquired, before they could move forward towards their liberation. Similarly, it seems, from the evidence, that religious educators need to examine the knowledge that is confusing and uncomfortable and become aware of what caused the distortion in their knowledge. To do this they need to acquire technical knowledge that is valid for them if they are to avoid conformist outcomes. The evidence, that has been taken from the transcripts of Judith (2.3), Elizabeth (1.5), Kathleen (2.4) and Geraldine (1.7), indicates that becoming aware, through the intellectual content of the course, had both thrown some light on the reasons for their dissatisfaction and taught them ‘not to accept things straight away but to read more and to look in more depth and then develop an understanding’ (Geraldine 1.7;12).

Judith (2.3;2,4,5,7) was already a Deputy Principal at the time of the interview and was to take up the role as Principal in a very big school the following year. She presented as professionally alert in all areas but especially about issues such as gender equity and career structures for women. Judith found ‘a lot of things puzzling’ when she was growing up in an Irish Catholic family and although she did not consider she was damaged by the traditional church in which she grew up she is glad she has ‘grown through a lot of things.’ She now realises she ‘wasn’t happy with many of the practices of the church prior to starting the course’ and ‘probably really feels less happy now about things — that’s because being informed I don’t think the church practices match the need’. The content of

the units had enabled her ‘to clarify some very confused thoughts’ and she thinks one of the exciting things is being ‘freed intellectually’.

Religion had been a burden for Elizabeth (1.5;2,24) and before the course began she felt she carried a great load — ‘not knowing where to go and what to do’. She wonders now that she has more information, what the next generation of Catholics will be like and thinks ‘they’ll be different... because our religion has changed’. The information from the course had sometimes caused Elizabeth to be ‘frustrated, angry, upset and disillusioned’ but the awareness that technical knowledge had given her had eased the burden.

At school Kathleen (2.4;2,4) had felt the constraints of the church even by the very fact she had to attend a Catholic school. She says her generation felt they ‘were on one side of the fence and the world was on the other’ and claimed her generation was the last to experience the ‘indoctrination era’. Because of this the structures of the church remained a problem for Kathleen. She discovered this problem was shared by the other members of her seminar group who applauded the concept of church when it was presented as one where the former top-down model of authority was giving way to power shared by the people. Information about the church had at last allowed her to claim that she ‘was a person in her own right’ with a right to share the mission of the church.

At the initial interview the first graphic to which Geraldine (1.7;3) responded was Appendix M:A.1.9;p.387. This provoked memories of confusion in her childhood and adolescence because ‘a lot of things at school often clashed’ with her father’s theology that came from his association with a progressive Dutch church. Geraldine hopes that from the widening knowledge as ‘the spiral (Appendix M:A.1.3;p.386) of information gets bigger and bigger’ she will be like the hurdlers (Appendix M:A.1.7;p.387) — ‘jumping in and taking risks’.

## 1.2 Summary: Technical Knowledge Base

Traditionally teaching has been a highly regulated profession where teachers felt both secure and yet constrained. When, therefore, the mat of certainty, for instance of what to teach in religious education, was pulled from under their feet

teachers were less confident than ever in their own professional judgement. The process of producing new knowledge through the course encouraged the research participants to exercise judgement about curriculum content and the knowledge helped them to reestablish their professional confidence and competence.

It would be fair to say that the confidence from the content knowledge, that was generated by the course, did not offer false comfort and security: rather the impact of acquiring satisfying cognitive content brought an acceptance that knowledge was contingent on the complexity and fragility of socio-historical events. The participants acknowledged the intellectual substance of their discipline was not permanent and recognised that the greatest disservice they could do themselves and religious education was to substitute new absolutes for the old. Thus, it is hoped that the challenge of new knowledge, partnered by this attitude of openness can deliver the participants, not from a normal ideology that operates in groups, but from the naivety that accompanies an uncritical socialisation into a group.

In essence the process of informing, that is constitutive of a professional knowledge base of the religious educator in terms of disclosure and specialised content, could be said to have increased, for the research participants, their self-confidence as well as a deep sense of ownership of the content of their discipline and a sense of achievement related to their professional task. Religious literacy and conceptual inquiry had provoked for the teachers a certain level of desocialisation and provided technical efficiency derived from the substantive content of the discipline of religious education. By clarifying the knowledge base of their discipline the participants now had appropriate language with which to name new understandings of Christianity. Technical knowledge alone will not 'remake words and recreate worlds' (Jansen, 1989:2). However, for the research participants it has restored confidence for them as professional educators.

## **2.0 PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE: CRITIQUE AND INTERPRETATION**

The forward and backward movement of the spiral (Figure 9:p.198) was used as an image of the series of processes of the professional development of the

religious educator. The spiral was chosen, as an image, because it is not the intention of this study to suggest that the processes are discrete from one another. However, there is evidence enough in the data to suggest that technical knowledge, constituted by cognitive interest, is the beginning of change. Just as the clarification of previous knowledge, through the articulation of technical knowledge generated efficiency for religious educators so, too, the data show that the articulation of a hermeneutical critique of theoretical knowledge produces a reinterpretation of experience and creates new meaning.

It has already been argued in this work that professional development happens when teachers recognise that their knowledge and practices are becoming less appropriate in the light of the emergence of changes in education and the church. Empirical type knowledge has been shown, in this chapter, to give religious educators control of answers, rules and laws related to the intellectual substance of their special discipline and to satisfy the cognitive interest of efficiency and technical control of appropriate knowledge. However technical discourse that is satisfying could be allowed to create, yet again, a security that will fail to disrupt what Foucault (1980) calls 'regimes of truth'. This argues for the need of a process, constituted by a practical cognitive interest, that will dialogue with knowledge in its socio-historical context to help revise the knowledge of religious educators in the light of change.

It was claimed in Chapter 1 that professional development calls for interpreting and negotiating knowledge and refining one's personal perception of knowledge. This, in Freire's (1973:155) theory, would result in 'reentering the world through the entering into of the previous understandings which may have been arrived at naively because reality was not examined as a whole'. Technical knowledge can be argued to have been a beginning point for the participants to examine what they had previously accepted naively by way of religious beliefs and practices.

## 2.1 Practical Knowledge Base

The ‘naive’ acceptance of religious knowledge, or socialisation into religion, was referred to by the participants who spoke of the generations of Catholics who ‘did not have an intellectual understanding of their religion... because it was hidden from them’ (Judith, 2.3;10). To move beyond socialisation calls for practical knowledge – knowledge that is placed in dialogue with both the experience of the learner and the previously learned understanding of Christianity so that the learner operates at a more discriminating and inclusive level of functioning.

When interpretive knowledge is operative the learner is not concerned with understanding tradition as a call to repeat the past. The task becomes one of asking what such things as texts, codes and practices mean, within the context of tradition, and then to discern in what way tradition can accommodate the past and the present and ‘affect people’s lives in a way that shows how their lives are actually tied up with the Christian story’ (Frank 1.6;11). The unit that Lorna (2.5:2) did on the *Theology of the Sacraments* confirmed for her that an understanding of the development of the Christian tradition is an essential part of religious education. Her study of the history of the sacraments, especially Eucharist, convinced her that the church can be true to its tradition and yet, for the sake of relevance for the contemporary world-view, adapt such things as the language and rituals of the Eucharist<sup>8</sup>. Her most radical proposal, in the light of the traditional practice in the Catholic church, was to challenge the need to have an ordained priest as president of the Eucharist. For Lorna a hermeneutical approach to the theology of the sacraments avoided giving tradition the right to establish the objective power of the institution; on the other hand a hermeneutical approach gave knowledge an intelligible relationship with tradition.

Kathleen (2.4;1,10) now thinks perhaps we ‘wandered off from the *real* Catholic faith and the course tells me we are going back to the historical emphasis... It has taught me that our essential traditions are not the man-made

---

<sup>8</sup> Catholics consider the Eucharist (Mass) as a special mark of their identity. The generation of Catholics, to which the participants belong, had an understanding of Eucharistic theology in metaphysical terms – a theology that distorts the understanding of it in the early tradition of Christianity.

things and it's the real traditions we have to get to'. So Kathleen 'firmly believes, with the help of the units [she] studied, that the real traditions are the things [she's] learning now'. She hopes that children will not be oppressed by the kind of religious education that previously 'over-burdened them with details, such as rote memorising of the vestments used at Mass'. Given the indication of Kathleen's earlier feelings of 'turmoil, struggle and desperation' she now had a welcome sense of control, from heuristic knowledge that has interpreted tradition for her.

Marie (2.6;1,14) fears that what she is teaching 'might be wrong' because she realises that 'the traditions that were passed on to [her] were not life-giving; they were laws about what you had to do and now [she] thinks from knowledge gained, and hopefully growing knowledge, that this is not a right perspective on tradition'. She has moved out of passively receiving information and 'now thinks it's a whole new world'. Formerly she had respected tradition as sacrosanct — 'important and complete'. Her new understanding led her to say

We're evolving socially into something different and the faith must deal with the issues of today... but I still think you need to have respect for history... whether you take the whole lot or weed out certain parts is what is at issue. It's still important and we can't throw everything out.  
(2.6;14)

Anita (1.1;395) had previously experienced contradictions within herself because her attitudes differed from the party line. She had harboured a feeling that things couldn't be 'straight black and white' but had not said so. She now has confidence, from a better understanding of scripture and theology, about a new understanding of, for instance, morality. From the information, that she has reflected on and internalised, she says

... it's important to be historically conscious so that we are aware of both the good in the past and the bad from our past and be prepared to change and give up what was good in the past but is no longer relevant today. I used to be nervous about saying that things in our past were bad but now I'm more relaxed about it although I think I've always recognised the problems.  
(1.1;402)

To a point Anita had overcome the contradictions by seeing that distortions in the discourse of religion had been wrongly institutionalised as authentic knowledge. Through hermeneutic knowledge she saw a more rational dimension of the texts and practices of the community.

The critical tools of interpretation had also been used by Elizabeth (1.5;32) to analyse the literary form of the Book of Genesis. The stereotyped, traditional ideas and language, that she admits she previously used, have been replaced by insights from biblical scholarship. The hermeneutics of the scriptures that she had done resulted in a changed emphasis for her on one of the messages of the Genesis myth<sup>9</sup>, namely that we are ‘co-creators’ and ‘stewards’ with a responsibility to appreciate and care for what is good.

The irrelevance of institutional rules and statements of belief, that ignored the lived history and experiences of church members in a radically changing society, caused some resentment in participants. Geraldine (1.7;1,6,7), for example, had ‘found theology challenging... [and] was reading more about issues that are changing our Christian understanding’. She now ‘questions authority’: her ‘present belief is that the church is in a time of fast change’ and hopes ‘it will gain momentum as the years go on and will see itself as a church with less hierarchical structure... Within that structure there must be room for the individual persons and their spiritual, personal and societal needs’. Geraldine was agitated and wanted her actions to be more in harmony with what she now understood about the church. The same was true for Marie (2.6; 2,7). Marie found the unit, *The Ecumenical Movement*, very informative. It spoke to her about the irrelevance, in this day and age, of the church’s resistance to women priests and she would like the church to recognise that ‘Jesus lived in a very different culture’. She therefore thinks ‘the church needs to respond to people in our particular time and culture’. Marie is now aware that the church ‘seems to be improving gradually but it can be very frustrating for people when it is too slow’. In fact she seems to think the church has slowed down, since its burst of change in the sixties, and believes ‘it needs to

---

<sup>9</sup> Myth is used here in the way form critics of the bible would use it to describe the literary genre of the Book of Genesis, 1-11 as a myth - a way of writing that presents symbolically a reality that cannot be explained in logical discourse.

be mobilised again to address issues and encourage people to accept their personal and social responsibility'.

Bernard (1.2:8) also had 'previously thought the church was out of touch' but reading 'a new church document has got me thinking again'. Lorna (2.5; 6,9) who had given a medium rating, for the level of her acceptance of the beliefs of the church before the course, had changed the score to a negative grading as a consequence of her new understanding of theology because critique of the church, brought about by the course, had made her impatient about things in the church that could be changed, if church authority chose to do so. Similarly, Helena (2.1;3) had previously given a medium rank to the acceptance she gave the structures of the institutional church: now it seems to her 'structures are less important and presumes... [she]... will understand more and appreciate better' as her study in the course goes on. Imelda (2.2;6) from reflecting on her new information now 'knows about Vatican II theoretically' but is suspicious of what, if anything, it has actually changed and 'wonders if it was a pseudo-freedom that was offered rather than a real freedom.'

The research participants recognised their past perceptions of technical knowledge had been bounded by constraints that had gone unchallenged. A critique of their beliefs and attitudes demonstrated for the participants that the authoritative practice of transmitted knowledge had alienated them from their own genuine interests.

A problem that remained unresolved for the participants was how to mobilise the opportunity for interpretive discourse for others. In fact some of the participants felt it would be irresponsible to disturb the comfort that some members of an older generation had by promulgating their dissatisfaction with the knowledge, values and practices that the participants now found alienating. Conversely others were angry that the church continued to keep people in the dark. Both Anita (1.1;404) and Delma (1.4:10,23) 'no longer felt threatened' themselves but both considered that it was important 'not to shock people'. Delma also feels 'frustrated that I can't share with others what it [the course] did for me.'

Lorna's (2.5;1) anger surfaced in her comment about the responsibility of the church to make information accessible, through adult religious education, and to accept that such education changed people

I think the institutional church is not really meeting the needs of people in most parishes. I think there's still too much power-play and hierarchy and male-dominated decisions. I think a lot of parishioners and teachers are more educated than the clergy who have the power and make all the decisions. I think that creates a great deal of frustration and contradiction about what we should be doing; the laity know their rights and the possibilities but one person wields the power.

Lorna has a perception that the clergy assume the role of 'traditional intellectuals' (Gramsci) and is intolerant of the fact that they use this to the disadvantage of the laity.

Judith (2.3;5) has reached a point that she attributes partly to the course. She thinks that 'one day the hierarchy will look down and say they're all doing something so we'd better change it — e.g. birth control'. The patterns of inequality, that are obvious to Lorna and Judith, have compelled them to abandon the safety of silence and their blind conformity to external authority.

Kathleen (2.4:10), after examining and critiquing the documents of Vatican II, found it incomprehensible that the direction of Vatican II had not been recognised — 'that was 1965 and here we are years later without realising its content'. Language and a critical understanding of knowledge had mediated an experience for Kathleen that constituted adjustments to her knowledge structure and a concern that the potential of Vatican II had not been maximised.

The effect of transmitted knowledge had made its mark on Bernard (1.2:2,7) who needed 'to clarify where... [he]... was heading'. He 'was not sure how soon the practices of the church can be changed' but was certain 'some of the practices should change *soon*'. Because Lorna (2.5:3) had come from a traditional Catholic upbringing and an education that had given her answers which she had not challenged, she thinks 'there's still the old part... that says you should be doing this or that'. Her first semester in the course had caused her to 'experience

'ambivalence' which she said she could cope with. However, she could not cope with 'the contradiction in the church' and was still fearful about 'stepping out and making her own decisions'. Her added anxiety was that she felt 'you really must speak what you believe and put up with the consequences'. She also feared that the course would probably make her 'more radical' and make it 'harder to live in the institutional church'.

The disparity between their previous knowledge, and the knowledge they gained from the course, highlighted for the participants the disjuncture between their 'cognitive interests' and the position of the institutional church. What emerged from reflection was a sense of personal responsibility for their own knowledge.

The data show that the critical hermeneutic of revisionism has broken the sustained silence for religious educators who became aware in theory and practice of what it means to be modern and to reinterpret the traditional understanding of being Christian (Marthaler, 1976b:463-468). Implicit in their awareness was their recognition of the historicity of dogma and the concomitant fact that the doctrine of the Catholic church is not immutable: therefore they accepted that change and evolution are necessary and possible. Helena (2.1;2) had been deeply attached to, and comforted by, the religious discourse she had grown up with. However, she has acquired a 'greater awareness of change' and thinks the church 'has not allowed enough room for change'. Imelda (2.2:6) considers she has always reflected on inconsistencies in the church and the tenor of her interview was that contradictions were to be explored and resolved in order to 'put together modern life and the historical aspects of Christianity'. Knowledge of the socio-historical context, out of which norms had been reified by the power of the institutional church, had made Nora (2.7;11) think about what is essential in Christianity: it made her adamant about changing things 'that aren't really relevant'. Carmel's (1.3:4) understanding of culturally embedded practices caused her to 'wish the church would get a move on' and realise the 'implications of celibate clergy' in this day and age. In fact her feeling was that by not seeing the irrelevance of the law of celibacy the church 'has abandoned its priests at a time when they need support'.

In the history of the Catholic church, over approximately the last eight centuries, the boundaries of knowledge have been hierarchically determined in a way that induced a technocratic silence. Truths were assumed to be objective and were internalised by the members of the church without examination and challenge. As earlier writing in this work has shown Vatican II, in theory, opened the flood gates by emphasising the dignity of the human being and the freedom of conscience. The fact, that forces of apathy and ignorance reduced the flood to a trickle, was repeatedly referred to by the participants. The content of the Vatican II documents has roused in the participants a variety of feelings of impatience and anxiety and an interest in understanding and negotiating new frames of reference for their knowledge, values and beliefs. The responses from the participants, as will be seen from the following extracts, from some of the transcripts, convey a very similar message about what they now perceive as the efficacy of Vatican II.

- Judith (2.3) I believe, however, the church was saying after Vatican II that individual members should enjoy more freedom, but it didn't actually happen.  
(2.3;15)
- Kathleen (2.4) Instead of having a sermon at Mass week-in and week-out I think people in the pews could be told about the Vatican II documents. I think we have to get people to get up and talk about these things.  
(2.4;10)
- Anita (1.1) I think Vatican II came about with good intentions but I don't think it has been implemented.  
(1.1;405)
- Helena (2.1) Before I started the course I didn't really know much about Vatican II. I knew we'd had a Council but that was all. Now I see how rich the documents are.  
(2.1;12)
- Frank (1.6) I think some of the clergy are unfamiliar with what happened at the Council and what it offered and I think people would want changes if they knew about it.  
(1.6;11)

Lorna (2.5) That's a statement [about Vatican II] I'd like to shout loudly and clearly to all the people and clergy. I don't think I realised the potential of Vatican II before I started the course and I'm still finding out about it... It's an incredible document and people don't know how to handle it.  
(2.5;5)

Delma (1.4) My generation has not really understood what Vatican II was trying to promote by way of moral freedom for individuals... I hope the generations that follow will feel more free.  
(1.4;10)

Elizabeth (1.5) It's a long time since I've heard any priests really addressing the Council documents and sharing them with the parish.  
(1.5;16)

In various ways all the above extracts comment on the risk taken by the institutional church by not disclosing the tradition to be mediated — and mediated on. The participants appear to declare, in unison, that it is indictable for the church to perpetuate the assumption that knowledge is a commodity when Vatican II invited critical examination of pre-assimilated patterns of knowledge.

When teachers become aware of their own beliefs they see possibilities for increasing the experience for others. They become aware that much of what they took for granted and internalised had been incorporated into the institutional church from dominant ideologies of other cultures and times. They become more aware, too, of the potential of how a critique of knowledge can lessen the gap between *what is* and *what ought to be*. The possibility of a variety of interpretations of knowledge persuaded the participants that an opportunity, similar to what they had experienced, was needed by the church at large. Marie (2.6;7) claims 'we benefit as students, from knowing what the church has been through... but on the other hand we can err by just looking back to tradition and not being aware of all the things that are happening in our world today and we need to listen to people around us as well as to what contemporary theologians are saying — other people need this opportunity.'

## 2.2 Summary: Practical Knowledge Base

It has been noted in Chapter 1 that the image of the teacher is of one engaged in the profession as an interactive reflective agent. A teacher whose professional development has involved him/her in a process of interactive reflection in acquiring intellectual content and critically interpreting that knowledge will be capable of, not only recognising the limits of tradition, but pushing beyond the practical control of tradition by continuing to examine and challenge institutional practices. The learner who encounters this mode of knowledge and accepts the failure of transmitted, or naively interpreted, knowledge to explain reality can create a new future.

Rather than consent and acquiescence the religious educators who engage in transformative professional development must be aware of what, perhaps unknowingly, shaped their knowledge, values and beliefs. This entails making problematic the knowledge that constitutes the norms and language of the institutional church that have caused for religious educators a disjunction and constraint in their personal and professional judgement. The case study data have shown that the participants, with a measure of personal independence, created a practical knowledge and found themselves more confident in their professional aspirations. The data also pointed to a commitment, and a sense of social responsibility, on the part of the participants, to share this more widely in the church community.

This dimension of professionalism calls for more than technical efficiency. It calls for a form of knowledge that is non-alienating and increases insight and understanding and sees alternative interpretive explanations for relationships between past and present knowledge. In this way discourses are not passively received as an ideological decoding of language, by either the individual or institution, but are marked by practical knowledge that has been actively interpreted and negotiated by the learner through questioning and contesting the meaning of established knowledge. Such a change in understanding has the capacity to help religious educators move, from their early socialisation into Christianity, and to change their understanding of themselves from being dependent operators to being

responsible agents. Such a change can come from practical knowledge which is founded on historical-hermeneutical science and is derived from dialogue and understanding of the substantive content of one's culture and tradition. It is knowledge that is interpretive and explanatory and makes links between culture and the individual's frames of meaning. In this way learners will be active in interpreting and negotiating knowledge that is in harmony with their personal and societal contexts.

### **3.0 EMANCIPATORY KNOWLEDGE: REDEFINITION AND RECONSTRUCTION**

It has already been pointed out that Habermas (1972, 1974) postulates that knowledge is shaped by socio-historical conditions and is the outcome of human interests that generate knowledge in the technical, practical and emancipatory domain — each of which has its own criteria for assessing its validity. However

In Habermas' terms one does not know in a true sense, ... until one knows in the way impelled by the cognitive interest and emancipation, in being free, including free to know what one knows is true, non-coercive and the result of personal and informed attachment.

(Lovat, 1992a:10)

It was noted earlier in this writing that the thrust of critical theory in Habermas is to nurture an understanding of non-individual causes of power in historically-socially constructed knowledge that has settled in individual consciousness. Thus learners, who go beyond the empirical-analytic and hermeneutic paradigms, move to an emancipatory knowledge: this is praxis which is directed towards the sort of action that is basic to a transformed self-understanding and to a critical reconstruction of social structures that are more just. Although 'praxis includes all human activity, be it instrumental, interpretive or critical' (Groome, 1980:172), the epistemology that is of ultimate concern is Habermas' concept of knowledge constituted by emancipatory cognitive interest: this aims at human freedom and 'enables people to create a present that has some freedom from a controlling past' (Groome, 1980:172). An earlier examination of critical knowledge in this study

noted that critical knowledge is characterised as an interactive process of critique and collaboration, between the individual and society, and is directed to an understanding of reality by a willingness to transform that reality. The implication of this for the professional knowledge of the participants is that their critical knowledge will be directed to redefinition and reconstruction of the reality of the church.

### **3.1 Emancipatory Knowledge Base**

This section will explore to what extent the data disclose evidence that, for the research participants, a professional knowledge base produced critical knowledge for a transformation of reality. There is evidence in the transcripts that, in a political sense, the learners were committed to overcoming contradictions that had created a feeling of alienation from traditional institutional expectations. In Giroux' (1986:39) terms they saw themselves not as 'accommodating intellectuals' who compliantly supported the prevailing pattern: they perceived their role as that of 'critical intellectuals' prepared to oppose prevailing patterns.

Judith (2.3; 6,10) now thinks of the church as people and 'doesn't worry about the bricks and mortar'. For this reason she is 'more interested in clarifying [her] own thinking and values and talking to other lay people about how they feel'. This is her attempt to put into action her belief that the church 'is a guide', but on the other hand 'the individual is ultimately responsible for his/her moral decisions.' It was previously noted in this chapter that Judith had felt 'freed up intellectually' from the content knowledge related to her profession. This intellectual freedom is now seen to express itself in signs of redefinition by Judith who, in relation to the beliefs, values and structures of the church 'tends to rely on how [she] perceives things, and what [her] own answer is to the situation'.

A readiness to oppose prevailing patterns in the church's discourse surfaced many times in the data. Some areas, where the participants were no longer prepared to comply as 'accommodating intellectuals' were in regard to the obligation to attend Sunday Mass as in the transcripts for Elizabeth (1.5;14) and Anita (1.1;394): the refusal to admit women to ordination – Geraldine (1.7;8) and

Bernard (1.2;4): the rule of celibacy for the clergy — Marie (2.6;7) and Carmel (1.3;6) and the church's position against abortion — Delma (1.4;5) and Frank (1.6;11).

Comment must be made about the teachers' claim that their new level of freedom, in relation to their moral decisions, was the consequence of the course. While this might suggest that the course was the sole cause of this freedom there is a growing number of Catholics, who have not engaged in adult learning, who hold similar views. The transcripts suggest, however, that while the participants, before their study, were hedging towards the independent positions being taken by Catholics they spoke of their autonomy in relation to these moral issues in the context of what they had learnt in the course. Judith (2.3;13,15) was one who, although she 'was well and truly on the way to taking responsibility for... personal beliefs and values', attributed her 'present consciousness of personal autonomy and responsibility' to the units she had done.

Inherent in the responses of the participants is that knowledge has created for them a critical consciousness. This was integral to the process, whereby they developed a heightened responsibility to participate as agents with 'a measure of personal independence and initiative towards sociocultural situations' (Groome, 1991:103). Elizabeth (1.5;19) indicated she had felt 'constrained by the authoritarianism of the church'. However, she was now 'enjoying the freedom of exercising personal responsibility' because she had become critically conscious; her new knowledge had stimulated her and energised her to address what constrained her in the authoritarianism of the church in a way that generated a degree of professional autonomy.

Bernard's (1.2;7) response of initiative towards sociocultural situations can be read within the same concept of critical consciousness that framed Elizabeth's, albeit without the same claim of joy: Bernard's feeling could be better described as relief. Over a period of seven or eight years Bernard had talked to parents about the sacramental programmes in which their children were enrolled. He now felt 'quite guilty' that he had presented doctrine in 'language that was not suitable — full of inclusions and exclusions'. The cause of the relief felt by Bernard was that he had discovered 'learning that was enriching' and he had a heightened

responsibility to take the initiative to make accessible to parents knowledge that was not only true to the past but relative to the present.

A professional knowledge base provoked critical consciousness and 'generated... energy' for Lorna (2.5;5): it moved her, for example, to show an initiative at her mother's funeral by the choice of symbols. Lorna had integrated into her life-world, through the unit on sacramental theology, a redefined understanding of the use of symbols. During the funeral liturgy for her mother she had used a bowl of fruit salad 'because making fruit salad had been a life-long ritual' for her mother. Lorna found the 'symbol powerful', and more appropriate than prescribed symbols, although 'some people couldn't quite cope with why it was used'. For Lorna the traditional symbols and practices used at a funeral had become problematic and this was her way of 'doing something [she] believed was authentic' for her.

Marie (2.6;14,16) found herself almost surprised at the measure of personal independence she had gained. 'Traditions that were passed on ... were not life-giving; they were laws' and now her 'awareness of tradition is a lot more than [her] family had'. She is beginning to articulate a critique of the structures of authority and their power and would like 'more knowledge to be able to challenge things'. She 'has become more aware of institutional constraints' and whereas she 'was accepting of how it was' she is now 'not so accepting of what they say' but sees 'no point in arguing about *all* they say'. One detects in Marie an ambivalence. The previously defined discourse is not to her liking and the experience of a certain level of critical consciousness signals she has a measure of personal independence that could gather momentum as she moves further through the course.

An important agenda for the participants was to reconceptualise the question of power so that the individual is not dominated by the institution. They were clearly concerned that answers should not be imposed by a triumphalist church: they had a vision of how they could be shapers of an horizon where there was greater mutuality between the 'traditional intellectuals' and church members. An external factor that was perceived by the participants, to affect the mutual relationships and responsibility between the individual and society, was power.

Their perception was that the institution appropriated power to itself: the challenge made by the participants was to change the systems of relations and to deconstruct inclusions and exclusions in the discourse. It has already been established in Chapter 1 that the power-knowledge relationships are often not recognised by those they dominate and it was anticipated, therefore, that the participants may not recognise the constraints. This anticipation was, in fact, unnecessary as the following references from some of the transcripts show. Most of the teachers had become critically aware that they had a problem with the power of the institution and they had, until now, taken it for granted. Geraldine (1.7;16) was resentful that 'the priest was seen as the power' to the neglect of 'the needs and opinions of the lay people.' She sees now that 'as a child her values weren't really based on choice' because 'church structures and the priest were supreme'. She is further concerned that the *status quo* could be continued by the conservative nature of young priests. This means that priests will 'maintain to a certain degree the power they have... and ... will not be prepared to empower the people'. Geraldine does not approve of this dichotomy between privileges enjoyed by the 'traditional intellectuals' and the other members of the church. She challenges the church not to isolate the lay people as a separate entity.

Past hurts, that had been part of Elizabeth's (1.5;11) life, added feeling to her comments about the power of the church. She was impatient with the way 'the priests keep quoting the magisterium and all the antiquated ideas of the church'. However, in spite of 'the memories and hurts the course had evoked' it had 'helped to resolve the issue' of the way the church had dominated her life by its endless delay in granting a dispensation from the priesthood for a man she wanted to marry. The content knowledge of the course had 'empowered' her and was 'part of the healing process' because it gave her the 'ability to challenge authority'.

Lorna (2.5;4) also showed intolerance with the control of power usurped by priests. She found herself, on a recent occasion, when a priest addressed her class, 'biting [her] tongue while the priest used the word *power* over and over again in relation to his [sacramental] powers'. This happened, for Lorna, as the consequence of the information from a unit on *Theology of Sacraments*. This unit

had identified for her the way distortions had crept into theology and she was bent on rectifying the situation for the sake of the future.

Lather (1991b:52) argues that emancipatory knowledge ‘directs attention to the possibilities for social transformation inherent in the present configuration of social processes.’ This appears to be very evident in the transcripts where the participants’ emancipatory knowledge emerges as hope for the future. For instance Delma (1.4;11) links the possibility of change to the old adage that ‘Rome wasn’t built in a day’. However, given the climate of the church since Vatican II that ‘was about promoting transformation so that individual church members could enjoy freedom’ she knows the potential for change exists but ‘the church [will] move slowly’. By applying his new insights, from emancipatory knowledge, to the possibility for transformation in the church Frank (1.6;10) thinks that although ‘there’s not a lot going on’ there is more hope for change than was possible in the past.

From the stand-point of emancipatory knowledge and a new critical consciousness the participants appear to have achieved an ‘awareness of the larger context of [their] practice and the moral dimensions that inform it’ (Butt & Olsen, 1983:10). This is seen in Delma (1.4;9) who had gained a conviction about the individual’s right to freedom of conscience. Delma says ‘the course has made a difference’ and she now feels that although ‘passing on the concept of freedom to children isn’t easy’ she has ‘to try and ensure that they think things through’ so that when they come to an appropriate stage of development ‘they’ll make up their own minds’. Lorna’s (2.5;5) transcript identifies her increasing consciousness about the cultural context of the church that influenced the moral laws of its discourse. The exclusion of women from taking certain roles in the liturgy and the insensitivity about the use of inclusive language are issues for Lorna. Geraldine (1.7;8) is likewise aware of the cultural background of the church and for this reason she claims that ‘practices in the future must favour a stronger role for women’.

Through critical hermeneutics, the participants became aware that their knowledge had often been passively received: they also felt a movement towards increased freedom through their critique of past knowledge. As a consequence

they exercised an increased autonomy to operate on their new understandings. As a result of critical knowledge Nora (2.7;7) felt an increased autonomy to act according to what she knows is true ‘because there are times when you can’t do things as you were taught and it’s all right to do what you believe is true.’ This same sense of increased autonomy was voiced by Elizabeth (1.5;7) who from the experience of frustration before, and during the course, says she could now ‘confront church practices if [she] had to.’ In recognising the knowledge outcomes of the course Bernard (1.2;3) also speaks of being ‘empowered’.

An analysis of the case study data revealed that the participants had experienced past conceptions of church teachings that were unacceptable. However, they now felt that they could interpret and understand the substantive content of religious education. As well as this there is evidence in the data of their capacity to exercise responsibility to discern what counts as significant knowledge. The notion of what counts as significant knowledge is captured for instance in references such as ‘I’ll be handing on to my children a love of tradition rather than a fear of it’ (Marie, 2.6;16).

The key to the discrimination that Kathleen (2.4;9) makes between what is essential and what is peripheral knowledge is made in relation to her changed attitude to attendance at Sunday Mass. ‘I was brought up with the idea that if you don’t go to Mass on Sundays you were damned... I don’t see it that way now... going to Mass is not the be-all and end-all particularly given the cost of fuel for people in isolated areas.’ Carmel (1.3;12) also realises the way knowledge has freed her from fear and cognitive conflict — ‘Formerly we had a horror of eating meat on Fridays... and many people left the church because they felt guilty. I feel sorry that people don’t have enough understanding to know what’s important.’

In the same way as Freire’s conscientization gave people a genuine sense of power, the knowledge generated by the course made the participants aware of contradictions and injustices in the institutional church. More importantly it made them aware that they had minds and wills of their own with a responsibility to shape their own lives and to address oppressive elements in the discourse of the church. Anita (1.1;405) does not consider ‘the good intentions’ of Vatican II have been implemented and thinks we ‘need to branch out’. She considers the mentality

that legitimates ‘we’ve always done things this way’ is restrictive and needs ‘to change enormously.’ Having decisions made for her is something Judith (2.3;17) is no longer comfortable with so she ‘has started the process of making [her] own decisions.’ Lorna (2.5;6) has made a shift in emphasis in her relationship with the church. Although she still has ‘to teach within parameters of the church’ for her ‘the real question is – how do the gospels tell us to be Christian?’

It has been pointed out in this writing that an effect of technical knowledge was to give the participants confidence and that through critical hermeneutical knowledge they came to a new historical consciousness and raised new questions. However, the freedom and ability to make effective ‘an understanding of knowledge which incorporates both instrumental and hermeneutic reason but transcends them both’ (Young, 1989a:36) requires emancipatory critical knowledge so that the participants are able to address what alienates and oppresses them in their life-world. This implies that the learner will focus on reframing their questions with a view towards action for the sake of the future.

### **3.2 Summary: Emancipatory Knowledge Base**

This section has explored the claim that emancipatory knowledge is constitutive of a professional knowledge base of the religious educator in terms of redefinition and reconstruction. The experience of the participants could be said to be one with an epistemic dimension that reflected the three categories of human interest namely, technical, practical and emancipatory (Habermas, 1971). Their learning had provided firstly a knowledge base for efficiency and competence they had not previously experienced; secondly it has given them new insights and understanding and thirdly a desire for the reconstruction of discourse, within the church, so that all church members could accept it as meaningful.

The data showed that the participants considered that the institution had, for too long, determined in its texts and practices the social production of meaning, and controlled their access to the discourse of the church, in ways that specified what was said and what remained unsaid. They admitted that it might not necessarily, or even desirably, be possible to achieve consensus: their hope was

that many points of view could be accommodated through open-minded dialogue. They had come to recognise ‘that if tradition is valued too much in its own right it establishes the objective power of the institution’ (Figure 8:pp.163-166). On the other hand they considered that tradition, found in the discourse of the church, was part of their heritage. While their concern was for critical integrity, for themselves and the church, their intention was to transform but not to annihilate the tradition.

The professional knowledge base had caused anger, anxiety and impatience to surface. It had also been productive of a critical consciousness that helped the participants determine the worthwhileness of the discourse for contemporary needs. It convinced them of their need to be agents of change. Content knowledge had given the participants an independence from dogmatic ideas; they had responded to professional knowledge by recreating their values and beliefs in the cause of building their own truth. They no longer saw themselves as passively receiving the normative views of the institution but as critically penetrating the existing discourses to interpret and negotiate meaning and to effect a renewal of the practices, texts and codes of Christianity in a changing and pluralistic world. Their desire was for integration. What characterised the integration, however, was that although the participants changed in attitudes, beliefs and behaviour they did so, in most cases, within the framework of their existing roles. They had not stepped radically outside the context of the church, and aspects of its discourses, with which they found themselves in conflict. It would be reasonable to interpret the transcripts as conveying the message either explicitly, as was the case with Lorna (2.5;3) and Carmel (1.3;10), or implicitly that they were prepared to ‘push’ but not ‘shove’ for redefinition and reconstruction of the discourse.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that in the course of a series of processes, that became operative as **information, internalisation and integration** (Figure 9:p.198) the research participants acquired a professional knowledge base of technical, practical and emancipatory knowledge in terms of **efficiency and competency, critique and interpretation, redefinition and reconstruction** (Figure 10:p.201).

The evidence pointed to a difference in the degree to which the modes of knowledge were discernible.

#### **4.1 Technical Knowledge**

In the foregoing analysis the evidence was very clear that the teachers perceived that, as a consequence of their study, they had accessed, from the scholarly research, the facts and concepts for the content of the discipline of religious education in a way that satisfied their technical cognitive interest. The new fund of systematically organised knowledge, that they had accessed, convinced all fourteen participants that they could defend the discipline with critical integrity. The departure from seeing the concept of knowledge as absolute and static to one of knowledge as provisional, fluid and contextually relevant had helped them see how they could contribute to refashioning their profession. They now experienced a sense of their own power, from their expanding theory base, to renew the discipline of religious education on grounds that were educationally defensible. A critical reappraisal of the specialised substantive content disclosed for the participants some of the cultural distortions in the tradition: it gave voice to biases and silences that had been a cause for them of cognitive conflict. This study does not claim that all fourteen participants showed they had achieved adequate technical knowledge. While teachers from both groups expressed relief at feeling 'intellectually free' it is significant that the religious educators who had already graduated (Group 1) thought 'it had now come together'. However, on the other hand, the participants in Group 2 who had just commenced the course thought they 'still had a lot to learn'.

#### **4.2 Practical Knowledge**

Just as it was argued that technical knowledge, born of cognitive interest, had been emancipatory so it was argued that practical knowledge was emancipatory. An examination of the data pointed to new insights and understanding for the participants from their critique of the content knowledge and

critical hermeneutical dialogue. This had effected for the teachers a historical consciousness. This enabled them to see the necessity for change in the tradition in relation to such things as the language, rituals and practices. They recognised that controlled and transmitted knowledge differed from knowledge that was context-embedded and generated from dialogue. As a result of critical dialectical hermeneutical activity the participants felt they could internalise knowledge as their own. Interpretation and explanation of culture-bound discourse offered criteria for alternative understanding of knowledge that was not alienating but was in harmony with their conceptual schemes.

#### **4.3 Emancipatory Knowledge**

In the analysis of the interview transcripts to substantiate the claims with reference to the outcome of emancipatory knowledge the issue was more problematic. Most of the participants, from their expanded critical technical knowledge, and the deepened hermeneutical insights from their practical knowledge, had become more independent and autonomous in their decision-making. Their first concern was to realign their past beliefs and practices. Secondly they had become aware of patterned inequalities in the power of the discourse of the church and their agenda was to redefine the balance by a critique of the structures of authority and their power. At first sight this could suggest that the professional knowledge base was fully emancipatory. However, there are ambiguities, born of a deep commitment to the church, in the positions of the participants. So, although there was a concern to confront and challenge the church discourse and to be active about effecting personal and institutional change the evidence suggests the agenda for reconstruction was at two levels. On the first level the agenda was to realise their professional responsibility as critical religious educators where their activity was underpinned by non-alienating technical, practical and emancipatory knowledge of the substantive content of their discipline. Given the evidence of their capacity to critically describe, interpret and examine the relevant intellectual substance it could be assumed that this was a probable outcome. On the second level the agenda was to effect an integration of the

individual's position with the institution. This would entail a radical reconstruction of the church's public discourse. The evidence in the case study data suggests that this was a limited outcome. The teachers were prepared 'to push from the edges' so while their praxis may initiate change in the institution it seems likely that change in the system of power relations in the church, as in any institution, will come slowly. This, therefore, will limit the autonomy of the professional which always relates to the social context and, consequently, is never completely free.

Outcomes in the specialised knowledge that is related to the technical, practical and emancipatory domains of learning are all important for professional development and contribute to the professional knowledge base of a discipline. In this chapter the argument has been that all three cognitive interests are valuable dimensions for the professional development of a religious educator and endemic to accessing the discourse of Christianity. This claim has been substantiated by evidence from the interview data of the critical case study. This showed that the research participants, in varying degrees, emerge from their studies of the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious) able to describe and explain the substantive content of the cognate disciplines of religious education; able to recognise, by critical hermeneutics, the reason for their own silences and those in the discourse of the church and conscious of their responsibility to be active subjects with a desire to change the social/ecclesial relations in which they participate. Such praxis will not be a rejection of their past beliefs, values and practices 'but a reordering of the perspective to one in which transformation (or at minimum, the delineation of the possibilities for transformation) is seen as the ultimate aim' (Benhabib, 1986:67). The degree to which religious educators produce new patterns of thought and action will depend on the extent to which they step out of a paradigm of operating from 'legitimated', self-perpetuating knowledge and move, beyond the process of questioning, to action governed by a comprehensive critique of individual experience in the light of the social forces of the church.

## 5.0 A DIFFERENT VOICE: Group 3

Comment in Chapter 4 located the pilot project, in which Group 3 members were engaged, as an initiative of the Catholic Education Office of Canberra and Goulburn. It was planned by the authorities to realise one of its professional development goals by providing support for religious educators. However, the nature of the exercise, although funded by the employers as an activity for professional development by way of in-house activity, proved to be very different from what qualifies, in this research, as professional development. The literature (Connelly & Ben-Peretz, 1980; Paulston, 1976; De Young, 1986) has already been cited as evidence that short, sharp bursts, aimed at involving the teacher as user, or technician, are not effective of radical change and this proved to be the case in respect of the project in which Group 3 members were involved.

Previous mention was made in Chapter 6 that although the data for Group 3 were analysed by exactly the same procedures as for Groups 1 and 2 the Group 3 data yielded a remarkably different outcome from the data of Groups 1 and 2. Consequently the conceptual framework (Figure 10:p.201) that has been used in this chapter to discuss the data for Groups 1 and 2 cannot be applied to the data for Group 3.

### 5.1 Standardising Knowledge: Group 3

The data show that because of the limited preparation for participation in the project, the teachers in Group 3 perceived that they lacked understanding of their practice and their power to control it. Sarah (3.4; 20, 26), for example, said: 'I had a sense of not knowing where I was going... I was confused... I was going crazy'. By receiving the curriculum ready-made, from another education authority, the teachers in the Canberra/Goulburn system were offered a curriculum package to which they had not contributed, at the philosophical and theoretical levels, during the process of planning and deliberation. Consequently the teachers perceived themselves as passive recipients of knowledge. This could deskill, rather than empower the users and create the situation where values and knowledge could be

passed on in an objective fashion (Giroux, 1985:378). As Patricia (3.2;21) commented: 'It seemed here it is — use it'.

There appeared to be an assumption, perhaps an unconscious one, on the part of the employers about the delivery of a ready-made curriculum. It could be argued that the employers assumed that the conception and the execution of knowledge could be separated (Giroux, 1985:376). Two of the consequences of divorcing the conception and execution of knowledge are succinctly stated by Olivia (3.1;19) who was emphatic that participating in the pilot project 'did not give [her] new knowledge nor new methodology'. A similar experience was recorded by Rebecca (3.3;28), '...it didn't give [her] knowledge but it gave [her] resources'. In relation to this acquisition, and owning of knowledge, Patricia (3.2), Trudy (3.5) and Wendy (3.7) also registered their belief that it had given them resources, but not knowledge, and it had affirmed, but not challenged nor changed, their approach to teaching.

All seven participants in Group 3 now described their teaching approach as praxis. However, they admitted that their understanding of this methodology was limited to the names of the five movements of a praxis approach because they lacked an understanding of its underlying philosophy. In fact most of the responses from these teachers even dismissed the need for any philosophical understanding of what underpins the praxis approach.

It would seem that in the cause of practical considerations, determined in part by time and financial constraints, an outcome of the pilot project had been technocratic rationalism and 'devaluation of critical intellectual work' (Giroux, 1985:376). The rationalisation and institutionalisation of the process for inservice, on the part of the employers, had stood in the way of a genuine commitment to growth on the part of the individual teachers (Ingvarson & Greenway, 1984:46). The participants had engaged, not as intellectuals but as practitioners, in a way that did not lead to conscientization.

The introduction of the pilot project, without adequate attention to critical pedagogy, had trapped the participants in their own history: to a large extent they continued to assimilate uncritically the belief systems of their tradition. This, one assumes, was certainly not the intention of the innovators of the pilot project who

had identified the needs of the participants through critical dialogical procedures and were attempting to respond positively to the teachers' need for professional development.

It is obvious, from the analysis of the professional development policies of the Catholic Education Office, in Chapter 4, that the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn was committed to educating professionally qualified staff with knowledge that surpassed their own experiences. However, involvement in the pilot project did not give teachers the critical theoretical base that is necessary to give teachers a capacity to be active agents of personal and institutional transformation.

This chapter has shown that specialised knowledge, gained from graduate studies in religious education, was constitutive for the research participants in Groups 1 and 2 of a knowledge base for their profession. This empowered them in terms of efficiency and competency; of critique and interpretation and of redefinition and reconstruction. In contrast this was not the experience of the members of Group 3. They claimed that participation in the pilot project had given them access to teaching resources. It can be argued from the evidence that professional development, by way of participating in a pilot project, to trial a curriculum document, had not engaged the teachers in critical learning and appears to have trapped them in their own history.

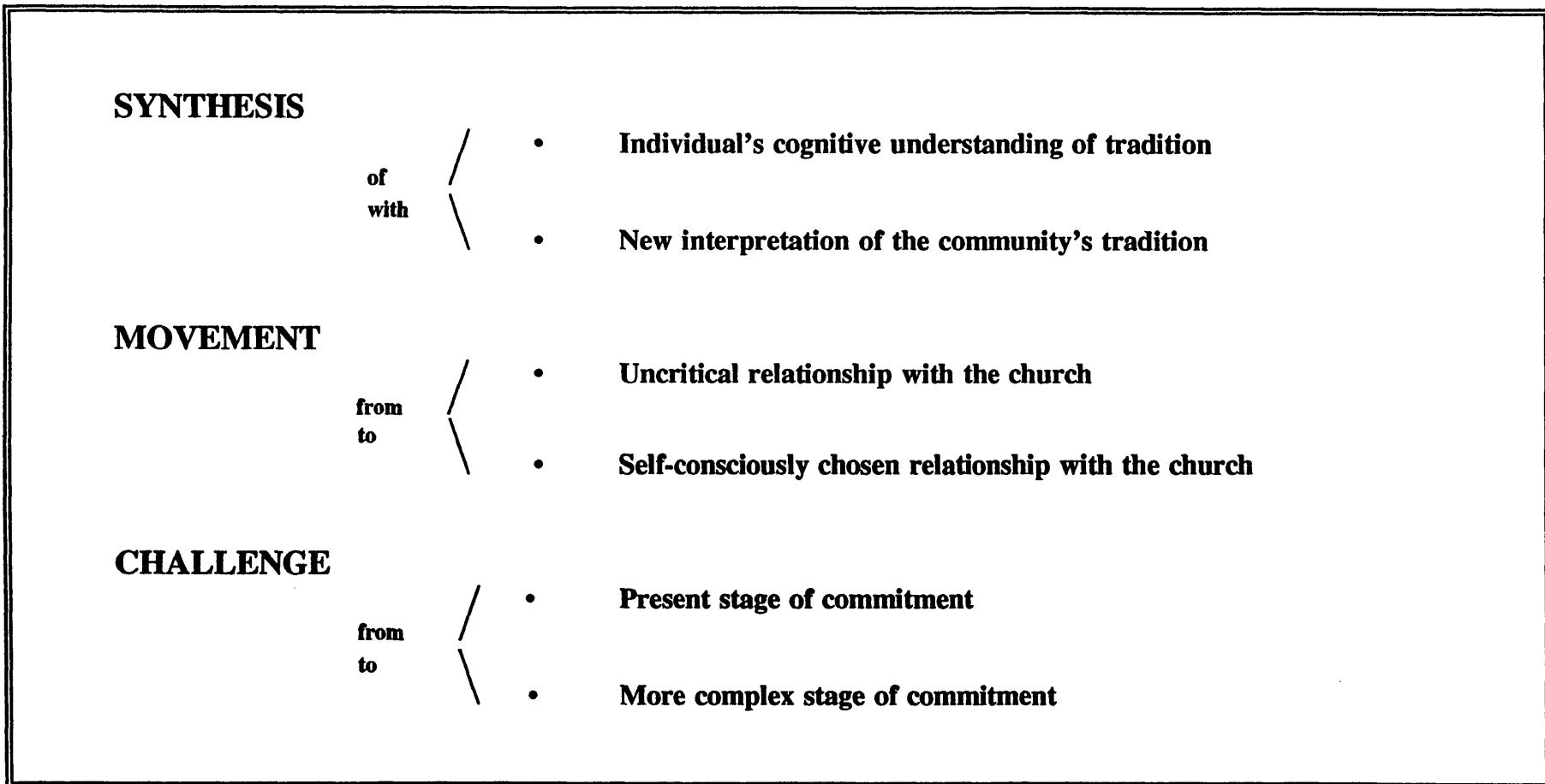
## **CHAPTER 8: TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

It has been argued in the previous chapter that professional development by way of graduate studies constituted for the religious educators a professional knowledge base that was constitutive of a sense of their own power to close the gaps in their specialised knowledge and produce knowledge that was non-alienating and, therefore, in harmony with their own conceptual schemes. It will now be argued that, parallel to the production of emancipatory knowledge, the religious educators are also challenged, by transformative learning, to recognise the necessity of examining essential linkages between their individual positions and their relationship with the social system of the church. This will be addressed by examining the data from the case study for evidence of the extent to which the randomly selected research participants engaged in learning that was ‘a mode of transformative activity’ (Benhabib, 1986:67).

The conceptual framework relates to the theories of human growth and learning in the contextualised world of the religious educator that were examined in Chapter 2. There it was established that there are parallels between adult development and adult learning. It was also established that adulthood can be a time of active systematic change that leads to a transformation of consciousness and a new orientation towards reality. The epistemological base that emerged from the examination of the literature was one of contextualised adult development. In other words contextual development implies that development is about the concrete actions of the individual in a concrete world – a changing individual in a changing world.

Evidence will be sought from the case study for ways in which the transformative development of the participants was productive of synthesis, movement and challenge (Figure 11:p.242).



**Figure 11: Transformative Experiences of the Religious Educator**

## 2.0 SYNTHESIS: A SYNTHESIS OF THE INDIVIDUAL'S UNDERSTANDING OF TRADITION WITH A NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE COMMUNITY'S TRADITION

In Chapter 2, from an exploration of the discourses of adult development and learning, a parallel was established in the way the adult constructs meaning and reality that synthesises the old and the new (Figure 3:p.86). Therefore adult learning that involves critical thinking, can effect transformative learning towards synthesis and integration of meaning in one's life-world. So, too, it is argued here that adult religious learning challenges the learner towards a synthesis of one's present stage of cognitive understanding of tradition with a new interpretation of the community's tradition.

The literature (e.g. Daloz, 1986:85) suggests that it is easier to let go of one thing when one is holding onto something else. The case study data support this: the participants had recognised they could let go of earlier assumptions and make qualitative changes in the light of new perspectives they had gained on the historicity of tradition. Lorna (2.5;4) is one who resonates, from personal experience, with the truth about 'hanging on to the old'. The course units, particularly *Theology of Sacraments*, had confirmed her position that changes had to be made and, with the security of this new knowledge, she was prepared to transform the old.

Anita (1.1;389) was prompted, in the first interview task, when she reacted to the illustrations (Appendix M:A.1.4;386), to comment that the person in the drawing who was being drowned reminded her of someone who was experiencing difficulty 'letting go of their old traditions' because change is 'rather threatening'. For her part Anita, in recent times has thought about the structure and practices of the church and believes that 'changes have to be made.' In fact although she admits to having taken a lot for granted she now sees prescribed practices, such as attendance at Mass every Sunday, from a different perspective. One expects that Anita's new historical understanding of the regulation about Sunday Mass came

from her study of the institutional narratives of the Eucharist<sup>2</sup> in the scriptures and the historical development of church law. This gave Anita reasons to make a personal decision about her practice of the regulation. Historical consciousness was important to Anita and had prepared her to change ‘what perhaps was good in the past but not relevant today.’

A new understanding of the historical development of symbol and sacrament had opened Judith’s (2;3;4,5,7) eyes to the historicity of tradition and ‘scared’ her about how we are educating children today. Because Judith could now leave behind ‘a lot of old baggage’ she was concerned that children should not be given an ahistorical introduction to the sacraments, that could condemn them to a rationalist doctrine: this would give them a false concept of tradition which they would hold onto for security. Judith’s idea of tradition is that it is something that must be kept alive and lived; this aligns her understanding of tradition with Gadamer’s (1979:32) as ‘a new creation of understanding’ that can rehabilitate tradition through ‘an interpretive process by which understandings of reality are achieved’ (McKenzie, 1991:19).

The journey of transformative learning is a dual carriage highway. In one lane travel the vehicles that carry the cognitive capacity to organise, analyse, integrate and synthesise. In the second lane travel the vehicles that carry the affective capacity to understand self and relate responsibly with others.

Judith (2.3;12) had travelled the road of cognitive understanding as well as the road towards an increased affective capacity. She understood why she needed symbols in her life and had been able to bring a new understanding to some of the traditional symbols such as those pertaining to the Eucharist. In recognising, cognitively and affectively, that traditional symbols had taken on a new meaning for her Judith spoke affectionately of her parents and the way they used statues and holy pictures: however, she herself now felt quite alienated from the ‘magic’

---

<sup>2</sup> The term *Eucharist* is used to name the event that was originally referred to as *a supper or a meal* (eg. Lk 22:19-20). The term *Mass*, although now the most commonly used term, as well as the regulations about attendance every Sunday, was introduced centuries later.

of statues and holy pictures. However she acknowledged there was a need to keep traditional symbols, such as the crucifix, that are essential to Christianity.

Kathleen's (2.4;13) capacity to balance both the cognitive and affective outcomes is significant. She hopes 'the kind of tradition that relied on pomp and ceremony has gone and the real traditions will be given priority.' Recently, as a conclusion to a unit she taught on the gospel message about peace, she planned a peace ceremony. She chose not to use the traditional peace symbol of a dove for the service. She invited the children to bring their own symbols that would help them remember the message of peace that was usually represented by the traditional symbol of a dove. Kathleen felt that the community's tradition about peace was 'brilliantly interpreted', in a way that 'was more important than borrowed symbols and verbal statements', by one small child who brought a Teddy Bear 'because he could always cuddle it'.

Baum (1978:281-283) contended that critical theologians must discern the pathogenic trends in their own religious traditions and be aware of the 'structural consciousness... exerted by religious language and religious forms quite independent of the subjective intentions of the believers'. Through their reflection on the theological content of the course the participants discerned some of the 'pathogenic trends in their religious traditions'. Nora (2.7;9), for instance, had become aware of the power exerted by language; indeed she had come to a conclusion that 'in reality we have had too many verbal statements in our tradition.' In examining Carmel's (1.3;3,5,7,9) transcripts one becomes aware that she has an interest in history and had been fascinated by the historical aspects of several of the units that dealt with the history and development of doctrine. This had helped Carmel discover some of the 'pathogenic trends' in her religious tradition. She reflected that this knowledge gave her two options — 'to fight the traditions and practices, and perhaps lose too much, or go with the structures and push from the edges.' Carmel was grateful for the knowledge she had gained of what had caused the 'pathogenic trends'. She felt that, with this new

understanding, she could increase an awareness of both the beauty of her faith and the community's tradition, and effect a synthesis of the two.

At first sight it seems that the discovery of 'pathogenic trends' in the tradition by Marie (2.6; 6,7,11,14,16), who was just beginning the course, had overwhelmed her to a point of disbelief and confusion because she was discovering that 'the sorts of things [from tradition] that were instilled in her in childhood really didn't develop the right attitude.' This made her realise that 'we are evolving into something different and the faith [tradition] must deal with the issues of today'. As a consequence Marie values becoming aware of how what she thought was tradition had constrained her beliefs and practices. She was now looking for a way to interpret tradition to deal with what was evolving in the world and in the church.

It became evident throughout the interviews that generated the case study data that the course provided information for the participants about the defensive nature of the reaction by the church to problems throughout history. This had directed the attention of the research participants to 'concrete events in their temporal order' (Riegel, 1976:689) which they considered were present examples of the church's defensive reactions. The participants perceived the issues of clerical celibacy and the ordination of women as two of the issues on the church's current agenda of defensive action. Their conviction was that these matters called for a new interpretation of the community's tradition rather than arbitrary defence. Nora (2.7;9) 'would like to see the church make a little more room for the various needs of today'. She argues that 'tradition... needs to go hand in hand with what is happening today' because 'we can err by just looking back to tradition without being aware of what is happening in our world today'. Delma's (1.4;5,6,12) transcript clearly identifies this time of crisis in the church as an opportunity, not for defensive protection of the past, but for a real understanding of the cultural situations in which these issues of celibacy and ordination of women were embedded and understood in the past. Delma now has 'an awareness of the historical changes' and believes, that although the church wants to achieve the

'greatest good', it has not taken the opportunity, in regard to these issues, 'to accommodate both the tradition as well as contemporary experiences'. She considers that her husband, who terminated his studies for the priesthood after six years because of constraints in the church, 'would make a fantastic [married] priest' and is annoyed that the church refuses to recognise the opportunity it is missing by being reactionary.

The 'power-play' and 'male-dominated decisions' have produced negative feelings in Lorna (2.5;4). She sees the church of the future as 'a church of small communities', that were traditional in the early church, where the celebrant of the Eucharist is not necessarily an ordained male member of the group. Likewise Nora (2.7;4) does not go 'along with the argument that there shouldn't be women priests because all the apostles were male.' Her argument for ordaining women hinges on the fact that 'Jesus lived in a very different culture where women were not public figures and [she] thinks that the church needs to respond to people in our particular time and culture.' Nora expressed a concern that because the church is defensive and is using invalid arguments it has short-circuited the consideration of options that are more positive and relevant as an understanding of the community's tradition.

An analysis of extracts of the ACU course document (Appendix E:p.331) showed that it considered that if tradition is valued too much in its own right it establishes the objective power of the institution. It also claimed that individuals must dialogue with the institution to create new insights that interpret community tradition and integrate the old and the new (Figure 8:pp.163-166). Frank (1.6;5,10) reflected on the objective power of the institution, that is expressed in traditional practices of the church community (e.g. attending Mass every Sunday). He recognised the importance of communal worship which he considers is a foundational underpinning of the practice. However, Frank regrets the implications of guilt for those who absent themselves from Mass on Sundays for reasons that are not encompassed by the objective law of the church. Frank is convinced a

community-centred church, that is true to Acts 2:37<sup>3</sup>, would not limit its concern to those ‘who are recognised as regular churchgoers’. He would like to see the practice of the church concerning the obligation of attending Mass changed to reflect what constituted community in the early church.

Helena (2.1;5,14) is, at this stage of her course, struggling with how to integrate and synthesise the old and the new of tradition. Because tradition is now understood differently by Helena she is ‘getting less satisfied with formulas’ that symbolise the objective power of the institution. On the other hand she is ‘not sure that the historical emphases of the Christian tradition, as well as contemporary experience and knowledge, can ever be fully got together.’ Helena acknowledges the difficulties presented by the objective laws of the church but has never felt constrained by them. However, she is beginning to see that laws that overly constrain the individual are undesirable and ‘presumes [she] will understand more and appreciate this point better’ as she studies more units for the degree.

Freire’s (1985:122) pedagogical practice of conscientization requires the oppressed not only to emerge from their ‘culture of silence’ but also to be mediators amongst their oppressors. There are problems and ambiguities in this research about where the participants stood as mediators amongst their oppressors. Certainly there is evidence that the participants saw the need for a new interpretation of the community’s tradition and for praxis to be wider than their own experience of interpreting tradition. On the other hand there is an ambiguity and an ambivalence about the degree to which they will become active mediators. This can be demonstrated by recourse to the following extracts from the data.

Bernard (1.2) I’m not sure how soon the practices of the church can be changed but certainly some of the practices should change soon.  
(1.2;4)

---

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2:37 spells out that community is constituted by brotherhood (sic) that is expressed in a united purpose of common concern for others.

Delma (1.4) I don't think the church can make black and white decisions in situations like that [about the young child in Dublin who was pregnant]. However, when I talk to my children about values in relation to abortion and things like that I always advocate the church's line.  
 (1.4;5)

Carmel (1.3) I tend to accept the quiet wisdom of the church although at times I wish they'd get a move on and realise what the implications of celibacy are.  
 (1.3;6)

## 2.1 Summary: Synthesis

A deconstruction of some of the texts of the ACU document (Appendix E:p.331) revealed that the course expected religious educators to critique responsibly their preconceived assumptions about knowledge, and forge a synthesis of the old and the new, by discerning the meaning of tradition's past and present claims to truth. This section has argued that there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the proposition that the participants experienced a transformation of consciousness. This deepened and expanded their cognitive capacity to analyse and synthesise more competently their own perspectives about tradition from a hermeneutical approach to the community's traditions.

The impetus for transformative learning about tradition appeared to begin, for the research participants, from a challenge to reflect on some unquestioned assumptions about tradition that shaped their beliefs and values. The instances of this phenomenon are in the transcripts of Geraldine (1.7;5); Helena (2.1;3); Bernard (1.2;4) and Marie (2.6;8) where the evidence points to the fact that they recognised the gaps 'between the old givens and new discoveries' (Daloz 1986:238). This challenged them to see that alternative interpretations were possible beyond the familiar and unquestioned that had been reified and reinforced by emotional attachments to the church.

Almost all of the research participants, in the process of realising their adulthood in a contemporary world, had experienced conflict with their present

cognitive understanding of their religion. The course had increased this conflict and had given them substantive content that took them beyond their former boundaries of knowledge. Their options were to jettison the old knowledge or to synthesise, this new, diverse and conflicting information with their old structures and beliefs. While some participants had previously abandoned the church, because they could not reconcile their differences, the evidence demonstrates clearly that the course had helped them discover common ground with the church through a new interpretation of tradition.

### **3.0 MOVEMENT: FROM AN UNCRITICAL ORGANIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH TO A SELF-CONSCIOUSLY CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH**

As Figure 11 (p.242) indicates transformative learning achieves more than the synthesis of understandings about tradition. It effects also a movement in relationships on the part of the learner. Mezirow (1978:105-106) speaks of growth towards maturity in terms of movement from organic social relationships, that place great value on the primary group and its values and practices, to social contractual relationships which emphasise the individual. The following section will examine to what extent Mezirow's concept applies to this study — to what extent the professional development programme caused the participants to move from an uncritical relationship with the church to a self-consciously chosen relationship with the church. This is not intended as a claim that the course stands alone as the sole cause of the movement in relationships. Some of the factors examined in Chapter 4, as the context for this case study, especially Vatican II, must also be considered important. In many respects the course only exists because of the dramatic changes in religious education since Vatican II. However, for most of the participants the course was the most significant cause of the change.

The argument in the previous chapter claimed that the participants had become aware that knowledge that lessened the gap in their control of the

substantive content of their discipline had been emancipatory. Similarly it is argued that substantive content made them aware of the dilemma of how distortions in the discourse of the church had informed their beliefs and values. They now perceived their task as one of reassessing and realigning their practice to relate to their preferred values.

It follows from the earlier analysis of the literature about dialectical development and transformative learning that individual development of adults is towards a sense of developing power related to socially constructed subjectivity, as well as contractual solidarity, between the individual and society. The researcher wishes to note that an examination of the philosophical underpinning of the ACU course (Figure 8:pp.163-166) demonstrated that the participants were engaged in learning involving a praxis epistemology. This means that the learning of the course had the potential to generate a movement from organic to contractual relationship with the church.

The internalised knowledge from the course had given the participants an understanding of why most Catholics had accepted traditional doctrine as absolute. The participants now perceived that blind acceptance had often been at the cost of a personal and relational way of knowing because it had sometimes been oppressive and restrictive of their freedom. By contrast the participants now reinterpreted the traditional way of being Christian by reframing their understanding of beliefs and practices in terms of new modes of consciousness and thus reclaimed their identity by choice. Marie (2.6;13,14) speaks of becoming aware of institutional constraints on her beliefs and practices and now feels 'that is not how it works' for her because her 'beliefs and values are now much more shaped by [her] own criteria than by the laws of the church.' Marie gave the church law about attendance at Sunday Mass as a concrete example of this. Previously Marie saw no way around that law but since 'doing the gospel of Luke [she] wouldn't feel any guilt if she misses Mass if something comes up because [she] doesn't think that's how Jesus would look at it.' Marie's comments can be interpreted as conveying a changed relationship with the church, where the way the

institution controlled decisions by fear had given way to a more contractual relationship, where Marie's needs were also considered important.

In the first interview Elizabeth (1.5; 4,5,9,14) conveyed a very passionate, yet mixed, message about a series of relationships she had experienced with the church. At the time of her 'greatest hurt and frustration' the church laws 'forced' her into an irregular marriage. However, even in the midst of what she describes as 'dramas' with the institutional church 'there would be no way [she] would ever give up [her] church practices.' Friends, who knew Elizabeth's love/hate relationship with the church, had encouraged her to do the course to get an intellectual understanding that could help her look more rationally at the situation. Elizabeth's answers to the question (Appendix M:A.3.0;p.397) that asked her to rate on the continuum to what extent, since she graduated, she found the practices, beliefs and structures of the church more acceptable showed that she had moved from the negative end of the continuum to the positive pole. Elizabeth now has a much less ambivalent relationship with the church. She speaks of her judgement and understanding now being grounded in knowledge: this has given her a freedom to discriminate between what is essential in Christianity and what is peripheral and she bases her relationship with the church on the essential elements. As an instance of this Elizabeth spoke of her understanding of Eucharist as a celebration that remembers, and makes present, the life of Christ in our own lives. This, however, is not how she experiences the Eucharist at the parish liturgy on Sundays and said 'When Sunday comes if I don't go to Mass I'm not all hung up about it.' Her preference is to attend Mass during the week at school when the liturgy encourages participation.

Lorna's (2.5;3,5) 'feelings about the institutional church are fairly negative at the moment.' When Lorna's text is analysed the reasons for this would appear to be the oppression she experiences from an organic, albeit not a passive, relationship with the church. The use, in her text, of terms such as 'power-play', 'inclusive language' and her negative experiences of these, give some indication of

Lorna's relationship with the church. Her fear is that the course will probably make it harder for her to live in the institutional church.

The argument at hand, about a change in relationship, is underpinned by a discourse of adult development as contextualist. This suggests that development is somewhat like a rite of passage. The need from time to time of a rite of passage is called for when a differentiated role is no longer in harmony with a new world-view. In the case of this research the adult learners, as in a rite of passage, entered into transformative experiences such as loss and gain, tension and conflict, negotiation and renegotiation and moved towards a reaggregation and a changed role and relationship with the church. The rite of passage entailed a movement from past assumptions to more inclusive and emancipatory ways of acting. In the first task (Appendix M:A.2.0;p.392) Geraldine (1.7; 3,5,6,12) commented that her beliefs and understandings had been continuously changing. She admits to having been regimented, in her earlier years, by the church which did not appear to provide for diversity. The hierarchical nature of the church concerns Geraldine who expects that the 'conflict occurring' in the church will bring changes in church practices and structures. She has 'had a change about how [she] views the church' and has been 'encouraged to look at where she stands in relation to the church.' As Geraldine had recently returned from overseas mission work she had anticipated that in her re-entry into the Australian education scene she would have to face adjustments, as indeed she did. What she did not anticipate were the experiences of loss and gain, tension and conflict as her studies in religious education moved her through a rite of passage that related to a changed role and relationship with the church. This is summarised by her conviction that 'now all members of the church see themselves on an equal footing and nobody is considered to be on a higher level than anybody else.' From a role, as an anonymous member of the church, the rite of passage had taken Geraldine to a new and visible role. Evidence of Bernard's (1.2;6) rite of passage is simply stated... 'Yes, I've definitely changed.' However, for him that experience 'didn't cause anguish' although it had moved him to revise his past and present perspectives on the church.

As adults look at religious practices and beliefs, from their own reinterpretation and understanding, instead of from the influence of socialisation they see that new tasks need to be addressed. One of the tasks for the participants of this research was to dialogue with the institutional church about the nature of a relationship that would counter their previous conventional relationship. Helena (2.1;2,3) is one who is addressing this very task as she begins the course. Whereas she feels 'quite positive' about a sense of belonging and community that the church had given her she is also aware that she has 'to ask questions and to challenge'. She appreciates that structures are necessary in a group but thinks the 'church structures have been too stable and have not allowed room for change.' It is important to note that Helena, in completing the task (Appendix M:A.3.0;p.397) in the interview had moved more to the negative pole of the scale about how acceptable she found the structures of the church since enrolling in the course — she is beginning to raise questions about what she had previously taken-for-granted.

Of all the participants, who had come into the course with an uncritical organic relationship with the church, perhaps Marie (2.6;1,2,3) would be the best example. On her Scatter Chart she comments that her upbringing had instilled in her a sense of 'guilt and punishment'. Consequently when she commenced the course she 'didn't feel capable nor ready to cope with new understanding and have an opinion about the church.' This very uncritical, conventional relationship appears to have shifted ground quickly: the evidence on her critical insight chart (Appendix M:p.385) shows that in the second semester of the course she had realised that as she became 'a more informed person' she had 'to dialogue more' about her position.

It follows from Chapter 4 that, since Vatican II, there have been self-contradictory inclusions and exclusions in the church's institutionalised discourses. Previously a feeling of inadequacy had been a barrier for the participants in uncovering the historical conditions that had shaped them. A growth in their capacity to articulate alternative knowledge about the doctrines of the church had increased their need to see the present reality for what it was: they saw the need to

be part of a process of change for authentic action and to define themselves ‘in terms less borrowed from others than earned of [their] own efforts’ (Daloz, 1986:66). In this respect:

Delma (1.4) . can say there isn’t always a right or wrong answer — I have to make the decision and I’m comfortable with that freedom of conscience.  
(1.4;7)

Carmel (1.3) I have no sense of being responsible for what happened in the past; it’s something I can’t do anything about but I am responsible for the present, and to a point, for the future.  
(1.4;5)

Kathleen (2.4) Perhaps we wandered off the track in the church so the course has opened my eyes to what the real Catholic faith is all about.  
(2.4;10)

Boyd & Fales (1983:110-115) maintain that when an individual moves from an uncritical organic relationship to a self-consciously chosen relationship it is usually, at first, a cautious, even tentative, action. Part of the tentativeness comes from weighing the consequences of reconceptualising their relationship ‘before deciding to go public with the change.’ This claim, made by Boyd & Fales (1983), can be substantiated from the empirical data of this study. In spite of Delma’s (1.4;3,10,28) conviction that she does not think she is quite ‘as black and white’ as the church, she is careful ‘to keep those opinions e.g. about celibacy’, to herself and feels cut off from her peers because they either do not approve, or find irrelevant, the new understanding she has about the practices and beliefs of the church. So although Delma gave a positive rank on the Likert scale about the extent to which, since the course, she had experienced freedom in her role in the church, an analysis of her transcript shows that, in fact, she is sometimes hesitant about using that freedom. Delma is by nature an innovator. A leader and critical thinker she has consciously chosen a contractual relationship with the church.

However, she remains tentative, in Boyd & Fales' terms, about 'deciding to go public' with the change.

The reason for Lorna's (2.5;1,2,3) tentativeness about her decision not 'to go public' is less clear. She was harbouring frustration and anger and was ill-at-ease with the power wielded in the hierarchical structures. Lorna had rejected an organic relationship and declared 'people will have to step out of line and do what they believe in to be church'. She feels free to make her own decisions; however, she remains tentative about going public because although she 'might want to be doing something [she] believes[s] is authentic [she] can't necessarily do it openly or say it openly because people don't understand and you often can't operate the way you'd like to'. In the case of the other participants it is clear that they have negotiated their roles in the church. What is not as clear, from the analysis of the texts, is the degree of tentativeness they had about going public with the change. They might well be characterised, as were Delma and Lorna, by a tentativeness in this regard.

### 3.1 Summary: Movement

From her experience in adult education, and from the evidence of the data of this study, the researcher subscribes to Finger's stance (1989:15) about adult education and agrees that the impact of the 'so-called *new movements* heralds a cultural transformation where the individual becomes increasingly a central focus where social transformation will occur through the transformation of the person... who defines his or her relation to modern society.' It is in this same sense that transformation of the church is likely to be effected through the individual member who defines his or her relationship with the church. When Vatican II was discussed in Chapter 4 as a factor in the context of this case study, it was noted that the Council engaged itself with renewal from a perspective of renewed scholasticism and at the same time adopted insights from a new philosophy of process. Therefore Vatican II aligned itself, to some extent, with the principles of

personalistic dialogue and admitted that the dignity of the human person, as well as his or her right to exercise freedom of conscience, was more important than the institution. It is to be expected, therefore, that if as a consequence of contemporary adult education *per se* it is the 'person who defines his or her relationship to modern society' then the same outcome is likely to occur in the case of the participants of the research in defining their relationship with the church. In this regard weight is given to the possibility from what was disclosed from a deconstruction of extracts of the ACU document (Appendix E:p.331). That deconstruction revealed that an assumption of the course is that church members as a pilgrim people in a church, where sociological change has occurred, will construct a different institutional identity. This indeed seems to have been the case from the evidence from the empirical data for the participants of this research.

It has been claimed learning that is a transformative process leads to a competence for autonomy and independence. One, therefore, can expect that the participants would be able to rely on that competence to negotiate a movement from their position of unquestioned assumptions and organic relationship, to a contractual relationship with the church. The evidence has pointed to the fact that the participants' unquestioned role in the church had changed and they could live with the paradoxes and differences within a community of persons of different outlooks.

A fact that appears to have previously escaped the participants, to a large extent, and to which they have been alerted, seemingly through a transformation of consciousness, was that the church as an institution is political. Therefore, in its activities it constructed language and codes that were presented as arising from an interest in objectivity but in reality were often constraining. It can be argued that when the participants became aware that they had been politically submissive, and had lacked a critical understanding of their reality, they were put in touch with their authentic needs and looked for a partnership that allowed a greater mutuality between the individual and the institution.

Habermas (1984:2) maintains that communicative action emerges interactively within a communication community. Such communicative action

serves to reconstruct an undamaged intersubjectivity that allows both for unconstrained mutual understanding among individuals and for the identities of individuals who come to an unconstrained understanding with themselves.

In the transformation of their relationship with the church, from organic to contractual, the participants show that their present experience, because of the learning community in which it took place, contributed not only to an 'undamaged intersubjectivity' but had helped heal previously damaged relationships.

The opportunity of formal religious education as adults, that was experienced by the participants, was creative for them of a movement towards a socially constructed subjectivity. This is not a claim that only adult religious education has such potential but it is a claim that can be made from the evidence of the case study.

#### **4.0 CHALLENGE: FROM THE PRESENT STAGE OF COMMITMENT TO A MORE MATURE STAGE OF COMMITMENT**

For the purpose of the argument to be addressed in this section the researcher has used the term commitment as a single, broad descriptor of dimensions that are associated with religious maturity, faith system, and beliefs. The choice of the word commitment was made because it is not the intention of this study to engage in empirical measures about such things as religious development and faith development. However some of the literature for these discourses was analysed in Chapter 2 and evidence will be used from that task to test to what extent the professional development programme challenged the participants to move from their present stage of commitment to a more mature stage.

Further evidence from the literature will also be drawn from Chapter 4 where the significance of Vatican II was examined. Of particular importance for this section is that some of the post-Vatican II documents (Figure 4:p.113) recognised the importance of stages of human growth towards religious maturity and emphasised the integration of personality with the cognitive and spiritual maturity of adults (e.g. Congregation for the Clergy, 1971:#77-95). Of equal significance for the argument that is now being addressed, is the acknowledgement in the ACU documents (Figure 8:pp:163-166) that there is a need for individuals to assume personal responsibility for their faith system, life-style and beliefs. The ACU documents also recognise that faith becomes progressively more inclusive, discriminating and more integrative as one journeys through life's stage.

As intimated in Chapter 2, which examined the transformative journey of the adult, the various strands of human development weave together as a single tapestry. The preceding testing of the literature with and by the empirical data supported the notion that transformative learning produced changes in the participants' personal knowledge and understanding of tradition as well as a change in their social relationships from a new understanding of the tradition of the community. The evidence indicates that strands in the tapestry were being woven together:

Kathleen (2.4) The course is clarifying things for me I hadn't even thought about... I think it's a liberating experience.  
(1.4;7)

Geraldine (1.7) I think I have developed more as a person.  
(1.7;15)

Anita (1.1) I think the course has done a lot for me personally because I think I am now able to articulate my views, my beliefs and values more clearly. Perhaps it has given me a certain amount of religious freedom.  
(1.1;404)

The recognition that the course had produced emancipatory knowledge had set up in the participants the experience and tension of bipolar constructs such as loss and gain, differentiation and renegotiation as well as ambiguity and paradox. There appeared to be both certainty and uncertainty in their emerging positions. While the acquisition of content knowledge had given the teachers professional confidence it had also raised important questions about the level of responsibility for their own beliefs. Frank (1.6;8,9) had kept his responses, throughout the interview, free from too many personal feelings. However he spoke very warmly and generously about what the course did for him personally. He 'developed more as a person' and got 'background knowledge for where [he] is in [his] faith journey'. As a result Frank is 'a lot happier with... religion at the moment... and feel[s] a lot more mature'. Consequently he can live 'with indecision in the church'.

The analysis of the ACU document showed that the course designers expected that the outcomes could impact upon the personal aspects of the learner's world-view: it also recognised that faith becomes progressively more inclusive as one journeys through life's stages. Imelda (2.2;5) was convinced that her wide travel experiences had already impacted upon her world-view and given her a more inclusive faith. She had not identified any personal needs as a reason for enrolling in the course. However 'just in this short time in the course' she believes it 'will add something to her as a person' and have some unexpected outcomes.

A notion of respect and tolerance for her own stage of development, as well as that of others, emerged for Marie (2.6;1) as an important issue. This had come with her now 'broader perspectives' and her realisation she could 'have an opinion'. In particular the unit on ecumenism, had changed her world-view of religions and given her an understanding of a more comprehensive and inclusive faith. After Marie recovered from the shock that Catholicism was only one way of being Christian she found she was happy to find she was a 'Christian first' and 'Catholic second' and consequently had a more mature commitment to her own Catholicism as part of Christianity.

A more inclusive world-view is also evident from Geraldine's (1.7;2) transcript. At the beginning of the course, from her experiences of mission work, she was inclusive in her understanding of other cultures. Geraldine, in two of the units of the course had stepped back and reflected on her mission work. This self-reflection helped her to recognise more clearly what the church means to her in terms of commitment. She was conscious, too, that her personal beliefs and values are progressively changing and maturing from the knowledge produced by the course and expects her commitment will likewise mature.

The passive acceptance of the language, habits and codes that had dominated the earlier stage of development of the participants contrasted with their new intentional response and more deliberate commitment. They became more critically aware that their self-concept, values and world-view had formerly been determined mainly by socialisation. Anita (1.1;393) the 'cradle Catholic' is now 'happier with authority that comes from the consensus of people [she] respect[s] rather than that which comes only from the institutional authority.'

Real freedom and mature commitment will never emerge from learning that is unintentional. Garrison (1992:143) takes the view that there must be considerable support if assumptions are to be questioned and students are to be critical learners: they must be intentionally aware of what they are being asked to learn. Perhaps Elizabeth (1.5;2) had more need of support than others because she sometimes felt she had carried religion on her journey as 'a load'. It was, therefore, 'rather a good feeling' to join a course where others, too, were trying 'to hang in' and were supportive of one another in their deliberate intention to learn. It seems that a factor in Elizabeth's change, in her level of commitment, came from her realisation that previously she was unaware of how 'deep' her faith commitment was. She is now 'most definitely aware' of who she is and has a much more intentional commitment.

Internalised knowledge had generated in the participants a new consciousness and had moved them towards a religious maturity. Judith (2.3;13) thought that even before the course she 'was well and truly on the way of taking

responsibility for [her] personal beliefs and values.' The course, however, has increased the momentum in her journey towards a more mature commitment which she believes is marked by a capacity 'to admit what might have happened in the past and then leave it behind and go on from the present.' Bernard (1.2;1), too, described the effect of the course on his maturity and used the image of a spiral (Appendix M:A.1.3;p.386). The spiral, he said, was for him a way of seeing his movement towards a development of his faith.

In adolescence Geraldine (1.7;1,2,16) by her own admission was immature about beliefs and values. Her perception is that the course has covered areas relating to her 'personal, professional and spiritual development.' The knowledge and learning had changed her Christian understanding and consequently her development had led her to an openness to change within herself and her commitment to the church.

The biographical profiles of the participants (Appendix I:pp.343-376) show that they brought with them to the course a stock of knowledge, beliefs and values that were often in conflict with the new knowledge they acquired. Tension came from recognising that truth is always emergent in interaction with the dynamics of all that is contextual to life. This broadened perspective is characteristic of a qualitatively different kind of self-awareness and level of maturity when the adult feels the necessity for taking personal responsibility for action. Kathleen (2.4;7) had come to equate her idea of Christianity not with absolutes, or static truth, but with positive action that provided a contextual dimension of encouragement and support that is essential for growth towards maturity.

Lorna (2.5;3,4,9) no longer accepts terms 'e.g. redemption and salvation' that 'just sound Catholic' and 'frighten people'. She considers that although she is now able to dismiss fear that she had experienced from such language it has not caused her to abandon her faith. She says the course, in fact, had done a great deal for her faith development.

The participants became aware, through an expansion of their knowledge, that they were part of a growing pluralism of ideas and theological positions in the

Catholic church and it is important to note that this did not mean for them that they were limited to being separate individuals with irreducible subjective interests. On the contrary they saw themselves with an agenda to reshape values and beliefs, in partnership with others. Helena (2.1;2) ‘is prepared to live with the positive and also to ask questions and to challenge.’ It is not, however, her intention to do this alone because the church gives her ‘a sense of community.’ Similarly Carmel’s (1.3;3) beliefs and values were being reshaped in partnership with others. She had a growing concept of ‘the journey idea of faith’ that she would make with others.

#### **4.1 Summary: Challenge**

Inherent in the capacity of these religious educators who participated in the research to perceive the challenge of a change in commitment, was a consciousness of both what had been restraining in their previous stage of commitment as well as the potentiality of action and a more mature commitment. They equated the stage to which they were moving with the competency to understand and accept divergent and changing perspectives for giving meaning to a multiplicity of views on reality.

The way any individual expresses commitment, throughout a life which is a transformative journey, will be tied to many aspects of life that contribute to a construction of meaning. There is evidence, from the data of the case study, that the participants identified ways in which they were moving towards a commitment in values and beliefs that they could clearly distinguish from earlier stages. They claimed that the course was a major factor that had produced in them an increased respect for individuals and a greater tolerance for ambiguity. This is not meant to imply that the participants had succumbed to either subjectivism or relativism. A mature commitment is made from an appreciation of the contextuality of knowledge and a genuine understanding of alternatives of beliefs and values for authentic needs.

Accumulated experiences are significant bases of learning (Tennant, 1990:226) and play an active role in development towards maturity. For the participants the evidence pointed to the course as a factor in their development towards maturity. The challenges of the course had been responsible for a movement from a commitment, constrained by selected emphases and exclusions of a static church discourse to a commitment characterised by a discourse that was more inclusive, and integrative of universal values that related to their lived reality of values and beliefs.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The sense in which transformative learning has been used refers to both the change and continuity that are effected by a series of transformations that are reforming of persons, societies and historical traditions. Transformative learning, therefore, is always both individual and social: it has a bilateral, though unified purpose. Hence transformative learning, such as was experienced by the research participants in Groups 1 and 2, provides a way of understanding the struggle to make sense of conflicting messages that begin with experience and knowledge that are dissonant and problematic. Transformative learning, therefore, implies an intrinsic relationship between the individual's changing world and the changing world of social systems — in the case of this research the social system of the institutional church.

Development is a multidimensional process and there is a uniqueness in each person's individual life history and associated values. Essentially, human growth is about development as free, responsible persons. This research has shown that the participants had acquired a sense of autonomy and integration, through intellectual exploration, that helped them to come to terms with tension and conflict. Tension in this situation has been creative of development as 'direction but not a point of termination.... [and] never a finished state' (Moran, 1991:151).

Therefore, the participants can expect there will be new calls to synthesis, movement and challenge and the need for ongoing transformative learning.

The process of professional development calls for competence and maturity in both professional and personal knowledge and understanding because changes in any area of life relate to, and influence, changes in other areas of life. It has been claimed that personal growth continues towards maturity as the adult comes to terms with tension and conflicts that are productive of change through the integration of past and present existential factors.

Transformation, as has been demonstrated by data from the case study, is concerned with giving life to the historical traditions of the past; it happens in the critical dialogue of the present with the past and has a vision for the future. Transformative learning is, in effect, a reflective critique of uncritically accepted assumptions: it is a struggle over power relations to improve the qualitative and democratic aspects of life. The relationship between critical professional education and personal transformation in individuals suggests that critical education will impact positively on both the individual's professional practice and personal growth which is made up of choices and decisions.

The necessity of engaging in adult education does not always lie with the motivation of the learner, as was evident in Chapter 4 from the examination of national policies about professional development and the guidelines from employing agencies for ongoing professional development of teachers. Most of the research participants were engaging in study as a consequence of these contextual factors for career prospects. However, the case study data showed evidence that these participants, in Groups 1 and 2, came to value education not merely as a way of gaining status and enhancing their careers but that they discovered and valued a 'new inner self'. The graduate programme expanded their consciousness of their inner and outer worlds and developed alternative perspectives and ways of synthesising relationships between self and church. The interview transcripts also suggest that a person's way of being Christian is likely to be challenged at various intervals throughout life as the individual's knowledge and self-understanding, in

relation to the cultural situation and church life, evolve. Learning appeared to be a crucial factor in the process of challenging the participants to understand how experience and knowledge are constructive of change of beliefs, values and attitudes.

The basic notion of the development of adults adopted for this thesis is that development is understood as contextual and as an ongoing dialectical process. In the case of the research participants (Groups 1 and 2) this means that as individuals within a church community they have been created, to some extent by the values, beliefs and knowledge of the institutional church as it evolved. Given the long history of stability in the Catholic church such evolution was scarcely noticeable until Vatican II when, amongst other changes, there emerged the potential for a plurality rather than uniformity of knowledge, values and beliefs.

The thesis of this work has been established on an epistemology of contextualism which 'assumes that thought emerges from the human being's interaction with a constantly changing social, historical context' (Allman, 1983:112). This means that transformative learning is linked to interaction with the social context. A corollary of this is that, in an ever changing world, an individual cannot predict the consequences of interacting with his/her socio-historical context.

The parallels in the discourses of adult learning and a dialectical process of adult development pointed to an epistemological base for adult growth. The nature of knowledge that emerged was one that is non-static and challenges ongoing reassessment of questions and doubts in the light of new personal and social realities. A true reassessment requires the knowledge to be acted upon from a perspective that is conscious of the laterality between self and society — and in the case of this research, between the individual and the church in order to construct meaning through informed critical discourse. Given their early religious socialisation the challenge for the participants was to grow towards knowing what they see instead of continuing to see what they know (Vogel, 1991:xi-xii).

## 6.0 A DIFFERENT VOICE: Group 3

The concepts of professional development (Figure 1:p.35) imply that to be agents of change teachers will need to achieve a deepening awareness of themselves and society and recognise what is likely to be creative for them as desirable knowledge and action. This chapter has demonstrated that Groups 1 and 2 did indeed recognise what was more desirable by way of relationship with tradition and relationship between themselves and others. The responses, however, from Group 3, particularly in answer to the tasks (Appendix M:A.1.0, A.2.0, A.3.0; pp.386, 393, 397 and B.4.0; p.403 and B.5.0; p.404) did not show evidence that the group members engaged in learning that was productive of such knowledge and desire for action. However the voices of these teachers suggest that the participation *per se* in the research, and the critical self-reflection prompted by the interviews, had deepened their awareness and made them more self-consciously alert.

### 6.1 Mediating Critical Self-Reflection: Group 3

Although the level of contact between the research participants in Group 3 and the researcher did not exceed five or six hours with any individual participant, there was a perception, articulated by some of the participants, that their involvement in the research had generated knowledge and control. This had not been an anticipated outcome, on the part of the researcher, but the opportunity for critical self-reflection had brought three of the Group 3 participants to an awareness of their need for control and had removed some of their initial confusion and frustration. Sarah (3.4;12,23,28,29) was convinced that 'talking it over like this has helped and [she] thinks we need more of this'. Her recommendation, as a result of her 'greater sense of knowledge and confidence', was that the pilot project should be supported by 'compulsive, intensive inservice'. Olivia (3.1;6), Patricia (3.2;29), Rebecca (3.3;19) had 'done some reading' as a result of their involvement

in this research and Patricia said she had a new understanding of self-worth and felt a new confidence about religious education from participating in the interviews for the research. It seems that involvement in the research had stimulated reflection and a sense of power and confidence for the teachers that participation in the pilot project had not been able to effect. By participating in the research the Group 3 participants had been enabled to examine their beliefs and the influence of those beliefs on their practice. To a certain extent some of the teachers in Group 3 had, therefore, through reflection as research participants, become aware of the unconscious influences their religious practices and beliefs had on them.

## 6.2 Adoption Process: Group 3

An analysis of the responses from the members of Group 3 also suggested a reason why the project had not been very productive of knowledge and action. The reason relates to the theory of Hall *et al.* (1973) (Appendix Q:p.425) about implementing and adopting educational innovations. A basic principle of that theory is that 'change... is not accomplished in fact just because a decision-maker has announced it' (Hall *et al.* 1973:52) — personal motivation, conviction and commitment are also necessary.

The motivation and ownership of the learning by the members of Group 3 were at a low level, if measured against the Levels 0-6 in the typology of Hall *et al.* (1973) (Appendix Q:p.425), which ranks the levels of motivation from awareness (Level 0) to refocussing (Level 6). The majority of Group 3 members, after three terms of involvement with the project, remained uncertain about the purposes of the project and their adequacy to meet its demands (Appendix Q:p.425 - Level 2 of 6). There was 'no overall perception of what the pilot project had done' for Rebecca (3.3;7). Sarah (3.4;10) had, in fact, felt a greater sense of ownership of the school-based curriculum 'rather than of the new curriculum that was something planned by others'. Trudy (3.5;10) was unaware of any change in her as a religious educator. Victor (3.6;10) was frustrated because he knew what

he needed professionally and the pilot project had not met his needs. Wendy (3.7;34) recorded that the project had not done anything for her professional development. At this low level of satisfaction it seems unlikely that Group 3 members will confront ideologies that destroy the distinction between past and future. It seems unlikely, too, that involvement in the pilot project had prepared them for the 'possibility of growth, change and choice' (Hull, 1985:22).