IMPLEMENTATION OF AN OUTCOMES FOCUSED APPROACH TO EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY

by

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Abstract

Outcomes focused education is an educational reform movement that has influenced many countries, including Australia, in recent years. In this study the case of one primary school in Western Australia is examined. The study explores how this single school has implemented an outcomes approach within the context of large-scale jurisdictional change.

The research design utilises the qualitative approaches of ethnography and phenomenology to develop a layered case study with the basic unit of analysis being the school site. A number of richly informative case studies, from within this single site, have been developed drawing on data from a broad range of stakeholders including teachers, students, parents and the school’s principal. Departmental and school based documents have also been utilised to inform and guide the development of each case study. Emergent themes with respect to the implementation of educational change have been identified and the implications of these are discussed.

At the time of the study the school site was only in its fifth year of operation, and a variety of key factors were identified as having a significant impact on the level of success achieved in implementation. The change management model as used by the school is identified and described, and several critical areas of weakness are revealed. As a result, the study raises critical questions about the effectiveness of the model used by the school and
therefore questions the potential for this model to be used successfully in
other schools implementing similar pedagogical change.
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

1.1 Contextualising the Study.

A move towards an outcomes focused approach to education which has occurred over the last decade, marks the most recent and significant shift in educational philosophy to occur in Western Australia. Indeed the Curriculum Council believes that its publication of the Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia (1989)\(^1\) based on this philosophy represented at the time a major step in the reform of school curriculum in Western Australia (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 3).

Under this approach there has been a marked shift in the devolution of decision making concerning the curriculum being placed on school principals and teachers. Willis and Kissane (1997) argue that, “schools and teachers are now collectively responsible for ensuring that students are provided with the curriculum, learning conditions and environment necessary for their success” (Willis & Kissane, 1997, p. 41).

Implementation of the Curriculum Framework, began in 1998 however, four years on in 2002, Holmes (2002, p. 28) stated that schools and teachers were still grappling with the enormous change in pedagogy and the cognitive processes needed to successfully implement the myriad of changes required. It would appear that even now in 2008, the

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\(^1\) This document will be referred to hereafter as the Curriculum Framework.
implementation process is still problematic. However, this should come as no surprise given that, Killen (2000, p. 5) argues that it could not be expected that a system based on these principles could be introduced on a large scale without some difficulties and much concern from teachers. If Willis and Kissane (1997, p. 6) are correct in their assertion that outcomes focused education is often described as involving a fundamental philosophical shift in curriculum policy, practice and evaluation then it would be naïve to believe that the implementation of this approach would not been unproblematic.

It is interesting to note that the implementation process in Western Australian primary schools has met with relatively little opposition and the transition to an outcomes approach has progressed reasonably smoothly towards full implementation since 1998. It has only been since 2005, with implementation being rolled out into years 11 and 12, that public debate and media interest in outcomes focused education (OFE) have resulted in a noticeable ground swell of opposition that has continued to gain momentum, fuelled by persistent media attention. It can be argued that most of the newspaper reports are narrow and biased, creating significant confusion as to what aspects actually relate to the implementation of OFE. A myriad of issues reported in the media as having a large contingent of parent and teacher opposition have included changes to report card formats, teacher concerns regarding changes to assessment practices and the replacement of subject syllabuses with courses of study. A front page report that
appeared in the West Australian in June 2005, described the changes planned for WA's education system as being radical, controversial and in a current state disarray (Hiatt, 2005. p. 1). There is no doubt that OFE reported in the media under the banner of Outcomes Based Education (OBE), has been unjustly coloured by the media hype surrounding such things as the year 11 and 12 courses of study, (Hiatt & Strutt, 2005. p. 62) has done little to assist with educating the general public about its philosophy and fostering much needed support for its implementation.

1.2 Aims of the Study.

Given the above context, this study investigated how one Western Australian primary school has responded to this policy initiative and approached the implementation of an outcomes approach in education. By providing insight into the way in which one school has gone about implementing this approach, it is hoped that other schools will be assisted in their implementation of change. It is anticipated that principals, who are responsible for the development of a whole school approach to implementation within their own school, and teachers who are responsible for implementing this approach at the coalface, will find this study particularly informative.

The research study explored issues relating to the implementation of the current outcomes focused approach to education in a Western Australian primary school. The study examined aspects central to the implementation
process within one school and began with an examination of the ‘whole school philosophy’ that has been developed and underpins its operation, based on departmental policies and guidelines.

The aim was to examine how the school’s principal and teachers have gone about implementing policies in this area, the philosophies and pedagogical approaches they have used and the strategies they use to critique their success. The study investigated student perceptions about their learning and their role in this process. It also examined the various methods by which the school reports student progress to parents and how parents perceive the changes in educational practices that have occurred within the school.

The study was guided by a number of questions, which examined a variety of aspects relating to the implementation of outcomes focused education. In this context the focus of the study was to determine at a whole school level, what approach to the implementation of the Curriculum Framework has been developed. As a means of determining the approach used by the school the study was guided by the following questions;

- What professional development in this area have teachers and the principal received?
- What professional development/information in this area have teachers and principals actively sought of their own volition?
- What method/s is the school using to report student progress to parents?
At a more micro level the study explored the following questions;

- How are teachers implementing the Curriculum Framework in the classroom?
- By what means do teachers critique the success of what they implement?
- How do students perceive their role as learners?
- What are parents’ perceptions of outcomes focused education?

1.3 Significance of the Study.

There are four reasons why this study is of particular significance. Firstly, given that the Curriculum Council initially anticipated that “the Curriculum Framework would be fully operational in all schools by 2004” (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 4) which was subsequently extended to 2006, suggests that implementation has not been unproblematic and therefore warrants review.

Secondly, research of this nature is also warranted, as it would appear that there is limited research information available that has examined this educational reform. Indeed this is a concern that has also been taken up by a number of authors. Despite the appeal of an outcomes focused approach to education, Evans and King (1994, p.1) state that, “research documenting its effects is fairly rare”. This sentiment is also reflected by McNeir (1993, p. 2) who explains that only a few systematic research efforts have studied the implementation and effects of the current education model as a
comprehensive reform strategy. The expression of such views should be of concern to educators given the commitment with which not only Western Australia, but all states and territories in Australia have embraced an outcomes focused approach to education.

Thirdly, the implementation of this current educational reform has become a contentious issue in political circles and has been embraced by the media with increasing gusto over the last few years. As a result there has been a great deal of misinformation and biased reporting of the facts released to the public, which in part can be redressed in this study.

Lastly, there is no doubt that the current reform that is taking place is an important issue and its implementation will arguably remain at the forefront of educational research for some time to come.

1.4 Overview of the Study.

This study presents a case study profile of one Western Australian primary school as it worked towards full implementation of an outcomes focused approach. The study draws on a number of data collection methods including, interviews, observations and document review. Key participants in the study include the school principal, as well as selected teachers, students and parents from four specific classroom cohorts. The data collected from each classroom has been used to compile four mini-case studies that provide a window into the implementation process at the
coalface. The individual mini-case studies are then compared and contrasted through a process of triangulation as a means of identifying patterns and/or inconsistencies in teacher pedagogy. This data along with data collected from sources outside the classroom is then used to create a whole school case study. This larger case study provides a broader overview of the implementation process at a whole school level, which is then compared and contrasted with the philosophy that underpins successful implementation of an outcomes based approach in the Western Australian context. Significant findings are then discussed. Suggestions for future research directions in this area are also made.

1.5 Defining the Terms Within the Context of this Study.

A great deal has been published by William Spady who is a well known exponent of the philosophy of outcomes based education both in America and internationally. Indeed, Willis and Kissane (1997, p.8) credit him with first coining the expression ‘outcome²-based education’. Understanding the concept is by no means straight forward as there is considerable confusion about what ‘outcome-based education’ (OBE) means and about the various forms it takes (Willis & Kissane, 1995, p.1). This confusion is further compounded by the term ‘outcomes focused education’ which has also been used. As Tucker (2004, p.2) quite rightly points out, the terms OBE and OFE are often confused and used synonymously. He then goes on to

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2 The words outcome and outcomes are often used interchangeably by authors and the word outcome is used here definitively as it appears in the cited text.
clarify the differences between the two terms. However, any clarity of understanding that may have been achieved is lost when he goes on to cite the current Western Australian primary and secondary education curriculum as an example of a fully OBE system (Tucker, 2004, p.3). This statement directly contradicts the Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council, 1998, p.14) which talks specifically in terms of outcomes-focused education. An article published by Curtin University claims that the terms ‘outcome-based education’ (OBE) and ‘outcomes-focused education’ (OFE) are not inherently different (Curtin University, 2004, p.1). Indeed in her overview paper Outcomes Based / Outcomes Focused Education, Butler (2004) uses both terms synonymously. Indeed, this issue has been further complicated more recently by the use of the term ‘Outcomes and Standards Education’ (OSE) in an attempt to dissociate the implementation of OFE from the negative publicity that OBE has been receiving in the media and negate the controversy related to the recent criticism of falling standards in education.

For the purpose of this thesis, the term outcomes focused education is used in preference but the term outcome/s based education where it appears as quoted can be taken as being synonymous.
Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

2.1 Scope of the Review.

The following literature review begins with a brief examination of outcomes focused education internationally and explores some of the origins of the impetus for change. The review then looks more closely at the experiences of the USA and the state of Pennsylvania, as well as the development of OFE in a post-apartheid South Africa. Finally the review traces the development of OFE in Australia including The Hobart Declaration, the National Statements and Profiles and the Western Australian Curriculum Framework. The various Western Australian initiatives undertaken and publications produced in response to a number of implementation issues are also reviewed.

2.2 The Rise of Outcomes Focused Education.

With the advent of such things as globalisation, developed countries around the world have had to become more proactive in ensuring that they are economically competitive in increasing world markets. Countries have had to ensure that their educational practices result in a labour force able to facilitate significant competitiveness in global markets. It is therefore no surprise that in the 1980s, educational reform became a worldwide phenomenon (Warren, 1990, p. 57). Spady (1994) identifies three broad, interrelated sets of pressures that affected the direction of school reform initiatives in the ‘90s, which included; the nature of the Information Age
economy and workplace, the changing demographic character of society and, the rate and intensity of change affecting all social and political institutions (Spady, 1994, p. 29).

There are a diverse range of reasons offered by authors as to why OFE specifically has been embraced by countries implementing major educational reform. Killen (2000) explains that in recent years there have been increasing calls in Western societies for greater attention to be paid to the outcomes of education so that the return on investments in education could be evaluated. He argues that these increasing calls for accountability were one reason for the rapid spread of various forms of outcomes-focused education in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom during the 1980s and 1990s (Killen, 2000, p. 1). Spady also cites this as one key aspect related to the widespread interest in OFE, but he also offers several other reasons. Spady (1994) believes that the transformation of society from the Industrial age to the Information Age, has fundamentally affected the nature of work and employment opportunities and he argues that competence in information processing and data handling is already essential in most jobs (Spady, 1994, p. 48). He also believes that the OFE model promotes learning opportunities for all students in preparation for the continuous learning and improvement challenges of the Information Age labour market (Spady, 1994, p. 48).

Outcomes focused education has the potential of addressing a range of social, economic and educational issues that are characteristic of many
societies in the current age. However, the road to implementation has been anything but smooth, no more so than in the United States where OBE first gained popularity and notoriety.

There are a number of factors that Spady (1994) believes must be addressed if successful implementation is to be realised. Successful implementation at both the district and school levels is inseparable from community understanding and involvement. Therefore, districts that take great pains to nurture community connections both initiate and sustain OBE implementation with greater success (Spady, 1994, p. 139).

It must also be expected for the implementation process to take a considerable amount of time and in all earnest should actually be viewed as a long term and ongoing process. Spady (1994) identifies two reasons that explain why implementation takes so long. Firstly, OBE represents a major change in how a long-established institution is defined, structured and operated. Fundamental, deep-seated change does not come easily to any institution. Secondly, the change, renewal and improvement process surrounding OBE are not events but ongoing ways of doing everything they do (Spady, 1994, p. 108).

Despite the obstacles that have been encountered by numerous states in America in their attempts to introduce outcomes focused education, this has not acted as a deterrent to other countries. Indeed, as Warren (1990) points
out, in many countries, reformers have taken their cues from their counterparts in the United States (Warren, 1990, p. 58).

2.2.2 The USA Context.

Although a wave of OFE reform has recently swept America, outcomes is by no means new with the United States. Indeed, in the USA state of Minnesota, the effort to establish an outcomes based approach to student learning began in the 1970s (Manno, 1994, p.8).

More recently, in 1993 the Education Commission of the States reported that twenty-five states had developed or implemented an outcomes approach to education, and that eleven others have made outcomes a part of the state accreditation or assessment process (Manno, 1994, p.6). Evans and King (1994) believe these figures to be even higher, stating that at the time of the publication of their paper, there were 42 states involved in some form of outcomes-based reform (Evans & King, 1994, p.12).

2.2.2.1 Origin.

Authors vary in their opinion about the catalyst for change in education to an outcomes model in the USA. The Education Commission of the States (1995) points to concerns about the inability of the education system to adequately prepare students for life in the 21st Century. Murphy (1990) believes that it was the United States falling behind other industrialised countries in technological development, productivity, and product quality as
being the crisis that gave life to such reform (Murphy, 1990, p. 8). Murphy (1990) also points out that most analysts coupled the start of the current reform movement to the publication of numerous reports and studies, especially of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) *A Nation at Risk*, making them in effect the principal catalysts for educational improvements in the 1980s (Murphy, 1990, p. 19). This view is also supported by Clarke (1994).

While the evidence suggests that some form of reform was clearly called for, McNeir (1993, p.2) believes that the increase in interest specifically towards outcomes based education stemmed from its promise for far-reaching reform, an ability to provide a balance between school autonomy and accountability, and an ability to deliver dramatic results. The level of interest was such, that by the mid 1980s many states had begun to institute such programs (Manno, 1994, p.1). However, since that time the literature suggests that the level of success of implementation has varied between individual states due to their high degree of autonomy with respect to development and implementation of education policies. Many states including Colorado, Kansas, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Washington, Wyoming, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Ohio, Iowa, and Virginia, who embraced an outcomes approach have been forced to revise, delay or drop their plans to introduce outcomes-focused education in the face of fierce opposition (O’Neil, 1994, p.1). Much of the opposition Kister (1993) believes began in Pennsylvania with the religious right (Kister, 1993, p.5).
Any attempt to review the process of implementation in the USA is somewhat problematic as at the state level, documentation of the effects of OFE is difficult to find, and what is available is largely perceptual (Evans & King, 1994, p.4). Despite this, Moloney (1993) believes that the experiences of the state of Pennsylvania correspond very closely to nationwide trends and is a very representative state to explore America’s crusade to implement OFE reform (Moloney, 1993, p.1). Therefore, literature relating to Pennsylvania more specifically is reviewed to identify some of the issues that were problematic to the implementation process in that state.

2.2.2.2 Interpretation.

OFE requires that the broad outcomes of schooling are defined and made explicit and it would appear that reaching a consensus on this aspect has been a major stumbling block for many of the American states. Firstly, there has been the debate over what outcomes should be incorporated into the curriculum. Indeed, Killen (2000) believes that it has been this point that has fuelled much of the opposition to OFE in the USA (Killen, 2000, p. 6). Secondly, according to Killen (2000) OFE failure can also be attributed to the undue emphasis that has been placed on outcomes which focus on social reform rather than academic achievement (Killen, 2000, p. 21). Clearly, there is potential for the interpretation of the outcomes to vary and McNeir (1993) agrees that there is potential for outcomes to be viewed as value statements (McNeir, 1993, p. 3).
Debate over the underlying purpose of education and whether or not the teaching of moral values should fall within its domain has effectively pitted many educational stakeholder groups against each other and would appear to have been a reoccurring issue in many states. This is a critical point and McNeir (1993) warns that failure to obtain community support and a degree of consensus can sidetrack an OFE program (McNeir, 1993, p. 3). This is a view supported by O’Neil (1994) who explains that educators substantially underestimated the degree of public confusion and disagreement with OFE in several states that attempted to launch programs (O’Neil, 1994, p. 6). There is no doubt that this was a key factor in explaining the mammoth difficulties experienced in the state of Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Department of Education faced fierce opposition from well organised opponent groups from the outset, which was compounded by the fact that, supporters were not able to defend it well (Pliska, 1997, p. 1). Much of the opposition was mobilised by religious conservative groups who claimed that the outcomes diluted academics in favour of ill-defined values and process skills (O’Neil, 1994, p. 1).

2.2.2.3 Implementation.

A great deal of the opposition levelled at OFE in Pennsylvania stemmed from major inadequacies in the implementation process. While everyone applauded the notion of focusing on outcomes, nobody knew what OFE would look like in practice (Moloney, 1993, p. 12). This was compounded by
the fact that the OFE policy was implemented using a strategic planning method, which most people knew nothing about (Pliska, 1997, p. 3).

The strategic planning process required districts to plan for changes in vision, spirit and integrity, curriculum, assessment and professional development (Pliska, 1997, p. 7). Given the vast scope of the mandate and the limited understanding of stakeholders, it is not surprising that the study by Pliska (1997) found that the whole process was thwarted by endless debates and dialogues (Pliska, 1997, p. 9). Pliska (1997) also explains that these difficulties were further compounded by the fact that clear and consistent documentation for the development of district plans was not forthcoming from the state which kept sending new information to the districts as the planning was being undertaken, necessitating costly reviews and changes in direction (Pliska, 1997, p. 9).

A lack of understanding, support and consensus, effectively forced the Board of Education to delay, remove or rework major aspects of the OFE proposal (Moloney, 1993, p. 13). There is no doubt that this severely undermined the initial support and high expectations that an OFE approach would provide a panacea for Pennsylvania’s education ills. Pliska (1997) is certainly pessimistic about the continued success of OFE in this state and believes that, the implementation process and the idea of this reform succeeding does not look hopeful (Pliska, 1997, p. 12).
2.2.3 The South African Context.

The legacy of South Africa’s long history of apartheid has without doubt had a significant impact on the country’s educational system for most of the 20th century. The new government that assumed power after the 1994 democratic general elections, inherited an education system that had an abysmal track record in the areas of equality and basic human rights.

2.2.3.1 Origin.

There is no doubt that the pivotal turning point for education and curriculum reform in South Africa was as a result of the democratic elections in 1994. The demise of apartheid provided a unique opportunity to totally restructure the country’s education system. However, the challenge that lay ahead for educational reformists was extensive. Any new educational system would not only have to reflect the political ideology of the new South Africa but would also have to redress the damage of the old regime.

Fiske and Ladd (2004) believe that the adoption of OFE at this time can be explained in part by the fact that this approach was enjoying considerable popularity in other English-speaking countries, most notably Australia and New Zealand (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 157). They also point to the influence of William Spady who visited South Africa in his capacity as a consultant.
2.2.3.2 Interpretation.

The principles of OFE adopted by South Africa reflected the new social and cultural changes that were being embraced during the fledgling post-apartheid period. The South African model that was developed contained very broad values, such as access, equity, and development. Designers also put heavy emphasis on progressive pedagogy such as learner centredness, teachers as facilitators, relevance, contextualised knowledge and cooperative learning (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 157). There is no doubt that the OFE model developed by South Africa was unique and Fiske and Ladd (2004) describe it as an “eclectic approach to curriculum” (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 157). While the South African model may have been successful in reflecting the ideology of a post-apartheid nation, it clearly sat out of favour with William Spady, as he distanced himself from the South African model of OFE, describing it as a “professional embarrassment” (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 157). Spady felt that the focus on the outcomes of student learning as a starting point around which instruction and assessment are organised, which is the fundamental tenet of OFE, was lost in the development of the South African model.

The model was used to guide the development of South Africa’s first national curriculum guideline, *Curriculum 2005 (C2005)*, which began implementation in 1998 (Burger, 2006, p. 1). While a broad range of stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide input into the development of the document, a rush to meet implementation deadlines
meant that the quality of the document was severely compromised. Fiske and Ladd, (2004) point out that, the level of expertise among various committees varied greatly, and continuity and consistency among the various documents produced was problematic (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 160). Arguments by the Department of Education that the document needed further refinement went unheeded.

2.2.3.3 Implementation.

The International Marketing Council of South Africa (2006, p. 1) described C2005 as a flagship education policy, however, the Council also conceded the reality of implementation was highly problematic. Its cumbersome, over designed nature coupled with the extreme departure from the traditional training received by teachers meant that the use of the document soon became untenable. In 2000, a review committee was established to undertake a substantive review of the new curriculum and its implementation (Fiske and Ladd, 2004, p. 167). The review found that C2005 broke down in three major areas of implementation.

Firstly, the lack of content had left teachers in the dark about what content was needed to achieve the outcomes. This was compounded for teachers in communities with limited infrastructure and scant resources. As Fiske and Ladd (2004) point out, teachers are typically trained to deliver curriculum, not to write it, and many had neither the skills, the time, nor the inclination to create their own curriculum content (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 161).
Secondly, in an effort to mirror contemporary international terminology, the language of the document, which introduced more than 100 new terms, was found by many educators to be confusing and even gratuitous (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 161). This was no doubt compounded by the fact that for a percentage of educators, English is a second language resulting in the loss of critical meaning through translation.

The third area of weakness was the fact that teachers were not given adequate training in either the principles or the practical requirements of OFE. This aspect could have been addressed by providing adequate professional development for teachers, however, Fiske and Ladd (2004, p. 162) believe that this was considered by the Department of Education to be too costly and complex. Instead the Department implemented what Fiske and Ladd (2004, p. 162) describe as a ‘cascade’ model in which senior educators would be trained who in turn would in-service colleagues to pass on the required knowledge. This ‘Chinese whispers’ approach not surprisingly resulted in the watering down and/or the misinterpretation of crucial information (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 162).

The review committee’s report made a number of recommendations, which addressed the above weaknesses, however, the committee’s report was criticised by the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) for attempting to water down the principles of OFE and return to the past. Despite their difference in views, SADTU and the Minister of Education were able to reach agreement that OBE should remain the underlying
philosophy in the post-apartheid era (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 168). According to the review committee, despite the problems with the implementation of C2005, there was strong continuing support for OFE among South Africa’s educators and the committee reaffirmed the value of retaining OFE as an educational philosophy (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p.167).

2.3 The Australian Context.

In Australia the concept of educational accountability was one of the driving motives behind the introduction of outcomes focused education. The stimulus for change came from several sources: political, economic and educational (Killen, 2000, p. 1). Killen (2000) also believes that William Spady, who is regarded by many as the world authority on OFE, has had considerable influence on the approach to OFE that has been taken in Australia (Killen, 2000, p. 2).

In Australia State Ministers for Education have constitutional responsibility for primary and secondary schooling. They are responsible for, amongst other things, determination of curriculum content and methods of student assessment (Australian Education Council, 1990, p. 1). The states have historically been vigilant in maintaining educational curriculum within their jurisdictions and resisted wherever possible Commonwealth interference or control. However, the Commonwealth does play an important national role in considering schooling more broadly, in the context of a nation undergoing
significant social and economic adjustment and dependent upon a well-educated workforce (Australian Education Council, 1990, p. 1).

The most recent curriculum reforms to have been implemented in Western Australia are by no means unique to this State, indeed, these reforms have been part of a collaborative effort undertaken at a national level that has been driven to a major extent originally by the Australian Education Council (AEC).³

The AEC, established in 1936, has been of major importance in shaping the future of Australian Education (Australian Education Council, 1989, p. 1). One of the functions of the AEC has been to promote the development of Australian education by coordinating educational policies and developing collective approaches to major educational issues (Australian Education Council, 1989, p. 1).

Since the 1980s emerging trends at a national and international level have had important implications for school curricula. Schools have been asked to meet the demands for a better educated, more productive and more adaptable workforce (Australian Education Council, 1989, p. 11) and curriculum reform has been seen as critical in ensuring that schooling is responsive to these changes (Australian Education Council, 1989, p. 11). The demand for such far-reaching curriculum reform highlighted the need

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³ The AEC was subsumed into the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in 1993.
for more collaboration on a national level and focused attention on the need to address inconsistencies between the States which might limit national cooperation in curriculum reform (Australian Education Council, 1989, p. 11).

Cooperation in educational reform between the States and Territories can be traced back to 1989, when at an historic meeting in Hobart, members of the Australian Education Council made a commitment to improving Australian schooling within a framework of national collaboration (Australian Education Council, 1998, p. 1).

2.3.1 The Hobart Declaration.

The outcome of a meeting in Hobart by the AEC in 1989, was the release of *The Hobart Declaration on Schooling* (1989), which reflected an historic commitment to improving Australian schooling within a framework of national collaboration by reaching agreement to address the areas of common concern embodied in the ten Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia. (Refer appendix 1.)

Another of the AEC’s major activities in achieving curriculum reform at a national level was the undertaking of a series of curriculum mapping exercises, carried out across all State education systems and documenting the curriculum policies operating within each State. This provided a basis for

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In 1991, the AEC confirmed the framework for national collaboration in curriculum development in eight agreed key learning areas that included; Mathematics, English, Science, Technology, Studies of Society and Environment, Health and Physical Education, the Arts, and Languages other than English.

2.3.2 The National Statements and Profiles on Schooling.

In August, 1991 the AEC established the Curriculum and Assessment Committee responsible for the development of national statements and profiles in each of the key learning areas which were completed by 1993. While the profiles and statements are distinct, they are linked. The profiles show the typical progression in achieving learning outcomes, while the statements are a framework of what might be taught to achieve these outcomes (Australian Education Council, 1993, p. 14). With a clear focus on outcomes and a shift away from a prescribed syllabus there is no doubt that the development of the profiles and statements were based on the premise of OFE.

Many of the tenets of outcomes focused education are embedded in both the statements and profiles and are easily identifiable. The National Statement on Mathematics for Australian Schools, for example, explains
that its purpose is to provide a descriptive framework rather than a prescriptive syllabus that can be used to develop learning experiences particular to the needs of students (Curriculum Corporation, 1991, p. 1). It also acknowledges the need to foster in students the ability to become lifelong learners. As far as implementation is concerned, the principles of learning, teaching and assessment outlined in the statements are very similar to the Curriculum Framework. In a similar vein the profiles do not provide a syllabus, rather a foundation for courses which will meet students’ needs (Curriculum Corporation, 1994, p. iii). The profiles are also very specific in their reference to outcomes which are stated as the focus. The English profile for example, states that, the outcomes describe in progressive order the various skills and knowledge that students typically acquire as they become more proficient in an area. They outline the knowledge, skills, and processes that are essential and distinctive to the learning area and are the building blocks of the profile (Curriculum Corporation, 1994, p. 5). There is no doubt that the development of the National Statements and Profiles for Australian Schools marks the beginning of the shift to an outcomes approach in Australia.

2.4 The Western Australian Context.

In June 1994, the then Minister for Education formed a committee to review the process of curriculum development in Western Australia. The committee endorsed recommendations which paved the way for the establishment of a new statutory authority, the Curriculum Council (Ministerial Council for
Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1995, p. 157),
established in 1997, whose mandate was to develop a curriculum
framework for all Western Australian school children.

Drawing on material contained in the nationally developed *Curriculum Statements and Profiles for Australian Schools* (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 2) the Curriculum Council published and distributed for community consultation and revision a *Draft Curriculum Framework*. After an extensive review process the *Curriculum Framework* was published on the 23 July 1998, by the Curriculum Council and distributed to schools, ready for implementation in 1999. This was significant as it marks the first time that not only an agreed curriculum for all levels of schooling has been developed in Western Australia (Curriculum Council, 1999, p. 14) but also one that embraces an outcomes approach.

2.4.1 The *Curriculum Framework*.

The *Curriculum Framework* is the mandated principal document that is used to implement an outcomes focused approach to education in Western Australia. It provides a statement of the outcomes students are expected to achieve as a result of their schooling. It is described as neither a curriculum nor a syllabus, but a framework, which identifies common learning outcomes for all students (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 6). The document consists of;
• An overarching statement that includes thirteen overarching learning outcomes.

• Seven key principles, which contain five core values.

• An outline of four overlapping phases of development.

• Seven principles of learning and teaching and five principles of assessment.

• Eight learning area statements.

Review and reflection of the *Curriculum Framework* is ongoing as part of the Council’s activities at the State and national levels. It is also informed by the monitoring of research and trends at the international level (Curriculum Council, 2004, p. 11).

### 2.4.2 Supporting Documentation.

The Curriculum Council and the then Education Department of Western Australia\(^5\), both produced a number of documents aimed to help with implementation, however, this was not always the case and in some instances the documents created confusion rather than providing clarity.

The Education Department of Western Australia used the National Profiles supplied by the Curriculum Corporation, over a number of years, to develop the *Student Outcome Statements*, which were published in 1998 and formed the basis of the *Outcomes and Standards Framework*. The purpose of this framework was to assist teachers in determining and describing the

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\(^5\) The Education Department of Western Australia was abolished in 2003 and merged with the Department of Training to become the Department of Education and Training.
levels of achievement obtained by each student, for each of the outcomes described in the Curriculum Framework. While it was intended that the Student Outcome Statements would be used in conjunction with the Curriculum Framework, this proved to be problematic as irregularities in the case of some learning areas between the two documents made the identification of equivalences between the two documents difficult and confusing.

In 2002, the Department and the other systems/sectors agreed that the Curriculum Council would review the Student Outcome Statements and the more recent Catholic Education Office Progress Maps with a view to producing a common set of Curriculum Framework Progress Maps (Dept. of Education and Training, WA, 2005, p. 5.). A working version was produced in 2003 and was finalised for publication in 2005 as the Curriculum Framework Progress Maps. The Department of Education and Training then used the Curriculum Framework Progress Maps as the basis for producing the Outcomes and Standards Framework, also published in 2005.

2.4.3 Implementation.

Outcomes focused education marks a fundamental shift away from the teaching of a prescriptive content or syllabus approach and while Willis and Kissane (1995, p. 1) explain, an OBE outcome essentially drives the system and guides decisions about what is to be taught and how the teaching
process should be undertaken, this proved to be somewhat problematic for teachers who struggled with the absence of any sort of syllabus guidelines.

In response to the perceived concerns of teachers, the secretariat of the Curriculum Council developed scope and sequence statements of content for the outcomes in the Curriculum Framework and these formed the basis for a set of curriculum guides for each subject area (Curriculum Council, 2004, p. 14). These were published and distributed to schools in 2005.

The Curriculum Council also acknowledged parents as key stakeholders in the implementation process and undertook a State-wide campaign to inform them about the educational change being undertaken. This took the form of an Information pamphlet about the Curriculum Framework, which was distributed to every family with school-aged children in the State via schools in February 2000 (Curriculum Council, 2000, p. 13).

2.4.4 The Implementation Timeline.

The Curriculum Council intended that implementation would be phased in over a five-year period with the expectation that all schools would be fully implementing the Curriculum Framework by 20046 (Curriculum Council, 1999, p. 12). While this timeframe was arguably realistic and adequate, at the outset, it soon became evident that full implementation would not be realised by 2004. The Curriculum Council in their efforts to support and

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6 The initial five-year implementation phase of the Curriculum Framework ended in 2003 and schools now report to the Curriculum Council on their continued implementation of the Framework.
facilitate the implementation process published a range of documents, however the sheer volume has arguably been viewed more as an impost by teachers and community members alike.

While educators are held accountable for the implementation of the system requirements, they also have a significant degree of autonomy to implement the policies and guidelines in ways that meet the needs of their students, which has not been viewed by all as unproblematic. Bell (2002, p. 34) is of the opinion that “the direction that we have received has often been limited and schools have frequently found themselves wondering where to turn in order to take the next step”. Bell (2002, p. 34) goes on to point out that “the problem is that our rate of progress, our ideas and our successes, vary greatly”.

A Curriculum Framework Implementation Survey was developed to monitor the implementation progress of the Curriculum Framework in schools. It allowed schools to relate their progress of implementation to a continuum containing five progressive phases. In 1998-99 the survey was sent to a stratified random sample of 500 staff in schools, with a response rate of 51.4%. From 1999-02 the survey was modified and sent to all schools. It is interesting to note that the survey was voluntary and the response rates over the six years varied quite considerably.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Phase A</th>
<th>Phase B</th>
<th>Phase C</th>
<th>Phase D</th>
<th>Phase E</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation has not yet commenced (%)</td>
<td>Familiar with the Framework and have begun to review current learning and teaching programs (%)</td>
<td>Beginning to make links across phases of development and learning areas to enhance opportunities for students to achieve the outcomes in the Framework (%)</td>
<td>Modifying teaching, learning and accountability practices and refining knowledge and skills in relation to the Framework (%)</td>
<td>Fully implementing the Framework and using it for accountability purposes (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-99</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>00-01</td>
<td>1.3</td>
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<td>49.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-02</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02-03</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<td>44.0</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>71.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-04</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Data from Curriculum Council Annual Reports, 98-99 to 03-04)7

Figure 2.1 Progress of OFE implementation.

In the first year of the survey, 10.5 per cent of respondents indicated that they were at Phase E, which describes full implementation of the Curriculum Framework. The following year, this figure dropped dramatically to 0.6 per cent. The Curriculum Council believes this reduction indicates a more realistic perception of what implementation requires and is also indicative of adjustments made to the survey and sampling procedures that were designed to provide more accurate data (Curriculum Council, 2000, p. 20).

The variance in implementation is not a particularly surprising revelation when you consider Evans and King (1994, p. 3) believe that, implementation of outcomes focused education generally requires a

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7 In 2004-05 this method of reporting on the implementation of the Curriculum Framework was replaced, with all schools being required to report directly to the Council on implementation. (Curriculum Council, 2004, p. 13).
restructuring of the entire educational system and consequently takes a significant period of time. As a means of assisting schools, the DET initiated a number of strategies. In 1999 the Department introduced the Curriculum Improvement Program (CIP) which required schools to develop plans for the implementation of the *Curriculum Framework*, the *Outcomes and Standards Framework* and the *Curriculum Provision, Assessment and Reporting to Parents Policy and Guidelines*.

In 2003, Phase 2 of the Curriculum Improvement Program (CIP2) was introduced. The focus has been on addressing aspects of CIP identified as requiring further work, which included shifting the emphasis of implementation from understanding the outcomes to pedagogy (Department of Education and Training, 2006, CIP2 Background, p.1).

The Curriculum Council and the DET have had to respond to a number of concerns and difficulties experienced by educators at the coalface. The plethora of support documents and policies produced such as CIP, CIP2, the *Outcomes and Standards Framework* and the *Curriculum Guides* suggest that the process of implementation and change management at all levels has by no means been easy.

**2.5 Change Management.**

There is no doubt that the change management process is complex and there are a myriad of factors that will individually and collectively impact on
the level of success achieved. Indeed, it is argued that change in education is easy to propose, hard to implement, and extraordinarily difficult to sustain (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 1). A number of authors reflect this sentiment pointing to a diverse range of key factors, which have the potential to significantly derail what might be considered to be even the most failsafe change management proposals.

2.5.1 Understanding Change From the Bigger Picture.

Both individual schools and the educational system are integral to the change process, between which a symbiotic relationship must exist if any sort of significant change is to be realised. As Darling-Hammond (1998) points out, just as a system cannot change schools simply by mandate, widespread school change cannot occur by school invention alone, without support and leadership from the educational system (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 646). To this end a number of authors have identified a variety of factors that have a significant impact on the implementation process at this broader level Ranson (1994, p. 10), reminds us that education is inescapably political. It can and is often used to achieve a number of functions beyond the simple idea of educating individuals, by also fostering responsible citizenship, providing the foundations for a solid democracy, as well as generating the human capital necessary for economic growth. As a result, an attempt to pursue an extensive range of educational functions simultaneously may pose dilemmas for government departments
responsible for education (Ranson, 1994, p.10). Bearing this in mind, it should come as no surprise to find that educational policies can arguably not always be implemented without some degree of overlap and this has the potential to create areas of conflict. This would explain Darling-Hammond’s observation that, new policies do not land in a vacuum, but on top of existing policies, many of which she believes are not conducive to the strategies needed to successfully enact the new policy (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 650).

There are two possible explanations as to why this occurs. Firstly, it could be a case of the explicit directives or aims of one policy simply conflicting with another where the agendas may overlap. The other explanation is that the function of a particular policy may not be clearly understood or is misinterpreted by one or more of the key stakeholders.

Both of these explanations are critical in understanding the myriad of arguments put forward by many of the staunch opponents of OFE particularly the religious right in the United States that have been able to sabotage the successful introduction of OFE in a number of states.

Hargreaves & Fink (2006) also point out that most externally imposed reforms never get implemented properly because their designs are usually too inflexible to accommodate the varying needs and circumstances of different schools (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 56). This is a sentiment also reflected by Darling-Hammond (1998) who explains that studies of change
efforts have found that the fate of new programs rests on teachers’ and administrators’ ability to among other things, adapt the programs to their local context (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 647). This is particularly relevant given that a focus on outcomes requires educators to give significant consideration to individual students’ social and cultural backgrounds. This was a key factor with which many under resourced schools in some of the disadvantaged areas of South Africa struggled in their attempts to implement OFE.

2.5.2 Leadership.

At the school level, of all the key players charged with implementing the change management process, it is the school principal who is arguably the most pivotal. It is the principal who provides the interface between the mandated policies and his own individual school’s milieu. Crosswell and Elliott (2003) describe the principal as the lynchpin between system priorities and teacher practice (Crosswell & Elliott, 2003, p. 6). Hargreaves and Fink (2006, p. 1) and Macmillan (2000, p. 52) both agree that if educational change is to be implemented in a successful and sustainable way, it requires effective leadership.

There is clear consensus among a number of authors (MacNeill & Cavanagh & Silcox, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Crosswell & Elliott, 2003; Macmillan, 2000; Norris & Norris, 2007), that for a principal to be successful in implementing change management they must be dynamic in
their approach and be willing to acknowledge and utilise the expertise of others, however, this is not straight forward, as the role of the school leader is described as a difficult and complex one (Crosswell & Elliott, 2003, p. 1).

There is no doubt that school leadership goes far beyond the simplistic view that it involves nothing more than a charismatic leader able to portray a semblance of control to maintain effective operating structures within the organisation. As Crosswell and Elliott (2003) point out, it is not enough for leaders to just be effective in instructional leadership. They must also be concerned with their leadership having a much wider and long lasting influence in the form of, what Crosswell and Elliott (2003) and Norris and Norris (2007) describe as ‘sustainable change’. Numerous authors (MacNeill et al, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Crosswell & Elliott, 2003; Macmillan, 2000; Norris & Norris, 2007) cite the management of change as a critical component if leadership success is to be realised.

2.5.3 Sustainable Change.

It is a misconception to think that change management is applied only when markedly new system wide initiatives are to be implemented. Indeed, given that change is a constant for educational systems (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 642) change management must be seen as an integral and ongoing component of a school’s operating structure. This view is also supported by MacNeill et al (2003) who argue that change is a priori part of
leadership, because leadership without change is simply management of the status quo (MacNeill et al, 2003, p. 6).

If the notion of sustainable change is actively addressed by principals, Crosswell and Elliott (2003) believe that they will be more successful at initiating long-term change within their school (Crosswell & Elliott, 2003, p. 2).

The literature points to three particular aspects that are integral to sustainable change. Firstly, there is the issue of progressing past the initial implementation phase. Beyond this phase, in which new ideas and practices are tried for the first time, is what Hargreaves and Fink (2006) describe as an elusive institutionalisation phase, in which these practices are integrated into the teachers' repertoires (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 56).

Secondly, implementing a successful change management structure involves actively engaging key stakeholders in the process. As Norris and Norris (2007, The Process of Organisational Change, p. 2) quite rightly point out, the various educational stakeholder groups form the strategic context for the change. This is what Norris and Norris (2007, The Process of Organisational Change, p. 2) identify as the notion of a “strategic coalition”. It is therefore, imperative that they develop a shared understanding and a united vision of the purpose and direction that the change structure is to take, if sustainable change is to be effected. Macmillan (2000) believes that
effective leaders are those able to engage mindfully with not only the school's culture and its community, but also involve teachers integrally and meaningfully as team members in the implementation process (Macmillan, 2000, p. 52). As Macmillan points out, where initiatives were effective, principals use a model of implementation which incorporated collective, organisational learning among all members of the school community (Macmillan, 2000, p. 52).

Thirdly, it should be borne in mind that a hierarchical approach will be ineffective. As Norris and Norris (2007, The Process of Organisational Change, p. 1) explain, a hierarchical approach is an efficient means of maintaining an effective operating structure, but such a top down structure if used to effect any sort of change will have little chance of success. This view is supported by Macmillan (2000) who found that school performance did not improve when leaders imposed initiatives in a top-down manner (Macmillan, 2000, p. 52).

2.5.4 Teachers.

While it is acknowledged that the role of the school principal in effecting successful change management is significant, it must also be remembered that teachers have a pivotal role in schools and they are seen as essential to the success of any school restructuring (Bailey, 2000, p. 119). Indeed, Bailey (2000), believes that a major explanation for the failure of school
change lies in the fact that the context and process of mandated change often marginalises teachers (Bailey, 2000, p. 112).

Crosswell and Elliott (2003) also believe that this process must focus on staff. They argue that teachers must be engaged and motivated to support the change process and argue that the level of teachers’ commitment is seen as a key factor in the success of current educational reform agenda (Crosswell & Elliott, 2003, p. 2).

It is also important to consider that beacon schools and lighthouse schools may shine brightly, but they often draw outstanding teachers (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 1). Therefore, it can not be assumed that what appears to be the successful implementation of change management can be directly attributable to school leadership processes alone and high performing teachers could arguably mask school leadership inadequacies in relation to change management.

2.6 Implications for classroom practices.

Darling-Hammond (1998) believes that an OFE approach has serious implications for teaching practices. She believes that, this kind of teaching, which reformers claim must become much more widespread to meet today’s and tomorrow’s educational demands, is much more complex than traditional transmission teaching that seeks to produce straightforward recall and recognition of information (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 647). She
supports the claim by Howard Gardner that no society has developed an educational system that succeeds fully at teaching most students for understanding, although more and more countries hold this as their goal (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 647). If this is the case then the implications for teachers in relation to their classroom practices is great which is further compounded by a number of factors.

Policy is not so much implemented as it is re-invented at each level of the system. What ultimately happens in schools and classrooms is less related to the intention of policymakers than it is to the knowledge, beliefs, resources, leadership, and motivations that operate in the local context, which has been described as “the power of the bottom over the top” (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 646). This is most evident at the classroom level where teachers generally work in isolation from each other and for the most part obscured from the view of school administrators. Therefore it can be seen that effecting change at the classroom level is highly problematic. As MacNeill et al (2003) point out, current research notes how difficult it is to bring about changes in teachers’ preferred pedagogies, explaining that teaching is a culturally embedded act and very difficult to change (MacNeill et al, 2003, p. 5).

Many education systems rely heavily on professional development (PD) as a means of effecting significant change by modifying teacher pedagogies, however, MacNeill et al (2003) argue that PD has little effect on teachers’ practices as most PD simply banks knowledge and skills for possible future
use and the loss of information gathered and not used is extremely high (MacNeill et al, 2003, p. 6).

Even when teachers are effective at retaining information gathered at PDs or appear to have a solid understanding of the broad theoretical concepts it can not be assumed that this is automatically reflected in their classroom practices. As MacNeill et al (2003, p. 6) quite rightly point out, it is possible to learn all of the techniques of instruction but remain pedagogically unfit as a teacher.

2.7 Conclusion.

This literature review has explored a number of factors significant to outcomes in education and to the implementation of an outcomes approach. It is clear that the fundamental shift to an outcomes focused approach to education in Western Australia has not been undertaken in isolation. Indeed, it can be seen that all Australian states and territories have to some extent embarked on this new approach, from an internationally informed perspective that arguably bares all the hallmarks of an international movement. This approach has not been without its critics and a number of countries have attempted to implement this approach with varying degrees of success. It is interesting to note that even in the United States, where outcomes focused education first gained popularity predominantly through the work of William Spady, its implementation has been met with fierce opposition in a number of states.
Outcomes focused education is by no means a simple concept to grasp. There are a variety of forms that it can take, interpretation can vary markedly and the concept is open to misinterpretation at all levels. This is often compounded when a clear understanding of the fundamental principles that underpin this approach are not fully understood. This problem was particularly evident for both South Africa and the American state of Pennsylvania.

There are also a number of other significant factors that have been shown to impact on implementation. It can be seen that, not only a clear understanding of the theory of OFE but also unbridled support from all stakeholders is a quintessential prerequisite if successful implementation is to be realised. While it is evident that different countries have achieved varying levels of success, Spady (1994) is optimistic and believes that these past experiences should encourage rather than deter future efforts, arguing that, partial implementation is far better than no implementation (Spady, 1994, p. 106). Spady (1994) also warns that without encouragement and support from the top implementation often remains partial (Spady 1994, p. 106). It can be seen that this factor has also been a common weakness experienced by all three countries and it is interesting to note that a number of parallels can be drawn between the Western Australian context and the international experiences examined, in a number of significant areas related to implementation.
Chapter 3: Methodology for the Study

3.1 Introduction.

Methodology is best described as “the practices and techniques used to gather, process, manipulate, and interpret information that can then be used to test ideas and theories about social life” (Johnson, 1995, p. 221). There is now a wide range of methodological approaches that can be utilised by researchers and as Patton (2002, p. 69) points out, the variety of inquiry approaches has grown well beyond the simplistic dichotomy that once existed between quantitative and qualitative methodologies. However, it arguably still holds true, as Johnson (1995) explains, that “quantitative information is more easily gathered through large sample surveys on representative populations, while qualitative information, such as how people negotiate the complexities of everyday life, requires more intense scrutiny of smaller and typically less scientifically representative samples” (Johnson, 1995, p. 221).

Understanding what people value and the meanings they attach to experiences, from their own personal and cultural perspectives, are major inquiry arenas for qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002, p. 147) and they also underpin the purpose of this study. It is therefore this understanding that provides the justification for employing a qualitative approach to this particular research study.
Given that this study examines the diverse lived experiences of participants in a single school culture at a specific time, three methodological frameworks provide a helpful basis for understanding and interpreting the participants' lived reality; ethnography, phenomenology and case study.

Patton (2002) distinguishes between ethnography and phenomenology by defining specific foundation questions. Essentially the central issue facing the ethnographer is to understand what the culture of a particular group of people is whereas the phenomenologist looks at the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of the phenomenon, for the group of people (Patton, 2002, p. 132). The case study method is best defined by Yin (2003, p. 13) who explains that it “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”.

The boundaries between these different perspectives are by no means distinct and no one method adequately encompasses the total complexities of what this particular study sets out to document. It has therefore been necessary to use a more eclectic approach, as a means of utilising the strengths and addressing the inherent weaknesses associated with each of these individual methodological approaches.
3.2 Ethnography.

It can be argued that social life does not occur in a void. It is embedded within a particular cultural system, which in turn is influenced and shaped by the major institutions, which have the capacity to exert control over that system. Ethnography acknowledges the importance of understanding the effect that culture exerts by providing a “descriptive account of social life and culture in a particular social system based on detailed observations of what people actually do” (Johnson, 1995, p. 101).

There are substantial benefits to be gained from adopting this methodological approach when undertaking research in a school setting. A particular strength of this approach is that it utilises what Neuman (2003, p. 367) describes as “thick descriptions” which allows the researcher to place events in a detailed context so that the reader can infer cultural meaning (Neuman, 2003, p. 367). It is also a very effective and useful approach “particularly when social conditions, attitudes, roles and interpersonal relationships are explored in conjunction with fundamental cultural prescriptions” (Sarantakos, 1998, p.199). Indeed, as Patton (2002) explains it is the matter of interpreting and applying the findings from a cultural perspective that makes ethnography so distinct (Patton, 2002, p. 83-84).

Schools can be viewed as unique social systems, which are controlled and influenced by larger departmental authorities. This is an important factor that Sarantakos (1998) believes should be taken into consideration when
utilising this approach, explaining that the research needs to be “referenced to the larger sociocultural system as the explaining source” (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 200). Even with their limited autonomy, there is great potential for the cultural context of individual schools to be unique. They can be influenced by any number of factors such as geographic location, demographic profile and the socio-economic status of the population. In order to identify and understand the myriad of factors that comprise the complexity of a culture it is important for the researcher to immerse herself in the culture of the setting under investigation. As Bessant and Watts (1999) quite rightly point out, “it is only when you have become exposed to, or become part of, a complex social reality that all the elaborate rules, invisible meanings, motives, ambiguous actions and feelings that make up a social reality become clear enough to be seen and reported upon” (Bessant & Watts, 1999,p. 82).

**3.3 Phenomenology.**

When undertaking any research that involves interpretation of the actions and behaviour of people there is always potential for the researcher to make invalid assumptions about the reasoning behind such actions and behaviours. It is vital therefore to find an effective means of gaining entry into the lived experiences of individuals and to interpret those experiences from the viewpoint of the participants themselves. This is the realm of phenomenology. It is the study of conscious human experience in everyday
life (Johnson, 1995, p. 203). As Patton (2002) explains, the phenomenologist attempts to understand social phenomena from the actor’s own perspective. The important reality is what people perceive it to be (Patton, 2002, p. 69).

If it is accepted that reality is subjective then an individual’s perception of reality is dependant on how they experience, are stimulated by, react to, understand and recall a phenomenon. The researcher must therefore methodologically, carefully, and thoroughly capture and describe how people experience a phenomenon. In order to achieve this the researcher must undertake in-depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Only in this way, by obtaining first hand accounts, is it possible for the researcher to describe the subjective experiences of the respondent with accuracy.

Given that phenomenologists tend to focus on what people think (Ritzer, 2000, p. 213) it is important that the interview is structured in such a way that allows the participant to express themselves fully and in a way that will reduce the possibility if misinterpretation. Semi-structured interviews best facilitate this process by providing the researcher with information directly related to their area of study while at the same time providing the participant with scope to respond to the questions without constraints.

Clearly phenomenology operates on what Ritzer (2000, p. 505) describes as the extreme micro levels of thought and action and it would be unwise to
make generalisations about behaviour more broadly based on such an approach. This is not to say that understanding the experiences of individuals are irrelevant or of little value as it is the collective and interactive actions and experiences of individuals that combine to create and influence the shape of groups and societies.

3.4 Case Study.

The logic of the case study is to demonstrate a causal argument about how general social forces shape and produce results in particular settings (Neuman, 2003, p. 33). In this instance it is a specific school setting. Given that case studies can investigate a large variety of research objects, ranging from behaviour and interrelations, to persons and groups, to organizations and whole cultures (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 194) the researcher considered it to be an essential component of this study.

Given that a case is defined according to the selection of components that are included (Tripp, 1992, p. 10) it is important in the first instance to not only identify but also justify the categories of data that will be used to construct the cases. If one considers more closely the school milieu in relation to the five components of a case as outlined by Tripp (1992); people, things, events, context and relationships (Tripp, 1992, p. 3) it is possible to identify four sub-components of people, namely, the school principal, teachers, students and parents. The selection of these particular components (participants) in the case study has arisen as a result of
considering the properties which constitute and characterise them, in relation to the various educational roles that each of them perform. Given that the focus of this case study is an examination of the way in which the school implements an outcomes focused approach to education, the experiences of these particular groups of people, the context in which they occur and the relationships between them, are all essential components that need to be included in the study.

Historically case studies have been considered an inferior method of inquiry since they allow very little quantification or scope for generalisations to be made (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 192). In acknowledging the limitations of this approach, it is therefore, not the intention of the researcher to make any generalisations about the implementation of outcomes focused education beyond the defining characteristics of this particular case study school as many of the phenomenon reported in this study may well be unique to this site alone. However, it should also be noted that case studies are considered to be valid forms of enquiry in the context of descriptive as well as evaluative and causal studies (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 192) and this study provides important insights into the implementation process that can be used to design larger, more representative studies.
3.5 Research Design.

A variety of data collection methods were employed as a means of providing greater depth to the study, which included interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. The interviews consisted of one-to-one, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with individual teachers, and the principal, and one focus group interview with each of the student year groups. Parents participated in either a semi-structured group or one-to-one interview depending upon their availability. Observations focused on teachers and students in their usual classroom settings during routine learning activities while document analysis focused on school documents and departmental publications.

Field notes recorded by the researcher also provided rich information that added greater depth to the direct classroom observations. The notes also provided an efficient means of recording impressions and interpretations of social relationships and the inferred meaning of social interactions between individuals and groups as observed by the researcher.

3.5.1 Participants.

In total there were twenty three participants from the school. They included; the school Principal, three classroom teachers, three students from each teacher’s class, one parent of each participating student and one specialist teacher. Participating teachers encompassed all developmental phases/
learning areas - one teacher from early childhood (Year 1), one teacher from middle primary (Year 4) and one teacher from upper primary (Year 7) as well as the specialist teacher (Art). While this was not intended to be an attempt at representational sampling it was hoped that by engaging teachers from across developmental phases and learning areas, the data would be rich and informative.

The selection of student/parent participants was made in consultation with the classroom teacher based on their assessment of the level of parent involvement and interest in their child’s education. These parents were then approached seeking their and their child’s participation. It was anticipated that by selecting parents with differing levels of involvement or interest in their child’s education, the resultant data would more accurately reflect the diversity and richness of the school community.

The rationale for choosing this sample was to ensure that a range of teacher, student and parent perceptions were included, to facilitate a triangulation of the data sources. It was anticipated that this would enhance the quality and credibility of analysis, as “either consistency in overall patterns of data from the different sources or reasonable explanations for any differences in data from divergent sources can contribute significantly to the overall credibility of the findings” (Patton, 2002, p. 560). Parents were included as a valuable triangulation point as their views come from outside the classroom situation and as Tripp (1986, p. 55) points out, “by choosing a
participant who tends to see things differently, the triangulation can often be far more revealing”.

Given that “larger contexts tend to exert a greater influence over more components of smaller contexts than the other way about” (Tripp, 1992, p. 17) it was important to include the school principal as an essential component of the case study. With the devolution of decision making and an increased level of autonomy, there is potential for the principal to influence the entire school milieu, which may impact on teachers’ perceptions concerning the implementation of an outcomes focused curriculum. Also, Willis (1998) points out that within an outcomes focused education system, “principals and teachers collectively are held responsible for ensuring that students are provided with the curriculum, learning conditions and environment necessary for their success” (Willis, 1998, p. 16).

In keeping with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (1999), all identifying descriptions have been removed, to ensure that all participants are protected from any potential adverse repercussions which may result from their disclosures.
3.5.2 Procedures and Activities.

The participating school, Boronia Park Primary School\textsuperscript{8} was chosen by the researcher based on a prior affiliation between the researcher and some of the staff at the school. It was hoped that familiarity with the researcher would facilitate their willingness to participate in the research study. Another key factor that influenced this choice was the newness of the school, which commenced operation at the beginning of 2001. This placed the school in a unique position regarding the implementation of an outcomes focused approach, as all aspects of the school milieu have been afforded the opportunity of being established from the outset based on an outcomes model. These factors weighed heavily in the researchers decision to approach this particular school as a first preference.

The researcher initiated contact with the school’s principal, who indicated a willingness for the school to participate. Teacher participants were recruited through the school, approached jointly by the principal and the researcher. During a whole school staff meeting the research proposal was outlined briefly, after which individual teachers were approached by the researcher seeking their willingness to participate. The researcher initiated contact with four teachers in different student year level cohorts, which would provide insight into the implementation process across a diverse range of

\textsuperscript{8} The name of the school is a pseudonym used to ensure the anonymity of the participants.
developmental phases, whilst at the same time attempting to maintain a balanced gender representation within the teacher participants.

Initial contact with parents was through the familiar face of the classroom teacher, which the researcher felt would be less intimidating and reduce the potential for them to feel coerced in any way. It also provided prompt and open feedback concerning parents’ willingness to allow their children to also participate in the study.

In keeping with the NHMRC’s National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (1999), all participants were required to indicate their voluntary informed consent, prior to their inclusion in the study.

3.5.3 Document analysis.

This study utilised content analysis as a means of identifying themes within principal and/or teacher created school documents and directives that underpin the philosophical approach of the school, towards an outcomes approach and provides the context for its implementation. One of the drawbacks of this method as outlined by Lupton (1992, p. 147) is that the conclusions drawn are largely limited to the manifest meanings of texts. To address this problem, in-depth one to one interviews conducted with the principal and teachers have been used to provide insight into the latent meanings of the texts and how these participants have interpreted and engaged with them.
There is a range of policies and publications that are mandated for use in all state schools, many of which have associated guidelines and support materials that have also been developed to assist schools in the implementation of these policies. In Western Australia the Curriculum Council, and the Department of Education and Training, Western Australia have produced them. There are also a number of other documents that while not directly mandated for use in schools, have had a significant impact on the direction that policy development has taken. Many of these documents are discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2.

The principal was asked to provide access to school developed policies and guidelines and permission was sought to copy these documents so that analysis could be undertaken at a time convenient to the researcher.

The following list outlines the school-based documents that have been included in the document analysis process:

- Whole school and classroom timetables
- Sample of teacher programs
- Sample of teacher assessment checklists
- Sample of teacher task rubric and rating scales
- School based curriculum improvement documents and guidelines
- School development plans
- Professional development documents
- Report forms used over last 5 years.
- Information booklet for parents
- School newsletters
- School planning guide
- School plan 2005
There was at all times a high degree of transparency when it came to accessing school documents. The principal and teachers alike were more than happy to provide access to the full range of documents requested by the researcher.

3.5.4 Interviews.

Interviews were conducted with participants at a time and location convenient to them. One to one interviews were conducted with individual teachers and the principal, while focus group interviews were conducted with the students and the parents. It was anticipated that the inclusion of focus group interviews would allow easier assessment of shared or diverse views to be made, enhance data quality through participant interaction by allowing participants to consider their own views and the views of others, and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses.

An interview guide of questions was developed to delimit in advance the issues to be explored. This was to ensure that the interview time was utilised effectively while allowing flexibility and scope to increase the richness of the data. This was also particularly useful when interviewing the younger students, some of whom were not as adept at providing succinct answers. Four interview guides were developed, one for each of the participant groups; one for the principal, one for the teachers, one for the students, and one for the parents. They were prepared to ensure that the same basic lines of enquiry were pursued with each participant group, while
allowing for the differences in their roles within the school. The purpose of this was to examine the phenomenon from different perspectives (viewpoint triangulation), which “seeks to obtain a clearer, more detailed and authentic account of the phenomenon” (Tripp, 1986, p. 54). The principal and the teachers were given a copy of the interview questions (Refer Appendix 2.) a few days in advance of the scheduled interview time. This was to allow them the opportunity to peruse the questions and give consideration to what information they thought would be relevant and wanted to include.

The principal, student and parent interviews took place in the school setting in an informal manner and tape recorded (with the permission of the participants), apart from one parent who was unable to attend the school due to work commitments and was subsequently interviewed at their home. Due to teaching commitments during the day, all four teacher interviews were conducted in the evening at a time convenient to each. They were done via telephone and tape-recorded using speakerphone. Ideally the researcher would have preferred to conduct face-to-face interviews with the teachers but the distance between the researcher’s home and the participants proved to be problematic. The recorded principal and teacher interviews were transcribed and a copy given to each participant for checking and editing. No changes were requested and the participants retained the copy for their records. Given the localised nature of the study, the code of practice for the use of name-identified data as set by the
NHMRC’s National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (1999), was strictly adhered to.

**3.5.5 Observations.**

Direct observation of the classroom experiences involving teachers and their students was used to provide a more holistic perspective of the context in which they interacted. The challenge for the researcher was deciding what sorts of observations were considered relevant to the study and therefore noteworthy. To this end, ethnomethodology which studies “how people actually use social interaction to maintain an ongoing sense of reality in a situation” (Johnson, 1995, p. 101) provided a useful framework, which guided the observational process. The observations provided additional information to the researcher concerning classroom practices, not readily obtainable from participants during the interview process. The classroom setting can be described as a unique cultural milieu within which social interactions between participants follow mutually understood rules, guidelines and codes of conduct. The participants interpret and respond to the actions of others by using what Neuman (2003, p. 367) describes as their “cultural knowledge and clues from the social context.” Based on this understanding it was acknowledged by the researcher that the observations needed to go beyond a simplistic stimulus/response interpretation. Indeed, ethnomethodologists devote a great deal of attention to the study of conversations as well as focusing on what people actually do (Ritzer, 2000, p. 213).
As Johnson (1995) explains, ethnomethodologists use techniques to systematically observe and record what actually happens when people interact in everyday, natural settings (Johnson, 1995, p. 101). To facilitate this an observation guide (Refer appendix 3) was developed based on the principles of learning and teaching as outlined in the *Curriculum Framework*. In addition to the observational checklist, field notes were also used as part of the data collection process which included jotted and direct observation notes as well as spatial, interaction/social and temporal maps. These field notes were a critical component of the observation process given that Patton (2002) considers field notes to be the fundamental database for constructing case studies (Patton, 2002, p. 304).

The process of data collection and its ongoing analysis was the main process used to determine the amount of time that was to be devoted to the observational component of the study. The observations undertaken in the classroom settings were completed over the course of five separate days and done prior to the individual teacher interviews being conducted. This was to prevent the usual classroom practices of the participants observed by the researcher being influenced or altered in response to discussions undertaken during the interview process. The researcher liaised with the teachers and arranged times when the researcher could gain access to the classroom in order to undertake observations during lessons.

Each observational period lasted from forty five minutes to one and a half hours. The time frame of individual observations was dependant upon the
length of the lesson being taught. This allowed the researcher to obtain comprehensive data on all aspects of the lesson from the introduction to the conclusion. A total of three hours was spent by the researcher in each teacher’s classroom, undertaking discrete observations. After each individual classroom observation was completed the researcher used the jotted field notes and observation guide to write up more comprehensive field notes of the classroom activities and interactions observed.

The observations were necessarily conducted in an overt manner in order to address the moral and ethical issues associated with covert research. However, this may have been problematic in that the participants might have reacted differently knowing they were being studied. To address this the researcher attempted to remain as unobtrusive as possible by remaining seated in an ‘out of the way’ part the classroom and avoided engaging in conversation with students or the teacher. In some instances particularly in the younger grades the researcher was conscious to avoid eye contact with students to reduce the possibility of influencing their behaviour if they thought their actions were being scrutinised by an adult.

3.5.6 Data analysis.

Data analysis was initially undertaken as an ongoing process during the data collection phase. All new data was reviewed regularly and emerging themes provided guidance in determining what further data needed to be
obtained over and above what was initially identified as being required for the study.

Once data from all sources had been collected, five individual case studies were developed using information gathered primarily from the interviews conducted with the four teacher participants and the school's principal. The key questions that were used to guide the study provided a framework that assisted in determining what data was selection for inclusion in each case study.

The case studies were analysed individually in order to identify specific themes, issues and peculiarities, after which the findings from the individual case studies were triangulated, compared and contrasted. Significant factors related to the implementation process of OFE were identified from which the substantial findings for the study were drawn.

3.6 Conclusion.

Clearly the research approaches of phenomenology, ethnography and case study provide the most informative qualitative frameworks for examining the particular issue chosen by the researcher. This approach provides a rich plethora of data that takes into account the particular location, demographic profile and culture of the research site, as well as that which is perceived to be the reality experienced by the participants.
It is acknowledged by the researcher that self reflection at all stages of the methodological process be undertaken and to be aware of the potential for personal understanding to influence the selection and interpretation of data chosen for inclusion in the study. Consideration must also be given to the fact that it is not possible to make generalisations about the findings of this study in relation to other school sites although a critique of the conclusions drawn will provide information useful to educational practitioners utilising similar aspects of the approach used by the school in this particular study.
Chapter 4: Boronia Park Primary School - The case study site

4.1 Introduction.

Boronia Park Primary School is a Western Australian State primary school catering for students from kindergarten to year 7. It is a relatively new school that commenced operations from the beginning of the 2001 school year. In its first year the school had 306 enrolments and at the time of the study had a total of 501 students. The demographic profile is described by the school as being ‘above average’, observed as being predominantly Anglo-Australian with a relatively stable population. The school has only two students who are of Aboriginal descent. There were no apparent endemic student behaviour or morale problems observed at the school.

4.2 The School: As an operational site.

The school operates with a total of seventeen classes. Several demountable classrooms have been added to the original permanent school structure to cater for the increase in student numbers. Due to the newness of the school the buildings are modern and well maintained. The grassed oval, gardens and lawn areas are well established. Much of the surrounding area is yet to be residentially developed and the school is predominantly bordered by coastal scrublands. There are distinctive visual displays of student input throughout the school. Colourful clay tiles, designed and made
by the children at the school have been used to create a large mural on the outside of the library wall as well as borders on the brickwork of the drink fountains and patterns integrated into the footpaths throughout the school grounds. What had initially been a large grey concrete water tank located in front of the main car park of the school has been transformed into an artistic landmark, covered with motifs and designs painted by the students.

A small area behind the school is set up as a hobby farm, which contains a fenced vegetable patch and an enclosed chicken run that the children are responsible for maintaining.

Along with the classrooms, the school has a purpose built library, canteen and art room. It also has a football oval, cricket nets and hot mixed courts suitable for basketball, netball and tennis. One classroom is a designated computer lab, with the capacity to cater for a whole class at a time. The classrooms throughout the school are organised into clusters of five, as an ‘L’ shape, described as teaching areas one, two and three. Each room has two access doors, one external and one internal. The internal door of each classroom provides access to a linoleum floored wet area which is approximately twice the size of the average classroom. It contains a walk in store room, side benches, a sink, household cooking oven with hotplates, four computers for student use which are all linked to a printer also located in the wet area, a telephone with internal and external call capabilities, and several large work tables with chairs.
Four classrooms in each teaching area are back-to-backed in pairs, separated by two concertina doors, which span almost the entire length of the common wall. When drawn back the two classrooms can effectively become one large classroom. When closed the doors provide a high degree of sound proofing between classrooms.

The school has a public address system with a speaker in every classroom, operated from a central control in the administrative building, allowing the principal to address the whole school at the touch of a button and provide teachers and students with impromptu notices and information.

**4.2.2 Routines and Activities.**

The teaching day begins at 8.45am, concludes at 3.00pm and is divided into three blocks. The children have a twenty five minute recess break at 10.35am and a forty minute lunch break at 12.40pm.

Each day begins with a fifteen minute whole school daily fitness program in which students rotate in their classes through seventeen different activities including yoga, dance/aerobics, cross country and tug-o-war, coordinated by the physical education teacher and run by all the classroom teachers. The daily fitness program is posted on the school’s intranet and is easily accessible by staff and students.

School assemblies are held every two weeks on a Friday morning and last approximately half an hour. Each class is given an opportunity to host an
assembly and perform an item. General school notices are read out, events are publicised and student awards for each class are announced. The assemblies are held in a semi enclosed undercover area, which is also used by students to eat their lunch and the physical education teacher for lessons during inclement weather.

Each classroom has an air of calm orderliness, in which students willingly followed daily timetables, set routines and expected codes of behaviour, with which they were all familiar. All teachers developed and followed their own weekly timetable, which facilitated this. Lessons always appeared well prepared and sequentially organised by the teachers in each class and there were no teacher or student created interruptions to the flow of student activities.

Apart from the art room where the tables were arranged in a large ‘U’ shape around the room, all other classrooms in which observations were undertaken had desks arranged in groups, with students facing each other. This facilitated small group discussions and peer talk during lessons, which was never discouraged or at any time explicitly forbidden in any of the classrooms observed.
4.3 The School: As a site for change.

The way in which a school approaches and implements systematic change and the success or failure of that change process, is dependent upon a number of key factors, not least of which is the school’s culture. This begs the question of what and/or who defines a particular school’s culture?

An important aspect in relation to culture is the fact that Boronia Park had no history, cultural or otherwise, prior to the appointment of Tim Burgan as principal. The site was completely open to the development of a unique culture that arguably places this site in a position of advantage and more easily able to facilitate the successful implementation of system changes.

It must be acknowledged that there are a diverse array of individuals that define a school culture, which include not only the principal, teachers and students but also the parents and the broader school community. However, it is arguably the principal and the teachers and the set of relationships that exist between them, that enable tasks to be performed routinely and are pivotal in defining the operating structure of the school. Norris and Norris (2007), believe that it is the relationships practiced by the people in the organisation that constitute one aspect of culture (Norris & Norris, The Process of Organisational Change, 2007, p. 3). However, it must also be acknowledged that not all relationships in a school are equal as some key players exert more power than others, so it could be argued that those who
have more power have more control over the relationships hence more impact on the development of the resultant culture.

This aspect is acknowledged by Norris and Norris (2007), who suggest that while a leader may use different leadership styles to suit different circumstances within the school context, there will be a predominant style and this will “flavour” the school culture (Norris & Norris, Leadership and its Relationship to the Language Learning Area, 2007, p. 6). It can therefore be argued that Boronia Park’s principal, Mr Tim Burgan, is an integral player in successful change management. Indeed, inherent in the findings of a study by Crosswell & Elliot (2003) was the importance of school leaders, who believe that they are considered to be the interpreter and the connector between the school’s and the system’s goals and priorities and the resulting specific teacher practices (Crosswell & Elliot, 2003, p. 1). If the above is true, then the level of success in implementing system directives that have been achieved by teachers at Boronia Park, can be directly linked to the type of school culture that Tim Burgan has been integral in developing.

From the outset Tim Burgan, as foundation principal was in a position to define and develop the sort of culture that would facilitate what he deemed to be the necessary system changes, by select teaching staff through a merit selection process. Teaching staff gain employment at the school by firstly submitting a curriculum vitae, from which suitable applicants are short listed for an interview. The interview panel usually consists of at least three people, including the principal and the two deputy principals. The principal is
conscious of ensuring a gender balance and when asked if the panel ever included someone from outside the school explained that last year they included a representative from another school to ensure impartiality as some of the applicants interviewed were existing employees of the school. As a standard procedure applicants are required to address three questions within a half hour time slot and are given the questions 10 minutes in advance. While the questions are changed regularly they always relate to three key aspects; the curriculum, being a team player, and relationships with students and parents.

The principal clearly believes that this staff selection process is pivotal in ensuring that teachers subscribe to the school’s ethos. The inaugural annual school report of 2001, in describing the school *climate* states that;

> Throughout our selection of staff we have sought those who are ‘people focussed’, who are prepared to work together and who value highly the children, parents and their colleagues. This has resulted in the bringing together of like-minded people who share the same philosophy and who are focussed on the same goals.

(Boronia Park Annual Report, 2001, p. 9)

The selection of staff in this way would ostensibly guarantee that the teachers at the school shared the principal’s philosophy and approach. Indeed the principal believes that *the strength of the team at Boronia Park is a real feature.* (Boronia Park Annual Report, 2001, p.9). This has arguably

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9 In order to ensure anonymity of the school this document is not cited in the reference list.
resulted in a high level of teacher job satisfaction at the school. Tim explained that apart from a few of the staff that had taken maternity leave or promotional positions, there have been no teaching staff resignations since the school began operation in 2001. There is no doubt that Tim believes this to be a clear indicator that the school’s culture is exceptionally strong and united. If this is true, then the following case studies should ideally reflect the principal’s view that Boronia Park is indeed an exemplary site for the implementation of systematic change.
Chapter 5:  Boronia Park Primary School - The case studies

5.1 Introduction.

The five case studies that follow reflect different perspectives of the implementation process at Boronia Park. The principal, from a leadership perspective, the three classroom teachers from different developmental phase perspectives and the art teacher from a specialist perspective. By developing five case studies from a diverse range of perspectives within the one school site, it is anticipated that collectively the case studies will provide more diverse and therefore informative data about the implementation process from a whole school perspective.

Within each case study information will be presented at two levels. Firstly each study will examine what implementation means to the participant from a whole school perspective. Secondly each case study will examine the implementation process from each participant’s unique context, by identifying how OBE is reflected in teaching, learning, assessment and reporting to parents.

Of the four teachers who participated in the study, two were female and two were male. The teachers ranged in their number of years of teaching experience from nine to thirty, with two of the teachers being foundation staff members.
5.2 The Leadership Perspective.

5.2.1 Tim Burgan.

Tim Burgan\(^{10}\), was appointed as the foundation principal at Boronia Park Primary school when it opened at the beginning of the 2001 school year. This is significant as the school came into being after the shift to an outcomes focused approach had already commenced, therefore, Tim was afforded a unique opportunity to establish such an approach without the added difficulties of trying to change existing practices at the school site. While the school site was new, the majority of the foundation teachers (including three of the four teachers who participated in the study) graduated before the current educational reform began.

This case study draws on data obtained predominantly from the interview with the principal, however it also encompasses quotes from other relevant data sources where appropriate and includes: comments from other interview participants, school based documents and publications such as the strategic plan, the *Curriculum Framework* key understanding guide, annual reports, performance management documents, the Robson report, and a number of independent authors.

The interview with Tim was undertaken in his office in a very relaxed atmosphere with an essential cup of coffee in hand as the researcher knew from prior conversations that this interview would not be a short one. Tim

\(^{10}\) Name is a pseudonym used to ensure the anonymity of the participant in the study.
came across as a very open and relaxed person who was not afraid to give his personal opinion on issues. Indeed, on several occasions he jokingly asked not to be quoted when the conversation digressed onto more controversial issues on education. The interview lasted for well over an hour and a half and he was able to give comprehensive responses to all the interview questions that were posed.

5.2.1.1 Tim’s understanding of OFE.

Although the lines of questioning by the researcher did not explicitly reveal how the principal had come to develop his knowledge of OFE, Tim spoke at length about his understanding, which he explained had been supported by a number of journal articles that he had read that had been written by academics both interstate and overseas, who had studied OFE. He was able to describe how the various aspects of the Curriculum Framework fit with OFE from both a philosophical and pedagogical viewpoint. He described OFE as,

...what happens in the classroom is governed by that bigger picture understanding of the outcomes you want students to exhibit as life long learners...

He described how these bigger picture understandings relate to the 13 overarching learning outcomes in the Curriculum Framework, which are then taught to a more specific degree under the learning area outcomes. It
was evident that he had a solid understanding of the broad nature of the 13 overarching learning outcomes as well as their content.

...those outcomes cover everything from literacy and numeracy through to interpersonal skills and the ability to interact with others and find and synthesise information and not just rote learn something but to apply it in a real life context...

The Curriculum Improvement Program (CIP) and Curriculum Improvement Program: Phase 2 (CIP2) programs have done little to enhance Tim’s existing understanding of OFE. There had been no provision for the professional development of principals in the original Curriculum Improvement Program and even though this inadequacy was addressed with Curriculum Improvement Program: Phase 2, Tim pointed out that the majority of the professional development (PD) was purely compliance PD related to implementing system directives. Tim believed that what was inherently lacking in the system was PD that focused more on leadership issues.

_A lot of us were, jumping up and down and saying with CIP, what’s going on. There’s no direction, there’s no support and the response was the Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting (CAR) policy because that gave us the direction, from a support point of view, the PD for CIP2. But even that PD...a lot of the PD we do is compliance PD...this is how you need to comply with the system direction._

This is a very interesting point given that the Department of Education and Training state on their CIP2 website that, many positive aspects have
emerged from CIP including: the emergence of curriculum leadership as a critical aspect of the role of school leaders (DET, 2007, p. 1).

5.2.1.2 Tim’s perspective on whole school implementation.

I asked Tim if he thought the compliance PD undertaken to date was adequate in equipping him with the expertise necessary to implement the departmental directives in a way that meets the particular needs of the school. He claimed this was a really good point, explaining that 40 different principals have potentially 40 different ways of implementing the same approach, which he conceded was a real strength of the system while at the same time being a real weakness as well. This prompted him to describe his experiences at the first two days of PD undertaken for CIP2. On the first day participants were familiarised with the Curriculum Assessment and Reporting (CAR) policy. At the end of Day 1 they were told to use the information in the CAR policy to do ‘something’ in their school related to the policy and report back their experiences at Day 2. A critical aspect of this directive was that the participants were given no guidance as to what they should do other than needing it to be something relevant to what they covered on Day 1.

_I came back and said, I’ve got to share this policy with staff, so they know what the system direction is. To me there was no other option. …So between Day 1 and Day 2 over a couple of staff meetings we shared the policy. …Pretty dry stuff but this is the policy. When I got back to Day 2, I was the only one who had done that._
Tim explained that he was making this point not to be critical of others who attended the PD. Indeed, he acknowledged that he picked up many good ideas from colleagues on the second day, but rather to show the diverse ways in which system directives are being implemented. It could also be argued that it highlights a lack of prescription and/or departmental leadership. This meant that school responses were varied although he was sure that the organisers meant for participants to share the CAR policy with staff just as he had done. Tim justified the importance of his decision to respond to Day 1 of the PD by sharing the policy with staff when he explained that his staff, were much better informed when they went to a subsequent PD.

When the staff went to their own Making Consistent Judgements PD, which was the Year 3’s last year, they came back and said, you know we were the only ones there that knew about the CAR policy. And I’m thinking bloody hell, this is the policy that’s driving the whole program, this is what it all sits on. So maybe they do need to get more prescriptive, I don’t know.

The above recount shows that Tim places a high priority on the need for teachers to have a shared understanding of factors that are significant, from his perspective, in terms of whole school implementation. In this way teachers are better informed about the implementation process at a macro level, when considering the impact in their own classroom contexts. This is a key issue that is reflected in the findings of the Robson Report\textsuperscript{11} (2001) which states that, “effective school leaders…work with staff to show the

\textsuperscript{11} The mandate of the Robson report was to review organisational structures and strategies in government schools.
relationship between systemic initiatives and school priorities” (Robson, Harken & Hill, 2001, p. 52).

Tim conceded that there is undoubtedly a vast variety of ways in which different schools are approaching the implementation process. He pointed out that at the end of the day the new approach will work but only if schools are given the flexibility to make it work their own way. Tim openly admitted, however, that this flexibility was not only a strength of the system but also a weakness. This dilemma could be described as a ‘prescriptiveness paradox’. While this approach allows principals and teachers the flexibility to implement an outcomes approach that best suits their school’s needs, it can result in critical gaps in the implementation process, as the above example highlights.

Tim explained that for him the starting point with anything is to get people’s minds around the concepts first. His approach is based on the notion that you can simply tell people to change the way they act, but human nature dictates that this sort of change will be short lived. He believes that real and lasting change must begin with providing the time for people to get their mind around the philosophical reasoning that sits behind the need for change. In this way the focus is on changing the way people think from which their actions will also change more easily. Tim believes that all too often the process of change involves influencing people’s actions without addressing their rationale of thinking.
Outcomes based education is...about sharing a picture of what it looks like. Not saying you must read this and do it, but saying this is the thinking that sits behind the Curriculum Framework. That’s a change management philosophy and if you want change to be long lasting and cultural, it’s got to come from the person not from someone else. ...you’ve got to give them time to get their mind around the philosophy... so they can understand it and digest it and live it. You can’t just look at it and live it you’ve got to understand it.

A significant clue as to how teacher philosophy is developed can be found in the school’s strategic plan for 2003. Embedded in the strategies listed for the implementation of CIP are two key aspects. New staff are up-skilled in Key Understandings\textsuperscript{12} philosophy, and all teachers are required to plan guided by Key understandings from the Curriculum Framework.

An examination of the school’s 2001 annual report reveals that Tim believes the Department’s CIP has provided the teachers at Boronia Park with the knowledge and expertise necessary to successfully implement OFE using the Curriculum Framework. The report outlines how in their inaugural year Boronia Park held the Department’s Curriculum Improvement Program as one of their own priorities. The report then goes on to describe the results.

\textsuperscript{12} Term coined by Tim Burgan and discussed in more detail in the next section.
CIP is the move towards implementing an outcome-based education (OBE). This is a global trend and is quite a different philosophy. Here at Boronia Park we have focussed our efforts on gaining a common understanding from all staff on what outcome based education is about and how to implement the Department’s central vehicle the Curriculum Framework. PD was provided to staff that resulted in a common understanding/philosophy and the development of a planning approach that is being widely used in our school and has also spread throughout the district. This is an area in which a lot of schools struggle but in which, we seem to be leading the way.

(Boronia Park Primary School, Annual Report, 2001, p. 8)\textsuperscript{13}.

Clearly the principal believes that CIP has provided the panacea needed to ensure that all teachers understand OFE philosophy and will ensure successful implementation of the Curriculum Framework.

5.2.1.3 Implementation in the leadership context.

The school’s 2002 annual report provides some invaluable insights into the relationship between the Curriculum Framework and the planning process at Boronia Park. In a similar vein to the 2001 report, the CIP is described as being reflected strongly in the school’s own planning. The report then goes on to outline the results.

CIP forms a key part of our planning and accountability process. Teachers plan according to the Curriculum Framework. Our school has become a reference point for other schools with many staff being sought for advice and expertise in this area.

(Boronia Park Primary School, Annual Report, 2002, p. 7)\textsuperscript{14}.

\textsuperscript{13} In order to ensure anonymity of the school this document is not cited in the reference list.

\textsuperscript{14} In order to ensure anonymity of the school this document is not cited in the reference list.
Describing what whole school approach to the implementation of the *Curriculum Framework* had been developed, the principal explained that at Boronia Park his was unique and involved a markedly different philosophy than that used by many other principals. Tim explained that most principals view their strategic plan as their whole school approach which is not the case at Boronia Park. Tim described how the school’s strategic plan (displayed on a large pin up board beside the principal’s desk), has been developed using the four sub school (early childhood, years 1-3, years 4-5, and years 6-7) structures. Teachers in each sub school analyse student data, teacher judgement data, Western Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (WALNA) data and Monitoring Standards in Education (MSE) data to identify areas that they feel they need to work on. This data is then used as the basis for the development of the school’s strategic plan.

So, even though it’s a whole school approach in that we all strategically plan, we all strategically plan to meet perhaps different needs of kids and you can see by the priorities up there, priorities for 1-3, semester 1 reading, semester 2 spelling and writing and across the year working mathematically etc. They are priorities identified specific to those kids.

It can be seen that the school’s strategic plan closely mirrors the guidelines for whole school planning as outlined below by the Department of Education.
The whole-school planning process needs to include an outcomes-based curriculum provision focus.

The school's management information system can be used as a source of data about how well students are achieving in relation to the outcomes.

This will highlight how well the school's purpose is being met, how effectively the school's resources are being utilised, and whether action is needed to improve students' learning.

There are several dimensions of curriculum provision that need to be considered when reviewing and planning the school development plan.

Strengths and limitations could be identified, using the following guiding statements and questions, to assist the review and planning of the school's curriculum provision. Once teachers become familiar with their use, school development plans should help them to work more effectively and efficiently. The plan offers opportunities for teachers to participate in important decisions about their school's operation. The monitoring process incorporated in the plan also gives them feedback about their progress, thus reinforcing their efforts.

(Department of Education and Training, 2007, p 1).

Tim also described how he was going to modify the student data collection process by allowing teachers to express their own personal views about their students’ needs, although their views did not necessarily need to be justified with any specific data or results.

*Now teachers might agonise over – we have it now, teachers have said that kids’ spelling’s appalling, another class, our kids’ manners are appalling. There’s something teachers agonise over and I want to know what that is for staff and then use that to guide our planning as well. This gets reviewed every year.*
While the principal values the opinion of teachers and has actively sought to involve them in the schools strategic plan development process, it is clear that what is being focused on is less whole school but, more micro level, requiring action by teachers at the coal face in their individual classrooms.

Tim then went on to qualify his reasoning behind this approach, explaining that whole school initiatives don’t necessarily have to be explicitly embedded in the school’s strategic plan as there are other factors which facilitate their implementation.

> Whole school things happen whether they are priorities or not. ...We have had first steps reading PD and first steps maths PD in number. Now reading isn’t a priority for the 2/3s of the school but all of the staff do that PD because it’s a system initiative. Number’s not a priority for any of them but they will all do that because it’s a system initiative... so the priorities are actually targeting the needs of those kids and the whole school stuff happens anyway whereas before we thought its got to be in the school plan because it’s a whole school - no it doesn’t – it’s going to happen whether it’s in the school plan or not.

A perusal of the school plan document for 2005 showed that there were three distinct parts. The first page listed the ‘Planning Group Whole School’ areas for consideration which included; CIP2 (CF, levelling, moderation), System PD (First Steps), and Cross Curricular (consider how to integrate priority into other learning areas). The second page detailed the Aboriginal Education Plan. The remaining nine pages of the document detailed the strategic plans for each of the four sub-schools. The priority areas identified for the four sub schools are,
• **PP**: Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing, Number, Health/Values.
• **Yr 1-3**: Working Mathematically, Reading, Writing/Spelling.
• **Yr 4-5**: Writing/Spelling, Working Mathematically.
• **Yr 6-7**: Writing/Spelling, Self Management.

The document lists CIP2, System PD: First Steps, and Cross Curricular Integration as ‘considerations’ for the three sub schools. The document also lists a number of ‘strategies’ for each priority area. For example the Yr 1-3 priority area of spelling and writing strategies include;

- **Yr 1/2 value phonics**
- **Yr 1/3 modelled grapho-phonics strategies**
- **Mentoring – THRASS strategies**
- **Reading Journal**
- **Use science as a vehicle for promoting writing**
- **Development of whole school editing code.**
- **Workshop by local WA authors as school – examine writer in residence.**

It can be seen that the school plan is somewhat eclectic. The Considerations are identifiably whole school in vision while many of the strategies focus more micro level aspects.

**5.2.1.4 OFE reflected in teaching.**

For teachers at the coalface Tim described the implementation of OFE as,

...a change in focus from teaching a curriculum to teaching kids...being driven by that bigger picture understanding and the need to address the needs of the kids rather than teach a curriculum.
He was careful to clarify that although this was a shift away from teaching practices of the so called old days, he conceded that there are teachers who have always taught the individual, thereby subscribing to the OFE philosophy well before its more recent official introduction.

Tim made a point of explaining that a fundamental problem that he has encountered is that teachers don’t fully understand the philosophy of OFE, which is reflected in their misuse of the Curriculum Framework and the Progress Maps. He cited an example of the comments made by a teacher in her accountability interview relating to her approach to planning. The teacher had described how her planning was towards level 3 because she had year 7 and most of the children were level 3. When he asked her how she was using the Curriculum Framework she replied that she wasn’t using it at all. Tim described his reaction as,

…and just alarm bells rang…and I’m thinking this is not how it should be…I’m thinking this is not right...

As a means of addressing this problem Tim, with the assistance of teachers and administrators, spearheaded the development of a school based guide to assist teachers in understanding OFE and how the Curriculum Framework and Outcomes and Standards Framework can be used in the process. This involved unpacking the scope section of the English and Mathematics learning areas to tease out what he described as the key understandings for the different phases of development. Tim explains that it
is interesting that other educational practitioners have also adopted this same approach in their use of the *Curriculum Framework*.

...the *First Steps maths* is now based on a concept called key understandings taken from the scope of the curriculum in the *Curriculum Framework*. It is awfully ironic that we should develop this 5-6 years ago...

This comment by Tim suggests that as other educational practitioners are also using the *Curriculum Framework* in a similar way, this provides support that his understanding of how the *Curriculum Framework* should be used is correct.

A key aspect of the implementation process at Boronia Park involves a chain of accountability that operates through the school’s staff management policy. The policy incorporates performance management, professional growth and accountability. It’s stated purpose is to assist teachers in developing, reflecting and reviewing their teaching practices against the principles and practices associated with OFE. Tim explained that he and the two other deputy principals conduct accountability interviews with teachers that require them to develop a performance management action plan and complete an accountability appraisal document. Teachers then meet formally with their line managers in term 1 to view their action plan, have various informal meetings through the year and meet again formally in term 4 to review their performance.
We have an accountability structure where we give staff this sheet and ask them questions. Very wordy but it’s virtually saying, how are you using the Scope of the Curriculum\(^\text{15}\), and the Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment\(^\text{16}\). How do you cater for special groups, how are you addressing your block’s plan, which is those things (pointing to the school’s strategic plan on the wall). So staff have to say this is what I’m doing ...so there’s an accountability structure and we have an interview with people to see how they are going and that couples up with their performance management structure. So we have developed that over time. That’s the formal side of it.

An examination of the teacher accountability framework and the performance management section of the document entitled ‘Performance Management: Guided self-reflection’, found that teachers are required to reflect on their understanding of the broad principles articulated within the Curriculum Framework and that much of the accountability process relates to issues such as classroom management, consultation and advice to parents, professionalism and the like.

A perusal of the documents show that they both make specific reference to the Curriculum Framework and also identify many of the tenets of OFE on which teachers are required to reflect.

Tim identifies this formal aspect of teacher accountability as only one side of the process, which he believes is strongly supported by more spontaneous and informal interactions that he has with teachers.

\(^{15}\) A section contained within the Curriculum Framework that is designed to provide a snapshot of learning and teaching at each phase of development.

\(^{16}\) A section contained within the Curriculum Framework that describes the principles which should guide learning, teaching and assessment for students to achieve the outcomes in the Framework.
The informal side is you walk through the rooms, you have professional discussions about things and to be honest that’s probably the more powerful of the two approaches because it’s regular, it’s ongoing, it’s non-threatening. But you don’t have to spend long in a classroom to realise what is going on. So I guess there’s the two sides to that.

This was a very interesting point that the principal made as the researcher was able to note with particular interest the frequency with which he visited the various classrooms in which the researcher was undertaking observations. He did indeed enter rooms in a very unobtrusive way, making a point of not interrupting the teacher in the process of delivering their lesson but quietly stopping at a student’s desk at random to ask them about what they were working on then providing them with some positive feedback before continuing on his way out of the classroom. While it can be argued that many principals sitting in their administrative ivory towers are out of touch with the realities faced by teachers at the coalface, Tim is visibly proactive in keeping in touch with classroom practices within his school, allowing him to see first hand, evidence of OFE practices in the classroom.

5.2.1.5 OFE reflected in learning.

Tim acknowledges that providing an effective learning environment for students, with an OFE focus, requires teachers to focus on the needs of the children rather than focus on teaching a highly structured or specified
Tim explains that attempting to cater for the individual learning requirements of every child in the classroom can be problematic for teachers.

*If a teacher focuses on the collective needs of one section of the class the others will miss out.*

While Tim acknowledged this aspect of learning and teaching with an OFE focus creates a real dilemma for teachers at the coalface, he did not provide any insight into how teachers can successfully address this issue.

**5.2.1.6 OFE reflected in assessment.**

Implementing assessment practices that reflect OFE philosophy has been in part the focus of CIP2. Tim has developed a 2 year time line for staff in years 3, 5 and 7, who will be undertaking the Making Consistent Judgements PD officially, to then in-service the rest of the teaching staff. This time line has been developed based on Tim’s philosophy that;

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17 The purpose of the Making Consistent Judgements PD was to assist teachers in the levelling of students.
...you can’t just send someone to a PD and they know it, and then they come back and teach the teachers, it’s not going to work that way.

Tim explained that the year 3 teachers who have already undertaken the Making Consistent Judgements moderation process PD will share that knowledge with staff through some shared PD over the next two terms. This he believes will give other staff a bit of an idea about what it’s about but acknowledges it is purely a toe in the water exercise. The following year, the year 5 and year 7 teachers will also have completed the PD. During that second year the year 3 teachers will work with the year 1 and 2 teachers and share with them what making consistent judgements is all about. The year 5 teachers will work with the year 4 teachers and the year 7 teachers will work with the year 6 teachers. Tim explained that this is facilitated by the way the classroom blocks are arranged.

So over 2 years they will all have been exposed to it and actually had time to understand it. That’s change management as apposed to do the PD and they’re ok. I get back to that philosophy stuff, you need to get the thinking right before your actions change and that’s the same here.

It is interesting to note that while Tim acknowledges the lack of enthusiasm of some staff, it clearly does not concern him, as he believes that the two year plan will facilitate the engagement of staff over the extended period allocated and result in lasting change.
Given that the policies referred to above focus primarily on assessment and monitoring there is very little information that helps people to understand why these policies have been implemented. Without this fundamental understanding it is therefore not surprising that teachers are complacent and show little interest. It could be argued that the negative attitude of some staff is purely a reflection of the principal’s own views.

...the problem is the assessment tends to drive what we do, we become assessment driven and when you become assessment driven your time and your effort is taken away from the thing which is important, which is teaching and learning.

While the principal believes the *Curriculum Framework* to be an awesome document he is still not convinced on the purpose of a major assessment focus.

5.2.1.7 OFE reflected in reporting to parents.

Tim believes strongly that reporting to parents should be a dynamic process, acknowledging both the strengths and limitations of any one particular reporting method. In acknowledgement of this the principal has implemented a range of reporting methods. In term 1 the teachers conduct three way interviews with parents and students and in term 2 parents receive a written report developed by the school, in a format aligned to the Department’s schedule B report. In term 3 the school holds an open night when parents can come in and have their children show them their work and have a chat to the teacher and in term 4 parents receive the written
report developed by the Department. Tim also acknowledges another aspect to the reporting process that involves the less formal and more spontaneous interactions that occur between teachers and parents as being important.

The best way to tell a parent how their kid’s going, is to literally tell them how they’re going. You are not going to get a great indication off that (pointing to report schedule B). But, you see reporting to parents has to be a package ...and our package is, three way interviews,... a school report,... an open night... and a formal report. So that’s the formal side of the package. The informal side is parents dropping and talking to teachers..., and teachers ringing home and all that sort of stuff. So reporting is actually a package, not an event, it is the things that happen over time.

With the advent of OFE, many schools are experimenting with the use of student portfolios which provide, through work samples, a visible demonstration of what students know, understand and can do (Willis, 1998, p. 22). Of particular interest is the fact that Boronia Park does not use portfolios. The principal believes that portfolios are more useful if they are used in the context of teacher records where annotated work samples are collected and used as a teacher reference however he is adamant that portfolios fall gravely short of being an accurate reporting tool. Tim believes that portfolios are often compiled incorrectly and he is also very conscious of the impost that is placed on teachers in terms of time and resources that teachers feel obliged to put into the content and presentation of portfolios.
People promote portfolios as a reporting tool... but the reality of portfolios isn’t that. The reality of a lot of classrooms with portfolios is the last three weeks of term there is a mad rush to put stuff in there. Teaching and learning is out the window because people are so busy cutting and pasting and doing all these rubrics and bits and pieces... you can’t say that’s a valid reporting tool and even people will say to the kids before they even do it, “this is a portfolio piece so do a good job.”

It is interesting to note that the parents of children who had received portfolios in kindy and pre-primary also did not consider them to be a valid reporting tool.

*Parent:* It’s just a file of work samples, it doesn’t give me any information about how they are going.

*Parent:* Sometimes they are done so nice in the book and stuck in so neatly in kindy and pre-primary that you wonder if it is all their work.

While Tim clearly has a very thorough and in-depth understanding of OBE philosophy, it is in stark contrast to all of the parents interviewed with the exception of one parent of a year seven student. The parents had not heard of OBE or OFE nor had they any understanding of what it entailed. Some of them had noticed only minor changes to teaching practices. One parent had noticed that the style of writing had changed and another parent was aware that the reports had changed and they no longer did ‘A,B, C or F’. They could not recollect receiving anything from the school or the Department. During a parent interview one parent commented that,
There might have been something in one of the newsletters, but it’s most probably something that has not sunk in or didn’t read it.

Parent.

In view of the lack of parent understanding on the shift to OFE, it is not surprising that Tim conceded that he has not had a lot of feedback from parents about their views on the shift to an outcomes approach. He attributes this to the fact that the school only came into being 4 years ago and admits that the education process of parents has been lacking.

...I haven’t had a lot of feedback in general and that’s most probably attributed to the fact that we haven’t had that education process with parents really about what it’s all about. We have given them snippets.

Tim explained that OFE is discussed in various contexts with parents such as allaying concerns regarding split classes. Parents are told that OFE addresses the needs of each child individually so they are not disadvantaged by being placed in a split class. However Tim concedes that,

...we don’t do a heck of a lot. The odd newsletter bit but not really a lot and that’s probably something we need to work on because we do have to undertake this big education program of parents sooner or later. Probably sooner than later the better.

5.2.1.8 Synopsis.

Tim feels he has a comprehensive understanding of OFE. He expresses as a priority, the need to ensure staff share his big picture understanding of
OFE which he describes as, focusing on outcomes rather than inputs, an acknowledgement of what children can rather than can’t do, meeting their individual needs, as well as successful implementation of the *Curriculum Framework* with a particular focus on the Scope of the Curriculum section of the document.

Tim considers himself to be proactive in including teachers in the development of the school’s strategic plan and is sensitive to the added imposts that some widely used initiatives such as portfolios place on teachers. However, there appears to be a lack of clarity between this big picture understanding of OFE and exactly what OFE will look like within classroom contexts.

He has a definite view that change management needs to be based on two related aspects if it is to be effective and long lasting. Firstly, if you focus on changing how people think, then a change in their actions will more easily follow. Secondly, you need to give people time for their change in thinking to occur.

Tim places a high priority on *up skilling* all staff new to the school. He chooses to do this by *walking* staff members individually through his school based key understanding guide. This coupled with the CIP program run by the school Tim believes provides all staff with the complete knowledge base and understanding necessary to successfully implement an outcomes approach within their own classrooms.
Tim believes that the performance management processes operating in the school coupled with the informal walks that he undertakes through classes provides him with the assurances that teachers are implementing best OFE practices in their classrooms.

Tim acknowledges that catering for the needs of each child on an individual basis is problematic when implementing an OFE approach, however, he fails to provide any insight into how teachers can successfully address this problem in the classroom.

Tim is critical of an over emphasis on assessment and maintains that the focus must be on the *Curriculum Framework*. Tim sees himself as the lynchpin for implementation and for enabling his staff to understand what he considers to be important in OFE. He acknowledges that this has been his focus and has not yet reached the broader school community.

He believes that a lot of schools have rushed in, with principals simply demanding that teachers meet unrealistic implementation timelines while providing no change management and, no time for teachers to understand what it's all about.
5.3 The Early Childhood Perspective.

5.3.1 Jane Turner.

Jane Turner\textsuperscript{18}, the year 1 teacher has been teaching for nearly ten years. This is her second year teaching year one, and for the previous eight years she taught pre primary. The classroom observations revealed the room to be bright and colourful. A large fish net hangs across the front ceiling area and student work and environmental print adorns the windows and walls. A cluster of cushions in the corner of the room, is used by the children during informal mat sessions and provide a cosy and relaxed atmosphere. The desks are arranged into four groups of six and positioned to allow for a mat area at the front of the room, and a student work table area near the door. School bags are stored on the bench seat outside the room (as is the case for all classes) and each child has a chair bag hanging on the back of their seat.

5.3.1.1 Jane’s understanding of OFE.

Jane explained that she learnt about OFE mainly through her initial teacher training, specialising in early childhood education. This understanding has not been particularly expanded at Boronia Park.

\textit{\ldots at Boronia Park we haven't done a lot of PD with the Curriculum Framework.}

\textsuperscript{18} Name is a pseudonym used to ensure the anonymity of the participant in the study
She believes that her initial teacher training instilled in her an understanding that children develop at different ages and require various activities that cater for individual needs. She learnt to appreciate how diverse the development is in young children and that children need time to learn. Having come from this background Jane explained that she already valued OFE philosophy and didn’t really know any different.

...when I came out teaching it was just as the old curriculum was thrown out so when I began teaching there wasn’t really a curriculum as such for me to follow, but that didn’t bother me because having gone through uni I felt I had the freedom to do what I felt suited the kids’ needs.

This was an interesting comment by Jane and it was not clear if she uses any of the support material from the old curriculum. An interesting link to this can be found in the school developed Key Understanding Guide\textsuperscript{19}. The document states that,

\textit{Teachers should use teaching strategies to develop Key Understandings eg. First Steps etc.}

A thought bubble emanating from the planning circle explains that teachers should;

\textit{Plan learning programs around Key Understandings. Teachers have been using quality teaching strategies for years. Let’s not make the mistake of throwing the baby out with the bathwater!}

\textsuperscript{19} This school based document was developed to assist teachers in their understanding of OFE and how the CF can be used in the process
5.3.1.2 Jane's perspective on whole school implementation.

Jane’s understanding from a whole school implementation perspective is expressed as the process whereby information and directives filter down from the administrative level via the principal and line managers to the teachers.

*The admin team are really good at bringing things to our attention and running through it briefly at our staff meetings and then giving us the freedom to trial different things in our own classroom, or if it’s not really applicable at the time they are happy for us, as long as we are aware of different things and we have read them and aware if it’s going to have implications in our classroom. For example, the CAR policy, instead of admin just giving us a piece of paper and saying that’s it, they work it into our block meetings and give us time to discuss and work it into our school plan.*

The amount of information that is directed to Boronia Park by the Curriculum Council and the Department of Education is extensive and Jane relies on the administrative team to screen and pass on what they consider to be relevant information that the teachers need to know. Clearly, it is not only the type of information that is passed on that Jane considers extremely helpful but more importantly it is the way in which the information is disseminated that is critical to the way it is acknowledged and taken up by teachers.
The directions come from the admin but they help to make it relevant. Otherwise a lot of stuff that comes through your pigeonhole, because you are so busy as a teacher you may glance at it and never get back to looking at it properly until the end of the term when you clean out your bag. Because of the way it all filters down through the admin to our block meetings I feel we are doing it because it is relevant to our school and our kids rather than doing it or taking notice of it just because it is a Curriculum Council directive or initiative.

5.3.1.3 Implementation in the ECE context.

Jane is mindful of organising her room to ensure that it is conducive to the needs of the children and facilitates collaborative group work. She changes the layout regularly and believes that her classroom set up falls well outside the more traditional class layouts she has observed

My classroom set up I find is a lot different to other year one rooms that I see ...I sit my kids a lot more in groups and have learning centres. Whereas other classes are more traditional where the kids sit in rows and all the desks face the blackboard.

Implementing an outcomes focused approach in year one has not been unproblematic for Jane. She acknowledged that she struggled going from pre primary to year one and changing over from an older, established school to Boronia Park Primary School, which is still developing its pool of teacher and student resources. She has also found that the design of the classroom itself has inhibited her ability to fully implement what she considers to be an outcomes approach.
She believes that the junior primary classes should be set out more like the pre-primary rooms in order to facilitate an outcomes approach. She describes her ideal classroom as one, which is a lot bigger with a wet area that has direct line of sight from the main classroom teaching area, so that different activities can be run at the same time.

...that way if kids needed a longer time to finish a certain activity it doesn’t need to be packed up, you can leave it out. At the moment we have the common wet area but you can’t really see into it from your classroom. It would be good if we had more concertina doors that you could open wider so you have that visual and can supervise them. In year one you only have enough desks, chairs, pigeon holes and trays for the kids and that’s it.

Jane believes that the classroom layout and the limited access to materials and equipment restricts the types of activities and the frequency with which they are presented to children.

The pre-primary have the veranda with a tap on it and water trolleys and the sand trays, that you can access whenever you like.... Whereas in year one you set it up for a lesson in the wet area and then you have to pack it away and return it, so it tends to be a one off lesson...

Jane also considers the Technology and Enterprise learning area somewhat problematic to implement believing that again it is the classroom layout that impacts on her ability to implement it efficiently.
Due to the nature of Science, and Society and Environment they do tend to already be outcomes focused but Technology and Enterprise is not something I have learnt to put into my day to day activities or into a thematic program. That gets back to ...the classroom set up. If you could have an area with equipment and materials, and the kids come up with an idea you could say 'go for it’. As it is we need to go away and organise it and collect materials.

These comments tend to suggest that Jane has constructed her understanding of OFE around enquiry based or discovery learning and that she sees the physical layout of the school as working against her capacity to implement an OFE approach.

5.3.1.4 OFE reflected in teaching.

Using the Curriculum Framework is a key aspect of the planning process for Jane. She explained that she begins by filling in a brainstorming sheet with the chosen theme in the middle, linked to a variety of different activities. She uses colour codes to identify which learning area, eg English, the activity relates to. She then cross-references this sheet to an A3 sheet, which outlines the 13 Overarching Learning Outcomes and the different sub-strands. Jane explains that in this way she can see which Overarching Learning Outcomes have and have not been covered.

The whole planning process for teaching and learning, changes as the year progresses. Jane explained that in term 1 she plans a lot of transition

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20 The 13 Overarching Learning Outcomes describe the outcomes all students need to obtain in order to become lifelong learners, achieve their potential in the personal and working lives and play an active part in civic and economic life.
activities to move the children from pre-primary to year 1, so the programming is quite open. She also undertakes a lot of observations and has the children complete assessment pieces so that she can ascertain where each child is at in terms of academic achievement. It is not until about half way through the term that she concedes that she really starts to plan as she then has the information to plan from.

...the kids this year were very weak on alphabet sounds and initial sounds, so I found myself in the last half of term one planning at lot more language based activities with the sounds. Whereas last year the kids were strong in that so I went straight into planning activities on 2-3 letter words and different language activities.

In relation to teaching practices that reflect OFE philosophy, Jane explains that she considers that teaching children at this early developmental stage, requires the need for syllabus structure and explicit teaching. Her responses tend to suggest that she is of the belief that many of the teaching strategies that she implements are not in keeping with an OFE approach.

To ensure that learning for the children has an outcomes focus, particularly in year one I still think they need direct instruction and certain instructions and specific content, eg numbers, the alphabet, sounds.

It is interesting to note that Jane considers that the direct instruction and rote teaching methods that she employs are not consistent with the tenets of outcomes based education.
I still use direct instruction the way the old syllabus demanded, even rote learning. Because you need to build that direct instruction before you can expect them to be able to do a lot more open ended tasks.

5.3.1.5 OFE reflected in learning.

Jane negotiates the themes that will be used as a basis for learning thereby providing the children with the motivation and purpose to stimulate their engagement in the learning process.

I also give them a lot more choice about what they are learning, eg, we had a class meeting and brainstormed the themes we had learnt about, then looked at a calendar for next term and thought about the different dates, and also brainstormed things they were interested in and I then worked out how I could put their more specific interests like planes, and astronauts etc, into a theme. So they have more ownership about what they are learning and find it more interesting, which means that they will be more interested in learning it.

Jane is conscious of the fact that children learn in different ways and devises different lessons that meet the diverse needs of the children.

...I try to integrate games, art and music into lessons so that kids can learn the concept in a way that suits their interest or personality. The kids might stamp words in play dough or write on the white boards, or play carpet square hop scotch to sound out words.

Jane also uses a series of symbols on work to show progress of learning.

Although this process is not transparent for the children or the parents.
I use star, triangle and circle symbols on their work to denote, beginning, developing and achieved. That way I know what they mean but the children and parents who look at the work don’t.

It could be argued that if the children are to become reflective of their learning then it would be helpful for the developmental symbols to be explained to them. Jane’s comment would suggest that she is not willing to, or thinks them incapable of engaging in this process as yet.

5.3.1.6 OFE reflected in assessment.

Evaluating student learning is extensive and ongoing for Jane. She uses a variety of checklists and collects anecdotal notes that are used to compile a student profile for each child over the course of each term.

By the end of the term I might have 20-30 pages of different check lists then regularly enter them into my records book on the computer.

5.3.1.7 OFE reflected in reporting to parents.

Jane finds the formal report formats to be problematic and quite hard as a means of reporting student progress to parents. She believes that the format does not allow her to adequately show student progress and relies on the comment section as a means of explaining to parents why the report has been filled out that way.
...a child may be below their peers but have still made good progress personally, but the dot on the report makes it look quite harsh and looks like the child hasn’t learnt anything...

A critique of the report format that Jane refers to does appear to make it problematic to report progress to parents, particularly when a child is working below the expected level of achievement, as the following figure shows.

![Expected range of achievement](image)

Figure 5.1 Band used to report learning area progress.

Teachers are required to use the above band to report progress in all strands for each learning area. There is also a small space under each learning area for the teacher to write a very brief comment and slightly more space to write a general comment at the end of the report.

Jane believes that a standard report across the board is good but argues that it is not always appropriate, despite the fact that teachers at the school had a significant input into its development. She believes that some of the wording is not applicable to year one and cited the social and emotional section of the back of the report as an example.
Because they are year one they are still very egocentric. Developmentally they don’t need to be beyond that and some of the values are quite advanced, like active citizenship, and for year one they are only just beginning to understand the consequences of their actions.

The report contains a basic continuum line for each of the five values\(^{21}\), on which the teacher must place a dot to indicate the each child’s level of achievement.

\[\text{Inconsistent} \quad \bullet \quad \text{Consistent}\]

Figure 5.2 Band used to report level of achievement of values.

Jane’s comments raise questions with respect to the extent to which the core values of the Curriculum Framework need to be reported upon and the overall complexity of the reporting process as adopted at Boronia Park.

### 5.3.1.8 Synopsis.

Jane considers that she has a thorough understanding of OFE. She attributes her ongoing understanding to the way admin filters and provides what is considered to be relevant information to her and she is confident that this process has operated in her best interests.

\(^{21}\) The values include; pursuit of knowledge and a commitment to achievement of potential, self acceptance and respect of self, respect and concern for others and their rights, social and civic responsibility, and environmental responsibility.
Jane plans using the *Curriculum Framework* and has an understanding of the core values. However it is interesting to note that Jane considers the physical layout of the school to be a barrier to OFE implementation and it is also interesting that she does not feel that direct instruction or rote learning are in keeping with the tenets of OFE.

With no set syllabus to restrict her planning she is able to meet what she identifies to be the needs of the students.

Jane’s assessment practices are not transparent for the students or the parents.

Jane finds the report format problematic to use, particularly the values section.

### 5.4 The Middle Childhood Perspective.

#### 5.4.1 Brian Senna.

Brian Senna\(^\text{22}\) the year 4 teacher, has an impressive thirty years of teaching experience and comes across as enthusiastic and highly motivated. His classroom is bright and open with the desks arranged in groups that seat up to eight students. The middle of the class is clear of furniture, providing a central mat area for students to sit. Student work is displayed on the walls around the room and three fish tanks near the window, containing fish, marron and crazy crabs are collectively cared for by the students in the

\(^{22}\text{Name is a pseudonym used to ensure the anonymity of the participant in the study}\)
class. The atmosphere is very relaxed and the students have a clear understanding of the expectations for classroom routines and protocols.

5.4.1.1 Brian’s understanding of OFE.

Brian explained that for the most part he developed his current understanding about outcomes focused education at his previous school in his capacity as the mathematics coordinator. One of the critical factors that he believed impacted on the development of his understanding was the fact that the reason for change was not explained to staff.

The other staff and I were not so much adverse to change, I mean change is fine so long as you understand why you have to change and we weren’t really told why we were changing. So the school that I was at went a bit negative towards it. But most of us thought well the change is coming so let’s just get on with it.

While Brian does not consider that he has gained more knowledge of outcomes focused education at Boronia Park, he does feel that he has been able to consolidate his existing knowledge. This he believes has been facilitated by the capacity to network with other experienced teachers and share information and ideas.

...you are working with a lot of experienced teachers who you can talk through problems with and that works really well...
5.4.1.2 Brian’s perspective on whole school implementation.

Brian acknowledges that change must be relevant and that the principal plays a critical role in actively supporting teachers to overcome problems with implementation.

... you are not under the pressure to do it, you do it because there’s a reason. Tim is very good. He likes you to try things but he doesn’t hassle you if you don’t and if you have problems with something he will help you through it.

Brian also believes that a philosophy of change for change sake will not necessarily manifest in teachers the impetus and motivation necessary for the successful implementation of directives. He explains that teachers need to be given the flexibility to implement aspects of an outcomes approach that best suit their own approaches to teaching. Brian believes that Tim provides that flexibility which is highlighted in the way he is able to plan.

*I plan completely differently from the way I used to plan. I use the 13 Overarching Learning Outcomes (OLOs) in my planning and that works really well for me. That’s not the school policy to use that but Tim has said that I’ve got so much experience that I know exactly what needs to be taught and when. So that system works really well for me.*

While Brian believes this system works well, a subsequent comment by him suggests that this approach to using the *Curriculum Framework* is still somewhat problematic for him.
I use the Curriculum Framework all the time...I’ve got that open there. I get a bit confused with some of the Overarching Learning Outcomes so I have to keep reading them.

This comment would tend to suggest that Brian still lacks a solid understanding of the Overarching Learning Outcomes and how they were intended to be used. It would appear that Brian’s engagement with the Curriculum Framework is still formative.

5.4.1.3 Implementation in the middle childhood context.

The critical factors that Brian believes are necessary for successful implementation of OFE in the classroom are professional development coupled with time. Brian explains that PD alone without being given time to understand and implement it is inadequate.

...we were getting some of the PD thrown at you and never really had a chance to digest it, or it was too easy to be negative, but if you have the time to think about things and then get the PD when you are ready for the next stage that is the way to go.

Brian also explains that these factors also need to be coupled with a philosophical shift in thinking about educational practices.

I just think you need that attitude that you are not just teaching the children, getting the children to achieve, it’s a change of emphasis and a change of attitude really and once you’ve got that you can start to figure everything else into it.
Brian’s comment here mirrors one of the key tenets of OFE as espoused by Tim.

As far as the classroom is concerned Brian has always liked the group set up and while he concedes that bigger classrooms would be nice he does not consider this to be a prerequisite to successful implementation of OFE.

5.4.1.4 OFE reflected in teaching.

For Brian an outcomes approach facilitates the integration of lessons across learning areas and fits easily with his preference to work in themes, for which he programs on a fortnightly basis. He constantly refers to the OLOs as a guide and uses open-ended tasks as a means of facilitating the integration process.

*I don’t have to say, this is maths, this is science etc. I can cross those boundaries using the OLOs. With open-ended tasks you can cope with three or four different learning areas and I can program it easily.*

The above comment would suggest that for Brian it is a case of OFE fitting nicely with his existing teaching pedagogy. There is little that has required change other than using OLOs for planning and focusing on the use of open ended tasks.
5.4.1.5 OFE reflected in learning.

Brian acknowledges that implementing an OFE approach requires an understanding that learning is developmental and that the boundaries between distinctive year levels have been erased. He believes that learning must be needs-based requiring teachers to provide open ended tasks that allow every student to achieve to their potential.

You haven’t really finished when you have taught something you have to keep going until they achieve it.

While Brian clearly believes it is the responsibility of the teacher to persist until a child has learnt what is being taught, it is interesting to note that the students in Brian’s class consider that the locus of control for learning lies predominantly with them.

Student 1: Probably me because it’s up to me to get things in my head, not really the teacher, but he has to tell us what to put in our heads so a bit of both. Me about 90%.

Student 2: Me because the teacher doesn’t have my brain so it’s up to me. I have a little bit more control than the teacher.

Student 3: Mainly me and the teacher about 30%.

5.4.1.6 OFE reflected in assessment.

Brian explained that he uses a variety of methods to evaluate student learning including formal tests although he concedes that he does not give a lot of these, using them only occasionally.
…there’s checklists, observation grids, general discussions…I collect up their work and look at that, their journals.

5.4.1.7 OFE reflected in reporting to parents.

Brian was more inclined to discuss the new reports that teachers at the school are to use in the future, rather than the current report formats. While he had several reservations about the format of the new reports it was clear that some aspects of the report currently in use have not been unproblematic.

…there is a lot more of the values stuff which we found difficult.

5.4.1.8 Synopsis.

Brian developed his current understanding at his previous school but concedes that he has been able to consolidate this knowledge at Boronia Park and has found that networking with other teachers to be integral to this process. He considers PD and time as critical factors to successful implementation of OFE in his context.

Brian believes that it is highly beneficial that admin does not place teachers under pressure to implement specific directives, but rather provides constructive feedback and support to overcome problems as well as allowing teachers the flexibility to implement initiatives in a way that suits them.
Brian’s engagement with the *Curriculum Framework* seems principally through the use of the OLOs to support planning with other aspects of his pedagogy remaining unchanged as OFE fits with his existing practices.

Brian does however have similar concerns to Jane with respect to reporting and the place of values within the reporting process.

### 5.5 The Early Adolescent Perspective.

#### 5.5.1 Jan Loran.

Jan Loran\(^{23}\), a foundation teacher at Boronia Park, teaches one of the two split classes of year 6/7 students at the school. What is significant about this is the fact that she team-teaches with the other 6/7 teacher. The concertina doors, which separate the classes, are permanently drawn back and the two groups of students are integrated together throughout the day’s lessons, working in table groups of 10-12 students of mixed year and ability levels.

The two teachers plan programs together and jointly supervise lessons. Many of the lessons are based on group rotation activities and the adjoining wet area is utilised on a regular basis. This approach appeared to work extremely well and it was not immediately obvious that there were 56 students working in the one area, as the combined classroom space was effectively doubled. Jan had two table groups in her room space while the

\(^{23}\) Name is a pseudonym used to ensure the anonymity of the participant in the study
other teacher had three. This allowed for the creation of a large effective mat area in the middle of the two rooms, which gave the whole work area an open and spacious feel. There was never any confusion as to where students should be or what they should be doing and the day’s activities always appeared to run smoothly. Jan conceded that the success of this team teaching approach was in no small part due to the fact that she and the other teacher had very similar teaching styles so there was no conflict for students and they did not teach over the top of each other.

5.5.1.1 Jan’s understanding of OFE.

Initially when Jan was asked how she had developed her current understanding of OFE she was somewhat perplexed by the question as she was not immediately conscious of the process.

Um, osmosis, I don’t really know…

She went on to explain that she returned to teaching after a long break just as OFE was being introduced, although she found that there was not a significant pedagogical shift required on her part as she already used this approach. She believes that her understanding has developed over a period of time through a number of different avenues.

So it has developed over time really, doing PD, talking to people, having to re-look at what you were doing through the Curriculum Framework. That philosophy has always been my approach to teaching. It has been a case of the Curriculum Framework simply crystallizing that approach in a formal way.
As far as keeping abreast of the latest changes related to OFE are concerned Jan relies heavily on admin to provide relevant information.

*I think a lot of it Tim will tell us what is going on so it filters down that way.*

It would appear that Jan has had to make little change to her teaching practices and believes that OFE is simply a reflection of good teaching practices.

*...OFE is all about the way you teach.*

5.5.1.2 Jan’s perspective on whole school implementation.

Jan identifies a consistent whole school understanding of OFE as being a critical factor if implementation in the classroom is to be successful.

*I need the admin to support me in everything I do. I need them to also understand what OFE is all about too, so the things that we do, they can see the merit in them.*

Jan also relies heavily on the admin staff to screen and pass on relevant information, explaining that she does not have the time to read everything that is passed down through the Department.
We get the Curriculum Council newsletter that comes out detailing the latest things that are happening, but basically I don’t read them. I don’t have time. If it is a choice between reading the newsletter and a memo which has direct implications, I will read the memo and hope that the admin filter down any important changes, which fortunately they do. It’s not that I don’t want to read them it is just a time factor.

5.5.1.3 Implementation in the early adolescent context.

Jan also believes that an understanding of OFE philosophy coupled with active support by all stakeholders including parents is essential to successful implementation.

You need to understand what it is. You need to understand what you are trying to achieve. You need to have a philosophy of teaching. You need to have good people around you to support you. You need to make sure the parents understand where you are going with their child. You need the material things but OBE is nothing without the support of all those other factors.

Jan places a high priority on parent understanding of OFE, however, this is a far cry from the reality for the majority of parents interviewed. Indeed, of all the parents interviewed across the three year levels, only one year six parent was familiar with the term outcomes focused education. The parent’s initial understanding was formed at a remote northwest school some years previously.

I went along as a parent and it was the P&C and the principal and explaining the Curriculum Framework as it was being introduced to the schools...

Parent.
5.5.1.4 **OFE reflected in teaching.**

Jan states that with her teaching she has gravitated back to using more of a syllabus approach. She feels that teaching using an outcomes approach is far too open with a much greater onus being placed on the teacher to ensure that they cover everything. This she believes becomes problematic if a teacher assumes that what they do not cover, teachers in subsequent years will. By the same token Jan considers that the old style syllabus approach is too rigid and acknowledges the advantages that an outcomes approach affords teachers.

*Outcomes has allowed for people to develop fantastic palates and personalities within the classroom and teach in a way that suits them...*

5.5.1.5 **OFE reflected in learning.**

Jan has clear expectations of what she considers to be important to successful learning using an outcomes approach.

*For the kids to not judge themselves against other kids even though they do. The children need to understand that they are being assessed on what they can do and are not being judged against the achievements of other students.*

What Jan finds is most problematic is the fact that the current standard of learning that children are achieving using an outcomes approach she feels to be inadequate. She believes that learning in the early years is well
defined with the younger children learning specific things like phonics. However, once past this she believes that teachers are failing to ask critical questions like; what do the children actually learn?, and; what do they really need to learn?. Jan believes that teachers get so immersed in teaching themes such as ‘dinosaurs’ or ‘Egypt’ that they fail to develop a clear purpose so the question of what teachers want children to learn is not specified.

_For the children coming through to my class, they arrive with very poor skills. The children I see are not confident in a lot of the formal aspects of learning that we would like them to be competent in. Yes, they know how to research etc, but not enough know how to write genres._

This comment by Jan suggests that she believes that OFE at Boronia Park has resulted in critical gaps in skills and knowledge of students.

**5.5.1.6 OFE reflected in assessment.**

Jan uses a variety of methods to assess student learning. What is significant from an OFE perspective is the fact that Jan uses negotiated criteria and ensures that assessment is transparent.

_We use a wide range. We vary it to try to make it fair. We use rubrics so the assessment is open and the children know what is being assessed if they want to try to get a better mark. We even use negotiated criteria that the children have input into developing._
5.5.1.7 OFE reflected in reporting to parents.

While Jan has found the school based reports used over the last few years to be quite good she does not think there is anything very much outcomes focused about the new reports. Although she acknowledges that it will not take half as much time to complete she believes parents will not get an accurate picture of their child’s progress.

5.5.1.8 Synopsis.

Jan could not recall how she developed her understanding of OFE but conceded that she was already using most of the tenets of OFE so the change to this approach made little difference to her pedagogy.

Jan believes that support from admin is critical to successful implementation in her context and requires admin to also have a clear understanding of OFE philosophy so that they endorse what she does in the classroom.

Jan relies on admin to screen information for her and trusts them to pass on what is relevant.

Jan believes that an understanding of OFE by all stakeholders including parents is vital.

One area of OFE that Jan finds problematic is that the lack of a syllabus can results in gaps in student knowledge and skills.
5.6 The Specialist Perspective.

5.6.1 Tony Whitewood.

Tony Whitewood\textsuperscript{24} obtained employment at Boronia Park in the school’s second year of operation. He is the school’s specialist art teacher and has been teaching for thirteen years. The trademark white lab coat that he wears is adorned with inspirational artistic messages, pictures and designs. The students from year groups 1 to 7 inclusive, attend the specialist art room for their lessons. The desks are arranged in one large ‘U’ shape, which provides a large floor space area in the middle of the classroom where students sit together during discussion sessions at the beginning and end of lessons.

5.6.1.1 Tony’s understanding of OFE.

Tony is not conscious of how he developed his understanding of OBE.

\textit{Probably through trial and error, reading books, talking to people. I don’t think I have done any official PD. Through informal chats with people.}

Nor does he consider that any of the PD that he has done to date, either generally, or specifically related to his specialist area, has been concerned with OFE, although he does have a relatively clear understanding of the philosophy which underpins an OFE approach.

\textsuperscript{24} Name is a pseudonym used to ensure the anonymity of the participant in the study
It looks at what the students actually achieve and when you look at the evaluation side of things, what they can and can’t do, and then levelling against that standard if you like. So as opposed to just looking at progress, which is important, it looks at what they can do at the various stages through that process and at the end as well.

Tony is familiar with the Curriculum Framework and its content as it relates to his specialist area.

I know a bit about the Arts in the Curriculum Framework being structured using what they used to call the four strands. I have always liked the Scope and Sequence part of the Arts.

He has a sound understanding of the way in which the Arts learning area should be used, which he gained at a curriculum leader’s PD that he attended some years before arriving at Boronia Park, just as the implementation process for the Curriculum Framework began. He explained that it is not necessary to teach all areas outlined in the Arts area, such as drama, media, visual arts and music.

...you could teach all the outcomes and cover all the outcomes by simply teaching and reporting in one of those areas...teachers don’t need to report officially on Music in their reports because I’m covering all the Arts outcomes in the Visual Arts.

It is interesting to note that while Tony acknowledges the significance of this PD he does not acknowledge that any of the PD he has done was concerned with OFE either specifically or generally.

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25 It is interesting to note that there is no section in the CF that is identifiable using this term.
What is of particular interest in relation to Tony Whitewood is the fact that he is not a willing proponent of OFE and is reluctant to embrace it to any extent as he feels that the mandated implementation of this approach will be short lived.

*Personally, I think that OFE is out of date and is going to be changed in the near future so what is the point!*  

Again his attitude towards OFE was clearly stated when asked if he thought he would benefit from more OFE related PD.

*No, I don’t feel I would benefit from more PD because I’m quite sure it will all fall in a big heap quite soon and then we will go onto something new and different.*

5.6.1.2 Tony’s perspective on whole school implementation.

Tony explained that there is not a great network for Art teachers and he relies on `admin` to provide him with relevant information.

*I get most of my information from Tim.*

5.6.1.3 Implementation in the specialist context.

It would appear that Tony used the *Curriculum Framework* to support rather than drive his planning.
...there is a broad plan and it is loosely based on the outcomes and I do try to make sure that we do touch on the four strands of the Arts. I might reference or quote back to the Curriculum Framework. It’s not something I would open every term. I am aware of what’s in there and I just make sure that we touch on a few other things and not just the making26 bit.

Tony described as problematic, his effort to cover all the aspects that relate to the Arts section of the Curriculum Framework. He found that the amount of time that was allocated for each lesson restricted how much could be covered.

We try to look at Arts in society and different cultures with the older kids especially because the timetabling means that the grade 6-7s come for a longer period of time. We get time to reflect and learn on what we have done and there often isn’t that time with the younger grades.

5.6.1.4 OBE reflected in teaching.

While Tony feels that, OBE provides more freedom and flexibility to do what you want and what you think the kids need because there is no set syllabus, he has found that its introduction has had little impact on the way he teaches.

There’s no document saying this is what you should teach these children at this stage in their life, although there is broadly but there is much more flexibility. But this makes no difference to me in the art room because that is the way I have always taught, so if anything it gives me even more flexibility.

26 In this context the term ‘making’ is a direct reference to the Arts Skills and Processes outcome of the Curriculum Framework.
5.6.1.5 **OBE reflected in learning.**

Tony believes that there is no real difference to children’s learning when implementing an outcomes approach.

*As far as learning for the children, honestly it makes no difference. It should give them more empowerment to control their learning, but good teaching will do that anyway. It gives them more control and more ownership, but again good teaching will give them that.*

5.6.1.6 **OBE reflected in assessment.**

Tony uses a variety of informal methods to evaluate student learning which includes a folio which is sent home ‘as often as he can’ so that parents can ‘enjoy’ their child’s artwork.

*I would go around on a regular basis, not officially, but just over the shoulder kind of stuff to see what the kids are doing and talk about their ideas and jot down notes or keep very vague records if you like on what the kids are doing. You can see the really good kids and you can see what it is they are doing and you can also see the kids who don’t have a clue.*

Tony also concedes that assessing achievement in the Arts is somewhat problematic and it can not simply be based on the end product.

*...but by looking at the finished product you don’t really see what the kids have been thinking about during the process, you don’t see where they came from, you don’t see their inspiration, so it’s not that easy to do...*
Tony clearly understands that assessment is a dynamic process involving evidence that is not always readily tangible, which could explain why his approach to assessment is not particularly systematic.

5.6.1.7 **OBE reflected in reporting to parents.**

Tony is very critical of school reports, particularly the inability of schools that he has worked at to maintain consistency in the format.

*I haven’t been at a school where they have maintained the same format for more than a few years and even then they are usually cosmetic changes. Most of the schools I have been in, the reports look very much like the ones we use now at Boronia Park. So whether that means we actually got it right finally or they are just going around in one big circle, I’m not sure.*

What is of even greater interest is the fact that Tony does not consider that the current report format is in any way reflective of an outcomes based approach.

*I really don’t believe that primary schools report in outcomes because we don’t level, certainly not until now. Even now we are not levelling students.*

5.6.1.8 **Synopsis.**

For Tony, the shift to an outcomes focused approach has had very little impact on his teaching. He views OFE as simply a reflection of the good teaching practices, which he already implements.
Tony does not believe that the reports are outcomes based and believes that in order to report with an outcomes focus, levelling is a prerequisite.

Tony has a somewhat complacent attitude towards OFE, considering it to be a fad that will soon be replaced.

5.7 Conclusion.

While each case study has highlighted a number of issues that are particular to the context in which the individual participants operate within the school, there are also several themes that appear to be common to all the participants in the study and are particular to the implementation of OFE within this particular school site. These will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter and are summarised briefly as follows.

All of the participants work comfortably within what they consider to be their own exemplary teaching practices and utilise the Curriculum Framework more for the purpose of pedagogical reassurance, rather than being driven by its content. This sits in stark contrast to Tim’s belief that teachers should be driven by that bigger picture understanding that is derived from engagement with his school based key understandings document.

All the teachers rely heavily on admin to keep them up to date with the latest OFE information, through a process of screening and then disseminating important information. It is interesting to note that, when discussing the dissemination of information, the majority of the teachers
interviewed made reference to Tim, with one teacher using ‘admin’ and ‘Tim’ interchangeably. Clearly, teachers are aware of the fact that Tim is in control of the dissemination of information. The teachers are all trusting and passive recipients of the information provided through this process.

The merit selection process ensures that all teachers arrive at Boronia Park with a substantial knowledge base related to OFE, however there is also little evidence to suggest that teachers have increased this knowledge base while at the school or extended their teaching practices.

While all of the teachers have a collective knowledge of the broad theoretical aspects of the philosophy that underpins OFE, which can be attributed to the merit selection process through which they obtained employment at the school, there are a number of significant disconnects between the theory of OFE as perceived by the participants and aspects of classroom practices.
Chapter 6: Interpreting the Data from Boronia Park Primary School

6.1 Introduction.

This study sought to examine a single case study site in order to determine at a whole school level, what approach to the implementation of the Curriculum Framework had been developed, and critique its effectiveness. In order to achieve this, data were gathered from areas related to staff, student and parent understanding, teaching practices within the classroom and document analysis. In this chapter data relating to the case studies will be analysed in relation to a number of key questions, which guided the study:

- What is the ‘whole school philosophy’ in relation to OFE that underpins its operation?
- How has this philosophy been developed?
- How has the school’s principal and the teachers gone about implementing and enacting an OFE approach?
- How successful has the school’s principal and the teachers been at inducting the broader school community into OFE?

Interpretation of the data is undertaken at two levels. The individual case studies reflect micro level perspectives of the implementation process as it relates to the contexts of that person. Collectively, these data obtained from the varied perspectives of the individual participants reflect a macro level whole school culture. Interpretation at both levels will provide the basis for analysis of the above questions.
6.2 Understandings of OFE.

All of the participants within the study feel that they have a solid understanding of the principles that underpin OFE. For Tim Burgan, the principal, this is expressed very much at the big picture level.

...be driven by that bigger picture understanding ...
...what happens in the classroom is governed by that bigger picture understanding of the outcomes you want students to exhibit as lifelong learners...
...it is very open and investigating ...
...a change in focus from teaching a curriculum to teaching kids...[Tim]

For his staff, their understandings of OFE principles of learning, teaching and assessment (as expressed in the Curriculum Framework) are interpreted and talked about at a more micro level, as they are operationalised at the coalface. The teachers acknowledged the role of the student in the leaning process.

...they have more ownership about what they are learning...[Jane]
...children need to understand that they are being assessed on what they can do...assessment is open and the children know what is being assessed... [Jan]

It gives them more control and more ownership...get the kids ... to consider what they have learnt. [Tony]

All of the teachers made some reference to the aspect of inclusivity and the need for the teacher to address the specific needs of individual students.
...devise different lessons to suit the different ways kids learn... [Jane]

...it addresses the needs of each child in a more holistic way... [Jan]

...it’s not so much about straight teaching any more but about children achieving their potential... [Brian]

...planning what you think the kids need... [Tony]

Three of the teachers acknowledged that because learning is developmental in nature that this requires teaching to be more dynamic, going beyond simply teaching a set curriculum and focusing instead on outcomes.

...giving the kids time and repeated experiences and a variety of different experiences to learn... what is in the Curriculum Framework... [Jane]

You really haven’t finished when you have taught something, you have to keep going until they achieve it... it’s more developmental rather than passing one year after another... [Brian]

It looks at what the students actually achieve... [Tony]

Several of the teachers also described some specific aspects related to changes in lesson structure and organisation using an OFE approach.

...an activity can go on for a longer period and they can be learning a number of different things from it... [Jane]

There are more group set ups and learning centres... more opportunities to access extension activities... [Jan]

... open ended tasks that allows everybody to achieve... [Brian]

The issue of how the staff at Boronia Park developed these understandings deserves discussion. For Tim, there is no evidence to suggest that the
development of his understanding is linked to any significant extent with working at the case study site.

...I’d done some reading...journal articles by academics that study OBE in England, in the states and NZ and even in Victoria to a degree because they are a bit ahead of the game from an Australian point of view...[Tim]

For Jane, Brian, Jan and Tony, the data suggest that the bulk of their understanding came with them to the school. The merit selection process used to recruit teachers at Boronia Park has been pivotal in ensuring staff have a similar whole school vision of the philosophy that underpins an OFE approach. Clearly the level of understanding that staff bring with them to Boronia Park provides the platform for much of the school’s perceived success with ongoing implementation practices, although the principal accepts much of the credit for consolidating this understanding in-school at the curriculum management level.

The school developed key understanding guide with which all new staff are inducted is believed by Tim to provide the key to not only understanding OFE and using the Curriculum Framework but has also been significant in facilitating the development of the strong collective understanding shared by all the teachers at the school. While the principal clearly holds this document in high regard the absence of any reference to this school-based guide by the teachers suggests that it has had little or no bearing on the development of the staff’s OFE understanding.
6.3 Enhancement of OFE understanding.

Thus a significant finding of the study is that all of the participating teachers developed their understanding of OFE prior to gaining employment at Boronia Park. While for some, Boronia Park has provided an environment where they have been able to consolidate that knowledge there is little evidence to suggest that their knowledge base has been significantly enhanced since their arrival at the school. Indeed, during her interview Jane conceded that,

...at Boronia Park we have not done a lot of PD with the Curriculum Framework.

It would appear that Tim has adopted what can best be described as a very 'passive osmotic' approach, in which he believes that an OFE philosophy is developed at the school slowly over time and in a very implicit way.

...it’s an ongoing thing...it’s the professional discussions you have with people...It’s a lot of the informal things that you do all the time that share and develop that sort of thinking and ethos across the school. [Tim]

Rather than enhancing or increasing the depth of teacher understanding, or addressing issues with any specificity, this approach merely acts to keep OFE 'on the burner'. While this in itself can be applauded as a good thing as it maintains continuous contact with OFE philosophy, it could be argued that teacher understanding is not necessarily being significantly enriched. There
is little evidence to suggest that Tim has placed any sort of priority on actively ensuring ongoing growth and development in teacher understanding of OFE implementation practices. Teachers simply maintain the existing pedagogical approaches they have brought with them to the school which are, in essence, good practice.

It is clear that not all the information that is distributed from the Department of Education and the Curriculum Council is forwarded on to teachers at Boronia Park. The teachers openly commend Tim on the way he screens the overwhelming quantity of information received by the school and are confident that he will pass on only pertinent information, and that any information withheld is irrelevant and done so to facilitate effective time management on behalf of teachers.

*I think a lot of it Tim will tell us what is going on so it filters down in that way. [Jan]*

*...the admin team are really good at bringing things to our attention.... [Jane]*

*I get most of my information from Tim. [Tony]*

Acting in this way, Tim is able to sensor information and pass on only that which he believes to be relevant to the teachers.

The teachers are all trusting and passive recipients of the information provided through this process, believing that it adequately meets their needs. However, it could be argued that this places Tim in a pivotal position in determining how and what knowledge teachers obtain.
The principal, Tim Burgan, clearly acts as the lynch pin in the implementation of OFE at a whole school level. He utilises a very hierarchical ‘top down’ chain of accountability similar to that which operates within the Department. It can be traced from head office to district office to school, to the principal, to line managers down to the teachers at the coalface. There is little onus on teachers themselves to build their own knowledge.

6.4 Implementation of OFE at the classroom level.

Many of the best teaching practices that underpin an outcomes approach are not new and exemplary teachers have, in essence, been using an outcomes approach for many years. In this respect all of the teachers who participated in the study have had to make very little or no changes to the way they approach their teaching and simply see OFE as a ratification of their good pedagogy.

Isn’t this what we have always done and it’s been reworded as the term ‘outcomes’. That philosophy has always been my approach to teaching... [Jan]

...this makes no difference to me...because that is the way I have always taught. [Tony]

I didn’t have a lot of problems with it and I think I had worked a lot of it out by the time I got there. [Brian]

Having come from that background I already valued it and didn’t really know any different. [Jane]
Clearly, all of the participants work comfortably within what they consider to be their own exemplary teaching practices and it would appear that they utilise the *Curriculum Framework* more for the purpose of pedagogical reassurance, rather than being driven by its content. This approach is clearly sanctioned by the school principal.

All the teachers comment about the high level of flexibility afforded to them by Tim, which allows them scope to implement aspects that they are comfortable with in order to fit with their existing pedagogies.

...you are not under the pressure to do it...He likes you to try things but he doesn’t hassle you if you don’t...[Brian]

...giving us the freedom to trial different things in our own classroom, or if it’s not really applicable at the time they are happy for us, as long as we are aware of different things and we have read them...[Jane]

...I just tend to do my own thing...try different things here and there. [Tony]

Clearly Tim endorses this flexible approach and he does not seem to place a high priority on ensuring any degree of conformity in classroom practices by teachers. Indeed, it would appear that Tim’s primary focus is on ensuring that teachers have an understanding of the broad principles associated with OFE.

...we have tried to develop commonality in peoples thinking at a broader level. How they do that in their own class varies but the thinking’s very similar...
While this arguably provides teachers with the much-needed flexibility that allows them to implement teaching practices that suit their individual approaches, it does not address aspects that they find problematic in their own teaching contexts or areas of pedagogical weakness.

Tim believes that if all newly appointed teachers receive individualised orientation to OFE and the *Curriculum Framework* through the school based key understandings guide, that this will ensure that his vision of a *whole school understanding* will be realised. There is evidence to suggest, however, that individual teacher interpretation is varied when it comes to implementation practices, and there is no evidence to suggest that implementation is driven by Tim’s key understandings document. It is assumed by the principal that a clearly defined understanding of the *Curriculum Framework* and its underlying philosophy, will ensure that exemplary OFE pedagogy is automatically reflected in the classroom practices of the teachers.

The data suggest however, that this assumption is perhaps flawed as there are a number of inconsistencies between the shared understanding of the essence of OFE by the teachers and OFE as practiced in their own classrooms. The high level of flexibility afforded teachers in their classrooms, provides scope for them to implement their own individual teaching styles. However, this fosters a silo approach where teachers are able to compartmentalise their teaching practices from the rest of the school once the classroom doors are closed and the teaching day begins. The data
highlight the broad eclectic range of problems that the teachers grapple with.

Jane, for example, feels that she needs to justify her use of rote learning and direct instruction strategies. This suggests that she believes these approaches fall outside the principles of OFE teaching. Jane also considers that extended classroom space in which to engage students in discovery learning activities is a prerequisite to the successful implementation of OFE in her own context.

All of the teachers make reference to the *Curriculum Framework* offering more freedom away from a set syllabus, which provides scope for them to plan to better meet the needs of the students.

*I really like the Curriculum Framework because it gives me the freedom...to devise different lessons to suit the different ways kids learn.* [Jane]

*I also like to work in themes and this approach fits in beautifully with that and allows you to integrate everything.* [Brian]

*With planning there is more freedom to do what you want and what you think the kids need.* [Tony]

Jan however, finds the lack of prescription of the *Curriculum Framework* problematic and has reverted back to a syllabus approach, believing that the incorrect use of the *Curriculum Framework* by other teachers is resulting in critical gaps in skills and knowledge.
I feel that for the children the learning is too broad... For the children coming through to my class, they arrive with very poor skills. I don’t think teachers always develop a clear purpose when teaching specific topics so the question of what we want the kids to learn is not specified. The children I see are not confident in a lot of the formal aspects of learning that we would like them to be competent in.

Given that students are entering the early adolescent phase of their schooling and are considered to have significant gaps in their skills and knowledge, this must raise questions about the efficacy of the implementation process and the way in which the Curriculum Framework is being used. If this lack of knowledge and skills is a direct result of a weakness in implementation at a classroom level then it raises questions about how this area is being addressed by the school.

Data within this study suggest that there is a perception that older learners within the school have gaps in their knowledge, and that this is associated with the learning experiences and practices associated with their earlier years of schooling. This finding suggests that there is tension between such areas as the understanding and role of the Curriculum Framework, the implementation of a whole school approach, and also the provision of flexibility and autonomy at the classroom level.

Clearly the range of issues that the participating case study teachers struggle with is diverse and perhaps unique to each teacher’s own context. However, given that all of the teachers expressed a very similar understanding of the philosophy of OFE at a macro level, it is clear that this
provides no guarantee that interpretation and implementation at the classroom level will be consistent. For example, Brian openly admits that he does not fully utilise the *Curriculum Framework*, other than using the OLO’s to guide his planning, preferring instead to draw on his own extensive teaching expertise. Tony is openly dismissive of OFE, and in a similar fashion to Brian, prefers to draw on what he considers to be his own exemplary teaching practices. He uses the *Curriculum Framework* only loosely to guide his planning and believes that levelling is an essential tenant of OFE and a prerequisite to reporting in outcomes.

### 6.5 Sharing OFE understanding with students and the broader school community.

While the students participating in the study were not asked specific questions about their understanding of OFE, their responses provided significant insight into their understanding of what they consider to be their role, and that of the teacher in the learning process. Interview data from the students show that there is a clear shift in their understanding of the locus of control of learning as they progress through their schooling. All of students in the early childhood group believe that the teacher is in total control of their learning including both the content and extent of success. In contrast the students in the middle childhood and early adolescent stages all believed that while the teacher controls the content of lessons the onus for learning falls predominantly with them. The data suggest that the ability of students to be able to acknowledge, self-regulate and reflect on their role in
the learning process has developed over time at Boronia Park. It is not possible however, to determine to what extent this self awareness of learning can be attributed specifically to OFE practices within the school.

In relation to the wider school community, however, Tim Burgan, admits that parents have a very poor understanding of OFE. The notion of parent education is a critical point, which Tim acknowledged as being an area of need given that feedback from parents at the school about the shift to an outcomes model has been limited.

*I certainly haven’t had any negative feedback, or any positive feedback to be honest but I haven’t had a lot of feedback in general and that’s most probably attributed to the fact that we haven’t had that education process with parents really about what its all about. We have given them snippets.*

Much of the information that is imparted to parents is related to specific issues directly affecting their children and while this improves their understanding of issues on a micro level it does nothing to broaden their knowledge of OFE philosophy at the big picture level.

*We talk to them about it in various contexts like we always get the old split class thing at the beginning of the year. And we say to them... The thing about teaching that is hard these days is that you need to cater for the needs of all the kids. That’s one of the underlying things of OFE. So we have those sorts of conversations with parents and say that it doesn’t matter where they are as the teacher has to find out where they are at and take them from there etc.*
Tim concedes that the education process for parents is currently lacking and acknowledges that a concerted effort needs to be undertaken to ensure that parents have a more in-depth understanding.

.. that’s probably it at the moment, we don’t do a heck of a lot. The odd newsletter bit but not really a lot and that’s probably something we need to work on because we do have to undertake this big education program of parents sooner or later. Probably sooner than later, the better.

While Tim is conscious of the need for an educational process to be undertaken, it is interesting to note that he has not yet acted on this.

It could be argued that the impost for parent education should be a departmental responsibility, outside the school domain. While it is acknowledged that the Curriculum Council did undertake a State-wide campaign to inform parents about the educational change being undertaken, it was essentially tokenistic in nature. The evidence from this study suggests that the above campaign has been fundamentally inadequate and has fallen well short of achieving its aim of providing parents and the wider community with a clear understanding of the change to an outcomes approach that has been implemented.

Reporting to parents with an OFE focus has also proved to be problematic for some teachers. Both the early and middle school teachers found the format of the school’s report, particularly in relation to reporting on the values of the Curriculum Framework, difficult to use.
6.6 The Boronia Park Primary School approach to the implementation of OFE: An Overview.

In review of the above data analysis it is possible to identify five key elements that underpin the implementation process at Boronia Park.

1. The appointment of staff through the merit selection process is a key factor. In effect it ensures that staff enter the school with the requisite understandings that fit within the schools existing ethos and OFE approach.

2. The principal considers that his articulation of the big picture understanding through the induction of staff with his school based key understanding guide provides the foundation on which he believes he has been able to develop the unified whole school understanding of OFE implementation operating within the school.

3. The overall model of information dissemination operating within the school is one of a drip feed approach whereby information is filtered before being passed down to teachers. The principal screens and censors the information received from the Curriculum Council and the Department of Education and Training and passes on to staff only that information that he considers to be relevant. While the teachers acknowledge and appreciate that this allows them to keep abreast of information with minimal time impost, there is no
requirement that staff engage more broadly with the information that is delivered to them by Tim.

4. Change management within the school is essentially 'low key'. There is in effect little change to be managed. As a new school the outcomes culture was generated at inception through the merit selection of staff. There has been no requirement for “deep change” (Quinn, 1996) or the processes associated with it.

5. Teachers at the school operate with a high level of autonomy within their classrooms and there is little impost placed on them to modify or change their existing teaching practices.

The overall impression of OFE implementation at Boronia Park is of a top down, siloed environment in which the principal acts as the lynchpin that determines how and to what extent OFE is operationalised within the school.
Chapter 7: Findings of the Study

7.1 Case Study Reflection.

The findings of this study highlight the fact that successful implementation of an outcomes focused approach to education is a highly complex and ongoing process that is not readily quantifiable. This view is supported by Willis and Kissane (1995) who stress OFE as being a process and not a product or package that can be placed in schools (Willis & Kissane, 1995, p. 30). Indeed, the researcher acknowledges that through the development of this case study she has undertaken a significant learning journey herself.

Having had limited engagement in a professional capacity, with the case study school prior to the study, the researcher believed Boronia Park to be an exemplary school, standing at the forefront of OFE implementation practices. She now has a much deeper understanding and appreciation of the issues related to the successful implementation of curriculum reform and to long term sustainable change. It is clear that exemplary schools are underpinned by good leadership and successful change management that involves more than simply implementing and maintaining a system of best practice.
7.2 Methodological Considerations.

Given that this case study deals with a small number of people, examined through a narrow window of time at a specific place, a micro-level theory (Neuman, 2003, p. 52) has been developed to identify factors influencing the successful implementation of an outcomes focused approach to education within one particular school site. By the very nature of the fact that this case study is on a micro-level, which includes few people and examines their individual experiences and unique milieus, it increases the depth of understanding of the specific cases and situations studied at this site, however, this reduces generalisability (Patton, 2002, p. 14). Even though the data provide a plethora of information from which rich descriptive case studies were developed, as Johnson (1995, p. 30) quite rightly states, “case study makes it virtually impossible to make generalisations about the wider population”. Therefore it must be borne in mind that the findings of this study are peculiar to this school site alone and should not be used to compare or make judgements about other schools implementing curriculum change.

By the same token it is difficult to ignore some of the similarities that have been identified through critiquing the South African and Pennsylvanian educational experiences in implementing OFE. In view of this there is perhaps potential for this study of the Boronia Park experience to at least ‘add weight’ to what is known about implementation of OFE and the
management of change. For other schools this means that there is a larger pool of information available to them, as sites of change, to inform their processes and undertakings.

In terms of Boronia Park Primary School, when consideration is given to possible areas of future research based on the findings of this study, there is scope in the first instance for this study to form part of a more longitudinal study based at the same school. It is interesting to note that since the data collection was undertaken for this study, the principal has resigned his position at the school to take up a more senior position within the Department. A suggestion for further research could include developing another case study at Boronia Park to evaluate the impact of the principal's departure and examine to what extent and in what ways the management of curriculum and curriculum change have altered within the school.

7.3 Significant Findings.

The findings of this study which have been discussed in the previous chapter warrant further consideration in relation to a number of aspects highlighted in the literature review undertaken in Chapter 2. The literature provides two theoretical perspectives against which the findings of this study can be critiqued. The first perspective identifies the factors that need to be addressed if successful implementation of OFE is to be realised. The
second perspective outlines strategies that are integral to successful change management.

The literature suggests that successful implementation of OFE requires that all key stakeholders have a sound understanding of the philosophy that underpins OFE and are involved in the process. This notion is also identified as a priory in the literature on implementing successful change. This idea is also acknowledged in the Curriculum Framework, which states that education is the shared responsibility of students, teachers and parents (C.C., 1998, p. 17). The literature on implementation in the USA has shown that a failure to address this one aspect, has seen the demise of OFE in a number of American states. In contrast to the literature, this area of weakness at the school does not appear to be impacting on implementation of OFE at this stage. If it can be asserted that the lack of knowledge evident in the parents who participated in the study is indicative of the wider community, then it is hardly surprising that implementation has not been affected by any impediments from parent and/or community organisations. However, if the literature on implementation and the USA experiences are borne in mind, then the potential for this to become problematic in the future should not be underestimated.

The literature examined acknowledges that a shift to an outcomes focused approach must be viewed as a long term process. Indeed the literature on change management sees this as an ongoing process as educational reform is acknowledged as being in a constant state of flux. The Curriculum
Framework was initially phased in under a 5 year plan, so it can be seen that this important factor was not overlooked by the Curriculum Council when they developed their implementation timeline. What the literature on OFE does not discuss, but which is central to the literature on change management, is the fact that the element of time will be of little value unless it is managed efficiently by utilising effective change management strategies. As the literature on change states, leadership without change management is simply management of the status quo (McNeill et al, 2003, p. 6). The findings of this study highlight the fact that Tim was in essence, doing exactly that, managing the status quo. There is no imperative for Tim to change the practices of his merit select staff. Entrusting the staff to make changes when and if they choose to, was all that he deemed necessary once they had been inducted with his key understandings guide.

As the title suggests, OFE focuses clearly on the outcomes of education which the literature explains must necessarily be well defined. However, the literature on change highlights how problematic this has the potential to be. The literature warns that any attempt to pursue a range of educational functions simultaneously may well prove to be problematic (Ranson, 1994, p. 10). Indeed, the literature shows that reaching a consensus on this point was a major stumbling block for many states in America which was further compounded by the debate about the place of values education in this process. This aspect proved to be the ‘Achilles heel’ on which much of the opposition in the USA was focussed. It is interesting to note that the
inclusion of values in the school report has also been problematic for teachers at Boronia Park. Bearing this in mind and given that values proved to be highly problematic in the USA, it arguably raises questions about the place of values within outcomes focussed curriculum and how these are to be actioned and interpreted in schools.

The literature on both the American and South African experiences highlight the critical importance of ensuring that those who are charged with implementing an OFE approach have a sound and multidimensional understanding of it. From a change perspective, the literature points to two key aspects that will impact on how successful the development of that understanding will be. Firstly, a major failure of policy implementation can often be attributed to misinterpretation of documents. Secondly, top down operating structures if used to effect change will have little chance of success (Macmillan, 2000, p. 52). The literature shows that a failure to ensure an adequate understanding of the concept of OFE, coupled with a failure to address both of the above change factors severely marred implementation efforts in the American state of Pennsylvania. The concept was acknowledged in the literature as not being well understood which was compounded by the ‘top down’ strategic planning method, and the piece meal way in which information was disseminated to districts.

The same issues also proved to be highly problematic in the South African context. The document developers varied in their level of expertise, the terminology was not understood, and the ‘cascade model’ of in-servicing
teachers was ineffective. The principal at the case study school utilises two of the above strategies shown in the literature to be problematic in both the USA and South Africa. Tim has implemented a 'cascade model' similar to the one used in South Africa where teachers in-service other teachers. He also uses a top down operating structure where the school functions through a hierarchical chain of accountability that is also used to disseminate information to teachers. In contrast to the literature, these factors do not appear to be problematic at Boronia Park. Again, it could be surmised that the merit selection process has circumvented the problems that were encountered in the USA and South Africa where these aspects were utilised.

As discussed previously in this section OFE provides a framework around which teachers plan and implement their own content. While the literature hails this as providing the much needed flexibility to address the fast changing needs of contemporary society, the literature shows that this has also been highly problematic with respect to implementation. One explanation for this can be found in the literature on change which warns that the fate of new programs rests on the ease with which they can be adapted to local contexts. In South Africa teachers had no experience writing curriculum content and were at a loss to know what content was needed to achieve the outcomes and they also struggled to adapt this approach to their local contexts. In the USA opposition groups were able to use with significant leverage, the argument that OFE dilutes academics in
favour of ill defined values and process skills. The findings of this study also show that the early adolescent teacher participating in the study was starting to identify critical gaps in student learning. The teacher attributed this to a lack of prescriptive content being taught in the earlier years of schooling. The findings of this study tend to suggest that the weakness is indeed a lack of rigor in relation to curriculum content. This problem, however, does not appear to have come to the attention of the wider school community as yet.

7.4 Conclusion.

At this point it is important to reconsider the context under which this case study school operates as discussed in Chapter 4. The level of success achieved in implementing an outcomes approach at this school site is inextricably linked to the fact that at the time of this study, the school was newly established and had no prior history or existing culture that needed to be changed in order to facilitate the implementation of an outcomes approach.

The model adopted by Tim Burgan projects a semblance of successful implementation practises within the school. Boronia Park is portrayed as a lighthouse school, providing a reference point to which other schools aspire. Teachers confidently espouse the tenets of OFE and utilise the best teaching practices that suit their own individual teaching styles. However, the findings of this study also suggest that the model that has been adopted
by the principal is not necessarily the exemplar of excellence in the management of curriculum change that the school professes it to be. Were this model to be utilised within another school setting it may well prove to be highly problematic. This may be particularly so in those schools with deeply entrenched cultures, established long before any talk of outcomes and where the luxury of merit select staff appointment is unavailable. Tim Burgan was afforded a unique carte blanche opportunity when he was recruited as foundation principal of Boronia Park. Acknowledgement of his apparent success in implementing an OFE approach should, however, be tempered by an appreciation that as foundation principal he was nurturing a fledgling OFE culture, not changing an established culture in order to become one.

This study highlights the complexity of implementing an OFE approach, which requires a sound understanding of the tenets of OFE and the full support by all stakeholders. Implementation must be viewed as an ongoing process, guided by clearly defined change management structures, described by Boyd (1990) as a cycle of reform that is driven by the need for periodic adjustments in the balance of competing values (Boyd, 1990, p. 86). Principals and teachers must critique their pedagogy on a regular basis and acknowledge that it is an ongoing process. This should ultimately result in improvement through change rather than simply maintaining existing practices that are deemed to be merely adequate for meeting an OFE approach. Only then will implementation of this approach be truly
successful. For Boronia Park it is perhaps too early to judge the success of OFE implementation as the beginning of such a cycle of reform.
References.


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Appendices

Appendix 1: Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia

Ten national goals for schooling provide a framework for cooperation between schools, States, Territories and the Commonwealth. The goals are intended to assist schools and systems to develop specific objectives and strategies, particularly in the areas of curriculum and assessment.

1. To provide an excellent education for all young people, being one which develops their talents and capacities to full potential, and is relevant to the social, cultural and economic needs of the nation.
2. To enable all students to achieve high standards of learning and to develop self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, respect for others, and achievement of personal excellence.
3. To promote equality of education opportunities, and to provide for groups with special learning requirements.
4. To respond to the current and emerging economic and social needs of the nation, and to provide those skills which will allow students maximum flexibility and adaptability in their future employment and other aspects of life.
5. To provide a foundation for further education and training, in terms of knowledge and skills, respect for learning and positive attitudes for lifelong education.
6. To develop in students:
   a. the skills of English literacy, including skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing;
   b. skills of numeracy, and other mathematical skills;
   c. skills of analysis and problem solving;
   d. skills of information processing and computing;
   e. an understanding of the role of science and technology in society, together with scientific and technological skills;
   f. a knowledge and appreciation of Australia's historical and geographic context;
   g. a knowledge of languages other than English;
   h. an appreciation and understanding of, and confidence to participate in, the creative arts;
   i. an understanding of, and concern for, balanced development and the global environment; and
   j. a capacity to exercise judgement in matters of morality, ethics and social justice.
7. To develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which will enable students to participate as active and informed citizens in our democratic Australian society within an international context.
8 To provide students with an understanding and respect for our cultural heritage including the particular cultural background of Aboriginal and ethnic groups.
9 To provide for the physical development and personal health and fitness of students, and for the creative use of leisure time.
10 To provide appropriate career education and knowledge of the world of work, including an understanding of the nature and place of work in our society.
Providing a sound basis for a collaborative effort to enhance Australian schooling, the agreed national goals will be reviewed from time to time, in response to the changing needs of Australian society.
At the July 1996 MCEETYA meeting the following goal was added:
That every child leaving primary school should be able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level.*
* In March, 1997 this goal was amended to include numeracy.

Appendix 2: Interview Guides

Principal

What is your understanding of outcomes focused education and how does the Curriculum Framework, Progress Maps fit together?
How did the school go about developing its philosophy towards an outcomes approach?
Please explain how the school ethos reflects the ideology of outcomes focused education?
Do you network with other schools concerning any aspects related to outcomes focused approach?
What leadership PD have you done with respect to outcomes focused education/CIP/CIP2?
How has all of this helped you?
How do you keep abreast of the latest changes/findings/best practices occurring in outcomes focused education.
Have you developed any whole school programs to assist in the implementation process?
How is the chain of accountability organised to ensure that all teachers are implementing the whole school approach?
What sort of priority has been placed on PD for teachers in the area of outcomes focused education? – why/why not?
What PD have teachers at the school done?
Do you feel PD in this area needs to be ongoing?
If so what PD do you think is needed?
How have you gone about implementing the CIP and CIP2?
What feedback have you had from parents concerning the changes that have occurred in the school in relation to the shift to an outcomes focused approach?
What portfolio format has the school adopted? Why?
What has been the feedback from parents concerning portfolios?

Teachers

How did you develop your current understanding of outcomes focused education?
What do you need to fully implement outcomes focused education in the classroom?
What is your understanding of outcomes focused education and how does the Curriculum Framework, Progress Maps fit together?
What is different about planning/learning for children/classroom set up/reporting/reports with an outcomes focused approach?
What Curriculum Council documents have you read?
How did you feel about them?
How do you keep abreast of the latest changes/findings/best practices occurring in outcomes focused education?
What PD have you done concerning outcomes focused education, either general or specific to particular learning areas?
How do you feel about the PD you have done to date?
Do you feel you have received adequate PD in the area of outcomes focused education?
Do you feel you would benefit from more PD on outcomes focused education?
If yes what sort of PD would you like/need?
Do you engage in self-directed/self-initiated PD in the area of outcomes focused education?
How do you plan?
What documents do you use to support your planning?
What method/s do you use to evaluate student learning?
How often do you level your students?
How do you level your students?
To what extent do you actively involve parents in their children’s learning?
How do you go about achieving this?

Parents
What do you know of the changes to education that have been occurring in schools over the last five years?
What do you understand by the term outcomes focused education?
How well do you think outcomes focused education caters for the individual needs of your child? (eg. learn at his or her own pace, cater for strengths/weaknesses)
What do you think about the quality of the information provided in the various reporting methods; portfolios, formal reports, parent interviews etc?
What method of reporting do you find most informative about your child’s progress?
What method of reporting do you find least informative about your child’s progress?
Where do you think the responsibility lies with respect to the success of your child’s learning? (eg. school and/or home environment)

**Students**

Do you like school? Why/why not?
What do you like? What don’t you like?
How do you think you are going at school?
How do you know?
How do you think you are going compared to other students? – How do you know?
What do you use to determine how well you are learning/doing at school?
Do you compare yourself to other students academically? Why?/How?
Do your teachers compare you?
Do your parents compare you?
Do you think you should be compared? Why/why not?
What do you think about reports/portfolios?
Which do you think is more important – ie. shows what you have learnt?
Do you think all your learning happens at school?
Where do you think the most important learning takes place (classroom/playground/home)?
Do you think the things that you learn outside school (home/parents) are important?
What motivates you to learn?
What do you think are the most important subjects to learn?

What are your favourite subjects? – Why?
What are your least favourite subjects? – Why?
What do you think is the role of the teacher in the classroom?
Who is in control of your learning – you or your teacher?
How much control do you think you have over what and how you learn?
Appendix 3: Observation Checklist

Learning and Teaching
Occurrences of teacher modelling to the class.
Occurrences where the teacher makes explicit connections between information and experiences in the classroom and real life situations.

Connection and Challenge
Occurrences where the teacher connects ideas in lessons to students’ prior knowledge – record how often the teacher asks questions of students not directly related to what is being taught in the lesson but associated with it.
How many children are able to complete the task/s set by the teacher.
How long does it take them to complete set tasks.
What percentage does not finish.

Action and Reflection
Observe any instances of rote teaching/learning.
Evidence of integration between learning areas made explicit by the teacher.
Evidence of students being given opportunities to reflect on their own learning.
Evidence of students planning or goal setting in response to thinking about their own learning.

Motivation and Purpose
Occurrences where the teacher makes explicit to students what they are learning and why.
Occurrences where the teacher states immediate practical goals before/during the lesson.

Inclusivity and Difference
Document how individual differences in terms of learning style, language competence, ability etc, are accommodated within the lesson.
Document the types of learning opportunities provided within each lesson.

Independence and Collaboration
Instances where students are given flexibility to choose their own ways of working during lessons.
Instances of individual and/or collaborative learning observed during lessons.
Occurrences during the lesson of Internet being used as a tool for learning/teaching.

Supportive Environment
Record instances of teasing/sarcasm/remarks that stereotype/denigrate made by teachers to students, and students to students.
List classroom resources available and note those that are used during lessons.
List available equipment/print/useful technologies and note those that are used during lessons.
Map use of space within the classroom - furniture layout and movements of students/teachers during lessons.
Glossary

AEC Australian Education Council
DET Department of Education and Training
C2005 Curriculum 2005
CAR Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting
CC Curriculum Council
CF Curriculum Framework
CIP Curriculum Improvement Program
CIP2 Curriculum Improvement Program, phase 2
MCEETYA Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs.
MSE Monitoring Standards in Education
NHMRC National Health and Medical Research Council
OBE Outcomes Based Education.
OFE Outcomes Focused Education.
OLO Overarching Learning Outcomes
OSE Outcomes and Standards Education
PD Professional Development
SADTU South African Democratic Teachers Union
WALNA Western Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
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