UNDERSTANDING, INTERPRETING AND ENACTING ARTS CURRICULUM:
A kaleidoscopic view of teacher experience in Western Australian primary schools

by
Sian Chapman

This dissertation is submitted in the fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Murdoch University.
DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work that has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Signed:
STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS

This PhD Dissertation is a ‘Thesis by Publication’ and contains five papers. The candidate had the primary role in the research, and was the principal contributor to each paper, appearing as first author on each respectively.

Each of the other authors provided supervision, actively contributing to the conceptualisation and design of the research, advice on near and cognate literatures, data collection, and expertise in relation to the analyses, interpretation and reporting of results. Each author contributed to critical revisions and final approval of each version published.

This Thesis by Publication conforms to the guidelines published by Murdoch University Graduate Research Office (Graduate Research Degrees Thesis Style Guideline: Thesis by Publications/Manuscripts), and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018).

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ABSTRACT

Arts education in Western Australian primary schools consists of learning opportunities outlined by mandated curriculum and implemented by classroom and specialist arts teachers in schools. This study considered how, and in what ways, do teachers understand, interpret and enact arts curriculum in Western Australian primary schools? Conducted across three phases of inquiry, this qualitative study used key theoretical constructs from curriculum theory and policy enactment theory to understand the impact of contextual variables on teachers and schools.

In phase one, the perspectives of 11 arts curriculum leaders were drawn from in-depth semi-structured interviews. Marginalisation of the arts, the disconnection of schools and teachers to the arts, and the limited impact of professional learning were found to have influenced arts teaching and learning in unintended ways. Findings influenced phase two of the research.

In phase two, interviews with 24 participants across four schools revealed the importance of purpose, value and practice as three key concepts in better understanding curriculum implementation in arts education. A purpose, value and practice framework was developed to mitigate the effects of curriculum misalignment, and suggestions for increasing teachers’ criticality and connoisseurship were explored as important pathways for improving arts learning for young people.

In phase three, the trajectory of one teacher’s experience was documented in order to consider the creation of professional agency in an increasingly challenging school environment. As one possible model of successful arts curriculum implementation, the conditions and challenges this teacher experienced were explored. Issues relating to relationships, time, purpose and constraints, work-related identity, experiences, and work communities, as well as isolation, ongoing support and the development of community were uncovered as a result.

The study concludes by considering the practical findings through complexity theory, suggesting the nested nature of systems are an insightful way to better understand the complexity of curriculum implementation in our schools.
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I acknowledge the significant contribution of the arts curriculum leaders, school principals and teachers who participated in this research project. Without their time, effort, and insights this project would not have been possible. I would also like to single out “Penny” whose generosity and willingness to consider the possibilities of change made the third phase of this project such an interesting and worthwhile inclusion.

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LIST OF ACROYMNS

Acronyms used regularly throughout this thesis are outlined below.

ACARA  Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AISWA  Association of Independent Schools Western Australia
CEWA   Catholic Education Western Australia
DoE    Department of Education
NAPLAN National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy
SCSA   School Curriculum and Standards Authority
# GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

The definitions of key terms used throughout this dissertation are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<td>Arts Learning Area</td>
<td>Consists of the art forms of dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Complexity Theory</td>
<td>An interdisciplinary theory that explains the way complex systems interact and evolve in unpredictable ways.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>The courses and content mandated for the Western Australian education systems and sectors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Enactment Theory:</td>
<td>A theory that explores the way that policy is understood and implemented across different educational contexts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Learning</td>
<td>A process of growth and change that teachers willingly engage in to improve classroom practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection:</td>
<td>The process of describing, analysing and evaluating thoughts and practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexivity:</td>
<td>The ability to reflect on practice to engage in continuous learning.</td>
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CHAPTER 1 CONSTRUCTING THE KALEIDOSCOPE

“The Arts have the capacity to engage, inspire and enrich all students, exciting the imagination and encouraging them to reach their creative and expressive potential.” (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014)

This introductory statement provides the rationale for an arts education and aspiration for what the arts (comprising the art forms of dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts) can provide Western Australian children through learning opportunities guided by the Australian Curriculum: The Arts and the Western Australian P-10 Arts Curriculum. It is a bold statement and is aimed at inspiring teachers as they engage with these curriculum documents. The statement is supported by local and international research that suggests the arts are recognised and valued by teachers, parents and the wider community as having positive influences and learning outcomes for students (Bamford, 2009; Costantoura, 2000). However, the statement for all the capacity that it suggests the arts hold, has little impact on the reality of schooling in Western Australia in the 21st century. The arts are marginalised to the curriculum fringe (Ewing, 2012; Gibson & Anderson, 2008) and struggle to be heard in a crowded curriculum. Therefore, the opening statement is a starting point to reflect on arts learning, and why now is an important time to be inquiring into arts curriculum implementation practices in the primary school.

1.1 Background

My interest in arts curriculum implementation processes has grown over a 25-year involvement with teaching dance and the arts in primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors. Starting my career as a secondary dance teacher in the early 1990’s, I saw firsthand how curriculum change in schools impacted teachers. From Unit Curriculum to the Curriculum Framework and accompanying Student Outcome Statements as the mandated curriculum documents, the change process I participated in and witnessed were seemingly two different processes. Change for some colleagues was perceived as onerous and, in many instances, resisted. The resistance to new curriculum models was puzzling as I found the process of curriculum renewal and change
professionally interesting.

Several years spent working in the Department of Education, Western Australia in both the Monitoring Standards and Curriculum branches, provided further insight into how an educational jurisdiction approached curriculum development and implementation. It was here that I came to see and understand some of the challenges and frustrations teachers were having with the implementation of the arts in schools, especially in primary schools. From a lack of time, to a lack of specialist teachers to help decode and understand the curriculum, the reasons given by classroom teachers for the difficulties in implementation were numerous.

A change of focus that only comes with maternity leave gave me a different insight again as I operated my own business teaching dance in primary schools. Visiting different primary schools introduced a variety of reasons as to why the arts were out of reach for classroom teachers. It also seemed specialist arts teachers were not in a place to assist, as they were dealing with the weight of their own teaching load and a heavy performance / exhibition schedule promoting their schools to the wider community.

So, I began the PhD journey thinking that I would focus on teacher development and the upskilling of primary classroom teachers to be better equipped at including the arts in their classroom practice. This seemed especially important as the start of this project coincided with the introduction of the Western Australian Curriculum, although the implementation of the arts component was delayed several years. What soon became apparent though, was that the complexity of the school environment meant professional development and learning was not a one size fits all proposition. As I began looking more closely at this school complexity, I realised the contextual pressures that impacted on teachers and schools was an area of research that needed further investigation. While there was a depth of understanding around what impacts on a teacher personally when having to teach in an area outside their comfort zone, there was little research on the external variables that also had an impact. What has eventuated then, is an in depth look at curriculum implementation practices in the Western Australian primary school context with a particular focus on external factors that impact change on the system, school and teacher.
It is here that I acknowledge the epistemological and ontological positioning of this research. Acknowledging my view from these perspectives frames the interpretations I make as a researcher and positions my understandings more appropriately. According to Walter (2013), epistemology relates to our theory of knowledge and how it is defined. In this way, epistemology is also concerned with who decides what is knowledge and what knowledge is important. As a new researcher interested in the processes and practices of primary teachers in implementing a new curriculum, the topic itself indicates a way of knowing or viewing the world. Fundamentally, I view schools as complex environments in which teachers exist and interact in very different ways depending on the individual context. I saw the implementation of the *Western Australian P-10 Arts Curriculum* as being problematic for primary teachers and therefore, as a researcher, I had to identify and manage this way of knowing both with the participants and the data generated. This became important as the project developed and the ways that teachers use the arts curriculum differed to my own. It was in these moments that my epistemological assumptions needed to be managed for the benefit of the project overall.

In contrast, ontology is seen as the theory of being and how we perceive the world around us (Walter, 2013). Is it objective or constructed by the players within? I believe that reality is constructed, and each individual holds a variation of truth (reality) depending on their own personal context. Ontologically speaking, my research direction and interest also identified a bias. My perception of arts education in Western Australian primary schools is primarily one of insufficient provision. Specialist arts teachers are often the only arts teacher on staff in primary schools and cannot realistically cover all five art forms in any real depth. This has meant that classroom teachers become responsible for at least part of the arts curriculum. But which part and under what conditions? Ultimately, the aim of this research has been to provide guidance for teachers to improve arts provision in their classrooms by understanding some of the bigger contextual issues that impact their practice. While the view to improvement in arts practice may or may not have been shared by the teachers who engaged with me in this research, my approach to this research topic and the participants was always open in my support for the arts in schools. These ontological assumptions are also important to recognise.
and label as there was the potential for these views to impact the direction of the project.

1.2 Rationale
This study sought to understand how Western Australian primary teachers understand, interpret and enact arts curriculum; through exploring and documenting their experiences and practices. The experiences of both classroom primary teachers and arts specialist teachers shaped the study and questions asked. The perceptions and viewpoints of both groups of teachers added value to the study by providing quite different perspectives. The voice of the classroom primary teacher was central to the study as they generally have first carriage of the curriculum and are largely responsible for what is developed into learning activities for their students. Second, arts specialist teachers were a critical group, as they have specialist skills and knowledge related to the subject and are an important part of maintaining the arts in the current educational landscape. Also important were the voices of the arts curriculum leaders and school leaders as their role is to oversee and manage the curriculum practices of the schools in their sectors. However, to understand why this topic is important, the development of curriculum in Australia and the place of the arts within that evolution is considered first.

1.3 Curriculum Development in Australia
The notion of an Australian curriculum was initiated several decades ago in the early 1980's, with the possibility of such a system discussed by scholars and politicians of the day (Brennan, 2011; Drummond, 2012; Gerrard et al., 2013). Different iterations of government saw new attempts at bringing education together, but the complex federal versus state and territories education funding and syllabus control meant that most efforts floundered (Brennan, 2011). It was not until state education ministers through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) released a joint learning document in 2003 that the idea of a national curriculum really started to coalesce. In 2008, the Rudd Labor Government announced the development of a national curriculum as part of its ‘education revolution’ (Brennan, 2011; Gerrard et al., 2013) and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was formed in May 2009. This body now carries the responsibility for developing all curriculum, assessment and reporting
documents for Australian States and Territories to use.

Familiarisation of the phase one learning areas of the *Australian Curriculum: English, Mathematics and Science* commenced in 2011. Countrywide full implementation was completed in 2014, with enough time now passed for researchers to consider the impact of these changes. Peer reviewed research is available examining the historical context and implications of curriculum implementation (Atweh & Singh, 2011; Brennan, 2011), system and school level practices of implementation (Gerrard et al., 2013), and metropolitan versus rural implementation issues (Drummond, 2012) as well as learning area specific impact studies (Albright, Knezevic, & Farrell, 2013; Lowe & Appleton, 2015; McDougall, 2010). Each of these papers highlighted the complexity of attempting to implement change across such a variety of learning contexts. The importance of the relationship between policy documents, professional learning opportunities and collegiate support was emphasised. These contexts, practices and relationships that operate within and across schools were an important construct for this study. Significantly though, the early development of the Australian Curriculum did not include the arts as a mandated learning area.

1.4 Arts Curriculum Development

The arts were not included in the first phase plans for the Australian Curriculum (Ewing, 2010). This was despite the addition of the arts as a learning area in the Hobart Declaration on Schooling (MCEETYA, 1989), the continued inclusion of the arts in the Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century (MCEETYA, 1999) and more recently in the Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008). Each of these consecutive declarations, made by then current Education Ministers and representatives from all Australian States and Territories, highlighted the importance of the arts to the social and cultural fabric of the nation. The arts were also included as one of the eight key learning areas when the first national statements and profiles were published (Curriculum Corporation, 1994). Inclusion of the arts in the Australian Curriculum finally garnered strong unified support from arts educators through the lobbying of organisations such as the National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE), and through the public consultation process of the draft arts paper (Cosaitis, 2011). The intense lobbying led to the arts being included in the second phase of the
Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011). Curriculum development of the arts in Western Australia evolved in tandem with these initiatives.

In Western Australia, from the 1984 Beasley Report discarding the achievement certificate for a unit curriculum model, to the introduction of the Curriculum Framework in 1998, debate around curriculum development has been lively (Marsh, 2011). Again, the arts were one of eight learning areas included in the Western Australian Curriculum Framework and further policy initiatives were undertaken to support this document. In 2002, the Department of Culture and the Arts and Department of Education and Training agreed to “develop an arts in education partnership framework for Western Australia” (Government of Western Australia, 2005, p. 1). Titled Creative Connections: An Arts in Education Partnership Framework 2005 – 2007, this framework was designed to provide support for high quality arts opportunities for students across the educational continuum. It recognised the creative connection between young people and the development of a knowledge economy to ‘future proof’ the state. This agreement was followed up with an audit and review in 2008 leading to the development of Creative Connections: An Arts in Education Partnership Framework 2010 – 2014 (Government of Western Australia, 2010). Despite these policy documents and strategies in place to promote the place of the arts within the Western Australian education system, there were still discrepancies between the intent of the written policy documents and the wide variety of arts practice in the primary school environment. The contrast between these two positions provides the impetus for the research questions asked.

1.5 Research questions
In the context of this background, the following overarching research question has guided this study:

How, and in what ways, are arts curriculum understood, interpreted and enacted by classroom teachers and arts specialist teachers in Western Australian primary schools?

Supplementary questions were also used to focus the direction of the three components of the main research question.
To understand:

a) What impact do situated contexts of the school have on enacting arts curriculum?
b) How do the professional cultures of the school impact curriculum enactment processes (for arts learning)?
c) What role do material contexts of the school play in supporting or inhibiting curriculum enactment in the arts?
d) How do external contexts impact the curriculum enactment process for the arts?

To interpret:

e) What is the relationship between purpose, value and practice in the implementation of a primary arts curriculum?

To enact:

f) How does the relationship between context and value influence a teacher’s ability to change their arts education pedagogy and practice?

1.6 Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in how several important theoretical ideas from curriculum theory and policy enactment theory are combined to understand the complexities and challenges of implementing the arts in the primary setting. Importantly, this research contributes an understanding of how context influences the purpose, value and practice of teachers, both independently and in synergy or in tension with each other. In this way, understandings of contexts provide a different means of approaching teacher practice and the creation of agency and change in the arts.

Insights into the process of change and an individual teacher’s ability to create change in the arts context is a valuable contribution to the arts education research field. Teacher agency as opposed to teacher development or learning in the arts context is a growth area for research and this project adds to developing understandings. The recognition of some of the specific issues that faced one arts teacher and how they were dealt with provides examples for other arts teachers facing similar situations.

Significantly, this research contributes to knowledge in the field and helps to
inform government and government agencies of the ways primary educators in Western Australia can be better supported during periods of curriculum change. The research also informs policy decision making processes for the continued and improved implementation of the *Western Australian P-10 Arts Curriculum* in all sectors and systems in Western Australia.

Finally, understandings derived from this research provide insights into policy creation and enactment more generally. Understanding and learning from human reactions to enactment processes is not confined to the arts learning area or the teaching profession. Components of this work are useful to similar efforts in other social research fields such as nursing and social work.

1.7 A Kaleidoscope as Thesis Metaphor

A kaleidoscope was used as a metaphor to visualise and verbalise the abstract concepts of this project in a simple but effective way. A kaleidoscope, according to the Merriam Webster online dictionary, is simply an instrument containing loose bits of coloured material (glass or plastic) between two flat plates with two plane mirrors so placed that changes in position of the materials are reflected in an endless variety of patterns by the mirrors. A kaleidoscope reveals an endlessly changing complex pattern which holds its form when you pause but reveals a different pattern when you next rotate the cylinder. The patterns produced are artfully arranged and mesmerising to look at. Schools and the concepts of this project were considered in the same light.

Each school has a similar feel about it, is made of the same elements – buildings, teachers and students, but like a kaleidoscope, when you look a little closer the pattern is never quite the same. For example, schools all have classrooms and the standard parts of a classroom, such as tables, chairs and storage, however the layout of each room is individual to the class that currently inhabits it. In the same way, most schools have a wet/undercover area, an administration block, playgrounds and a library as well as classrooms. But, the arrangement of these buildings and how they are used depends on a range of other factors including location and need. The metaphor works as the kaleidoscopic nature of the school environment is ever-moving with the ebb and flow of the school day, term, semester and year.

Describing the pattern of each school that participated in this project is one part
of this research but understanding the similarities and differences is a bigger part. Like a kaleidoscope, when a component of the loose materials is constrained in some way, the complexity of the possible patterns is reduced. When schools are constrained in the way they operate the possibilities for creativity and innovation are similarly reduced. This research looks at those elements that constrain and enable schools to operate efficiently and effectively in an arts context.

To start, the first three chapters of the thesis build the component parts of the kaleidoscope. The background, literature review, conceptual and methodological frameworks create the material that make up the kaleidoscope. Then, chapters four to seven offer the individual turnings of the instrument revealing the patterns created. These chapters of this thesis are introduced with a kaleidoscopic image. Each image is created from the significant words of the chapter presented in a repeating circular pattern. Some of the words are common to each chapter, representing the similar but different aspect of schools and the common materials of the kaleidoscope, but other words are specific to that chapter and ideas. The use of an image in this way helps unpack the complexity of the issue and makes visual that which is often difficult to describe. From an artistic perspective, these images also add a degree of creativeness to what is otherwise a text heavy document, and after all there should be an element of creativeness to a thesis about the arts!

1.8 Presentation of Thesis

This thesis is presented in a ‘thesis by publication’ format. Five articles are included representing the three aspects of the research question: understanding, interpreting and enacting. Each article is also like a separate turning of the kaleidoscope. A different angle, a different perspective, but with enough common elements that there is confidence in describing a viewpoint of a shared issue.

Chapter 1 is the introduction. The research project is outlined, the background and significance are considered along with the presentation of the research questions and the introduction of the thesis metaphor. Chapter 2 looks at the literature review and considers the fields and relevant authors that have influenced this study and led to the creation of the conceptual framework that
guides this project. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological framework, research design and methods used. Chapter 4 presents the first aspect of the main research question, **understanding**, and includes the first two research papers. Chapter 5 presents the second aspect of the main research question, **interpreting**, and includes the third research paper. Chapter 6 presents the third aspect of the main research question, **enacting**, and features the fourth and fifth research papers. It is important to note here that at the time of submission the fifth paper was still under review. Chapter 7 provides the conclusion and significance of the project overall. The four papers that have been published at the time of submission can be found in their publication format in Appendix 4.
CHAPTER 2  LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptually, this chapter frames, supports, challenges and locates this project within the broader field of educational research. There are four sections to this review. Section one situates the study within the larger field of arts education research providing a rationale for the project’s focus and main research question. Section two then includes an examination of relevant curriculum theory, policy development and policy enactment theory ideas that conceptually frame phase one and two of the study and positions this research within that framing. The third section covers relevant teacher development, learning, change and agency literature that informs phase three of the project. The final section considers complexity theory that is used as a way of decoding the findings made across the three phases of the study. In this way, complexity theory provides a theoretical means to consider the main research question and various contributions made.

The kaleidoscopic metaphor introduced in chapter 1 is also particularly relevant in this chapter. The diversity of ideas covered here represents the disparate individual components of the inner workings of the kaleidoscope. Individually, they seem unrelated, but together they form an integrated whole, in the same way that key conceptual ideas introduced in this chapter influenced the direction of this study. What other researchers have explored and how they have approached their own studies adds to the construction of the conceptual framework presented in this thesis.

2.1 Arts Education

Arts education as a field is a relatively minor player in the overall global educational research landscape and occupies an even smaller part of Australian educational research attention. However, identifying the place of this project within the international and national arts education research field underscores the contribution it makes. To do this, the broad areas of interest to Australian and international arts education researchers are highlighted and considered as part of this review.

Research into arts education in Australia falls roughly into one of three broad categories. First, there is a body of research detailing arts advocacy and
change (Cosaitis, 2011; Ewing, 2012; Forrest, Watson, & Forrest, 2012; Temmerman, 2006). Second, an emerging sector of research focuses on the impact of the arts on learning outcomes in other curriculum areas (de Vries & Albon, 2012; Gibson & Anderson, 2008), however, the bulk of research in this area is internationally based. Finally, the third category includes a body of work examining issues of teacher self-efficacy in the implementation of the arts in primary schools (de Vries, 2011; Garvis, 2009; Hudson & Hudson, 2007; Lummis, Morris, & Paolino, 2014). Each of these areas has a relevance and impacts on the focus of this study, and so are examined to place this work in context, starting with the body of research looking at advocacy and change.

**Advocacy and change.** Arts education advocacy and change are relevant issues for this study. Primary teachers face a crowded curriculum (Ewing, 2012), and the arts are still having to justify their place within the school day. Position papers on advocacy and change in and for the arts are more prevalent than empirical based studies, perhaps due to the difficulty in changing the perceived hierarchical positioning or status quo of arts education.

The place of the arts in education as a vehicle for the development of critical and creative thinking has been a strong focus of recent advocacy work (Blank, 2012; Ewing, 2012; McDonald, Aprill, & Mills, 2017; Nilson, Fetherston, McMurray, & Fetherston, 2013). Ewing (2012) in her position paper, examined the development of a national arts curriculum in relation to creating quality educational experiences for children and goes on to discuss how learning in the arts provides critical and creative thinking skills in children that is missing in the narrowed focus of learning for standardised tests. Temmerman (2006) also argues that the arts can positively influence the development of a range of life skills in children and although not the only means of gaining those skills, it is one of the most direct and varied in the opportunities offered. Cosaitis (2011), in his assessment of the Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts paper, indicated that the arts and imagination are intricately connected and needed to develop a culturally aware society.

These and other similar papers (Forrest et al., 2012; Gibson & Anderson, 2008), argue strongly for the place of the arts in the Australian curriculum and the role they can play in the development of the whole child. In the politicised education
world that education now finds itself (Brennan, 2011), this argument is necessary as the arts, in the primary setting especially, struggles to find space to exist, let alone grow. This understanding is important to this study as it impacts the reality that primary teachers face: the dichotomy between the scholarly, perceived benefit of an arts education on one hand, and the political drive for improved educational standards in literacy and numeracy, on the other.

Teachers feel they are stuck between a rock and a hard place when it comes to arts education. This study adds a slightly different perspective to the collective understanding of the hierarchical positioning of the arts. In conjunction with a dialogue in advocacy and change, this study focused on how the arts were used as a learning tool for educational outcomes in other learning areas. This area, while in its infancy in Australia, has a much broader international base.

**Arts integration.** Arts integration research was another important starting point for this study and a major motivation for the final direction of the investigation as the educational focus of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) learning approaches gains momentum in schools (Cook, Bush, & Cox, 2017). However, there is only a small body of Australian focused research in the integration of arts-based learning models (de Vries & Albon, 2012; Gibson & Anderson, 2008; Power & Klopper, 2011). For example, *The Wow Factor. Global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education review* (Bamford, 2009) highlighted that the vast majority of research on arts integration practices were based in North America or the United Kingdom. Similarly, Ewing (2012) looked at international research outlining how the arts might be better placed for learning to occur through the arts, and made comparisons with Australian attempts, while lamenting the lack of research in the area. Furthermore, while highlighting a succession of reports written underpinning the importance the arts play in student achievement, Ewing (2012) also suggested that corporate or organisational partnerships are a means of establishing a larger Australian research base.

Internationally, collaborative ventures between schools and higher education institutions where teachers work to improve their practice in some way, have been a larger focus of research (Cawthon, Dawson, Judd-Glossy, & Ihorn,
2012; Vitulli, Santoli, & Fresne, 2013). These relationships have provided researchers with a consistent environment from which to base a variety of investigations that not only add knowledge to the field, but which directly aids, and impacts schools involved. However, relationships of this kind are less prevalent or ongoing in Australia, which may be a contributing factor for the limited arts education research conducted in this space in this country.

Nevertheless, integrating the arts through cross curricular learning has been an area of investigation internationally (Gullatt, 2008; LaJevic, 2013; Overland, 2013; Smilan & Miraglia, 2009; Wong, 2013). These studies attempt to highlight the process and issues of arts integration across a variety of school settings. For example, Smilan and Miraglia (2009) were interested in understanding the relationship between the participants’ in an Authentic Arts Integration (AAI) model, LaJevic (2013) examined how arts integration was practiced in a primary school, whereas Overland (2013) was primarily concerned with music as the vehicle for arts integration practices. Interestingly, the studies all had difficulties with participants fully understanding how the arts could impact on learning in other areas and therefore difficulty in fully utilising the potential of the models under study.

In an Australian context, Gibson and Anderson (2008) argued policy makers and educators have little background information to use in ongoing curriculum development discussions and these international small-scale studies do not have the research weight to create change. Likewise, in one of the small number of Australian arts integration studies identified, Heyning (2010) used a single school case study and looked at the impact of choir lessons on learning in other areas, concluding these lessons had a positive impact on listening skills and group collegiality. Similarly, Power and Klopper (2011) investigated innovative creative arts strategies in K-6 classrooms. Employing a Likert scale questionnaire to gather data from 66 participants across New South Wales they discovered having multiple art forms in the one learning area decreased the amount of time spent in all. More recently, Snook and Buck (2018) conducted an arts integration program with a primary classroom teacher in one Melbourne school across a week, finding implementation difficulties from both the teacher and the school in creating sustainable change. Nonetheless, what these studies did provide was an understanding of the complexity of the arts curriculum
implementation issue. School complexity then became a key concept driving the direction of this study. Incorporated within this direction was the role of the teacher in the arts implementation process, and consideration of this role led to the exploration of self-efficacy and teacher learning in the arts.

**Teacher self-efficacy.** Of all Australian arts-based research, the field of self-efficacy and arts teaching is one that has attracted the bulk of research attention. The focus has primarily been on pre-service or early career generalist primary teachers and fundamentally this body of research suggests that primary generalist in-service and pre-service teachers do not regularly use the arts in their classrooms because of low confidence and poor content skills (de Vries, 2011, 2013b; Garvis, 2009). For example, Lummis et al. (2014) reported on first and fourth year pre-service teachers’ experiences prior to their pre-service training and as a result of their training. Limited experiences with the arts prior to university had a negative impact on the student’s enthusiasm to engage with the arts during university studies. By the end of their teacher training students felt most confident with the concept of teaching drama and visual arts, as these were the focus of their classes, but still did not feel confident to teach dance, music or media arts.

Similarly, Garvis (2009) examined a theoretical construct for the development of self-efficacy in pre-service teachers. Results of this study indicated there were four sources of high self-efficacy. They were: student outcomes, school environment, self-issues and external factors (Garvis, 2009). When one or more of these sources were fulfilled then greater confidence in teaching the arts was displayed. Further studies highlighted similar findings but with a focus on music (de Vries, 2011, 2013a). More recent research has looked at pre-service teachers experiencing creative practices in their own university learning to understand and unlock creative practices in their teaching practice (Ewing & Gibson, 2015). The findings of these Australian studies were also backed by international research.

Internationally, issues of self-efficacy have been well researched. A lack of confidence in pedagogical practices as well as content knowledge have been the greatest contributors to a lack of self-efficacy in teaching the arts (Biasutti, Hennessy, & de Vugt-Jansen, 2015; Holden & Button, 2006). For example,
Russell-Bowie (2013) reported pre-service primary teachers had little confidence in the idea of teaching dance in a study across five countries that included Australia. This lack of confidence reinforced what has been found in empirical studies of other art forms, such as a United Kingdom study on non-specialist teachers teaching music (Holden & Button, 2006). Furthermore, other international research has described arts learning opportunities in primary classrooms as haphazard, mainly intended as the fun in-between activity rather than as a learning tool of their own, which further suggests a low level of confidence in using the arts (Bamford, 2009; McKean, 2001). These studies reinforced the importance of confidence and knowledge required to successfully implement arts curriculum in the school setting.

As a result, advocacy, integration and self-efficacy as concepts were important considerations in the direction and framing of the final research question for this project. Understanding the breadth and depth of current arts-based research highlighted where the focus has been and where the gaps in understanding still exist. These three concepts identified some of the personal pressures facing teachers. However, the external or outside forces that also play a part in arts implementation practices were not a focus, and so it was this area that this study could make the greatest contribution. An examination of curriculum theory and policy forces was undertaken to explore these ‘outside the arts classroom issues’ and provide a more complete picture of the primary arts implementation question.

2.2 Curriculum Theory

Curriculum theory was the first area of literature in ‘outside the arts classroom issues’ explored to focus the study and refine the research question. In particular, ideas from curriculum theory were used to conceptually frame the discussion in phase one and two of this study.

Curriculum theory as “the interdisciplinary study of educational experience” (Pinar, 2004, p. 2) seeks to understand the way curriculum impacts on the educational experience (Pinar, 2011). History, pedagogy, and current political understandings all play a part in the educational experience. Curriculum theory is used to explain what we teach our students and why. Here, curriculum theory adds an important dimension to the thesis in identifying and addressing the way
Curriculum is framed in the Western Australian educational system, across sectors and in schools.

Historically, the work of John Dewey in the educational sphere underpins much of the discussion here. As a pragmatist, Dewey assigned both practical and theoretical insights to educational practice in all its forms, highlighting the interconnectedness of the personal and the social realms (Simpson & Stack, 2014). This interconnectedness is an important understanding for this research in interpreting how teachers react to elements outside their control in the implementation of arts curriculum both individually and collectively as a school and system.

Dewey was also a strong advocate for a central place of the arts in schools. He believed that a well-rounded education in the arts was essential to both a strong mind and social consciousness as highlighted in an essay he originally wrote in 1911.

> There has been great loss in relegating the arts to the relatively trivial role which they finally assumed in schooling, and there is corresponding promise of gain in the efforts making in the last generation to restore these to a more important position. Viewed both psychologically and socially, the arts represent not luxuries and superfluities, but fundamental forces of development. (Dewey, 2010, p. 96)

Unfortunately, Dewey’s 1911 hope that the arts were facing the last generation of marginalisation in education, has yet to be realised. Part of the issue has to do with the different ways curriculum is perceived by those whose write it as opposed to those whose use it.

Two of the most relevant discussions for this study then, centre around the “curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived experience” dichotomy first proposed in 1983 by Aoki (2009), followed by Eisner (1994) with the “intended and operational curriculum” and more recently by Pinar (2011), who added the idea that “curriculum is a complicated conversation”. “Curriculum-as-plan” as Aoki (2009) now sees it, highlights the use of curriculum documents provided for the classroom teacher based on a prescribed syllabus. This is the knowledge that has been decided by education regulatory bodies as being what students at a particular year level need to know. Alternatively, “curriculum-as-lived experience” are all the other components that make up the classroom
experience and impact on the school day (Aoki, 2009). In this way, they are the planned and unplanned happenings of a classroom and are important as they encapsulate the core dilemma of this study, understanding the differences between what teachers are supposed to teach and what they actually teach.

The relationship between planned and lived experiences can also be seen as a “complicated conversation” (Pinar, 2011). The interplay between the planned and lived experiences of each educational setting visited in this study is like holding a conversation; in the same way that giving and receiving information influences the next interaction. In this manner, this conversation also acknowledges the relationship between curriculum traditions and practices (M. Greene, 2000). As a result, knowledge, value and context are also vital components of the conversation. Knowledge represents the curriculum as a document and the degree to which it is understood. Value is the interpretation of the curriculum, and context provides the environment in which the curriculum is enacted. The variations in response between these components highlight the complicated nature of the environment.

This thesis challenges that view. It unpacks whether what currently exists in our schools can be considered a conversation at all, let alone a ‘complicated conversation’. What is revealed is the way teachers approach and engage with the curriculum is under question. Superficial reading of and a lack of connection with the written syllabus documents does not support the notion of teacher engagement in a ‘complicated conversation’. Tracking the ways that teachers engage with the curriculum also examines the complexity of their engagement, reflection and imagination. How the curriculum is used is an important construct of this work.

Similarly, the more recent work of Michael W. Apple queries “what and whose knowledge should be official” (Apple, 2018, p. 2). Advocating a move away from the rhetorical questions that have defined curriculum studies recently to a repositioned and more relational reconnection between curriculum, teachers and schools, a growth in critical analyses and action in education is sought (Apple, 2018). This idea is further elaborated by Deng (2018) who posits that the field of curriculum needs to realign with curriculum development and classroom practice rather than the current focus on curriculum theorising. This
thesis adds a contemporary example to that suggested change by identifying and critiquing local issues that have a broader implication for both curriculum theory and practice.

However, in Australia, as in other parts of the western world, the conversation about curriculum is still tied to social change, beliefs and current political ideology (Yates, Collins, & O’Connor, 2011), and the change called for by curriculum theorists like Apple and Deng is slow to eventuate. Understanding the impact this cultural shift is causing classroom teachers requires an appreciation for issues that not only surround curriculum theory and enactment but also policy development and policy enactment theory.

2.3 Education Policy Development

Understanding the influences of education policy development on schools and curriculum implementation is a fundamental building block of this research. In the same way that curriculum theory has been influenced by global dynamics, the development of education policy is also influenced by several factors globally, nationally and locally. Globally, one of these factors is the rise of neoliberalism. The current neoliberal approach to education has resulted in what Lingard, Martino, and Rezai-Rashti (2013) suggest is a rescaling of educational accountability. In an effort to open education to market forces, this rescaling has shifted the focus of performance from the child to the school, education system and governments, and is being experienced most in western post-industrialised countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Australia (Lingard et al., 2013). This performance shift has impacted the focus and direction of this thesis as it has placed the arts further down the hierarchy of learning areas in schools. Understanding the consequences of this shift for teachers is an important motivation here.

As a macro force impacting on education across the globe, the neoliberal movement is considerable. Argued as an inevitable process of living in the global village (Ditchburn, 2012; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Sabol, 2013), this competitive focus has driven the educational agenda and ties it to economic policies meaning that the mathematical world of economics becomes the sole determinant of ‘value’ and so the ‘currency’ of what counts in education is linked to market forces. This matters because these neoliberal principles inform policy
and its enactment (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013). However, policy change does not happen quickly, there are often small-scale changes that teachers make, choosing pieces of policy to improve student learning and ignoring those that do not help (Ball, 2016). Yet a disconnection exists between many teachers’ desire to do ‘the right thing’, make a difference in their students’ lives, and be informed by policy that reflects conflicting educational imperatives. This disconnection is an important aspect of the focus of this thesis in understanding what happens to policy when disconnection occurs.

Nationally then, educational policy has been impacted by the introduction of the Australian Curriculum. Development of the Australian Curriculum is outlined in chapter 1, however, for this discussion the schedule of learning area curriculum implementation that started with English and Mathematics and finished with The Arts and Languages other than English, is a telling indication of the hierarchy of learning in Australian schools. The delay to the implementation of the arts curriculum in Australian states and territories also had a major impact and is a focus of the first publication in this thesis.

Notwithstanding this, the attention on academic achievement through national regimes of standardised testing, has also had a lasting impact on the place of the arts within primary schools. Much of the first school term is consumed by practice writing and test taking to ensure that students in Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 are conversant with the codes and structures of the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests. Policy dictates that these tests are important for the student, school system and state and as such those tested learning areas are given priority in time and professional learning.

Locally, in Western Australia, policy development is impacted by the jurisdiction that schools align to. Government schools follow the mandates of the Department of Education (DoE) and can be influenced by the direction of the government of the day, Catholic schools follow the directives of Catholic Education of Western Australia (CEWA) and are heavily influenced by the teachings of the Gospel as proclaimed by the Catholic Church, and the Bishops’ Religious Literacy Assessment in which all Year 3, 5, and 9 students sit each year. Independent schools make their own decisions in conjunction with their school boards but are supported by the Association of Independent Schools.
Western Australia (AISWA) who maintains compliance requirements for the associated schools. On the whole, schools are impacted by a myriad of policies, but it is how these policies are implemented or enacted within schools that was of greater interest to this project.

2.4 Policy Enactment Theory

Policy enactment theory provided a way to unpack and frame the participant perspectives of the issues that impacted on teachers in the process of implementing arts curriculum. Here an exploration of how policy enactment theory has been used in the educational sphere is considered to contextualise how the theory is used in this project, as elaborated in chapter 3.

Policy enactment theory involves understanding that ‘doing policy’ is a complicated, iterative process (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012). It is diverse, contested and interpreted in a multitude of ways as it is enacted across schools and classrooms. Ball et al. (2012) also highlighted that policies do not sit in isolation. Existing frameworks, commitments and values impact on the process of implementation (or enactment) in ways unique to each school setting. The understanding that context is vital to the debate and not to be underestimated, was critical to the premise of this research.

Policy enactment theory investigates the myriad of policies that are imposed on schools. Researchers delve into the practices of the actors within schools in moving policy from idea to fruition and examine the processes that are involved (Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011; Jess, McEvilly, & Carse, 2017; Sheikh & Bagley, 2018). In doing so, policy enactment theory incorporates an understanding of the variety of individual educational settings and teachers in those settings and has been used as a vehicle for considering the process of policy change in a variety of ways.

Policy enactment research important to this thesis, involved understanding ‘policy as text’ and ‘policy as discourse’ (Ball et al., 2012; Braun, Ball, Maguire, & Hoskins, 2011; Nudzor, 2009). This understanding looked to recognise the impact that policy as a written document has on those it is intended for, or more specifically, the intentions of the policy and how that translates in practice. Then, policy as discourse examined other issues that impact implementation. Issues of power, gender and social constructions were the focus, as well as
policy networks across the macro, meso and micro levels of conceptualisation (Vidovich, 2007). The dichotomy of ‘text and discourse’ is an essential understanding for this project, as the parallels between policy enactment and curriculum enactment are numerous.

To help structure the non-linear nature of policy enactment theory, contextual dimensions have been used to frame one aspect of policy ‘discourse’ considerations. Understanding these contextual dimensions that add to the complexity of each school situation is a fundamental concern of this work. The four contextual dimensions to be considered from the work of Ball et al. (2012) are: situated contexts (e.g. locale, school histories and intakes), professional cultures (e.g. values, teacher commitments and experiences, and policy management in schools), material contexts (e.g. staffing, budget, buildings, technology and infrastructure), and external contexts (e.g. pressures and expectations from broader policy context). How these components are coded and decoded by individual schools and teachers Ball et al. (2012) describes as the messy, creative and negotiated process of enactment.

In parallel to the ‘text and discourse’ inquiries, there has also been a line of research that has examined why policy enactment research is important. For example, Singh, Heimans, and Glasswell (2014) used policy enactment theory to examine policy ontologically, considering both context and performativity in the process. Similarly, but with a slightly different context, policy enactment theory was used to consider how researchers themselves do policy research (Heimans, Singh, & Glasswell, 2017), where the focus is on the effects/affects of policy research rather than on ‘policy as text’. In addition, policy enactment theory has helped to frame the macro ‘national policy directives’ with the micro ‘teacher as implementation tool’ discourse (Nolan, 2018). This direction of policy research is particularly relevant to the later stages of this thesis when complexity theory is introduced as a way of explaining the findings and will be extrapolated in more detail in chapter 7.

Policy enactment research has also focused on those who actually do the enacting in the enactment process. These ‘policy actors’ (Ball et al., 2011) are a vital component of the theory, and researchers have examined their impact from a variety of angles. For example, Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002)
investigated cognitive perspectives of policy implementation and policy agents sense making of policy. The cognitive model included the policy intent, knowledge, belief and experiences of the policy agent and policy circumstances, as the three aspects of cognition to take into consideration (Spillane et al., 2002). Similarly, Singh, Thomas, and Harris (2013) considered the recontextualization processes of mid-level policy actors as policy was decoded and recoded in a school setting. Whereas, Grimaldi (2012) elaborated on Braun, Ball, and Maguire (2011) concept of a ‘policy toolbox’ and discussed a three-pronged framework as a way of analysing policy process in context with the policy actor and agency being one of the prongs, whereas Sheikh and Bagley (2018) looked at cognitive sense making developing what was termed ‘policy social psychology’. As a result, what policy enactment theory research revealed, was that like curriculum theory, there are two sides to the enactment/implementation issue. There are structural components and individual components, and attention needs to be paid to both to more deeply understand the issue at hand. Therefore, while policy enactment theory and the contextual dimensions were an excellent entry point to begin the project from, other fields of enquiry also held ways of understanding improvement, and it was important to consider the contribution these fields also offered this project.

Consequently, as implementing the arts in the primary context takes teachers out of their comfort zones (Alter, Hays, & O’Hara, 2009), it was important to identify what additional issues may emerge as a result. Moving into areas of less expertise requires greater support. In the educational context, one avenue for this additional support is to increase professional development and professional learning opportunities. To understand how the processes and practices of teachers are affected by professional development and professional learning, these terms and general understandings required further investigation.

2.5 Professional Development
As highlighted, curriculum enactment requires improved and increased educator support. Targeted and accessible professional development and professional learning opportunities provided by relevant educational authorities form one source of this support. What these opportunities look like, in practical terms, for the classroom primary teacher in Western Australia, is yet to be determined, but there is a significant amount of research conducted in the last decade in teacher
knowledge, under the umbrella of both professional development and professional learning, to aid the discussion.

Teacher learning, as one focus, is a complex phenomenon and the subject of substantial attention. Much of this focus has stemmed from introduced policies in countries such as the USA, with the 2002 No Child Left Behind policy, the UK’s 2013 Improving the Quality of Teaching and Leadership policy and the Australian government’s 2008 Smarter Schools National Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality policy. Each of these policies’ advocate for an increased reliance on standardised test results as a benchmark for student learning and therefore teacher competence. These policy documents aim to make explicit the requirements for teacher improvement in each of these jurisdictions but have had a far more reaching effect. Embedded within these documents, are requirements for teachers to undertake learning to further enhance policy goals. What was once implicit in the professional life of a teacher has been made explicit by government policy and tied to the embedded learning improvements of students. This has had far reaching implications for the teaching profession as professional development opportunities become mandated and individual choices for learning become restricted (Ewing, 2012). This changing face of professional development has resulted in renewed research efforts as researchers aim to stay abreast of the increasing politicised notion of teacher learning. To understand the complexities involved in teacher professional development and professional learning, a brief discussion of the development of the terms is relevant.

**Teacher development or teacher learning.** Past research has used the two terms interchangeably. The current literature implies professional development had a historical base in training (Avalos, 2011; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Webster-Wright, 2009), whereby teachers would be “inserviced” on a particular topic usually chosen by the administration team or education body in line with system requirements. Arguing against this notion, these studies recommend that professional development no longer be considered or based on this training or in-service model. The current belief, that teachers should no longer be considered deficient in some way and in need of developing, holds weight for these studies. In their place, alternate models have been identified, trialled and detailed in more recent research which places the
teacher at the centre of the learning (Duncombe & Armour, 2004; Guskey, 2002; Noack, Mulholland, & Warren, 2013). The change in focus from training to learning led to the rise in the use of the term professional learning. The term professional development, however, is still used to define the bigger picture notions of teacher change. Within the framework of this research, ‘professional development’ is used when discussing systems and sectors, and policy enactment on a mass scale. In discussions of individuals, local situations and specific learning, ‘professional learning’ is used instead.

**Professional learning.** In contrast to the previous section, professional learning is something more personal and organic. Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, and McKinney (2007) subscribe a more general meaning to professional development and a more specific individual meaning to professional learning in their Scottish work on Continuing Professional Development (CPD). They suggest that professional learning must result in specific changes to beliefs, actions or attitudes to be real. Furthermore, Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2009) argue that professional learning requires a degree of collegiality and collaboration to be valid and that the learning must be valued by the school community. Investigation in an Australian context suggest that a culture of inquiry is required for teachers to consider the “complex relations between professional knowledge, experience and identity in generative ways” (Kerkham & Hutchison, 2004, p. 97). This brief examination of professional learning research highlights how some of the literature differentiates between the function of the two terms.

Professional learning defines an individual teacher’s learning journey as they undertake or collaborate in the research process based in and for an individual school community. However, regardless of whether the term professional development or professional learning is used, what has become clear, is that there is no single approach to teacher learning and change. Different models and practices have been attempted to promote the change process. Some of these models are discussed here as a backdrop to the final focus of this project.

**Models and practices.** To better elucidate and promote teacher change, learning models and practices utilised to instigate change have gained greater focus in recent research efforts. Research into professional development or
learning models and practice has a long history, dating back at least eighty years, with the work of early change theorists using psychotherapeutic models (Guskey, 2002). More recently, researchers have focused on the notion of change and models that support this idea. Internationally, there is a large body of research looking at models of professional development for teachers (Avalos, 2011; Borko, 2004; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Duncombe & Armour, 2004; Kennedy, 2005). Embedded in this body of research is the notion that the teacher is instrumental in and central to the learning and change. Kennedy (2005) developed a continuum of professional learning encompassing nine models sitting along a scale of increasing capacity for autonomy. The continuum ranges from attending training sessions that update skills (the traditional professional development model of delivery), to participating in transformative research that combines practices and conditions to support a new agenda. This increasing focus on the practices and conditions of teacher learning are of interest to this study.

The subject of professional learning places the teacher in different learning contexts. For example, in an overview of one hundred and eleven research papers on professional development from one journal over a ten-year period, the authors concluded that “teachers continue to be both the subjects and objects of learning and development” (Avalos, 2011, p. 17). In being the subject and object, teachers are required to think about learning in a multitude of ways. The factors that underpin this thinking have also gained attention in more recent research.

One of the factors that impact professional learning is pedagogy. The way that teachers process their teaching is an important part of their own growth. Borko (2004) identified three factors for professional development models that impact on a teacher’s pedagogy. They are: “subject matter knowledge, understanding of student thinking and instructional practices” (Borko, 2004, p. 5). Therefore, professional development that explores one or more of these constructs has the potential to positively impact on a teachers’ learning.

Similarly, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) suggest teacher change happens through a process of “reflection and enactment”. This process is cyclical in nature and exists within four domains in a teacher’s world. Those domains are
“the personal domain (teacher knowledge, beliefs and attitudes), the domain of practice (professional experimentation), the domain of consequence (salient outcomes), and the external domain (sources of information, stimulus or support)” (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 950). The process of learning may start in any of the four domains, thus recognising that teachers are individuals and learn in different ways. This is further supported by Noack et al. (2013) in their study on teacher change processes during professional development. They suggest that teachers should have the opportunity to explore their own learning approaches and assumptions within the cycle of professional development. This space allows teachers to reflect on their own learning practices and use this knowledge to further enhance the change process and student understandings.

In addition, professional development has also been identified as “anything that engages teachers in learning activities that are supportive, job-embedded, instructionally focused, collaborative, and ongoing” (Hunzicker, 2010, p. 177). Avalos (2011) further discusses the complexity of teacher learning, indicating that it involves teachers intellectually, emotionally and requires them to evaluate their belief and value systems. It involves a personal journey; site oriented to what is relevant and pertinent in their professional world.

Interestingly, each study cited above places the teacher as central to learning and recognises that for understanding to take place it must be, in some way, intrinsically motivated. The impetus for change may start from external sources but ultimately there must be a benefit to classroom practice and student outcomes for the change to become permanent. When related to arts professional development, for the generalist primary teacher, current research is beginning to establish that these members of the education fraternity have little background knowledge or pedagogy to support existing arts curriculum, let alone the development of new initiatives (Ewing, 2012). Thus, the notion of intrinsic motivation for improvement in arts education delivery is an important construct to manage.

Additionally, the notion of the teacher at the centre of the learning process is also particularly salient for the context of this thesis. General classroom primary teachers in Australia are required, by the content of the national and state-
based curriculum, to have a broad understanding and knowledge of a wide range of learning areas (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014). The focus of this project, the arts, is but one of these areas of expected knowledge. So, for professional learning in the arts, teachers are required to use the mandated curriculum in an authentic practical way, working with other staff within the school structure over an extended period of time.

There is, however, little empirical evidence of how this currently happens in Western Australian primary schools. What is recognised though, is the significant role that the principal and administration team of the school must play in the professional learning cycle (de Vries & Albon, 2012). Support from the administration adds a degree of relevance to the work being undertaken, by clearly demonstrating that it is valued within the school community. This becomes increasingly important in learning areas such as the arts, where there may be less emphasis on teachers to maintain up-to-date arts knowledge and understandings, due to the prominence of literacy and numeracy in the curriculum. As a result, a greater percentage of professional development time and money is allocated to the more prominent areas and arts professional learning is sidelined.

What has become clearer through the investigation of studies included in this review on professional development and professional learning, is that context is vitally important and a model or practice that works in one environment may not be as successful in another. More specifically, they do not replicate easily because of the influence of the situational context. This notion is supported by Opfer and Pedder (2011) who, for example, completed a systematic review of professional development literature for the Training and Development Agency for Schools in England, and were still unable to determine the factors or specific relationships between teacher learning characteristics that resulted in positive teacher change. They also challenged the causal relationship of professional learning, that is, professional learning will improve practices which will in turn improve student outcomes. They instead went on to posit that the complexity of the learning environment involved “three overlapping and recursive systems: the individual teacher, the school and the activity” and that these systems interact “generatively for teacher professional learning to emerge” (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 384). In the only paper reviewed that discusses systems in
relation to the arts, Pascoe (2013) considered the complexity of the school environment and arts education as an eco-system. This eco-system analogy situated the arts within the classroom, the larger school and the wider community. These three similar systems posited by the authors above, provided a structure to further consider the change process from for this project. One avenue to consider teachers and educational change from has been the idea of teachers as change agents.

2.6 Teachers as Agents of Change

Here the focus of the literature review shifts yet again and turns to how teachers can influence and lead change. This idea has relevance for this project in that teachers are the face of education in the classroom. Curriculum and policy are meaningless without the direct intervention of teachers in their implementation and ongoing adherence. Fullan (1993) suggested that teachers open to change were interested, flexible, skilled and collaborative. These conditions are increasingly important in the face of policy and assessment mandates that take autonomy from teachers (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010; Carse, 2015; Lukacs, 2015). For example, a teacher interested in pursuing a program of change in arts curriculum within their school may be proactively working towards that goal but come up against policies that require them to focus on literacy and numeracy, reducing their capacity to make decisions for themselves. Being aware of the factors that can influence change was important to the development of this project.

In recent years, the teacher as change agent literature has had an increased focus across the globe. From teacher leadership in Hong Kong (Lai & Cheung, 2015), to science education in-service programs in Zimbabwe (Gwekwerere, Mushayikwa, & Manokore, 2013) and entrepreneurship in the United States (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010), teacher as change agent is an area of significant interest. In Scotland, studies have centred on the introduction of the new national curriculum, Curriculum for Excellence that has placed the teacher in a central position for the interpretation and delivery of this document (Carse, 2015; MacLean, 2018; MacLean, Mulholland, Gray, & Horrell, 2015; Priestley, 2010). What this research suggests is that there is international interest in finding ways to support teachers in the ever-increasing work load that teachers are seemingly faced with. Another line of thinking that developed alongside
teachers as change agents was the notion of professional agency in the educational setting.

2.7 Professional Agency

The concept of professional agency in the educational context has grown in recent years. Described as a process of change, agency involves acting intentionally and independently through deliberate engagement (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Priestley, Edwards, A. Priestley, & Miller, 2012; Toom, Pyhältö, & Rust, 2015). Professional agency in the context of this thesis stems from the ability of a teacher to create change in personal circumstances to grow and improve working conditions. As a result, professional agency has become an increasingly common way to understand change in school environments (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Lukacs, 2015; Priestley et al., 2012; van der Heijden, Geldens, Beijaard, & Popeijus, 2015). Agency, in this way, provides a different perspective to teacher development or teacher learning that suggests change is a personal response to the presented work conditions, putting the teacher at the centre of the change process. Therefore, the provision of learning opportunities alone is not enough for change to occur, if the teacher is not prepared to engage.

Agency has its base in sociology (Archer, 2000; King, 2010) and the work of Archer (2000) and Giddens (1984) form the backbone of the interpretation of professional agency used here. Part of the competing discussion surrounding agency in education has focused on the individual perspective or structural position used (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015; Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Edwards, 2015; Priestley et al., 2012; Pyhältö, Pietarinen, & Soini, 2014; Sloan, 2006; van der Heijden et al., 2015). This division of individual and structural components has allowed researchers to highlight, specify and explore in detail the aspects that impact on a person trying to create change in the workplace, and each is equally important to the work of this project.

An individual perspective is a personal viewpoint of a situation and involves identifying ways in which people act to influence change. These identified acts or change events become the individualised aspects of a person that are important to the development of agency (Lasky, 2005). This development, for example, might involve personal responses in areas such as beliefs and identity.
(Biesta et al., 2015; Pyhältö et al., 2014; Sloan, 2006), or attributes or inclinations that play out as a result of action to a particular situation. In the context of this thesis, professional background and training in the arts affects belief about capacity to teach the arts (Biasutti et al., 2015). More specifically, if a teacher believes they are capable and identifies with this capability, they are more likely to perceive success in an arts teaching event or believe their enthusiasm for teaching can influence change. Consequently, an individual perspective is paramount for this discussion of agency but is still closely linked to environmental or structural contexts as well.

By way of contrast, a structural perspective, where agency is explored through a social or cultural lens, involves identifying the surrounding context that influences change in an individual. This might involve, for example, power, gender, language, or employment (Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, & Paloniemi, 2013; King, 2010). Furthermore, notions of power are central in a discussion of agency in arts education, as lone teacher representatives of a learning area (as is often the case in the arts) do not have as large a voice in curriculum and staff room discussions as do the many voices of classroom teachers discussing literacy or numeracy, especially when empowered by national regimes of standardised testing. Therefore, an individuals’ reaction to socio-cultural inputs and the variations that socio-cultural considerations can place on an individual, are important constructs to consider as part of an integrated professional agency model.

The combination of individual and structural elements that combine to address professional agency is an important construct for considering the personal aspect of this project, but the initial focus was more about how the system coped. To address the system as a whole - teacher, school and jurisdiction, complexity theory was considered an appropriate fit.

2.8 Complexity Theory
Developed alongside the conceptual framework that included curriculum theory policy development and policy enactment theory was the notion of using complexity theory to theorise how systems react to implementation practices. So, while curriculum theory and policy enactment theory were the entry points for this study, the exit point was complexity theory.
Complexity theory is “a theory of change, evolution, adaptation and development for survival” (Morrison, 2008, p. 16). Complexity thinking has evolved from “physics, chemistry, cybernetics, information science and systems theory” (Davis & Sumara, 2008, p. 3) but with a more transdisciplinary focus. The basic tenet of complexity theory is that demonstrated patterns of behaviour are the result of a unique set of variables that are unpredictable. They are shaped by the interactions between the nested systems and subsystems (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). However, it is difficult to separate a system from its environment and therefore descriptions must take into account the interrelatedness of the subsystems (Cilliers, 2005). So, in education, this means that schools, the process of teaching and learning and teacher learning itself are all individual, complex systems but they are also inherently interrelated and nested together (Cochran-Smith, Ell, Ludlow, Grudnoff, & Aitkin, 2014; Davis & Sumara, 2010; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). It is this unpredictable interrelatedness that makes complexity a valuable way to consider curriculum implementation processes for teachers, schools and jurisdictions.

Complexity theory highlights that learning is dynamic and reliant on the contexts that surround the learner. A process that works in one environment may not succeed in another because of the interplay between the systems. To recognise the connectivity of the systems the “vital elements of a complexivist mindset include the need to be attentive to context, connection, and contingency” (Davis & Sumara, 2010, p. 859). Complexity theory has been used in numerous ways to describe educational issues and processes.

One way that complexity theory has been used in education involves developing a deeper understanding of ‘knower and knowledge’ systems (B. Davis, 2008), with the realisation that knowledge and practice are explicitly bound and difficult to discuss separately. This ‘knower and knowledge’ dichotomy (Davis & Sumara, 2008) has been used across different learning areas to explain difficulties in curriculum practices. Dotger and McQuitty (2014) examined how knowledge develops within practice and how that practice produces knowledge in their elementary science classroom work. In a similar vein, the ideas of self-emergence and connectivity have been explored in physical education (Jess, Atencio, & Thorburn, 2011). The concept of knower and knowledge systems is important to this project as it helps to describe the
individual and structural elements that co-exist in tension during change.

Complexity theory in education has also been attempting to move research away from causal models of explanation to a recognition and understanding of “specific local linkages” (Lemke & Sabelli, 2008). These local linkages can be seen in initial teacher training research (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014) or graduate teacher training research (Strom, Martin, & Villegas, 2018), where complexity theory focuses on understanding the impacts on new teachers through the complex interactions of the teaching environment. These understandings are also important for this project as the parallels between the underlying ideas of complex interactions being site specific and difficult to replicate across other sites is strong.

Another focus of complexity theory in education has been school accountability. Ways of improving the functioning or information flow in a school has been examined with the premise that complexity theory offers a way of moving among the parts in a non-causal way (O’Day, 2002; Radford, 2006, 2008). For example, the concept that research intervention in educational settings results in improvement in a linear ‘one equates the other’ fashion is challenged by Radford (2008) who uses complexity theory to underscore the unpredictability of schools. This non-causal focus is important as the idea of context specific outcomes is paramount to this study.

One of the difficulties in using complexity theory or thinking in the educational space is in describing both micro and macro activity within the nested system, thinking it is part of the same level within the system. Davis and Sumara (2008) outline the dynamic levels of a complex system from bodily subsystems, through collective social bodies to ecological theories. An associated timeline from seconds through to eons helps establish the pace of emergence across the levels within a complex system. Understanding that each level of a nested system has requirements and ways of operating that contribute to the system as a whole and cannot be described or evaluated using the same values as another level is key, and particularly pertinent to this study in the examination of both structural and individual components of influence.

2.9 Summary

This literature review and associated conceptual framework identifies how this
project fits into the field of educational research generally and arts education research more specifically. It also underscores how the areas of curriculum theory, education policy development, and policy enactment theory conceptually add weight to the development of the research question. In addition, the fields of professional development, professional learning, teachers as agents of change and professional agency highlight the impact change has on primary teachers’ practices and processes in and for the arts. Finally, an understanding of complexity theory develops the theoretical contribution this thesis offers the academy.

The field of arts education research is complex. There are many competing voices, arguing not only for the place of the arts in the education system generally, but also for the place of individual art forms as well. The research reviewed suggested that some of the art forms – music and visual arts specifically, have a higher profile in Australian primary schools, as indicated by the focus on these art forms in known empirical research. For example, O’Toole (2013) highlighted the regular but marginal place of visual arts and music in the curriculum and denoted the other art forms of dance, drama and media to the ‘lively co-curricular fringe’. This perceived hierarchy has played a part in the current state of research in the arts in Australia, however, it is beyond the scope of this review and research project, to examine further.

An exploration of curriculum theory research highlighted curriculum as policy, curriculum issues and the place of the arts within the Australian curriculum as the major areas relevant to this study. Curriculum as plan and curriculum as lived as highlighted by Aoki (2009) is of particular interest as is the notion of curriculum as a complicated conversation (Pinar, 2004). Policy development and policy enactment theory provide the entry point to understanding the external factors that impact on teachers.

Examining the available research on professional development and professional learning identified a large body of research, systematically identifying and describing models and processes of professional development and professional learning leading to teacher change. The research identified factors, both internal and external, that impact on the teacher learning process and although often named differently by different authors, they are in many ways, similar entities.
The identified internal factors included curriculum knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of the teacher. The external factors included student outcomes, support and information (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Hunzicker, 2010; Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

The large body of research on teacher self-efficacy and teaching in the arts suggests that increasing participation of students in the arts lies, in part, with increasing participation and confidence of their teachers. This area of research informs current curriculum enactment processes and practices by providing a snapshot of the issues that may be faced by teachers as they attempt to implement a program of study that is unfamiliar.

There was, however, a paucity in the research detailing a way to understand how, an individual teacher and their context, might be impacted by the systems at play when compared to other teachers. Through complexity theory, a different approach to thinking about how teachers relate to the systems and contexts at play is attempted. This is the area of knowledge explored. The intricacy of educational settings, of curriculum change and of teacher learning is central to this study and is what drives this avenue of investigation.
CHAPTER 3  METHODOLOGY

“A good choreographer captures the complexity of the dance/story by using rigorous and tested procedures and in fact refuses to be limited to one approach to choreography” (Janesick, 2000).

The process of research design is like choreography. Elements are carefully considered and chosen to best fit the theme or idea of the work. Similarly, as Janesick (2000) suggests, there is validity in using a variety of approaches in the design and application of qualitative research. This chapter outlines the processes of the inquiry and the pluralistic approaches employed.

As the overarching aim of this research was to understand how Western Australian primary teachers understand, interpret and enact arts curriculum, the exploration and documentation of the lived experiences, attitudes and beliefs of arts curriculum leaders, classroom primary teachers and arts specialist teachers were crucial. Investigating this experience adds to the collective understanding of arts curriculum enactment processes and practice more broadly. Therefore, in this context, the following overarching question guided the study:

In what ways are arts curriculum understood, interpreted and enacted by classroom primary teachers and arts specialist teachers in Western Australian schools?

To answer this question an approach was required that allowed for the complexity of modern schools to be recognised. As a result, this research was conducted over three phases with 35 participants to better understand this question. The importance of participant’s viewpoints and understanding that teachers interpret their situation based on their perception of their surroundings, led to a qualitative, interpretivist approach.

3.1 Research Framework

The approach taken in this study was broadly qualitative, falling within an interpretivist paradigm, where the meanings participants’ attribute to interactions and contexts are explored (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Walter, 2013). Interest in the participant perspective (Ary, Cheson Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006),
where the interplay of context and engagement with an arts curriculum was important, required an approach that favoured immersion over objectivity, and therefore a qualitative rather than quantitative approach was taken.

Interpretivist research is interested in the social constructions that humans make when examining their world (J. Greene, 2010), and understanding the meaning of participant’s words and actions in a tangible way (Schwandt, 2000). Accordingly, the reconstruction of subjective meanings and the formation of a collective understanding of the arts experience at each school site and for each participant was one way in which the interpretivist view was taken into account. The value that each participant attributed to the arts, and the processes within their schools that support or challenge that value are highlighted through the research process and supported by interpretivist understandings.

Lincoln (2010) discusses interpretivist research as needing a multi-layered metaphor to describe the complexity of the lived experience, decision-making processes and contradictions of understanding. Returning to the kaleidoscope metaphor introduced in chapter 1, each changing turn of the research focus from the arts curriculum leaders to each of the four school, reveals a different and unique pattern; similar in the way that the turning of a kaleidoscope reveals a different pattern to the eye. The multi-faceted nature of these patterns is comparable to the lived complexity of the school setting for teachers. Each school is similar in that there are physical buildings, teachers, students, parents, administration and support staff, but different in how each setting and its’ components interact, and in ways that are not immediately discernible.

As a result, interpretivist research employs methods that allows description and interpretation in a variety of ways. This need for variety or ‘bricolage’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) led to an educational criticism approach (Eisner, 2017).

3.2 Educational Criticism

Educational criticism, as an approach, seeks to disclose or make the qualities of a situation under scrutiny clear. It is in a sense a ‘reconstruction’ (Eisner, 2017), a version of events supported by evidence, described and appraised in a way that brings the qualities of the situation to life. Educational criticism was chosen for this research because it addresses the complexity of curriculum implementation in a way that honours the perspectives of the participants, but
also allows for an interpretation and discussion of issues as seen from the researcher standpoint.

The use of educational criticism also provided a complementary qualitative social inquiry approach for this project (Eisner, 1994, 2005a, 2017; Uhrmacher, McConnell Moroye, & Flinders, 2017), that suited the chosen conceptual framework. Using an educational criticism approach required an alignment with qualitative research which fits comfortably with the interpretivist view. Eisner (2017) discusses six features of a qualitative study that closely align with this project. They include: being field focused, using the self as an instrument, having an interpretive character, the use of expressive language, attention to particulars, and judging success through coherence, insight and instrumental utility (Eisner, 2017).

For the first feature, the essential part of being field focused that aligns with this research is the focus on observing the educational setting as it is. The boundedness of a setting requires the participants to normalise the happenings within that setting as they see it (Agee, 2002). Fundamentally, this research aimed to delve into the perceptions and views of the participants in a way that was authentic as possible. For example, participants were asked to describe current settings and how they impacted on their practice, rather than how they would like the situation to be, given an alternative. Seeing the situation as it was proved to be a key tool in the development and analysis of the project.

The second feature, using the self as an instrument provided for a degree of discernment in what is seen in the setting. Perception, in this way, involved a version of “re-seeing” (Bresler, 2006). Discerning what was important in each school setting went to the core of the research project and was an invaluable screening device in the analysis stage. For example, recognising how the participant’s perception of their environment also equated to their valuing of the arts differentiated between a simple description of the situation and a more sophisticated understanding of curriculum hierarchy.

The third feature, having an interpretive character requires asking why and making meaning of the answer. This requires “thick description” (Holliday, 2004) and the creation of meaning (Eisner, 2017) in the way that the research is conducted. As this project has involved unpacking curriculum implementation
practices, this aspect is crucial. Also crucial is the interpretation and meaning making through the theoretical structures created. Here, for example, the development of the Purpose, Value, Practice (PVP) model proved invaluable to creating meaning in arts educational practice.

The fourth feature, using expressive language is used heavily in this research. The lived experiences of the participants require them to tell their story in their own words and so throughout this dissertation direct quotes are featured. Descriptive vignettes are used in chapter 4, and in the final publication the use of narrative portraiture is highlighted (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

The fifth feature, attention to particulars, underscores that in a qualitative study the fine grain detail of the project is not overlooked. Here, this attention is developed through a sharpening focus of each stage of the project; from the macro phase one of the perceptions of arts curriculum leaders, through to the micro phase three of the journey of one teacher in one school.

The sixth and final feature involves coherence, insight and instrumental utility. Alignment with these concepts asks for the project thesis to persuade the reader that the insights provided are coherent and make sense in the way they have been presented (Eisner, 2017). Fundamentally, this project aims to satisfy the reader that every effort has been taken to follow protocols and procedures, providing a true and accurate account of arts curriculum implementation issues in Western Australian primary schools.

3.3 Educational Criticism Structure

There are three main elements of an educational criticism structure that are used in this research, and although there is fluidity in the way the elements can be applied, in that they are not prescriptive, these three elements provide a way to organise and think about the project in parts, and as a whole. The three elements are description, interpretation and evaluation.

**Description.** Description in an educational criticism context helps to create a picture or visualise what the situation under review is like (Eisner, 2017). It is an important part of this project as it sets the scene and enables the voices of the participants to be heard. Description is used to portray the work settings of the curriculum leaders, the school sites, teachers and arts specialist
teachers of the second phase, and the work environment of Penny, the focus teacher in phase three of the study.

**Interpretation.** Interpretation is used to provide a different perspective to the research done through description. Where “description can be thought of as giving an account of, interpretation can be regarded as accounting for” (Eisner, 2017, p. 95). In this context, accounting for the way teachers perceive their contextual environment, and process how and why they teach what they teach, interpretation provides a framework for understanding the curriculum implementation process as examined in this study.

**Evaluation.** Evaluation then, is the process of appraising and valuing the situation under scrutiny for its educational import (Eisner, 2017). This evaluation requires a judgement to be made, however, the judgement is contextually based and recognises that there is more than one opinion on what constitutes value and educational growth. The evaluation presented here considers arts curriculum implementation from both a practical and theoretical standpoint.

The practical evaluation standpoint provides one viewpoint on how teachers, schools and educational jurisdictions understand the enactment process for their situation. This practical stance is the prominent position of the five papers that comprise the body of this thesis. Conversely, the theoretical standpoint adds to theory on how enactment processes impact on teachers, schools and educational jurisdictions. This theoretical evaluation is discussed from a complexity theory viewpoint where system interactions are key. These two different perspectives are important end points of this project. However, to be able to discuss the project from these contrasting positions, the project first needed to be framed in a way that made those understandings possible. Therefore, an embedded multi-case study design was used to encapsulate the breadth and depth of the project.

### 3.4 Case Study Design

To gain the broadest understanding of the enactment process, this research used a qualitative exploration of **understanding, interpreting and enacting** curriculum implementation through a case study design. A case study is an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context
may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p. 16). In this instance, due to the interest in the interplay of context to arts curriculum enactment by teachers at the same school, and in contrast, teachers at different schools, an embedded multi-case study design was used. An embedded case design also prioritised questions of how and why over questions of what. Understanding the different contextual pressures faced by schools called for a model that allowed both the individual nature of each school to be considered as well as what this meant in more general terms for teachers across the schools.

According to Yin (2014) an embedded design conducts similar research at each site but does not initially collate the results as one study. The individual sites are first reported as separate entities, as each individual case consists of a ‘whole’ study, and then the emergent results from each are considered in relation to the other sites that make up the study. Therefore, five discrete cases made up the embedded design of this research project, and these cases are elaborated on next.

The study was conducted across three phases and centred on the three components of the main research question: understand, interpret and enact. Phase one of the study was the overarching view of the project and focused on those charged with leading the curriculum change process. The participants were Western Australian arts curriculum leaders from the Department of Education (DoE), the School, Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), the Association of Independent Schools Western Australia (AISWA), Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA), teachers from Teacher Development Schools (TDS) and education officers from major performing arts companies in Western Australia. These participants collectively became the first case study and although on different sites, this collective of arts curriculum leaders had similar perspectives that were important to the study and thus could be considered one case in the embedded multi-case study design.

Participants in the first phase of the project were asked to consider the impact the contextual dimensions had on staff in schools in relation to their ability to implement the arts curriculum. Data collected from participants in this phase represented the understanding aspect of the main research question.

Phase two of the study narrowed the focus to four Western Australian primary
This phase sought to understand the implementation process from within the school environment. All three education jurisdictions in Western Australia were involved with four schools electing to participate. Each of these four schools represented a separate case in the embedded multi-case study design.

Hillview was an independent government primary school in the central metropolitan area of Perth Western Australia. It had a specialist music teacher and part-time dance / drama teacher on staff. Winding Crescent was an independent government school in the outer Perth metropolitan area. It had a specialist music teacher on staff and part-time visual arts specialist. St Albertine’s was a small Catholic primary school in regional Western Australia. It had a performing arts specialist teacher on staff. Admiral Hall was a small independent school in an inner-city environment with a part-time music and part-time visual arts specialist teacher on staff.

As four separate cases in the multi-case study design, data collected from participants across this phase was considered at a school (site) level and represented the understanding aspect of the main research question. The bringing together of the four school cases and the analysis of the combined data then represented the interpreting aspect of the main research question.

Phase three then narrowed the focus further by concentrating on one teacher in one school to understand the change process in greater detail. This phase also strengthened the case study approach by providing data from a different more detailed perspective, adding a degree of authenticity to the research process (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007) and clarifying points of interest from the case study schools. The participant ‘Penny’ was the arts specialist teacher at St Albertine’s, one of the four schools from the second phase of the project. Data collected in this third phase highlighted issues that enacting curriculum can have on individual teachers in schools and represented the enacting aspect of the research question. See Figure 3.1 for a graphic representation of the project overview including the case study design.
3.5 Selection of Schools and Participants

**Phase one.** In phase one arts curriculum leaders were purposively selected using a stakeholder methodology (Palys, 2008). Stakeholder sampling ensures that the participants targeted are the ones with the knowledge and understanding to best provide an overview and perspective of the problem.
Major stakeholders from the three identified education jurisdictions: Government, Catholic and Independent were invited to participate as part of the arts curriculum leader’s group. Initial contact was made via email with department managers, and then by email with the arts curriculum consultant in each education jurisdiction. The School, Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) was also approached to participate as the curriculum regulatory body in Western Australia. It was anticipated that two or three participants would be available from each jurisdiction, but it was quickly discovered that the educational jurisdictions lacked staff working specifically in the primary arts learning area. As a result, one arts-based curriculum leader from each of the jurisdictions participated and two arts-based leaders from SCSA were involved. The school system representatives worked to support both primary and secondary arts education, whereas the SCSA arts representative was primary based and the second SCSA representative was in a management role but had an arts background.

Other relevant stakeholders were then identified and invited to participate including teachers from Arts Teacher Development School’s (2) and education officers from the Department of Culture and the Arts and major performing arts companies in Western Australia (4). This final group of participants were included to ascertain whether similar concepts of the impact of the contextual dimensions were revealed by art form specialists who were one step removed from the education system. Their inclusion provided a different perspective and highlighted the paucity of arts curriculum leaders in curriculum support roles across the education sectors. The participant invitation letter and consent form for phase one inclusion can be found in Appendix 2.

**Phase two.** Phase two schools were selected using a theoretical replication logic, where in a multi-case study design theoretical replication looks to “predict contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons” (Yin, 2014, p. 57). For this project those reasons included belonging to different education jurisdictions and the differing arts focus of the arts specialist teachers on staff.

As the largest jurisdiction, the Department of Education was represented by two schools; a central metropolitan and an outer metropolitan school. AISWA and CEWA were represented by one school each in the sample. Each of the four
schools were similar in that they had arts specialist teachers on staff, but each school used their specialist in different ways adding an extra dimension of contrast to the study. This theoretical replication provided a sense of uniformity to the data collection processes but individuality in the changing school sites.

The process of school selection happened through known contacts. It proved to be very difficult to attract schools to the research without an introduction. For example, one of the government schools was my children’s primary school and the principal was very supportive of the research process. At the second government school, the acting principal was a personal acquaintance who was working closely with Murdoch University at the time of school selection. The independent school was sourced through a work-colleague who had a connection with the principal and the Catholic school agreed to be involved because an old school friend was teaching there.

The difficult nature of procuring sites for research is important to acknowledge. In this case, it was initially thought that a school without a specialist teacher on staff would be a valuable addition to the project. However, attempts to source a school with this staffing profile failed. Therefore, all four schools involved had arts-based staff and an assumption of an overall predilection to the arts was considered in the data analysis stage of the project.

Schools and their teachers were invited to participate in the study through initial contact via a letter to the school principal. On in-principle agreement to participate in the study, school principals then invited classroom teachers to participate. The participant group at each school had between four and six teachers and the principal. This allowed a range of experiences to be captured at each site. Teachers from a range of year levels and teaching backgrounds made up the participant group at each school. The principal, teacher participant invitation letters and consent forms can be found in Appendix 2.

Phase three. Sampling in phase three focused the study further by concentrating attention on one school and one teacher. Sampling was criterion based (Palys, 2008), as the chosen school needed to be one of the four schools from phase two, and the teacher involved the specialist arts teacher at the school. This school and teacher were chosen from the phase two interviews which highlighted ongoing issues surrounding purpose and value that impacted
on this teacher in a variety of ways. The arts teacher in question was interested in being involved and wanted to develop her understanding of the implementation issues and work at increasing arts knowledge across her school.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Considering the research questions, the chosen interpretivist design and the educational criticism approach, document analysis and semi-structured in-depth interviews were used as the main methods to collect data.

**Document analysis.** Document analysis was used to provide insight into the understand and interpret aspects of the main research question. The *Western Australian P-10 Arts Curriculum* was systematically examined to inform the project on what the participants should program for and teach in the arts learning area. This curriculum document examination provided an avenue to explore the rhetoric of the written curriculum with the reality of the school environment.

Equally, the most important use of documentary records is to “corroborate and augment evidence” (Yin, 2014, p. 107). With this understanding in mind, the documents examined added credence to the stated curriculum enactment processes used by the participants. In particular, the rationale, aims, organisation and ways of teaching from the *Western Australian P-10 Arts Curriculum* were studied (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2014a). Using a deductive approach, the categories selected to code the curriculum aligned with the heuristic device used in the first two phases of the project. Discord between the documentary evidence and practices of the participants is discussed in chapter 4.

**Semi-structured interviews.** Extended semi-structured interviews were used across all phases of the study. These in-depth interviews helped identify participant’s teaching history, interpretation of their work environment, and opinion of, and relationship with the arts. This allowed a detailed contextualised lived experience of the value systems at work.

Prior to the collection of any data from the identified project participants, a pilot interview was conducted to trial the interview questions and practice
interviewing techniques. The pilot interview was held with a work colleague who had held an arts curriculum leader position in the Department of Education and was currently an arts specialist teacher in a primary school. As such, she could respond to the interview questions from both perspectives. The pilot interview was an invaluable tool in practicing the six quality criteria for interviews (Kvale, 2007) which included making sure the questions were shorter than the answers given, practising clarifying the meaning of answers given, and allowing for spontaneous answers through relevant questions asked.

As a result, the interviews were focused and purposive. A schedule of question prompts was used but there was an openness to the process, with the direction and content of the replies left to the participants interpretation of the questions (Kvale, 2007). This was particularly significant across the four schools with the teacher participants identifying a range of teaching experiences that influenced their view on curriculum implementation issues. Some responses were short, and others were much longer and detailed. Recognising and understanding the relationship between teaching experience, length and sophistication of answer happened as a result of the iterative interview – analysis process. It also meant that with the heightened awareness, the interviews became richer as the study developed.

It was also important to make each of the participants feel at ease, and as the researcher, be aware of the power relationship in the interview process. This was difficult as the interviews, for the most part, took place in each of the participants place of work. Therefore, an awareness of making the interview a safe place to talk, regardless of the workplace venue, was required.

Considerations made included: keeping the door of the interview room closed, starting the interview with historical questions regarding work history to relax the participants and reiterating the anonymity of the research process.

Questions asked in the interviews across the three phases can be found in Appendix 3.

Research heuristic device. Creating a conceptual framework capable of focusing on the lived experiences of the teachers and the contexts that impact on the arts curriculum enactment process required drawing on different aspects of curriculum theory and policy enactment theory. As discussed in
chapter 2, these theories provided the entry point for this study, and here elements of policy enactment theory offered a pertinent heuristic device to use in structuring the interview questions and initial analysis in answering how teachers understand the arts curriculum.

Policy enactment research tends to focus on all aspects of education except curriculum (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Curriculum has traditionally sat outside these discussions, treated independently of policy. Considering the impact that policy can have on the teaching and learning process this separation is curious. Bernstein (2003) introduced the idea of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation as the three message systems of schooling and Rizvi and Lingard (2010) use this notion to suggest that these systems are the core of teachers’ work and that policy does impact on these. This research is taking this view a step further and exploring the contextual dimensions of Ball et al. (2012) with curriculum enactment as the focus. The four contextual dimensions considered were:

- Situated contexts (e.g. locale, school histories and intakes)
- Professional cultures (e.g. values, teacher commitments and experiences, and policy management in schools)
- Material contexts (e.g. staffing, budget, buildings, technology and infrastructure)
- External contexts (e.g. pressures and expectations from broader policy context)

These four contextual dimensions encapsulate the external factors that impact on the teaching and learning process in schools. Teachers are not necessarily consciously aware of the impact these dimensions have on their day to day business, but their influence is constantly present, nevertheless. So, understanding how the contexts identified above are processed, understood and prioritised by the participant groups was the initial focus of this research. The research questions used in phase one and two of the project in relation to the contextual dimensions were:

- What impact do the situated contexts of the school have on enacting arts curriculum?
- How do the professional cultures of the school impact curriculum
enactment processes (for arts learning)?

- What role do the material contexts of the school play in supporting or inhibiting curriculum enactment in the arts?
- How do external contexts impact the curriculum enactment process for the arts?

The specific methodologies outlined above were used in this study as the most relevant ways to holistically sharpen the focus between the three phases of the research project. These methodologies allowed for detailed description and pertinent insights to be made about arts curriculum implementation practices. A more detailed explanation of the analysis process follows.

3.7 Data Analysis

Iterative data analysis provided insight on the curriculum implementation issue and direction for each phase of the study. This process needed to be flexible and open to variation, as the aim was to understand and interpret the participants' responses. Too much structure in the analysis would limit the exploration of unplanned or unexpected occurrences (Bazeley, 2013) but there needed to be enough structure to satisfy the parameters of trustworthy research.

The data analysis across the three phases of the research project followed a similar pattern. Individual interviews were audiotaped, transcribed and entered into NVivo 11 Pro edition qualitative software for coding and analysis. The phase one interviews were transcribed directly into NVivo 11 Pro by the researcher to gain a more detailed understanding of transcription protocols. Phase two interviews were mostly professionally transcribed as they were conducted in school groupings, meaning that several interviews were completed in one school visit. These interviews were checked for accuracy and any notable pauses or audible sighs were added to the transcriptions. The phase three interviews were again coded by the researcher as these interviews were a much more personal undertaking with researcher as participant.

Coding of the data was undertaken over several cycles (Bazeley, 2013; Saldana, 2013) to thoroughly interrogate the data. Coding was stored in nodes and each layer of coding had a folder and named network of subnodes as required. See Figure 3.2 as an example.
In phase one, the eleven interview transcripts were reread and then the data was “chunked” (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013) into the broad categories of situational, material, professional and external, the four contextual dimensions from policy enactment theory used as a heuristic device to guide the initial stages of the study. This process was consistent with a structural method of coding, where a conceptual term is given to a selection of data drawn from a specific research question (Saldana, 2013). From this technique, a picture formed about what contextual issues phase one participants saw as impacting teachers in schools. For example, from the quantity of data placed in each of the four contextual dimension nodes, a feel for where the phase one participants saw the greatest challenges for teachers was provided.

Each contextual dimension was then subjected to a second more descriptive cycle of coding (Saldana, 2013) where each of the structural categories were again considered for drawing out the nuanced similarities and differences of the participants understanding of the implementation process. For example, under the category of professional cultures some of the topics explicated included ingrained habits, priorities, relationships and teacher attributes. These second-round node categories were helpful in labelling the issues or challenges faced by teachers.

The data then underwent a third cycle of analysis where repetitions and patterns (Bazeley, 2013) were considered across the breadth of the transcripts bringing to light the notions of ‘curriculum as text’ and ‘curriculum as discourse’. This exploration led to the intended and unintended outcomes of curriculum
implementation explored in chapter 4 and the first publication.

In tandem to the coding of the interview data a document analysis was also taking place. At each of the three stages of the coding process the written curriculum documents were also being reviewed and examined using the same codes and categories as the semi-structured interviews to find the similarities and differences, the patterns and links between the written and the practice (Bowen, 2009; Gross, 2018).

Phase two of the data analysis underwent a similar process. All twenty-four interview transcripts were reread for accuracy and entered into NVivo 11 Pro for coding. The transcripts were then structurally coded using the situational, material, professional and external contextual dimensions as the starting point. Structurally coding the data in this way, in the first instance, provided a direct comparison between what the arts curriculum leaders saw as critical issues in curriculum implementation and then what the school-based teachers saw.

In the second round of coding a descriptive ‘topic’ coding technique was used, where identifications of the topic rather than abbreviations of the content (Tesch, as cited in Saldana, 2013) were important. This technique elaborated on the issues facing teachers in schools. Descriptive categories such as ‘administration’ and ‘teacher attributes’ were explored. This round of coding was looking for what issues were behind the contextual dimensions for the teachers in schools. Subnodes of ‘teacher attributes’, for example, included ‘burning out’, ‘confidence’, ‘needs’, and ‘learning opportunities’.

A third round of coding looked at why teachers were talking about the contextual dimensions in the way they were. This line of thinking led to recoding the data using such categories as ‘showing value’ which was then subdivided into ‘arts integration’, ‘arts practice’ and ‘cultural production’. What became clear through this work was that there were different purposes to the participants descriptions of the contextual issues at play.

The coding and subsequent category development led to understandings about the contextual environment facing primary teachers, as outlined in chapter 4. A deeper understanding of the interrelatedness of purpose, value and practice was elucidated through the findings elaborated in chapter 5 and helped to
answer the interpreting sub-research question: what is the relationship between purpose, value and practice in the implementation of a primary arts curriculum?

Of particular interest at this point of the project was that the third article about purpose and value was started before the second article about context. However, due to the iterative nature of the coding and writing process that was undertaken, it became clear that part of the story was missing. At that point, it felt like the teacher participant stories had not been told and moving to an examination of purpose, value and practice was denying a valuable viewpoint being heard. The data was re-examined and the second article about content and context was completed, providing a valuable insight into teacher concerns in curriculum implementation.

A similar process happened in the development of the fourth publication. Initially, the ideas around criticality (see chapter 6) were caught up with purpose, value and practice (see chapter 5) in the third publication. However, the article in its initial form was rejected by the chosen journal. This was a valuable learning experience and the reviewers were right in their assessment that there were too many ideas happening in one paper and therefore none were well developed. Rewriting the purpose value and practice paper focusing on just those three ideas proved an appropriate course to take and, as a result, the criticality paper developed in its own right, and was greatly strengthened in the process.

In phase three, six interviews were transcribed and coded. The process was different in this phase as the focus moved away from the four contextual dimensions used as the starting point in phase one to look more specifically at agency and change. Descriptive coding drew out initial categories around community, support, and individual change. A second stage of coding examined the identified categories for deeper understandings around individual and structural elements of change, for example, ‘researcher influence’, ‘PD influence’ and ‘admin influence’. These categories gave shape to the fifth publication.

A particular focus of the third phase of the research was the use of narrative portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). Narrative portraiture is described as “a
blending of qualitative methodologies—life history, naturalist inquiry, and most prominently, that of ethnographic methods” (Dixson, Chapman, & Hill, 2005, p. 17). What these methods, and the telling of the ‘story’ do, is highlight the lived experiences as authentically as possible.

What narrative portraiture also allowed was to “document and illuminate the complexity and detail of a unique experience or place” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 13), recognising the power of localised theory building (Flick, 2014). Towards this end, the focus in phase three was on one teacher, in one school, highlighting the challenges faced in attempting change as a sole agent; an experience not unfamiliar in Western Australian schools. Focusing on one participant in this way allowed for an in-depth study of her journey and helped to answer the enacting sub-research question: how does the relationship between context and value influence a teacher’s ability to change their arts education pedagogy and practice?

On completion of the descriptive coding and while considering the practical implications of the data through the associated publications, the theoretical implications of the findings were also considered. To do this, complexity theory was utilised, as complexivist thinking linked ‘schools as ecologies’ and complex environments in ways that aided understanding of the issues surrounding arts curriculum implementation.

### 3.8 Complexity Theory

Looking at the main research question from a complexity theory perspective determined how the participant schools could be considered individual ecologies and how the interrelatedness of each contextual dimension worked for the individual primary teacher, their school and jurisdiction in question. In short, complexity theory enabled each site to be considered an overlapping and nested system. The following key ideas were considered the most pertinent for this study and were drawn from the way complexity theory has been used in educational research, as outlined in chapter 2.

First, the ‘vital simultaneity’ (Davis & Sumara, 2008) of knower and knowledge were important constructs to consider the findings of this study through, as they function as two discrete systems and impact significantly on the curriculum
implementation process. According to Davis and Sumara (2008) 
knaver
systems or knowledge-producing systems are the physical systems that that are capable of self-organisation. In this dissertation, teachers are the knower systems that produce and use the knowledge in question. On the other hand, knowledge systems are the information that is to be shared, here, the arts curriculum in question. This understanding supported a dynamic that had more to do with contrast than commonality. This relationship was also considered at different levels of construction; teacher, school and jurisdiction.

Second, growth and emergence, through diversity, redundancy and specialisation was also an important construct for this study (B. Davis, 2008). In particular, the specialisation of balancing internal diversity and internal redundancy (Davis & Sumara, 2008) provided a unique way to explain why programs in schools sometimes function extremely well but when a core component changes the flow on effect can be significant. Growth and complex emergence exist when schools get this change process right. These aspects of complexity theory and their interrelatedness are introduced in the concluding sections of chapters 4, 5 and 6, and in detail in chapter 7.

Finally, the undertaking of data collection and examination requires that certain university conditions have been met. Detailing how this project was informed by and met the relevant ethical guidelines for human research is outlined next.

3.9 Ethical Considerations
Ethically, this project was governed by the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2007, implemented at Murdoch University through the Responsible Conduct of Research Policy. As part of this policy ethics approval was gained from the University (No. 2014/250) in the first instance and renewed as required under the policy. As this research was conducted with Department of Education (DoE) and Catholic Education WA (CEWA) staff, approval was sought and granted from both jurisdictions (DoE ref: 15/0082957 and CEWA letter dated 17th February 2015). In addition, DOE required approval from District Office managers and principals of schools selected before the curriculum leaders or teachers could be approached. These approvals were sought and granted as required. As AISWA schools are independent bodies, permission was sought and acquired directly from the one AISWA school.
involved in this project. The ethics approval letters can be found in Appendix 1.

Informed consent was then sought from all participants. Participation letters and consent forms were distributed and signed prior to interviews. Participants were made aware that consent could be withdrawn at any stage and transcripts of the interviews were sent back to participants for validation before coding commenced. One of the arts curriculum leaders from phase one, requested parts of her transcript be redacted as she was concerned about the tone that could be interpreted through the text. This was done without question and those parts of the transcript were not used in the coding or as quotes in the publications. Participants were further protected by using pseudonyms throughout the coding process, in the writing of the publications and this thesis. A excel spreadsheet kept track of the pseudonyms used in each phase of the project to maintain consistency and ensure there were no doubling up of pseudonyms used.

However, these procedural ethical considerations were not the only ethical aspects considered in the completion of this project. The integrity of the project was also considered through the concepts of authenticity and trustworthiness.

3.10 Authenticity and Trust-Worthiness

The notion of authenticity and trust-worthiness are important considerations in qualitative case study designs (Schwandt et al., 2007), as they provide a means for ensuring the research is credible and of a high quality. For this study, authenticity was strengthened through the well-developed research questions, parameters guiding data collection methods and participant reflections. Trustworthiness was consolidated through the detailed documentation of the research process. In the process of completing an educational criticism, authenticity and trustworthiness are combined into consensual validation.

Consensual Validation refers to a “state of shared belief” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 59) where the validity of the work in question is examined from a place of agreement and understanding. Eisner (1994) suggests that consensual validation is reached when a work provides a level of structural corroboration and referential adequacy that clearly supports the premise of the work.

More specifically then, structural corroboration in an educational criticism,
considers the extent to which the concepts, ideas, and views put forward support each other (Eisner, 1994). For this study, the way that the observations of the curriculum leaders are supported by the teachers in schools without any interference from either the researcher or other participants, provides a level of structural corroboration.

Referential Adequacy refers to the usefulness of the educational criticism to improve understanding of the issue or problem at hand (Eisner, 1994). If, at the end of the criticism, it can be said that the situation is better understood, not necessarily fully, but that the work provides a more detailed understanding, then referential adequacy is reached. In the context of this study, a much greater understanding of the issue of arts curriculum implementation has been reached as a result of the thinking and writing conducted throughout this project. In addition, the participants across the three phases of this study provided feedback to the articles produced as part of the thesis by publication model, as well as the peer reviewers for the journals published in. This detailed ‘shared understanding’ of those involved in the project in both the direction and outcomes of the study, aid in attaining referential adequacy, reaching consensual validation and a state of shared belief in this work.

Finally, the end of this chapter represents the completion of the content of the kaleidoscope thesis metaphor. The blending of processes and approaches chosen to create the conceptual and methodological elements of this project are revealed in the images leading the following chapters.
CHAPTER 4  UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE

4.1 Educational Jurisdictions: Places as Context

I arrive at the Association for Independent Schools Western Australia (AISWA) for the interview with Louise, the arts curriculum leader. AISWA is situated in a predominately commercial area with office blocks and small manufacturing companies lining the busy street. I park across the road from the AISWA office, pondering the choice of office site. Although the location is central to Perth as a city, there are no schools or residential areas close by and therefore, the building feels isolated from the schools and students it represents. The staff are protected from visitors with card access for the office areas and so I wait in the small reception area of the AISWA foyer for Louise. I observe the people that come and go through the reception area with curiosity. It is clear that there are not many visitors to AISWA as most of the traffic appears to be AISWA staff.

It is a similar story when arriving at the curriculum section of the Department of Education. Housed in a vacated secondary school, Statewide Support Services, an arm of the Department of Education, oversees support to Western Australian government schools in curriculum, behaviour and disability support among other areas. Some of the curriculum support officers, including the arts officer are housed in this northern suburb facility. As a former school, the site is eerily quiet, like it is waiting for students to return, however, the signage indicates that students are no longer the focus, conference areas and offices are signposted rather than classrooms and the library. I wonder whether the staff still meet once a week for morning tea as they would have when the site was operating as a school.

In contrast, the Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) office is tall and imposing, a converted convent that dates back to the early 1900’s. The history and heritage of the building is obvious; the limestone, use of timber, high ceilings and stained-glass windows are
a sign of age and significance to the Catholic heritage. Gwen, the arts officer at CEWA takes me to the Board Room. A large dark timber conference table and ornate high-backed timber chairs with red velvet seat pads take most of the space in this room. However, with only two of us in such a large, draughty room the echo is pronounced, and I question whether I will be able to hear our voices clearly on the audio transcript.

The School, Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) sits in a commercial area south east of Perth’s CBD near a large shopping complex and train station. There must be a pragmatic reason for locating SCSA here, as the site is completely removed from the three educational jurisdictions that oversee education in Western Australia. On entering the building, I can access the floor SCSA is housed on, but with swipe card access to the office areas, I am met by ‘Jenny’ the primary arts officer and taken to the meeting room we are using. On the way, we swing by her desk and I notice that all the curriculum officers are working in small cubicles in an open plan office design. The environment seems divorced from the life and energy of the schools at the centre of the work done by SCSA, to the point where it is hard to reconcile the two.

These short vignettes represent initial impressions of my arrival at the work places of the arts curriculum leaders. The first three paragraphs represent each of the educational jurisdictions and the fourth paragraph represents SCSA, the curriculum regulatory body in Western Australia. What was interesting about each of these sites was the contextual differences that existed even at this jurisdictional level. Office blocks, vacant school, converted convent, these environments have something to say about the organisations, their ‘clients’ and their relationships with what happens in schools on a day to day basis. These impressions also introduce the concept of ‘description’ in educational criticism as an approach and provide a frame for this chapter: how contextual landscapes impact on the implementation of arts curriculum.

This chapter then goes on to examine how contextual landscapes impact on how the arts curriculum is enacted and understood by curriculum leaders,
schools and teachers. The two following articles provide complementary portraits to understanding the contexts in which teachers operate. In this way, these articles provide an 'emic' perspective, or “insider's view of the world” (Fetterman, 2008, p. 249). More specifically, how curriculum designers and leaders view the world is addressed in *Arts Curriculum Implementation*. “*Adopt and Adapt*” as Policy Translation, and how teachers and school administrators view the same world is addressed in “*Content without Context is Noise*: Looking for Curriculum Harmony in Primary Arts Education in Western Australia. An emic perspective is a critical starting point as it allows multiple versions of the landscape to be presented, for example, how the jurisdictional curriculum leaders perceived the arts implementation environment from a systemic leadership perspective. This ‘positioning is then placed alongside how the school-based participants perceived their school environment contexts including the impact on their arts teaching programs.

In terms of *educational criticism*, an ‘emic’ view also exemplifies the first stage of the criticism process - *description*, “the vivid rendering of the qualities perceived in the situation” (Eisner, 2002, p. 234). Describing the environment from the perspective of the curriculum leaders and then the teachers contextualises the situation in unique and different ways which allows a variety of interpretations. This contextualisation through description happens in two ways.

First, through establishing the research contexts in which the data was collected. The ‘thick description’ the environment adds to the discussion of context is important and re-examined at the end of this chapter. Second, *description* through the lived experiences and voices of the participants, highlights a variety of perspectives and complexity of the environment that impacts on curriculum enactment. However, it is also important to acknowledge that description is rarely developed in isolation from interpretation in an educational criticism process. There is inevitable overlap. So, although the focus of this chapter is on *description*, there has to also be an element of *interpretation*, particularly within the publications themselves, partly reflecting the specific journal’s requirements for publication.

In this chapter policy enactment theory is used as a heuristic device. Policy enactment theory is based on the work of Ball et al. (2012), focusing on
understanding how the arts curriculum is implemented. The following sub-
research questions formed the basis for both publications:

a) What impact do situated contexts of the school have on enacting arts
curriculum?

b) How do the professional cultures of the school impact curriculum enactment
processes for arts learning?

c) What role do the material contexts of the school play in supporting or
inhibiting curriculum enactment in the arts?

d) How do external contexts impact the curriculum enactment process for the
arts?

What these research questions do is to underpin the impact of contextual
dimensions. The first two publications are presented here as the ‘emic’
perspective of understanding. In the section following the papers, the
contribution of the ideas contained in the publications are examined from two
perspectives: an educational criticism approach and a complexity theory
perspective.

Finally, it is here that the first of the kaleidoscope images is produced to visually
display the critical ideas of this chapter. Figure 4.1 is created through the
combination of the significant words of this chapter and highlights the
understanding component of the overall research question. The repeating
pattern of the figure is similar to the construction of the kaleidoscope image but
through the rotation, the differing views of the words represent the ‘same but
different’ notion of the schools involved.
Figure 4.1  Understand kaleidoscope image
4.2 Article 1

Arts Curriculum Implementation.
"Adopt and Adapt” as Policy Translation.

This paper examines macro, meso and micro understandings of policy enactment within Western Australian primary school arts education where a new national arts curriculum is being revised and implemented through a process colloquially known as ‘adopt and adapt’. This paper focuses on how a government led implementation policy has influenced arts teaching and learning in unintended ways. It includes a theoretical reflection and a consideration of the effects of such policies. Using policy enactment theory as the enquiry lens, four contextual variables are highlighted for their impact on teachers and schools. The variables include situated contexts, material contexts, professional cultures and external factors. Effects are discussed through the perspectives of eleven arts curriculum leaders drawn from in-depth semi-structured interviews. Marginalisation of the arts, the disconnection of schools and teachers to the arts and professional learning impacts are discussed as results of this policy translation.

Keywords: arts education, policy enactment theory, curriculum implementation, translation, adaptation

“This Arts have the capacity to engage, inspire and enrich all students, exciting the imagination and encouraging them to reach their creative and expressive potential.” (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014)

This statement from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), the body responsible for the development of the national curriculum in Australia, serves as an aspiration designed to inspire teachers to engage all students with the Arts. The Western Australian P-10 Arts Curriculum (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2015c), to be fully implemented in Western Australia by 2018 (Collier, 2015), is a process of translation of the national curriculum for the Western Australian context. This Pre-primary to Year 10 syllabus promises an arts education in dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts that encourages students to “explore and experiment” as they are involved in arts making and responding activities (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2015c). Teachers are encouraged to provide a creative learning environment in which imagination and curiosity thrive. While this is an admirable goal for a new curriculum, as is often the case in curriculum matters,
the rhetoric of the curriculum documents does not always match the reality of the school environment. In the primary setting (children from 5 - 12 years of age), where teachers are responsible for up to seven learning areas, literacy and numeracy are the priority and arts learning has a lower status. This lower status is in contrast to Australian and international research that points to how the Arts are recognised and valued by teachers, parents and the wider community as having positive influences and learning outcomes for students (Bamford, 2009; Costantoura, 2000). Understanding this mismatch is a key theme for this paper if there is to be a better use of resources currently allocated to curriculum development, and improved student engagement and learning outcomes for students in the Arts.

Examination of the mismatch is undertaken on three levels. First, the macro level, identifying the political – economic climate that pervades education in Australia and other similar western countries. Second, the meso level, identifying the policy at the centre of this paper and the contextual dimensions that impact on arts learning opportunities. Recognising their contribution to the ecology of primary schools will highlight the focus of arts curriculum implementation (Ludwig, Marklin, & Song, 2016). Finally, the micro level, the intended and unintended results of implementation policy and what this has meant for arts education in this scenario. It is to this first broadest context that we now turn.

**Macro forces: Neoliberal Movement**

As a macro force impacting on education across the globe, the neoliberal movement is considerable. The current neoliberal approach to education has resulted in what Lingard, Martino, and Rezai-Rashti (2013) suggest is a rescaling of educational accountability. This rescaling shifts the focus of performance from the child to the school, education system and governments, and is being experienced most in western post-industrialised countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Australia (Lingard et al., 2013). Argued as an inevitable process of living in the global village (Ditchburn, 2012; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Sabol, 2013), this competitive focus has driven the educational agenda and ties it to economic policies meaning that the mathematical world of economics becomes the sole determinant of ‘value’ and so the ‘currency’ of what counts in education is linked to market forces. This
matters because these neoliberal principles inform policy and its enactment (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013). Yet a disconnection exists between many teachers’ desire to do ‘the right thing’, make a difference in their students’ lives, and be informed by policy that reflects conflicting educational imperatives.

Across Australia, the development and implementation of a national curriculum, the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014), heralds the latest change in our education landscape. This process of curriculum development and implementation has not been without its challenges as Australian States and Territories try to reconcile the new curriculum guidelines with the current curriculum practices. In order to better understand the current situation and perceived mismatch of curriculum and practice, we briefly consider the history of the national curriculum.

**National Curriculum**

The notion of an Australian curriculum was initiated in the early 1980’s with the possibility of a systematic and systemic approach to curriculum discussed by scholars and politicians of the day (Brennan, 2011; Drummond, 2012; Gerrard et al., 2013). Iterations of Australian State, Territory and Federal governments led attempts to develop and implement a national curriculum but the complex Federal versus State and Territories struggle for education control meant that most efforts floundered (Brennan, 2011). In 2003, State and Territory education ministers through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) released a joint document that coalesced into the idea of a national curriculum. In 2008, the then Federal Rudd government announced the development of a national curriculum as part of its ‘education revolution’ (Brennan, 2011; Gerrard et al., 2013). This ‘revolution’ can be interpreted as one of several initiatives aimed at increasing the Federal government’s control over education policy and practice (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

As a result, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was formed in May 2009. This body now carries the responsibility for developing curriculum, assessment and reporting documents for all Australian States and Territories and takes its direction from Federal and State/Territory Education Ministers. A decision was made by ACARA to phase in different learning areas of the curriculum over several years to allow teachers and schools more time to come to terms with the changes; currently there are three
phases of curriculum implementation planned (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013b).

In 2011, teachers and schools across Australia began the familiarisation of Phase One learning areas of the Australian Curriculum: English, Mathematics, Science and History. This required unpacking the national curriculum, changing current programs, and consideration of assessment and reporting mechanisms before full implementation of this first phase by the end of 2014. The Arts, as a learning area, fell within the phase two group of subjects and was made available nationally for implementation in February 2014 by ACARA. The initial timeline for full arts implementation across the nation was 2016. Western Australia, through the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), the regulatory body for education in Western Australia, chose a different path. This path or adaption included a revision of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts, a rewriting of the syllabus materials, and a revised timeline for implementation.

**Meso forces: ‘Adopt and Adapt’ as Policy**

At a meso level, the policy central to this paper is colloquially known as ‘adopt and adapt’. In this context, ‘adopt’ recognises policy components to be implemented as published by the Australian Curriculum, whereas ‘adapt’ indicates components to be altered for use in Western Australian schools. This policy phrase was introduced by SCSA and endorsed by the Western Australian government for this process of translation from Federal to State responsibility. In this parlance, translation implies taking policy from its written to enacted context. Policy, however, is described as more than just text, or a set of directions or prescriptions to be followed. Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2012) and Rizvi and Lingard (2010), for example, consider policy to be a process where a directive is understood and translated into action in different ways for different contexts. In considering policy as both text and enactment we can better understand the notion of ‘adopt and adapt’ as a tool to manage the introduction of a curriculum, and discuss why this may or may not produce the intended outcomes of teacher and student engagement with the arts in and through the new curriculum.

As a phrase of translation, adopt and adapt, is used across many disciplines. Examples from medicine (Bhoo-Pathy et al., 2013), management (Frigo & Anderson, 2014), and cultural studies (Grodach, 2013) use this terminology to
identify the translation of one idea into action. It is used across education generally (Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron, & Vanhover, 2006; Thomson & Sanders, 2010), and also in other Australian education settings as a translation of policy from its written to enacted context. This approach of ‘adopting and adapting’ appears in the Queensland government’s *Curriculum into the Classroom 2013* (Queensland Government, 2013), and the terminology features heavily in the Western Australian rhetoric for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. This process of ‘translation’ shapes and often changes the intention of the curriculum. What this process highlights is that any policy is only ‘seen’ by the way it is enacted or legitimized by policy actors (Wallner, 2008) and the human interface between policy and its intended beneficiaries is key.

As a descriptor, 'adopt and adapt', first appears in the context of the national curriculum in the *Western Australian Jurisdictional Response to the Australian Government of the Australian Curriculum* (Government of Western Australia, 2014). Highlighted in this document was the agreement by Western Australia to *adopt* the Australian Curriculum versions of the English, Mathematics, Science and History learning areas (phase one) but *adapt* all phase two and three learning areas for the Western Australian context. The size, complexity and the vastly different contexts of the Western Australian education system are used as a rationale for this position, as well as perceptions about the enormity of the curriculum, necessary changes to the assessment structure, indicated standards, and the timeline for implementation (Government of Western Australia, 2014).

Western Australia has always been in a unique position in Australia when it comes to the variety of educational contexts it must service. Primary schools in Western Australia range from large metropolitan sites with over 1000 students, to small remote schools with only 25 students. The remote schools can be hundreds of kilometres from regional centres and several thousand kilometres from the capital city Perth, so the concern of making the curriculum relevant to a variety of educational contexts is real. SCSA, as the body with responsibility for the development of curriculum and assessment for students in Kindergarten through to Year 12 as well as the responsibility for setting standards for student achievement is carrying out the ‘adaptation’ work. The Western Australian
jurisdictional response document indicated that SCSA would work to reduce the amount of content (now to be identified as core and additional), and arrange content as a year by year syllabus rather than in the two school year bands of the national document (Government of Western Australia, 2014). This is an important change that highlights the government’s concern with how teachers currently engage with the curriculum and perhaps identifies the way to increase engagement through easy to implement documentation.

However, it is not just the syllabus content that has had an impact on arts curriculum practices in Western Australia. Recent comprehensive national reviews of music (Pascoe et al., 2005) and visual arts (D. Davis, 2008) highlighted the wide variety of practices that are currently present in Australian primary schools concerning arts education. In addition, there are three key characteristics that function to add layers of complexity to perceptions and issues for implementation of the arts curriculum in Western Australian schools. (1) There are five arts subjects to cover (dance, drama, media arts, music and visual art), (2) Each art form has its own distinct language and expression, and (3) Teachers’ own experiences of the arts and teaching the arts in primary schools is limited and usually constrained to one, or possibly two, art forms (Gibson & Anderson, 2008; Wright & Pascoe, 2004). Each of these characteristics alone creates a challenge for a generalist primary teacher but when considered together the impact is even more significant.

If the curriculum is perceived to be elitist or not accessible for a generalist teacher or there is a lack of teacher confidence, then it is understandable that teachers take the path of least resistance and engage with the arts in a less focused and structured way. It could, therefore, be argued that the purpose of the ‘adopt and adapt’ policy is to implement the curriculum in such a way as to actually reach students in schools and increase their engagement with the arts. However, there have been issues and ramifications not fully understood in the implementation of this policy in schools. Policy enactment theory provides one focusing lens that enables us to better understand the intended and unintended results of ‘adopt and adapt’.

**Policy Enactment Theory**

Policy enactment theory is one way to understand policy and the impact that it has on systems and schools. Arts curriculum implementation practices in
Western Australia are contextualised by both ‘big picture’ policy contexts, and ‘smaller picture’ policy practices in policy discussions (Vidovich, 2007). Analysing the links between the two, policy enactment theory provides a helpful framing device as it incorporates an understanding of the variety of individual settings and teachers in those settings. How a policy such as ‘adopt and adapt’ impacts on curriculum implementation is especially important in terms of the complexity previously highlighted.

Seminal in the field of policy enactment theory is the work of Ball et al. (2012), who argue that policy enactment theory involves interpreting, translating and reconstructing policy. What this approach does, for example, is highlight the way that policy and the ways it is enacted is always mediated and in a state of flux. More specifically, Ball et al. (2012) research, conducted in secondary schools in the United Kingdom, argues that policy is not enacted in a vacuum and there are “four contextual dimensions that need to be considered: situated contexts, professional cultures, material contexts, and external contexts”(Ball et al., 2012, p. 21). How these components are coded and decoded by individual schools and teachers comprises the messy, creative and negotiated process of enactment (Ball et al., 2012).

![Figure 4.2 Contextual dimensions](image)

As a heuristic device these four contexts provide a framework for understanding a number of the significant contexts that impact on teachers’ work outside of the immediate classroom environment. Looking at ‘adopt and adapt’ focusses our
attention on the:

- Situated contexts (e.g. location, population, socio-economic factors)
- Professional cultures (e.g. administration, priorities, relationships, marketing, values, and teacher commitment)
- Material contexts (e.g. infrastructure, provision, staffing, technology and time)
- External contexts (e.g. pressures and expectations from broader policy contexts). See Figure 4.2.

In order to understand the complexities of policy enactment at both the meso and micro level we focus on the actors and agencies involved. Arts curriculum leaders, are key actors who have a responsibility to lead and support change, provide one important insight into this contested world and the ‘adopt and adapt’ ideology more broadly. It is to these curriculum leaders we now turn.

**Arts Curriculum Leaders**

As significant actors within arts curriculum implementation, Arts curriculum leaders have a critical perspective to add to the conversation about curriculum change and its effects. For example, as leaders they are not policy makers but charged with supporting teachers to understand and implement arts curriculum. Using a stakeholder sampling method (Palys, 2008), twelve key representatives were directly approached to participate. All but one agreed. The eleven curriculum leaders interviewed in this research come from a range of educational contexts. Initially, from education jurisdiction offices; Government (2), Independent (1) and Catholic Education (1), as well as the state’s regulatory body, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (2). Participants (2) were then recruited from Teacher Development Schools (TDS). TDS’s are an initiative of the Western Australian Department of Education where schools apply for the role and selected staff in those schools become the point of contact for other government schools and teachers for curriculum related support and professional learning. Finally, Education officers (3) from the major performing arts companies in Western Australia were also included. It is interesting to note that there were only eleven identified primary arts curriculum leaders available to interview. In a state with over 500,000 school-aged children with 10% of the nation’s young population, that there are so few direct and
indirect curriculum support positions relating to primary arts reflects the low value of the arts in this education system.

All participants have an interest in, and understanding of arts practice, and each has a personal focus in at least one of the five art subjects (dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts) offered in Western Australian schools. These curriculum leaders have a similar affection towards the Arts and all talked about the importance of the Arts in the lives of Western Australian children. Each of the curriculum leaders interviewed as part of this paper identified the ‘adopt and adapt’ mantra and the impact they perceived this was having on schools. Participants were interviewed using a series of open-ended questions with a focus on curriculum enactment\. The questions being asked of the participants were designed to give greater clarity to the following question:

How and in what ways are the Arts understood, interpreted and enacted by classroom primary teachers in Western Australian schools?

The Arts curriculum leaders’ responses focused on their understanding of what impacts on classroom primary teachers when implementing the Arts, and the contributing factors that enable or inhibit arts learning in schools. These contributing factors were aligned to the contextual dimensions identified earlier. The responses to each contextual dimension were examined separately to develop a deeper understanding of the complexity at play. This complexity was then considered holistically to further unpack the intended and unintended outcomes of the ‘adopt and adapt’ message. A discussion of each context now follows.

**Situated Contexts**

The situated contexts reveal an understanding of the impact of *place* on curriculum implementation practices. Three key factors were identified as important in understanding *place* in this way. First, the school community itself and the values it reflects, second, the resources within the school and third, the geographical location was identified. Each of these are now described in turn.

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1 This research was approved by the affiliated university and the anonymity of the participants protected by the use of pseudonyms.
The school community was found to be vitally important in delivering a strong arts curriculum for primary schools in Western Australia. In this context a school community consists of the teachers, parents and wider community members working to benefit the learning outcomes of students. For example, programs that involve the strengths of the school community are an obvious way explicit learning can be enhanced benefiting not only the children but also providing a mechanism for staff professional learning as well. Imogen, a curriculum leader from the government jurisdiction, offered an example of when a strong school community works well for the Arts.

We certainly find that our schools in [a particular region]...have a very strong focus on the Arts and they have a lot of family, of community members who are practicing artists in their own right, who actually come in and support the school in the delivery of the Arts there. In many of our remote schools the Arts are high on the agenda because the Arts are very important to that community too.

(Imogen, curriculum leader, Government)

Tapping into the interests and skills of the school community is a logical way to add to staff knowledge and understandings. This view is also consistent with the literature that suggests that children generally engage in learning better when they have access to the arts that are relevant to their context (Blakeslee, 2004; Ewing, 2012).

Location and socio-economic influences are also factors’ that influence understanding of place. For example, the socio-economic bearing of a school has a considerable effect on a child’s academic performance (Perry & McConney, 2010). This impacts on arts offerings as the focus on the improvement of academic performance has direct links with how much time and attention is given to other learning areas (Thompson & Harbaugh, 2013).

School based opportunities form one component of an arts program but schools being able to offer and integrate additional arts learning opportunities into their programs depends on geographical and financial resources to do so. A school’s physical location and ability of the students to pay for items like transport and tickets was also raised by one Education Officer as a concern to offering well rounded arts programs. Clara, for example, highlighted the difficulty faced trying to attract teachers and schools to centralised performances.

…for teachers to actually come out of schools is really, really difficult because of the amount of risk and safety
management for the students is really huge and that has had a great impact. I also know, I've had some teachers that we have had some great support from say "look my budget has literally been slashed this year" so I got that at the end of last year saying "I have to be really careful about where we spend the money and have to relate it directly back to curriculum and what are the outcomes going to be for the students".

(Clara, Education Officer, performing arts)

The travel, risk management procedures and paperwork associated with taking students out of school has increased teacher workload in recent years. Education officers also highlighted that the associated administrative burden has a greater impact on schools further away from the city. The situated contexts give an impression of how location creates both opportunity and restriction in education. How schools and teachers respond to these impacts delineates what is possible to offer students. For example, if excursions are not possible due to funding and travel constraints, how can local artists and opportunities be used instead? Influencing how these opportunities and restrictions are handled characterises the professional cultures of the school.

**Professional Cultures**

Professional cultures identify the processes within a school that impact on arts curriculum implementation and delivery. Three key impacts relating to school processes were identified. First, support for the arts (by the school administration and the school community), second, school administration decision-making processes, and three, teacher values and commitment were concepts identified by participants as being significant.

Support for the arts is a concept that has a global audience. In the US, McKean (2001) identified district administration support as an issue for teachers working in partnership with teaching artists to improve curriculum delivery. In Western Australia, the curriculum leaders identified support through explicitly valued and supported arts programs in schools. Louise, a curriculum leader in the independent school jurisdiction, saw a strong connection between a school administrator’s position on the Arts and how that translates to and through the rest of the school.

…then there is the attitude towards the Arts from the executive, from the principal, the assistant principal and so on. [At North PS], their principal actually has an arts
background so she thinks that the Arts should permeate every part of the school curriculum, so she is going to employ a music teacher and a visual arts teacher and she would welcome me to the school to talk to people and so on.

(Louise, curriculum leader, Independent)

Where there is explicit support and value from a school executive, there is openness and sharing between the administration team and teachers and between teachers themselves. This value is reflected in the way the school operates.

School operation is very closely tied to administration decision making; the second key impact to be discussed. One way that administration teams influence school operation is through the school timetable. The timetable provides structure to the school. Teachers know when their class is working with another teacher for a particular subject, and for how long, because it is timetabled. This allows classroom teachers to focus on other aspects of the curriculum. However, allocation of time, space and resources to a learning area provides an indication of value; greater resources, greater value. Imogen, a curriculum leader from the government jurisdiction, saw the school administration team as having an influence over the school timetable but also recognised the juggling of many competing priorities.

I think again the administration team is important in terms of what they will timetable, how they will timetable it and the space they will allocate to it. And of course, our administration teams have got so many competing agendas, so many competing priorities they have to accommodate ....

(Imogen, curriculum leader, Government)

When support is explicit, through timetabling and resourcing, new ideas are encouraged, lessons and programs are trialled and reflected upon. It is in this way curriculum development and change becomes part of the ethos of the school. Helene, an arts teacher in a Teacher Development School (TDS) shared an example of teachers in her school sharing pedagogy and valuing arts learning to help students retain information.

In the classrooms we have a movement about explicit teaching, which is about every day, like repetition, body language, sound repetition, repetition to push it from the short term into the long term [memory]. If you are a specialist like me, you don't have the opportunity to see the
kids every day. So, the retention of knowledge from one week to the other, that continuity of the creative process is staggered all the time. So, you need to have things, other strategies to help students retain that.

(Helene, arts teacher, TDS)

However, when programs have less support or no specific time allocated through the timetable, curriculum leaders saw teachers who may have an interest in self-improvement or in collegially sharing ideas being left to attempt new ideas alone; a consequence being them reverting to what they already know. This notion of value was evidenced by Hannah in her work in an Arts TDS, working with teachers in surrounding schools.

...so for teachers who want to try and explore a new avenue or explore the Arts that takes more time outside of their given time that they have in schools so ...unless you've got a teacher that really wants to run with it, that time poor teacher is not going to have the time to really go and explore a different avenue or a different approach or using the Arts or trying to make the arts fruitful in their school because they are already time poor with all the other things that already occur with teaching.

(Hannah, arts teacher, TDS)

The professional cultures identify the processes and structures that exist within the school. They are the interior, less tangible elements of a school community that create tension in either positive or negative ways. The culture of a school can also be influenced by what the school has; the material resources available.

**Material Contexts**

The material contexts are identified as the human and physical resources available to schools. Three key notions were identified as having an impact. They were staffing, infrastructure, and provision.

The teaching of the Arts in primary schools is undertaken by the classroom teacher or a specialist arts teacher, using the most knowledgeable or willing person available. The curriculum leaders identified these staffing policies as having an impact on arts teaching in primary schools and saw staffing as a challenge for the administration of the school. Richard, in his role at SCSA, was in a unique position to comment on the concerns of principals, having spoken to all of them in a series of meetings held across the state in the lead up to the introduction of the Western Australian curriculum.
The challenge now for principals is making decisions now about who and what am I employing in this school and how will I cover this? Which one of these areas do I think would best support the remaining teachers...so I can get the specialist; think physical education specialist, think arts specialist - visual arts, drama or dance. (Richard, curriculum leader, SCSA)

However, staffing is only part of the equation. The new curriculum calls for study of both visual and performing arts during the primary school years (School Curriculum and Standards Authority 2015), so for schools to manage this requirement, issues beyond staffing must also be considered.

A school’s infrastructure will, in many ways, determine what a school may offer in the Arts. Providing quality arts learning requires space, across both physical and time dimensions, but the reality of dwindling school resources is a concern, as highlighted by Imogen, a curriculum leader working in the government sector.

I think what impacts on a curriculum delivery for a teacher is if they are not given a regular space. So if one week you are in the art room but next week you are in the Year 4 room and then next week you are in the undercover area, I think that has the greatest impact, more so than having a dedicated drama space or a dedicated music space. I think for people who don't necessarily have as much experience, not having a dedicated space will certainly have a negative impact. I believe it can be taught (Arts we are talking) can be taught in any space, as long as that is the regular space.

(Imogen, curriculum leader, Government)

Somewhere to go to teach the Arts, where the materials were stored and easily accessed and where it was appropriate for the children to either make a mess or make noise was considered important in the effective delivery of the Arts. In addition to the infrastructure of a school and the space allocated to the teaching of the Arts, provision for the necessary supplies was raised.

Provision for the Arts in schools was characterised primarily as conversations around money. Money for supplies, for instruments, for excursions, for incursions, and even for extra staff. Marie, a curriculum leader for the Catholic sector, identified a range of concerns that face schools when considering the issue of provision.

Resources are going to be a big thing for media, some
schools with music, it is going to be quite a big issue...finances of course. Just trying to set all that up. Specific rooms are sometimes another issue. If you have got music happening and to meet the curriculum you probably need a lot of instruments and where are you going to keep them? Locked up where...also singing music - copyright issues. Media arts - camera's and computers and all sorts. (Marie, curriculum leader, Catholic)

The material contexts identify the tangible components of providing for a learning area. Where and how the Arts are positioned in the school (infrastructure and resources) become an obvious way to discuss whether a school community values a curriculum. However, sometimes factors outside of the control of a school community impact on curriculum and it is to these external contexts that we now turn.

**External Factors**
The external contexts identify the wider issues that impact on schools and are characterised as external pressures or expectations. These issues are often outside of the control of the teachers and even individual schools. As system initiatives and requirements, these policies are implemented by schools to meet the needs of their student cohort, school community and education sectors. One impact of policy and curriculum pressure is the resultant notion of a crowded curriculum.

**Curriculum pressures.** A crowded curriculum has been blamed for many pressures currently encountered by teachers as a result of competing priorities in schools (Crump, 2005). These competing priorities can be both school initiated and teacher initiated. Aoki (2009), identified that the school day is filled with both planned and lived experiences. The current lived experience of teachers in schools requires significant time spent in mathematics, literacy, and increasingly science. Mandated time has also been allocated by the government for physical education. Once these requirements are considered there is not much time left in the school day for everything else. At the moment the Arts falls under the banner of ‘everything else’. The curriculum leaders recognise this as a potential hurdle for the Arts as indicated by this statement from Richard, curriculum leader at SCSA.
…there is much complaint that we are dealing with an overcrowded curriculum. I think the curriculum has always been crowded because we teach many other things that aren't described anywhere, which are the things that may not be happening in some homes, the things that are no longer happening in society that the village used to teach, all being put on shoulders of the primary school...

(Richard, curriculum leader, SCSA)

The pressure to adequately cover all components of the current curriculum was a common theme discussed by curriculum leaders and in their opinion seemed to be used as a reason for some schools to not offer or to limit offerings in the Arts. This view is strengthened by curriculum design documents released by ACARA. In *Curriculum Design v3.1*, a document highlighting the process used by the writers of the Australian Curriculum, the Arts were allocated between 4 and 5% of the total curriculum time in the primary years. In comparison, English was allocated between 20 – 27% and Mathematics 16 – 18% (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013a, p. 9). Placing a greater emphasis on the Arts is difficult under such powerful framing. Complicating the place of the Arts further are the expectations placed on the Arts and arts teachers to showcase students and schools through the Arts to parents and the wider community. These expectations are now considered.

**Expectations.** Expectations around the Arts are tied to school business plans and school marketing strategies. A great source of leverage for school self-promotion, the Arts were observed by the jurisdiction based curriculum leaders as a way for schools to market themselves in tight school markets. This was especially noted where several similar schools in close proximity were competing for student enrolments. However, there was also the perception that the pressure of using the Arts as a vehicle to showcase the school sometimes outweighed the teaching learning process. Louise, the curriculum leader for the independent sector saw this in her work with schools and teachers.

A lot of their time [the teachers] would be spent, rather than delivering an authentic arts education, what they were being forced to do was produce an exhibition or make a performance...

(Louise, curriculum leader, Independent)

This expectation for the Arts to provide the vehicle for school and community engagement was seen as detrimental to the teaching of the arts when it became the sole focus of the Arts program. The curriculum leaders saw the Arts teacher
as instrumental in advocating for a comprehensive arts program in these instances.

The provision of a strong teaching and learning program in the Arts, is contextualised by an understanding of the impact of the four variables described. The contextual dimensions were considered individually to appreciate the environment in which arts implementation is either enabled or constrained. Understanding the intended and unintended outcomes of the ‘adopt and adapt’ message is strengthened by an awareness of the complexity context creates for schools. With this awareness in mind, the micro forces of the intended and unintended outcomes of ‘adopt and adapt’, can now be considered.

Micro forces: Understanding of the ‘adopt and adapt’ message (mantra). The ‘adopt and adapt’ message has been a powerful tool for SCSA in outlining their plan for curriculum change in Western Australian schools. Each of the Arts curriculum leaders interviewed understood the purpose of the ‘adopt and adapt’ policy and how this related to the perceived best interests of arts education in Western Australia. For these respondents, it was hoped that the delay and revised outline would provide a more comprehensive, easy to use document for schools. In discussing how the ‘adopt and adapt’ decision was theorised from the original ACARA documents, Richard, a leader at SCSA explained:

We ‘adopt’ that you [ACARA] have defined drama and dance and media, music and visual arts. But we [Western Australia] are going to ‘adapt’ it because we are going to split it into years, and we are going to sort the achievement standard out because it doesn't work for us.

(Richard, curriculum leader, SCSA)

That the national ACARA syllabus ‘doesn’t work’ for Western Australia can be seen as a reflection of the unwieldiness of the Curriculum Framework\(^2\); the most recent syllabus materials used in Western Australia (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998). It is the case, for example, that conflicting perspectives and conceptions about the nature of the Curriculum Framework

\(^2\) The Curriculum Framework was introduced in Western Australia in 1998 with eight learning areas: English, Mathematics, Science, Society and Environment, The Arts, Health and Physical Education, Technology and Enterprise and Languages other than English. Debate between teachers about the balance between content and pedagogy, especially in the Arts, was common for much of the time that the Curriculum Framework was in use and now the same arguments could be used with the national curriculum.
have permeated discussions amongst arts teachers since the framework’s conception, particularly with relation to uncertainty between the need for content and the need for pedagogy. Richard, a leader at SCSA described his understanding of the previous Curriculum Framework implementation:

We ran the notion of eight learning areas all equal in the sun...the entitlement model that came with the Curriculum Framework... if we had syllabuses...mandated syllabuses (which are the what) ...and then gone to the how...

(Richard, curriculum leader, SCSA)

One of the criticisms of the Curriculum Framework was that the focus was on pedagogy, leaving teachers to work out what to teach, when what was needed by teachers was a syllabus (the what) and the related pedagogy (the how). What this comment leads to is the intent and purpose behind the new ‘adaption’ work promoted through the policy, growing out of unsuccessful regimes of curriculum implementation.

What this has meant, for example, is that creating achievement standards for each school year Pre-primary to Year 10, instead of 2-year bands that work across year levels, has been one major focus of the alterations undertaken for Western Australian schools. More specifically, identifying specific content to be achieved at each year level (creating what to be taught) with less emphasis on the pedagogy (how) has been the overall aim of SCSA in order to reenergise the Arts in the Western Australian school system. However, this has created a paradox between, on the one hand, the current neoliberal push for educational reform and accountability, and classroom teachers’ current needs and understandings on the other. This mismatch leads to confusion adding to the discontent felt in schools, and consequently makes policy revitalisation more difficult.

To revitalise the Arts, the curriculum needs to be achievable. One of the participants Gwen, in her role at SCSA, suggests that classroom teachers need concrete syllabus content mainly due to a lack of confidence in their ability to teach the Arts. This lack of experience with the Arts leads to a lack of understanding and engagement:

So, I think that it is a lack of expertise and confidence of "well what do I actually have to do?" So, our work here is...

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3 Author emphasis (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998)
not just to produce a syllabus that a generalist can pick up and run with. It’s developing those teacher support materials with an assessment and everything, so a generalist will think "I can do that, I can pick that up, I can do that". I think that has been missing in our curriculum up to now. (Gwen, curriculum leader, SCSA)

This group of curriculum leaders recognised that the work commenced by ACARA and continued by SCSA needs to be attainable if arts in WA schools are in fact to be re-energised. For example, if a classroom teacher does not feel comfortable with the language and the presentation of the material then these curriculum leaders understood that teachers themselves would fail to engage with and therefore implement the curriculum.

We have got to be careful that we don't put ourselves so high up on a pedestal that nobody...that a generalist goes "I can't go near that...that is too scary". It is just not that scary... (Richard, curriculum leader, SCSA)

Understanding how teachers currently feel about teaching the Arts is partly the work of the Arts curriculum leaders.

How the ‘adopt and adapt’ policy relates to the ongoing work implementing the curriculum is a critical component in comprehending its impact. Understanding its purpose; to make curriculum more accessible to students is one component of this paper, and highlights the intended outcomes of the ‘adopt and adapt’ message. The second purpose of this paper is to examine the unintended outcomes of the ‘adopt and adapt’ message. This knowledge pinpoints some of the reasons that the ‘adopt and adapt’ policy falls short in achieving its aims. The unintended outcomes will be explored now.

**Implications: Marginalisation, Disconnection, Professional Learning**

‘Adopt and adapt’ as a policy initiative has an intended purpose. We suggest that this purpose involves a streamlined, simplified curriculum intended to offer clear access to arts content for the generalist classroom teacher. However, in the rhetoric of implementation there have been several unintended outcomes and the implications of these changes has resulted in teachers and schools marginalising the Arts further and disconnecting from the curriculum. To us, these actions appear as a direct result of continued ongoing change and shifts in policy and curriculum across the system.
We argue that ‘adopt and adapt’ although instigated in a display of understanding and consultation has in fact exacerbated the side-lining of the Arts and struggles to make, encourage or coerce teachers to place greater emphasis on the Arts in their classrooms.

**Marginalisation.** Marginalisation is a process of isolation and separation. The Arts have been isolated by the increased status of literacy and numeracy and resultant focus on these areas in standardised testing regimes. This isolation is exacerbated by the way that the Arts themselves have been separated into discrete forms – dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts, requiring schools to choose between them. A requirement by the Western Australian curriculum for schools to select one performing art and one visual art as a focus for Arts learning (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2015c) further separates and marginalises the learning area. How schools organise for this requirement is yet to be seen.

Marginalisation is also occurring in the Western Australian education system due to the plethora of policies that schools and teachers are required to oversee and enact in any given school year. Schools are now seen as the glue keeping the social fabric of our society together, responsible not only for traditional curriculum subjects such as English, Math, Science and the Arts but also drug education, sustainability awareness, road safety and decreasing obesity levels in children (Goldman, 2010; Harris, 2000; Walton, Waiti, Signal, & Thomson, 2010). Given this context, it is not surprising that schools and teachers struggle to keep pace. While Australian schools have greater autonomy in how they run on a day to day basis as a result of decentralisation and one line budgets, they have less and less autonomy in what is considered important and essential learning idealised through the development of a national curriculum. This has led to further marginalisation. This issue is a global concern with the standardisation movement spreading throughout western industrialised countries. Issues for arts practice as a result of national policy decisions involving standardisation of practice have been well covered by this journal (Allison, 2013; Blakeslee, 2004; Conway, Hibbard, Albert, & Hourigan, 2005; Sabol, 2013).
**Disconnection.** The second implication faced by this policy is disconnection. Disconnection can lead to apathy and a lack of enthusiasm. In the Arts this lack of enthusiasm translates to a lack of advocacy. It is difficult to advocate for the Arts in the primary school when there is little appetite from teachers for doing more. The hidden rhetoric of the ‘adopt and adapt’ policy is that Western Australian teachers are in some way deficit in their arts knowledge, requiring the regulatory body to make the curriculum easier to use. The return message, via the arts curriculum leaders, is that with other curriculum priority areas to consider, and only so many hours to achieve required measures, teachers will attend to what they will be held accountable for first.

At this stage there are few accountability measures in place for quality arts learning in Western Australian primary schools, and the processes of ‘adopt and adapt’ have not made it easy for teachers to be concerned about the Arts in schools. This lack of concern and lack of attention is in direct contrast to the 2014 *Arts in Daily Life: Australian Participation in the Arts* report released by the Australia Council for the Arts which notes that in 2013 “85% of Australians agree that the Arts make for a richer and more meaningful life”. The report goes on to highlight that “66% of Australian’s believe that the Arts have a big impact on the development of children” (Instinct and Reason, 2014). If this is what Australian’s purport to believe, it is then perplexing that this intent is not reflected in the provision of quality arts learning opportunities in our schools.

**Professional learning.** The third issue raised by the unintended outcomes of the ‘adopt and adapt’ policy is the impact on professional learning. Disconnection with the curriculum impacts on the willingness and opportunity of teachers to access professional learning. At a time when teachers are under enormous pressure to maintain and increase student results through standardised testing programs like the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (Thompson & Harbaugh, 2013), attention to arts professional learning has decreased significantly. The Arts curriculum leaders noted this in the very small numbers of teachers that were accessing professional learning opportunities. Rowena, a curriculum leader who liaises between schools and performing arts companies indicated:

...In the meantime there is people like us trying to justify the opportunities that we have now and enticing them [teachers] to take part but [the schools] are just waiting, so
we have got to keep that momentum going.
(Rowena, curriculum leader)

This concern is replicated in other parts of the globe. In a discussion of the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) on professional development for arts teachers in the U.S., Conway et al. (2005) noted that most professional learning was steered towards traditional academic subjects and that Arts teachers professional learning needs are rarely considered. This situation is replicated in Australia. Not only is it difficult for arts specialists to access local relevant professional learning, as a generalist classroom teacher it is equally difficult. Even if a classroom teacher is interested in self-improvement in their arts teaching, there is little support at a school level for feedback on the improvement process. Helene, a teacher in a TDS, highlighted her concern in the following way.

Who do they ask and who has those skills? So they might be lucky in a school, they have administration or some classroom teachers that can help them and support them to improve but, what do they do if there is no one that can help them to improve? (Helene, curriculum leader, TDS)

Professional learning is not just about the number of opportunities on offer, although that is a concern in itself, but is also about the quality of learning and how it relates to arts pedagogy. Good professional learning in arts education is not just about what to teach but also about how to teach. It is about the provision or role of current arts specialists to guide and help classroom teachers who want to improve do so in a supportive collegial environment.

The research also reveals that at this point in time professional learning in the Arts is not a focus in Western Australian primary schools. The current arts curriculum leaders, at the jurisdiction level, are available for curriculum support but that support does not extend to assessment of teaching. This is in contrast to the levels of support available for literacy, numeracy and increasingly science. Support exists at a systemic level, for example feedback on NAPLAN results, at a jurisdiction level, for example, district professional development opportunities, and at a school level, for example, whole school planning and collegial year group meetings. It is recognised that this support is a result of the emphasis on standardised testing and schools responding to that situation and teachers are required to participate in these focused activities.
Teachers are not required, however, to participate in arts professional learning activities. Even if they were interested in arts professional learning, a paucity of opportunities exists to support or assess teachers improve learning outcomes for Western Australian students in the Arts. Again, this reflects a mismatch of belief, practices and values.

The Future
The future for arts education in Western Australian schools is unclear. In recent times Russell-Bowie (2011) and Sabol (2013) have highlighted changes to arts policy needed to positively influence the teaching and learning practice across schools, systems and sectors in order for the Arts to flourish. The inclusion of twenty-first century skills, improved instruction, and increased professional development are highlighted changes (Sabol, 2013). These issues raised particularly correlate to the focus of this research. ‘Adopt and adapt’ as a localised policy set out with the intention to make arts curriculum more accessible to a wider range of classroom teachers, in the hope that there would eventually be a greater engagement with the Arts. However, as with most policies, the Western Australian curriculum is not enacted in a vacuum and has contextual implications not anticipated at the outset by the policy makers, curriculum developers, arts researchers or teachers. The unintended outcomes of further marginalisation, policy apathy and lack of professional learning opportunities fall in line with the areas of need reflected in the literature (Sabol, 2013).

Considering the ‘adopt and adapt’ policy from the four contextual variables highlighted, the ways in which the ‘adopt and adapt’ policy has been contextualised by the environment in which it operates were outlined. From the internal (school) and external (system) variables a unique way of understanding the context in which this policy is operating in, is made available. The simple introduction of a new curriculum, even one that has more detail and focus on explicit teaching, may still not be enacted in the intended way if attention isn’t given to the other variables that play a part in the process.

What happens over the next two years until full implementation of the mandated curriculum in Semester 1 2018 (Collier, 2015), will be telling. The Western Australian P-10 Arts Curriculum has now been released for teachers to use in
their schools but with little meaningful support. Quality support to help teachers adjust may prove to be the key to a successful implementation. As Gaztambide-Fernandez and Sears in Pinar (2005) highlight, there is a perception that the right inputs into education (policies) will result in desired outcomes (better results), but the plethora of policy documents vying for attention in schools at any one time tells a different story. The policy at the centre of this paper highlights yet another policy to add to the pile.

This research has revealed some of the barriers to implementation that suggest it is not as simple as an input/output dichotomy. Local contextual variables and policy impact play their part and are yet to be revealed. This in fact, signals the next phase of this work. Discussions with teachers in schools about their local situation will add to understandings in this implementation process. Whether the intended outcomes of the ‘adopt and adapt’ policy prove to provide what schools need or the unintended outcomes, as revealed in this research, become the reality for teachers and schools is yet to play out.
Abstract

Arts education in Western Australian primary schools consist of learning opportunities outlined by mandated curriculum. However, assumptions underlying this curriculum involving access, resources and support impact schools’ capacity to implement the curriculum without them being adequately addressed by the written curriculum. Drawing on the policy enactment theory of Ball et al. (2012), four contextual variables (situated contexts, professional cultures, material contexts and external factors) are used to highlight the differences between the written published curriculum and the implemented, practised curriculum. Drawing on interviews with 24 participants across four schools’ issues of geographic location, use of arts specialists, appropriate learning spaces and the stresses associated with mandated literacy and numeracy testing are reported as contextual pressures by this study. This paper details the disruptive interference of these contextual pressures that we describe as ‘noise’. The provision of a better understanding of this contextual landscape brings schools and teachers away from the ‘noise’ of disruption and closer to curriculum harmony.

Key words: Arts curriculum, context, assumptions, primary education

Introduction

“Content without Context is Noise” as a phrase, has a resonance to the central theme of this paper. For example, it is one thing to write and publish an arts curriculum – that is content. However, it is another to implement this or any curriculum without taking account of the context in which it is to be implemented. Where there is a dissonance between the content and the context, ‘noise’ that is unproductive in terms of curriculum as practiced, is an outcome.

‘Content’ in the context of this paper refers to the Western Australian arts curriculum, consisting of five arts subjects: dance, drama, media arts, music
and visual arts (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2015c). As overarching conceptual organisers students engage with these subjects through the process of making and responding. This engagement becomes more pressing when from 2018, it is mandated that Western Australian primary schools offer a performing art and a visual art each year to all students. How this is to be programmed in schools is not yet known, and yet in order for effective learning to occur there must be alignment or harmony between curriculum as written and curriculum as practiced (Moore, 2000).

Following on from ‘content’, ‘context’ describes the school and teaching environment in which content is delivered. These contextual variables impact on teachers’ ability to engage with the arts, but are not necessarily within the control of the individual teacher. This paper concentrates on contextual aspects such as the physical and emotional space of a school, for example, how the administration shows support for the arts and the feelings that this engenders in teachers. This contextual understanding is important for teachers as there is often a mismatch in the way context is accounted for in the written curriculum, and how the reality of environment and place impacts on what learning opportunities teachers can and cannot realistically offer.

The metaphor of ‘noise’ in the system is also useful as a descriptor in the sense that noise are sounds that are especially loud, unpleasant or cause disturbance to harmony. More specifically, ‘noise’ in this article refers to a disconnection between individual teachers and the arts curriculum that exists when content is implemented without an understanding of context. The lack of harmony between each of these central elements is found in the minimal evidence of arts curriculum in lesson planning, and the lack of engagement by teachers with implementation processes. Consequently, this paper focuses on understanding the noise, and increasing opportunities of curriculum harmony to improve effective arts learning.

The article is divided into three sections. The first outlines key curriculum theory considerations, curriculum assumptions, and four contextual dimensions underpinning the research. This section provides a framework for situating this inquiry and assumptions implicit in the Western Australian Curriculum: Pre-primary to Year 10 Arts Syllabus (School Curriculum and Standards Authority,
This framework highlights how these curriculum assumptions impact on schools differently. This is important because the four contextual variables embedded in Ball et al.’s (2012) policy enactment theory helps identify the background factors that impact on teachers and their ability to deliver quality arts education. Understanding the impact of these variables on schools and teachers provides insight into what teachers offer in an arts curriculum and why.

Section two of the paper explores key curriculum assumptions and four contextual dimensions as they emerged in the research more specifically. Drawing on four primary schools, twenty teachers and four principals across the greater metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia, we consider how these contextual dimensions are addressed in the curriculum as ‘written’ and subsequently impact on ‘practice’ in schools. We draw on evidence offered by these teachers and principals as a way of informing the research, and giving clarity to the question: How and in what ways are the Arts understood, interpreted and enacted by classroom primary teachers in Western Australian schools? What this second section does is make clear the grounded nature of arts education practice in Western Australian primary schools.

The final section discusses the significance of the relationship between content, context and practice and how, when these iterative relationships are neglected, an impoverished arts education in schools’ results. We argue, for example, that without an understanding of context, curriculum has little meaning for schools, teachers and ultimately students. In linking concepts of content, context and noise we conclude by offering ways of moving towards curriculum harmony that we argue as being critical in improving students’ arts learning. So, just as the title of this paper begins with “Content” we begin by examining the field of curriculum theory for relevant ideas of ‘curriculum as content’, and then examine the arts curriculum in Western Australia (our content) for its’ inherent assumptions about schools.

**Understanding Curriculum as ‘Content’**

Understanding the difference between ‘curriculum as written’ and ‘curriculum as enacted’ through the work of curriculum theory allows us to comprehend some of the challenges teachers face. Curriculum theory as described by W. Pinar (2004) is the “interdisciplinary study of educational experience” (p. 2), and looks
at defining and characterising curriculum in terms of experience. Following this, we have categorised curriculum in two ways; written and enacted. In this case, the written curriculum is presented to teachers for use in a formal documented sense, and the enacted curriculum is what teachers actually do to provide for learning opportunities in their classrooms. These two characterisations of curriculum provide two key ways to understand the conditions that impact teachers. Likewise, curriculum contemplated in this way may also be considered a “complicated conversation” (Pinar, 2011). What this means is that the interplay between the written and enacted experiences of each educational setting is like holding a conversation, in the same way that giving and receiving information influences the next interaction. Therefore, in this way we are acknowledging the relationship between the two, and recognising that each educational site contains its own ‘conversation’. However, understanding the relationship between written and enacted curriculum is further ‘complicated’ when the contextual differences between schools are also considered, hence our focus on aspects of policy enactment theory over curriculum theory. However, to better understanding the intersections between the written and enacted curriculum, the written curriculum and the assumptions made about and for schools are examined.

**Curriculum and Assumptions in Western Australian Schools**

To be fully implemented in 2018, the *Western Australian Curriculum: Pre-primary to Year 10 Arts Syllabus*, engages students through the twin ideas of *making* and *responding* (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2015c). At its most fundamental, students create and learn arts skills in dance, drama, media arts, music or visual arts through the process of *making* by planning, producing, designing and performing. Students *respond* to their own and others art works through analysing, interpreting and evaluating. Students learn to be artists and audiences for the arts, thereby increasing their engagement with, capacity for, and ability to learn through, with and about the arts.

This new curriculum design, with its two key organisers, has evolved from a policy of ‘adopt and adapt’ (Chapman, Wright, & Pascoe, 2018a) from the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts* (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014). Adopting and adapting the national curriculum was deemed necessary by the Western Australian Government (School Curriculum
and Standards Authority, 2014b) as a way of improving the relationship (the gap) between teachers and the curriculum they are responsible for implementing (Chapman et al., 2018a). This adaptation centred on simplifying the national curriculum and providing year-by-year descriptions, rather than the two-year bands prescribed in the Australian Curriculum. One reason for this simplification of the new Western Australian Curriculum: Pre-primary to Year 10 Arts Syllabus in both idea and form, is the notion that more classroom teachers will engage with a simplified document providing explicit teaching ideas, rather than pedagogical ideals as was the case with the previous Western Australian based curriculum (Chapman et al., 2018a). Whatever the reason, and however simple the new curriculum is, assumptions are made in this current document about school environment. These environmental assumptions impact on schools in a variety of ways and are key to understanding the paucity of effective arts education opportunities provided to students. Addressing these assumptions and reconciling them with the reality of school life is fundamental to improving effective arts curricula, and it is to these we now turn.

Curriculum assumptions. Implicit in the Western Australian Curriculum: Pre-primary to Year 10 Arts Syllabus (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2014a) are assumptions about the nature of schools involving geography, resources, and support. The first key assumption within this document, is that geography should not impact curriculum delivery, and that access to arts opportunities are straightforward. The curriculum is written with the idea that no matter where you are in Western Australia, each student has equitable access to arts learning opportunities. However, in Western Australia, a state of 2.6 million km², primary schools vary from small remote sites with only 25 students to large metropolitan schools with over 1000 students. Remote schools can be hundreds of kilometres from regional centres and several thousand kilometres from Perth as the capital city. The provision of education to these vastly different contexts requires flexible curriculum that can be shaped through teacher agency to fit the environment, students and community that is faced. While the Western Australian Curriculum: Pre-primary to Year 10 Arts Syllabus does suggest flexibility, the reality for schools is that opportunity, whether it be for access or provision, is not equal either in scope or delivery. It is also the case that even the schools in this study, within a 150km radius of
each other and the capital city, still face a range of challenges around provision and opportunity highlighting the importance of context itself.

The second key assumption considered is resourcing. Issues of resourcing, like staffing and teaching material supplies, are commonly cited as barriers to curriculum delivery (Russell-Bowie, 2011; Temmerman, 2006). The mandating of both a performing and visual subject by the *Western Australian Curriculum: Pre-primary to Year 10 Arts Syllabus* has added pressure to schools to fulfil this requirement. While it is recognised that these learning opportunities significantly benefit students, and is the first such initiative to be imposed on schools in the Arts learning area, it is a difficult expectation as schools continue to struggle with staffing and resourcing – both physical in terms of classroom design, and material in terms of teaching aids and supplies.

The third key assumption of the arts curriculum to be considered is that of leadership support. Support, in the context of this investigation relates to priorities and time. For example, the written curriculum assumes that as one of the mandated learning areas the Arts will be given the professional learning time and effort required to implement and make the changes necessary to support teachers in this area. However, schools are continually dealing with a crowded curriculum (Sabol, 2013), and the impost of standardised testing in literacy and numeracy (Ewing, 2012). Here a crowded curriculum refers to the competing priorities experienced in a school, and the number of learning areas and/or curriculum ideas that teachers are expected to cover in a year (Crump, 2005). This congestion makes arts learning difficult, with little time to explore, trial, reflect, adjust and improve. Consequently, all participants spoke of the pressure of a congested day, the standardised testing regime, and thus, how the Arts fit into this ‘hierarchy of value’.

Taken together, these three key assumptions of geography, resources and support help us understand the discord experienced in primary schools however, these assumptions cannot be examined in isolation. More specifically, the contextual landscape of each school changes the way assumptions impact on arts education practice. In order to understand schools and their individual contexts more fully, we turn to elements of policy enactment theory (Ball et al., 2012) as one way of examining the mismatch between curriculum as *written*
and curriculum as *enacted*.

**A Framework for Context**

Ball’s et al. (2012) policy enactment theory framework provides a useful heuristic device for exploring context by focussing on the situational, professional, material and external contexts that impact on the daily work of a teacher in implementing arts curriculum. This framework, as a way of thinking about commitments and values that impact on implementation (or enactment) of policy, grew out of work in secondary schools in England. Finding the diversity and contested nature of enactment across schools and classrooms adds to the complexity of each school situation, and relates to the work of this study in understanding context. Here our work focuses on curriculum implementation and teacher practice in the primary setting (children 5 – 12 years old), but there are parallels between policy enactment and curriculum enactment in that both require the implementation of an externally produced document in the educational setting. The iterative nature of these factors provides a flexible lens in which to view context as one key variable in this complex dynamic. Each of these are now considered in turn.

**Four contextual dimensions.** The first dimension of four proposed by Ball et al. (2012), ‘situated contexts’ (location, population), reveals the impact of place on a teachers’ ability to offer the type of arts program that best suits the school and its students. Place, as a site or location for example, impacts on issues of access. How access is recognised and accommodated by schools provides the contrast between the written curriculum and the curriculum as practiced. This is important because access to live theatre and dance for example, provides opportunity for arts learning and lack of access means that these opportunities can be expensive and remote.

The second dimension, ‘professional cultures’, identifies the processes within a school that impact on arts curriculum implementation and delivery. Key to understanding professional cultures is the relationship between staff and the administration of the school. School administration decision-making processes and the value attached to learning area priorities, determines in part the ongoing support for the arts (by the school administration). Understanding how and why schools prioritise learning and show support for the arts increases opportunities for the provision of quality arts learning for students.
As the third dimension, ‘material contexts’ identifies the human and physical resources such as staffing, infrastructure, and provision available to schools. For example, focusing on, using or adding to the staffing expertise of a school is imperative to a well-functioning and efficient school that can deliver the mandated curriculum effectively. In a related way, the infrastructure of a school - the layout and use of classroom space, impacts on the connectedness staff and students have with their school. These areas are particularly relevant to teachers in schools as they represent the components that impact daily on their teaching and hence the arts learning opportunities they provide.

Finally, as the fourth dimension, ‘external contexts' identifies the wider issues that impact on schools and are characterised as external pressures or expectations (Ball et al., 2012), including, for example, standardised testing and a crowded curriculum (Sabol, 2013). Outside the control of teachers and even individual schools, these pressures and expectations are often experienced as system initiatives and requirements. Subsequently, teachers feel that flexibility and choice has been removed from their teaching practice, stifling their own agency and student learning opportunities.

Therefore, unpacking the four contextual dimensions of the framework provides an important tool in analysing arts practice in primary schools in Western Australia and helps in examining why classroom teachers struggle to implement the curriculum as written. To better understand this discord and explore context in practice, four schools representing three education jurisdictions in the greater metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia provide an insight into how context impacts practice. More specifically, contextual differences are highlighted by considering the perspectives of both specialist arts teachers and generalist classroom teachers. The inclusion of these two groups of teachers is intended to highlight how the mismatch or disharmony in arts implementation occurs in each school and across differing levels of arts experience. Each research site is now further considered.

Jurisdictions, Schools and Participants
The three educational systems in Western Australia; Government, Catholic and Independent were represented in this study by the four schools involved. Paradigmatic sampling method (Palys, 2008) was employed as this method
provides exemplars of a particular ‘class’. In this case ‘educational jurisdiction’ equates to ‘class’ in that each sector provides a bounded context (school) for consideration. In this way, each jurisdiction is represented; two government primary schools, and one each from the Catholic and independent sectors. All four schools offer an arts program with specialist arts teachers although the art forms offered vary across the schools. Music is offered in some form in all four schools with a specialist arts teacher, and all other arts subjects are offered but not necessarily with a specialist arts teacher.

From these four schools, twenty teachers and the four school principals took part in semi-structured interviews that considered contextual factors impacting on arts practices in the classroom. An interview schedule was used with all participants that covered multiple aspects of the four contextual dimensions. More specifically, questions under the ‘Situated Context’ heading invited impressions from the participants of the school cohort, physical location of the school, and arts background of students. Similarly, open-ended questions under the ‘Material Context’ heading such as “In your opinion, what impact does the physical layout of a school have on your ability to offer arts activities?” were asked, and responses reflected a range of diverse experience and backgrounds.

Each interview was transcribed and coded using a structural coding method that was “framed and driven by the research question and topic” (Saldana, 2013). Unsurprisingly, teachers with more experience had more to say about their classroom practice and school procedures than those with only one or two years of teaching experience. As an adjunct, the principals were asked to consider how the contextual factors impacted their role as school leader with responsibility for curriculum leadership in each school. Contrasting these environments, the following discussion outlines how the written curriculum makes assumptions about contexts and what the everyday reality of context means for each of the participant schools.

**Contextual Understandings**

This second section looks more specifically at four contextual dimensions.
(situated, professional, material and external) and their impact on the everyday reality of school life for the participant teachers, highlighting the salient elements each participant reported.

**Situated contexts.** Situated contexts describe how schools are different by reflecting the environment that they are in (Ball et al., 2012). In relation to the study, situated contexts reveal a consideration of the impact of place on a teachers’ ability to offer the type of arts program that best suits the individual school and its students. Participants were asked their impression of their schools in terms of location and school population and what impact those areas had on their ability to enact the arts curriculum.

**The impact of access.** Place, in the context of arts learning, impacts on learning through the notion of ‘access’. Access is important because often the physical location of the school means external opportunities are difficult to access, either in terms of travelling to arts events, or for external providers to travel to a school. For example, the *Western Australian Curriculum: Pre-primary to Year 10 Arts Syllabus* makes suggestions for minimising the impact of location through the use of both live and digital versions of art works (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2015b). The reference to digital versions of artworks is an attempt to help schools recognise that there are alternative ways of accessing the work of others when attending in person is not a valid option. Each of the four schools dealt with the issue of place in different ways. For example, two of the participating schools are located close to public transport and in a locality where the hiring of buses is an easy option. Admiral Hall is one of these schools.

Admiral Hall is an independent inner-city school located in a port precinct. A small school with only 86 enrolled students, the school population is diverse but prides itself on significant community involvement. For example, the school has a strong link with a nearby theatre company, and the school often enters community-based activities that involves students in the local area. The Arts at Admiral Hall comprise of visual arts for Years 3 to 6, and music for the Kindergarten to Year 2 students. Being an urban school, the students have easy access to arts activities within the city precinct, and make use of such activities frequently. This easy access is highlighted by one of the classroom teachers, Maya:
We’ve got [Theatre Company] around the corner – they often offer us free sessions. We’ve had parades down the street – we can just go and access. We took part in the children’s festival last weekend. So, in terms of being able to access arts within the city we’re really lucky. We have our own bus so we’ve been to [a school] for a performance once. One time we got offers to the ballet. 

(Maya, classroom teacher, Admiral Hall)

In contrast, Winding Crescent Primary School in an outer metropolitan setting, finds it difficult to bus the children to arts performances or exhibitions. In this school, excursions are perceived as expensive and often outside the budget of school families. The issue of access though, can be perceived in different ways as highlighted by Paul, the Acting Principal at Winding Crescent.

I don’t think the kind of distance we have from the CBD or from [the port] and things like that has a big impact. It has an impact in terms of if we’re visiting places and incursions. We have kids here who haven’t been to the beach, who don’t get to the CBD, don’t know where it is and things like that. So, when we go there it’s exciting. So, I guess there’s an impact in terms of excursions and things like that but not in terms of access.

(Paul, Acting Principal, Winding Crescent)

What Paul highlights is a perception of access to opportunities being equal, but without the ability to get the students to performances and events. This perception of equity and equality of opportunity becomes clearer when the background of Winding Crescent is examined in more detail.

As a school in an outer metropolitan suburb, Winding Crescent experiences families struggling to provide necessities for their children. Winding Crescent caters for just over 400 students from Kindergarten to Year 6. There is a 25% indigenous population (Aboriginal Australians), and over 25 nationalities represented at the school. Identified as having a lower than average Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) score, where the index measures educational advantage or disadvantage, the school works closely with the school community to improve the conditions and situation of the students. Parental involvement is encouraged and initiatives such as a breakfast program give students a healthy start to the school day.

Winding Crescent offers arts in the form of music / drama (a performing arts hybrid model) and for Years 1 - 3, visual arts. Both arts subjects are taught by specialist arts teachers, however as both arts teachers are part time, the
younger classes have visual arts where it fits into the timetable (contingent on the availability of staff and space), therefore not all classes have access to the arts with a specialist teacher for the entire year. This means that while students experience many arts opportunities, these are mainly limited to what can be accessed on the school site. By way of contrast, at Admiral Hall, the use of external arts opportunities is an integral part of the arts program for the school.

Perceptions around opportunity are also created through leadership support, and as a learning area support from the school administration team is crucial for the Arts. In terms of the contextual dimensions being examined in this paper, support from the school administration falls within the domain of professional cultures, and is considered next.

**Professional cultures.** Professional cultures identify the processes within a school that impact on arts curriculum implementation and delivery. The written curriculum asks and assumes schools will be able to specifically offer at least one performing subject and a visual subject, from pre-primary to Year 8 in all schools (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2015c). For example, a school might choose to offer dance as their performing art and media arts as their visual arts subject. However, this school-based decision and the priority it is given is predicated on staffing and resourcing support being available. Key to providing support for the arts, in relation to staffing and resources, are those who make planning decisions – the school administration team. Therefore, the relationship between staff and the administration of the school is critical. This relationship was examined in the four participant schools by first looking at the priority given to arts learning, and second, supportive school administration decision-making processes. Specific questions considered by the participants included in what ways does the school organise for learning opportunities in each of the Arts subjects and what involvement does the administration have in the process?

**The impact of school priorities.** School priorities relate to those decisions made at a school level that determine what attention and support is given. In Western Australia schools are required to develop a business plan with stated priorities to develop policy and budget. Across all four schools, it was acknowledged that the arts were ‘important’, but none had the Arts as a
documented school priority. This lack of inclusion is a manifestation of value, and the hierarchy that exists in education reflecting the pressures of prioritising literacy and numeracy curriculum.

St Albertine’s, a small Catholic primary school is a case in point. St Albertine’s is in a regional area approximately 100km south east of the capital city, Perth. Catering for 180 students from Kindergarten to Year 6, St Albertine’s sits in a lower socio-economic area within a semi-rural farming region with 80% of the population Australian born. Adhering to the principles of a Catholic education, the school motto is “Faith and Trust”. Increasing the literacy and numeracy standards of the students is a high priority for the school. Penny, the arts specialist at the school, described it this way:

> I’m pretty upfront about that. And I have said that people want the arts but in terms of when you look at our vision of the school, it’s all about reading, writing, religion. Which I get.

(Penny, arts specialist, St Albertine’s)

So, the tension between offering an art program is tempered by the priority placed on improving literacy and numeracy. This tension is further highlighted by one of the classroom teachers at St Albertine’s.

> I wouldn’t say [the Arts] was a number one priority. And I think that’s why we’re not reporting on art is because it was kind of well do we need to? It’s up to you if you want to teach it or not.

(Felicity, classroom teacher, St Albertine’s)

What Felicity highlights is that SCSA’s mandate for schools to offer two arts subjects is yet to make an impact at the school level. However, a challenge will come if the mandated provision and reporting of a performing art subject and visual subject is upheld. In addition, School Curriculum and Standards Authority (2016b) has released a notional time allocation guideline for each learning area in which the Arts is allocated two hours per week. This guideline recognises school based decision-making, so how schools will organise for this is yet to be seen, as many primary schools are not currently timetabling for two hours per week of arts instruction. This placement of the arts highlights a long standing struggle with marginalisation, the ramifications of which has been discussed by other authors in previous issues of this journal (Collins, 2016; Webb, 2016).

**The impact of administration support.** A supportive school administration is crucial to an effective arts program, and at all four research sites, the principal, as the head of the administration team, was supportive of
the arts. At Hilldale PS, where the principal has a drama background, support for the arts was high. Hilldale Primary School is located 12km south of the Perth CBD. As such it is close to large shopping centres, recreation facilities and public transport. Over 70% of Hilldale’s population was born in Australia, and over 80% of those living in the suburb speak only English. Hilldale Primary School is an independent government school, meaning the Principal and School Board “have been given increased flexibility and responsibility to make local decisions across a range of school operations to enhance education outcomes for students” (Department of Education, 2016). Hilldale currently caters for over 650 students from Kindergarten to Year 6.

The school focuses on academic achievement and striving of excellence in all students as indicated by their school motto “we are judged by what we do”. The arts are an important focus for the school, and music and drama are offered as part of the designated arts program taught by specialist teachers. The music teacher is full-time, teaching across the entire school, and the drama teacher works part-time with the Year 3 to Year 6 students. The classroom teachers have individual responsibility for visual arts, and there is an outside provider for 10 weeks of dance for all students each year. There is an increasing focus on media arts in the school as interested staff are employed and run innovative programs in their classrooms. The Principal at Hilldale described her support for the Arts in the following way:

To me it is almost like the arts is the umbrella that we can scoop them all up [the students] and give them the opportunity to shine.

(Melanie, Principal, Hilldale PS)

What Melanie, as Principal describes, is a supportive attitude towards the arts that reflects how the arts cater for the diversity of student experience. Recognising and supporting this diversity is achieved across the five arts subjects (dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts) at Hilldale.

Support from the administration was a theme that staff from the other three schools also highlighted. For example, Ruth, a classroom teacher at Winding Crescent PS, underlined the supportive nature of their administration for the arts in the following way.

I think one thing that we're really lucky with here is that we've got leadership that appreciate the arts. So, we've been allowed and given permission to get, sink our teeth into some really big
At the time of the interviews Ruth was in the middle of working on a large school mural with her class, and although she was spending much of her DOTT (duties other than teaching time) on the project. Completing the mural with her students was valued by the administration and Ruth appreciated the support given to her to start and complete the task. In this research site support from administration, and therefore value, was translated into time.

In summary, understanding the professional cultures of the school led to an exploration of school priorities and support from the school leadership group. After the consideration of the first two contextual dimensions (situation and professional cultures), the teacher participants are seen to be working under a variety of circumstances, away from the ideals of the written arts curriculum. The third dimension, material contexts, sheds further light on the complexity of schools as material contexts deal with understanding the impact that the human and physical resources available to teachers have on the provision of learning opportunities for students.

**Material contexts.** Material contexts are those identified as the human and physical resources available to schools (Ball et al., 2012). These resources are particularly relevant to teachers as they represent the components that have a daily impact on their teaching. Infrastructure, staffing, and provision are three key concepts considered in relation to written curriculum assumptions, juxtaposed against the realities of teacher engagement with the arts. The written curriculum, through the mandated requirement of a performing and visual arts subject being taught each year, assumes that schools have the necessary physical space and resources to manage both components of the Arts curriculum. However, this is not always the case, and the reliance on the ‘ideal scenario’ assumption of the *Western Australian Curriculum: Pre-primary to Year 10 Arts Syllabus* has placed additional stress on an already marginalised learning area. Participants were asked to consider these ideas through questions that focused on how the physical layout of the school impacted their ability to offer arts activities and what role the staffing profile of

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5 DOTT is time allocated for teachers to perform duties other than face to face teaching within the normal school day.
the school played in their ability (or necessity) to teach the arts?

**The impact of infrastructure.** Primary schools in Western Australia are built on a ratio of classrooms to expected student numbers, but sometimes the student intake quickly outstrips the physical infrastructure of a school, leading to pressure on resources both physical and material. At Hilldale PS, the arts have a high profile, but pressure of student numbers mean that the purpose-built visual art room is used as a regular classroom and the drama teacher is employed without a regular space to teach in. This has ramifications not only for the staff, but also for the students as highlighted by Rose, the drama teacher at Hilldale.

There is no home for [drama], so I found that really difficult to adjust to. Not too much in the fact that you couldn't do what you wanted but resource wise and space wise that the kids could identify that this space was for this purpose.

(Rose, arts specialist, Hilldale)

The concept of the arts and especially the performing arts (dance, drama and music) having a ‘home’ was also identified by curriculum leaders as being important for schools to consider (Chapman et al., 2018a). For example, it was suggested that the recognition of a regular space adequate for the task, provides a sense of belonging and a place to safely experiment with arts ideas within the confines of a known group i.e. the classroom cohort. Undercover areas and other open spaces while adequate, do not provide the same feeling of belonging or safety, and often are booked for other purposes leaving the performing arts class to find an alternative space, if any.

The performing arts are not the only art forms impacted by school infrastructure. For example, the physical layout impacts on classroom teachers wanting to experiment with visual arts in their classrooms with carpet on the floors making the use of different mediums (such as paint, clay, and ink) problematic. Felicity, a classroom teacher at St Albertine’s, exemplifies the issue in the following way.

No, we don’t have enough space, I avoid paint pretty much altogether because I have carpet…because I know the cleaners will just kill me, so we try to do things where they're sitting at their desks.

(Felicity, classroom teacher, St Albertine’s)

Teachers are part of a team, including non-teaching staff, and so being mindful of the workload of the support staff means teaching programs are often devised
with minimal clean-up needed to maintain a cohesive staff. A cohesive staff is also built on the premise that the staffing profile supports the curriculum and the students.

**The impact of staffing.** The ability of a school to effectively manage the two arts subjects expected each year depends in part on how the school is staffed. Having or finding an arts specialist teacher increases a school's capacity to cope with curriculum change in the Arts as it provides the school specialist skills and knowledge to draw upon. In Western Australia, many arts specialists are either music or visual arts specialists. Some of these specialists have university teaching degrees in these specialisations, but are becoming less common due to changes in university degree structures. Increasingly, for example, there are fewer pre-service programs that offer an arts speciality as a pathway for a major or minor teaching area, and as a result there are fewer trained specialists in schools (Collins, 2016; Lummis et al., 2014). Others are classroom teachers who have an interest in the arts, and so become the arts ‘specialist’ for their school. Gina, from St Albertine’s highlights what generally happens when their school hires staff.

> At a bigger school you would probably go “right, we need a drama teacher” and then they would employ that person for that role. Whereas here, you need a classroom teacher, but you’re interested in that [the Arts] so right you’re doing that now...  
> (Gina, classroom teacher, St Albertine’s)

Components of the arts covered by specialist arts teachers in schools can also vary. Where there is an arts specialist teacher, there can be a decreased expectation for classroom teachers to ‘cover’ that art form. However, without an arts teacher, the classroom teachers find themselves filling the gap, predominately without expertise in the area. With two art forms to cover this scenario will only increase, putting increased pressure on the ability of the classroom teacher to manage the arts curriculum.

Similarly, as the ‘Duties other than Teaching’ (DOTT) provider, the arts teacher often provides time for regular classroom teachers to be away from their class. This provision of preparation time for classroom teachers, when the students have their specialist classes, is an increasingly common scenario in primary schools. Monique, a classroom teacher at Winding Crescent talks about the role of the arts specialist and DOTT provision.
I think specialist teachers are really important and I know, especially [visual] art teachers and music teachers, that we need them but we seem to be – they’re hard to find at the moment so you kind of just have regular teachers slotting and trying to find out if they can do it themselves to provided DOTT.

(Monique, classroom teacher, Winding Crescent)

At Admiral Hall, where there has been a long history of arts engagement in the school, the staffing focus for the Arts is slightly different, as Natalie, the Principal points out.

The thing about the arts jobs is it’s really hard because it’s so part-time, maybe one day a week, which is really hard to attract people to that job. (Natalie, Principal, Admiral Hall)

So, the difficulty for schools, especially smaller schools, is attracting qualified arts teachers into what are often part-time positions. Finding the right person who is willing or only wants to work one or perhaps two days a week is an additional challenge for school administrations; this being the case in an economy where there is chronic underemployment (Heath, 2016). This contextual complexity impacts on classroom teachers as it adds to their overall workload, that is, being responsible for all the learning areas not covered by specialist teachers. In the same way that staffing is an important determinant of effective arts education, so too is provision.

The impact of provision. As the third element of material contexts, provision identifies the material resources that a teacher uses to offer arts activities. For classroom teachers, the biggest concern is money, and how budget drives activities. Consistently across the four research sites, participants talked about how budget impacted on their arts offerings. Brooke, the arts specialist at Admiral Hall notes:

Oh, I could always have more. I try to be quite conservative with the budget and I just have to think of it within the grand scheme of the school. It’s a low fee-paying school, so there’s a lower budget. (Brooke, arts specialist, Admiral Hall)

Consideration of the budget also raised an issue in nominating someone within the school to take ownership of the ordering and checking of supplies. At Hilldale, it was Georgia’s responsibility:

If you wanted to do a different activity you have to really think ahead to order the materials as each community has their own budget. But, it’s just a difficult process and I think if people are busy it’s like “Oh I won’t bother with that, I’ll just do the basic stuff”,

and we’re all guilty of that. (Georgia, classroom teacher, Hilldale)

As Georgia points out, the variety of learning tasks a teacher prepares for students over a day, week or term, sometimes mean the easiest path organisationally, and for a teacher’s personal sanity, is to keep activities simple. Each of these considerations are important when having to factor in ordering materials as well as setting up and packing away more complicated activities within an allocated teaching time and impacts on the arts learning opportunities offered.

Provision then, impacts on classroom teachers through budgeting and resources and the two concepts are inexplicitly intertwined. Coupled with our growing understanding of the contextual complexity facing teachers when offering arts curriculum, external factors are the final element of Ball et al’s (2012) framework considered.

**External contexts.** External contexts identify the wider issues that impact on schools and are characterised as external expectations or pressures (Ball et al., 2012). These issues are often outside the control of teachers and even individual schools. Specific questions asked of the participants targeting these issues included what challenges do you face when implementing new policy or curriculum and what do you need from the school leadership and /or system to make this process of enactment easier? Standardised testing and the crowded nature of the curriculum were the two most commonly named issues facing the participant teachers when grappling with time for the arts in schools. These two issues are in line with recent studies suggesting similar problems are faced by teachers in primary schools (Alter, Hays, & O'Hara, 2009; Ewing, 2012). These expectations and pressures are considered separately to provide a more nuanced understanding of what is affecting classroom teachers with standardised testing one prime example.

**The impact of expectations.** The National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is a nationwide testing program for students in year 3, 5, 7 and 9. The testing covers components of the Australian Curriculum in reading, writing, language conventions and numeracy. All students, regardless of educational jurisdiction, sit the tests over a week in May of each year. Participants at all four schools were quick to cite NAPLAN as
having an impact in one way or another from the ‘adultification’ of children (Bousfield & Ragusa, 2014), having to ‘teach to the test’ (Thompson & Harbaugh, 2013), or the focus on ‘increasing student performance’ (Hardy, 2014). Maya, a classroom teacher at Admiral Hall attempts to find balance by putting the testing program into perspective:

NAPLAN impacts on everything but as a school we attempt to ensure that it becomes part of a balanced approach. At some points, we’ve had some parents who place an inordinate emphasis on NAPLAN. Then again, I would say a high proportion of our parents are not that focussed on it. And in fact, some are dead against it but we feel that it’s a useful thing to do. We do it. We use the results but they’re just part of our deal.

(Maya, classroom teacher, Admiral Hall)

In the Catholic sector, there is the added expectation of the Bishop’s Literacy Test, where students are tested on their knowledge and understanding of Religious Education concepts (taken at Year 3, 5, and 7). Teachers at St Albertine’s talked about the expectations of NAPLAN and the Bishop’s Literacy Test as having an impact on the perceived place of the arts and time requirements for each.

I think preparing the kids for the NAPLAN test takes up a lot of time. And they don’t test the arts in NAPLAN, it’s all focused on English and Mathematics, and then in the Catholic schools they also have the Bishop’s Literacy Test as well. So, they’re our 3 main focus areas, there’s going to be data that’s collected about the school reflecting our teaching, which can have a big impact on our own jobs, and the parents are getting the reports back and going “oh well my kid’s all the way below here, what have you been doing?”

(Catherine, classroom teacher, St Albertine)

Apart from the standardised testing regimes imposed on schools, other expectations arise from within the school community that require teachers to accommodate change. In the form of incursions or class excursions, these extra activities impact on arts programs and time in arts lessons. Leanne, the arts specialist at Hilldale notes:

If we have groups come in [incursions] or when we’ve got swimming, sometimes things can’t be avoided because you can’t change any of that, so if they’re going to swimming I’ll say to a teacher “if you can change [their music time], change it but I’m not going to run around trying to organise everybody”. So, there is those sorts of things.

(Leanne, arts specialist, Hilldale)

Consequently, there is an expectation for school staff to be flexible and accommodating. In schools where this culture of goodwill happens with genuine flexibility rather than grudging compliance, there is better communication
between staff. At the same time, the pressure of meeting curriculum requirements and parental expectations is immense and examined next.

**The impact of pressure.** Teachers face many pressures, but none quite like the pressure of a crowded curriculum (Sabol, 2013). Taryn, a classroom teacher at Winding Crescent explains:

> It's just the amount that you have to get through in terms of the curriculum, it's so heavy and they're expected to do so much. And you just don't get time. Like I would say maybe one art lesson an hour a week and then its whenever we get time for the mural, and still some kids miss out on that each week so it's not enough really. And incorporating drama into your reading lessons and stuff like that, that can be tricky in terms of planning especially with twenty-five kids. And you know you've got kids that are illiterate; they can't still read at that age.

(Taryn, classroom teacher, Winding Crescent)

The ‘standard stuff’ of literacy and numeracy is a recurring theme repeatedly highlighted by the participants. Unsurprisingly, the pressure for teachers did not come from being unable to fulfil arts curriculum requirements, comments were instead about the pressures of fulfilling literacy and numeracy requirements. These external factors are a constant pressure teachers both feel and respond to.

Taken together, the four contextual dimensions add to an understanding of curriculum assumptions and teacher practice in the arts. Considering the three ideas of **content** (arts curriculum), **context** (school and teaching environment) and **noise** (interruptions) allows us to think more clearly about what each means to practice and how they interrelate. In this final section, we outline our interpretation of ‘**noise**’ as a way of describing the mismatch between curriculum as written and curriculum as enacted.

**Turning Curriculum Noise into Curriculum Harmony**

In the context of this study, ‘**noise**’ is presented as a conceptual organiser describing the interruption between the flow of written curriculum and its enactment as effective learning opportunities. Part of this disruption is a result of the interplay between contextual variables and curriculum assumptions covered in the previous section. Recognising and acknowledging these concerns is a step towards minimising the impact of curriculum assumptions surrounding access, resourcing and support for schools. The other part of the
disruption involves a resistance to curriculum change by teachers, a change ‘fatigue’ which is out of alignment with curriculum assumptions made by the written curriculum. For example, the written curriculum assumes enthusiastic compliance with content and pedagogy contained within the document. Reality suggests though, that teacher compliance with the content and pedagogy is less than enthusiastic (Andrich, 2009).

What we could observe, for example, is the way that teachers are resisting constant curriculum change by disconnecting from the written curriculum, and perhaps in the process, disconnecting from perceptions of top down control from those agencies charged with producing curriculum. This disconnection is demonstrated through a resistance to engage with the implementation process by some teachers. This comment below from a participant teacher with over twenty years teaching experience sums up the attitude towards the new arts curriculum when asked if the timeline for implementation was known:

Most of us go ‘I don’t know, and I don’t really care’. And seriously, I don’t because having taught for so long, it [curriculum] seems to do a 7-year cycle and they change the rules, and they relabel it. I do whatever they say, when they bring it out...and then they’ll change the rules and then they’ll tell us to throw it out and put something else in because they always do.

(Breanna, classroom teacher, Winding Crescent)

The frustration with the change process evident from Breanna is palpable. What this means is that there is an ongoing challenge to reach classroom teachers through the ‘noise’ of change. SCSA’s efforts to make the curriculum more accessible are welcome attempts but the rhetoric of constant change still hampers the work to be done. This idea of ‘change fatigue’ (Andrich, 2009; Dilkes, Cunningham, & Gray), being tired of seemingly constant adaptation and change, is not new. However, the system’s ability to overcome this fatigue is not yet apparent, identified by comments like that from Breanna.

Adding to the issue of engagement with the arts in schools is the rhetoric of the ‘ideal school’. What is seen and given space, time and resources (whether deliberately or not) is what is perceived to have priority in the curriculum. This concept of value has relevance at all levels of education regardless of whether it can be articulated by all involved (Bleazby, 2015). Students perceive it from teachers (time given to learning areas), teachers perceive it from administrators (time given to professional learning), and administrators perceive it from
systems and sectors (standardised testing and accountability). The challenge is to recognise and re-evaluate engagement with the arts to better fit school resources and student needs.

**The Future**

We opened with the phrase ‘*content without context is noise*’ suggesting this is useful in explaining the impact contextual components of access, support and resources have on the written and enacted arts curriculum. Further highlighting this impact is the notion that without consideration of the relationship between context and written curriculum, disruption or ‘noise’ is the result. The key enablers we identified in working to minimise the disruption include: access to learning opportunities, quality support from school leadership personnel, and development of arts resources both physical and material. Key constraints to overcome and minimise the ‘noise’ include an overcrowded curriculum, change fatigue experienced by teachers and priority given to standardised testing regimes. Value or lack of value for the Arts as a learning area, is replete in curriculum development, implementation and fatigue, however through awareness from teachers and school leaders, change is possible.

What the research reveals is that schools with a better understanding of content, context and practice for their situation are better placed to deliver effective arts learning opportunities. Where there is less understanding of the relationship between content and context, there is less connection and more disjointed application of arts learning opportunities in the school – or more ‘noise’. Curriculum is written with the expectation that through the way that teachers apply it, students in any given educational setting have access to similar learning concepts and outcomes. However, even with similar learning concepts, there is still variation in practice across classrooms, particularly in the Arts. In other words, context is the ‘missing link’ for enactment to be effective in student learning.

Therefore, the potential for the understandings identified in this article in relation to access, support and resources to influence enactment methods used in schools is consistent. The identification of the individual contextual structure of a school, and working more deliberately within those understandings increases opportunities for successful and effective arts learning opportunities for
students. Improved support from systems and sectors in identifying ‘where’ and ‘why’ schools might encounter curriculum implementation difficulties would also be benefit students, schools and systems. Educational accord or ‘harmony’ then, is reached when practice, context and content are aligned and resonate with each other in consonant not dissonant ways. Understanding the relationship between content and context, and minimising the noise of ineffective implementation practice allows schools and teachers to better align content and take account of the contextual variables at play.
4.4 The Contribution of the Contextual Landscapes on ‘Understanding’ the Arts Curriculum

The two research articles contribute a deepening appreciation for the complexity of the environment in which teachers operate, and the impact this has on a teacher’s ability to engage with meaningful arts curriculum and translation into learning opportunities.

In the first article, the views of arts curriculum leaders were vital in understanding from a macro perspective, how teachers react to the arts curriculum implementation process. Their views, couched in terms of four contextual dimensions: situational, material, professional cultures and external factors (Ball et al., 2012) provided a detailed overview of the state of arts teaching and learning in Western Australia as perceived by those outside of the immediate school environment. Identifying the intended and unintended consequences of the curriculum implementation delay made by government, sets up an introduction to how schools and teachers react; evident in an articulated sense of marginalisation and disconnection.

In the second article, the views of the classroom teachers, principals and arts specialist teachers in schools added an increasing appreciation for the complexity and uniqueness of each school setting that makes generalisations about enactment so difficult for the implementation of the written curriculum. Highlighting the issues of geography and location, resourcing, and support as key areas of need, the teachers included were open about their struggles to create meaningful arts learning opportunities for their students.

In developing an understanding of the contextual landscape through description several points can be made. First, the research questions for this section of the project were designed to unpack the contextual complexity of schools. However, the questions revealed similarities between schools, but depth of answers depended on the actual school context. As such, the individual nature of each site meant that the four contextual dimensions impacted on each school, but in different ways. For example, while resourcing was an issue for all four schools, at Winding Crescent the actual materials that the students used were in short supply; limited to one trolley of materials for several classes to share; and this impacted on the choice of activities made by
the classroom teacher. By contrast, at Hillview the lack of physical space to conduct dance or drama classes was more of an issue. These differences, while together can be seen as resourcing issues, highlight the uniqueness of each school site and therefore the difficulty that a single curriculum document has working in multiple contexts.

Second, understanding the curriculum can be considered through the lens of complexity theory. By thinking about each component of the curriculum implementation process, teacher, school, system and sector as independent levels within a nested system, the resulting layering highlights complexity both within each level and between each level.

This nested way of thinking also provides the parameters for a 'knower and knowledge dichotomy' (B. Davis, 2008) in which the impact of the four contextual dimensions can be considered. In complexity thinking language, the knowing, physical or living system is the system that produces the knowledge, here the teacher, school, or system. Conversely, the knowledge system is the collection of knowledge produced by the knowing or physical system. In this study, this is represented by the arts curriculum. These two antagonists have a dynamic and reflexive relationship made more complex by the interactions of the four contextual dimensions on both the knower and knowledge. Resourcing, a school's geographical location and staffing issues highlight the dynamic, reflexive association of knower and knowledge impacting on the implementation of arts learning opportunities in primary schools. Moreover, B. Davis (2008) suggests that while knowers and knowledge can be considered separately, as initially described here, they cannot exist separately. This interrelationship sets up discussion in chapter 5 and 6 about the connections between understanding the arts curriculum and enacting it.

Finally, returning to the vignettes presented at the beginning of this chapter, the isolation of each systemic curriculum leader from each other, and the schools in their respective systems is a significant point to note. The government sector leader in the converted high school to the north of the city, the Catholic sector leader in the converted convent in a suburb close to the city, the independent sector leader in a commercial building in a commercial sector of the city, and although not included in the vignette, even the SCSA curriculum leaders in a
high security (swipe card access) building to the east of the city centre all say something about connectedness or lack thereof of the systemic ‘experts’ from our schools, teachers and students. Each of these settings are isolated from the school environments that the curriculum leaders are charged with providing insight and leadership to. This may be a deliberate attempt to not be seen to be working too closely with one school over another, however, it also presents as a barrier to accessibility and approachability. Perception is a powerful tool, and jurisdictions need to consider the intended and unintended messages they send.
CHAPTER 5  ARTS CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION: INTERPRETING THE RELATIONSHIPS

This chapter follows on from constructing the contextual enablers and constraints of arts curriculum implementation, to move towards a better understanding of the 'etic' perspective or the “outsider looking in” view (Fetterman, 2008, p. 249). This “outside looking in” view focuses on a researcher’s view of how teachers interpret their contextual landscape and curriculum context they operate in. Specifically, the article in this chapter focuses on teachers’ understanding of purpose, value and practice as it is related to arts learning. The ‘etic’ perspective presented here provides a direct contrast to the contextual description or ‘emic’ perspective of the previous chapter.

This chapter also develops insights through the second aspect of educational criticism, interpretation. This perspective provides an understanding of what has been previously described in chapter 4 but is now represented using ideas, concepts, models or theories (Eisner, 2017). In this chapter, interpretation is conceptualised through the development of the Purpose, Value and Practice (PVP) model. The PVP model was created through the work of this chapter and associated article. This model is used heuristically to consider the awareness and relationships that teachers establish across a matrix of purpose, value and practice at three levels – the macro, meso and micro. A deeper analysis of this framework leads to more complex relationships and provides insights that open arts learning opportunities for students and impact on arts curriculum implementation.

The supplementary research question used to frame this chapter is: What is the relationship between purpose, value and practice in the implementation of a primary arts curriculum? This research question highlights relationships as being the key to understanding implementation, and the varied relationships between purpose, value and practice as the result. The article Purpose, value and practice in Western Australian schools: understanding misalignment in arts learning is presented here as part of this deepening understanding.

Finally, the kaleidoscope image for this chapter is presented below in Figure
5.1. Again, the repeating words represent the important elements of this chapter and the interpret aspect of the overarching research question, but the differing relationships between the elements are displayed through the rotating angles of the words.

Figure 5.1 Interpret kaleidoscope image
5.1 Article 3

Purpose, value and practice in Western Australian schools: understanding misalignment in Arts learning

Purpose, value and practice are three key concepts in understanding curriculum implementation in arts education. When these three concepts work in harmony the alignment provides a framework for successful arts curriculum implementation. This study highlights how these concepts are often misaligned with competition between the translation of purpose as stated in curriculum documents, mediated through competing values shown by teachers, principals and the community, the realities of teaching, and the everyday life of schools. Key to understanding the impact of a misaligned arts education is the intersection of purpose – the why of arts learning; value – the beliefs about what is worth knowing in terms of curriculum authorities and teacher’s beliefs; and practice – the actuality or how of arts learning. A purpose, value and practice framework is explored using a qualitative methodology drawing on the experiences of 20 primary school teachers across four schools in Western Australia. The ways that each of these three key concepts manifest provides insights into what can improve authentic arts learning for young people in schools. Additionally, the centrality of the teacher to the teaching learning process, and time allocation commitments by teachers and schools are discussed as key considerations of curriculum implementation misalignment.

Key words: arts education, purpose, value, practice

It is 7.30am on a Monday morning and Miss A is already in her Year 3 classroom preparing for the day. There is a knock at the door and the principal enters. “Good morning Miss A, I just wanted to let you know that unfortunately your request to attend the Media professional learning workshop on Friday has not been approved. There is just not enough money in the professional learning budget outside what is already planned for literacy and numeracy.”

Miss A is not surprised but it means that her plan to use a recent excursion to the zoo to extend her student’s understanding of animals and their habitat’s using an arts-based approach will have to change. The mixed media habitat collages the students are working on (scattered across the classroom drying) will have to be enough to cover arts learning this term. Without the workshop Miss A does not have the all the skills needed, or time on the weekend to learn
them in order to work on developing a short movie allowing the integration and expression of learning she wanted. Miss A sighs and continues marking the spelling and maths homework that needs to be returned to students later that morning, and so it goes, and so it goes. Maybe next term…

Arts curriculum implementation practices in Western Australian primary schools reveal a complex relationship between purpose, value and practice. What is revealed in the opening narrative represents the misalignment of purpose, value and practice. What is specifically highlighted is how the stated purpose of arts practice in schools is under tension from the sustained pressures of a crowded curriculum, constant curriculum change, fragmented teacher knowledge, and a lack of understanding of the arts (Ewing, 2012; Sabol, 2013). In addition, without support from school administration, in the form of professional learning opportunities, coupled with an awareness of curriculum requirements and interest from the teacher, other priorities continue to marginalise arts learning. Unsurprisingly, this results in teachers focusing on what they currently are held accountable for in learning areas such as literacy, numeracy and science rather than developing their understanding of arts curriculum content.

Understanding the ways that the arts are valued by teachers also gives a greater insight into the learning opportunities offered to young people in our primary schools. However, the constant pressure for the arts to maintain curriculum relevancy has led to an increase in the discourse surrounding the value of arts in schools (Bumgarner Gee, 2007; Hetland & Winner, 2001; Tubbs, 2013). For example, teachers reconcile curriculum expectations and their own arts knowledge in the planning of their day, and time allocations to the arts depend on how these factors are valued by school and teacher. Broadly speaking, time allocated to literacy and numeracy is directed by government policy (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2016b). Following on, the rest of the teaching day is divided between other competing curriculum requirements. Where the arts sit in this hierarchy dictates how much time the teacher allocates for arts learning; this allocation indicating the value of the arts for both teacher and school (Eisner, 2005c).

The key concepts of purpose, value and practice provides a framework for better understanding these tensions. Purpose, in this context, is identified as the
‘why’ or rationale for arts education and is examined from macro (society), meso (curriculum policy) and micro (schools) perspectives in the first section of this paper.

The second section discusses three different ways ‘value’ is described and understood as the ‘what’ of arts education including: intrinsic value seen through arts practice (Bumgarner Gee, 2007; Koopman, 2005), instrumental value highlighted by arts integration (Brewer, 2002; May & Robinson, 2016), and institutional value depicted through the development of cultural production in a school (Belfiore & Bennett, 2007; Galloway, 2009; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013).

The final section seeks to understand how teachers engage with the arts in their schools through their practice. The ‘how’ of arts teaching brings together the dimensions of the purpose and value frameworks and discusses how a more nuanced understanding of time is integral to a well-run arts program. This is not a simplistic ‘more time equals better arts learning’ argument. Rather, understanding time in richer ways can inform how time can be used more effectively, thereby better supporting the competing demands teachers face.

Therefore, this convergence between frameworks explored through ‘lived voice’ of 20 participants provides a better understanding of purpose, value and practice with a view to refining the alignment between each and improving arts learning in schools. Graphically, the connections highlighted in this article are represented in Figure 5.2.
This diagram depicts the interrelatedness of purpose, value and practice and the interconnections between them. However, these connectivities and how they might be enacted are further contextualised by our research design and participants, and it is to these components we now turn.

**Research Design and Participants**

This paper has developed iteratively from a study examining how teachers understand, interpret and enact arts curriculum in primary schools. The three key concepts explored here—purpose, value, practice—provide an important way to understand the notion of ‘interpret’ as just noted as critical in developing a greater awareness of ways to improve arts practices in schools.

Participants for this study were drawn from four schools in the southern corridor of the greater metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia. The four schools represent the three educational systems in Western Australia; Government, Catholic and Independent. This diversity provided a snapshot of practice from the different jurisdictional perspectives, each with the same curriculum but different organisational objectives under their respective mandates. This point of
difference also provided an insight into the practices of the participating schools who, by having an arts specialist on staff, professed to value the arts in some way. The way participants talked about, and indicated value for the arts, in each school and between schools was of interest to the research.

The participants also represented a range of arts backgrounds and teaching experience. Each schools’ specialist arts teacher focused on a different art form; one music, one drama, one visual arts and one multi-arts teacher (teaching the performing arts of dance, drama and music). The other 16 participants were classroom-based teachers, ten had more than five years teaching experience, and six less than five years’ experience.

Semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) exploring contextual dimensions impacting on arts implementation practices in primary schools were held with each participant. The research questions focused on the external aspects of a teacher’s work. This included factors outside of the classroom and personal control, that impact on how teaching and learning in the arts is interpreted. Specifically, the questions asked teachers about situational contexts, material contexts, professional cultures and external contexts (Ball et al., 2012; Chapman, Wright, & Pascoe, 2018b). For example, open-ended questions under the ‘Professional Cultures’ heading invited impressions from participants of the support offered by their school administration for teaching the arts. Similarly, questions under the ‘External Contexts’ heading such as “What external expectations do you perceive to impact on your ability to teach the arts in your classroom?” were asked, and responses reflected a range of perspectives and views. The complete analysis of these interviews and a detailed picture of how context impacts arts learning is detailed elsewhere (Chapman et al., 2018b), however what was also drawn from this process was a strong indication of the connectedness of purpose, value and practice, details of which are expanded here.

Interviews were transcribed and coded using a descriptive coding method that concentrated on the topic raised rather than the content (Saldana, 2013), the topic then being explored iteratively. The participants identified different states of purpose and value both at a school and individual level which are contextualised here in the quotes chosen for each section. However, beginning
the exploration of the connectivities between the participants and each part of the framework, we focus on the significance of purpose.

**Interpret as Purpose**

Purpose, as the rationale for arts education is influenced by how teachers interpret a complex intersection of macro, meso and micro influences. As such, a consideration of these three levels of influence: societal values (macro), curriculum policy (meso), and schools/teachers (micro) (Barrett, Everett, & Smigiel, 2012; Blank, 2012; Ewing, 2012), can help understand the ways teachers interpret curriculum change and act the way they do.

**Societal valuing.** Societal values surrounding the place of the arts depend, in part, on current understandings of what is deemed educationally important by relevant stakeholders like government. It is these values, for example, that “guide people’s decision-making and social conduct” (Sowey, 2013, p. 1). In an educational sense, these values represent the ideas and concepts of what is ‘worthwhile’ in an educational system where current neoliberal approaches and emphasis on standardised testing influence the notion of ‘educational importance’ and what is supported by government (Lingard et al., 2013). However, these values change over time and represent the dominant cultural group in any situation, the development of a “cultural hegemony” (Ditchburn, 2012). In Australia, and consistent with this view, the discourse surrounding the place of the arts is heavily influenced by these broader social forces and trends (Shuler, 2014). Argued as an inevitable process of living in the global village (Ditchburn, 2012; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Sabol, 2013), this thrust towards a ‘competitive’ focus has driven the educational agenda and ties it to economic policies, meaning that the mathematical world of economics becomes the sole determinant of ‘value’ and so the ‘currency’ of what counts in education is linked to market forces (Skourdoumbis, 2015). This matters because these neoliberal principles inform policy and its enactment (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013), and therefore impact on purpose, value and practice and the place of arts education in schools.

Economic policies also reflect the norms and values of current government directions, are important to the arts and impact on public education spending. For example, when funding is tight with little discretionary spending, there is a trend for the arts in schools, as one of the perceived ‘fringe’ subjects, to suffer
(Ewing, 2012; Sabol, 2013). Evidence of this is noted by participants of this study through staffing, material resourcing or rooming allocation cuts; these reflect being the victim of a ‘hierarchy of value’ (Chapman et al., 2018b). So, although there is a perceived sense of importance in the place of the arts at the macro level, that valuing is not reflected through curriculum support and school programming. This curriculum support and school level programming plays a vitally important role in the perceived purpose of the arts and it is through understanding these relationships that arts education in schools can be strengthened.

**Curriculum policy.** At a meso level, the purpose of the arts can be considered from two current curriculum policy perspectives. Curriculum theory suggests for example, that curriculum design and implementation has led to “complicated conversations” (Pinar, 2004) surrounding what and how we teach – arts content requirements, for example - and debates in Australia about federal versus state government control of education (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014; Lingard et al., 2013; School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2016a). It is these debates and tensions between the Australian Curriculum and development of the Western Australian curriculum, highlight this complex interplay influencing valuing of the arts broadly speaking (Chapman et al., 2018a).

However, curriculum policy, theory and implementation are concepts that impact on the everyday lives of teachers in ways beyond their control. For example, policy in Australia is set by curriculum regulatory bodies that oversee sectors and systems. Out of necessity, these bodies make assumptions about the schools within their jurisdiction, and design curriculum with an “ideal school” or more specifically “ideal knower” in mind (Macknight, 2011). This ‘ideal’ curriculum assumes that the human and physical resources necessary to teach the designated curriculum are available to schools. However, the reality is often different, and resources vary from school to school. This reality must be negotiated by teachers in order to cover the provided curriculum and contributes to the “complicated conversation” (Pinar, 2004) of what teachers have, and what in reality they can do. This dilemma is further compounded by the way the curriculum is constructed in Australia.
Curriculum in Australia is determined by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), a national regulatory body. At a state level, curriculum for Western Australia is generated by the School, Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), this divide Federal – State divide reflecting the conflicted histories of curriculum design and implementation between State and Federal Australian governments (Lingard & McGregor, 2014). This conflict, for example, has resulted in delays to the introduction of the Western Australian Curriculum documents for the Arts learning area (Chapman et al., 2018a; Collier, 2015).

In Western Australia, the Arts is one of eight learning areas in the curriculum, and is circumscribed by the key organisers of ‘making’ and ‘responding’ (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2015c). More specifically, making, refers to the process of creating arts works, moving from the development of the initial idea through to the presentation of that idea. Responding, refers to how students reflect, analyse, interpret and evaluate first their own work and then others.

The purpose of this organisation is to develop a well-rounded appreciation of the arts as both a practitioner and as a consumer. However, many classroom teachers still struggle with the content of a single arts lesson let alone a series of learning opportunities that encompass both ‘making and responding’ (Chapman et al., 2018b).

**Schools and teachers.** Schools and teachers provide the micro-framing of purpose of the arts in our schools. More specifically, what teachers think about the arts and how that translates into learning opportunities in the classroom provides an understanding of the way teachers’ beliefs influence the arts education they deliver. This is important because these beliefs shape and define what is offered to students reflecting not only what is valued, but also what teachers do in the time-poor and contested ‘space’ of the school day (Teitelbaum, 2008), in this way referencing the curriculum tensions of time and opportunity.

In addition, research further reveals that purpose, for teachers, is influenced by contextual factors that impact on them and their everyday lives (Chapman et al., 2018b), many of which are outside of their control. For example, Western
Australian primary schools work to educate 265 600 kindergarten to year 6 students (5 -12 years old) across eight education districts, servicing an area of 2.64 million km². Therefore, flexibility is necessary for schools to work within and across an enormous range of social conditions, contexts and geographies in order to allow for school and individual interpretation of programs and initiatives.

The purpose of the arts, seen from the three perspectives just described, identifies the divisions of society, curriculum policy and schools that impact on teachers’ arts education practice. However, the reality of how teachers approach the arts is more complex. For example, the day-to-day pressures of teaching mean that there is rarely a focus on the why of the arts – the purpose. So, without an explicit understanding of why, teachers focus on the what of the arts (Lummis et al., 2014); this often being an implicit and unfocused understanding of arts curriculum drawn from limited pre-service training, and memories of lessons at school where personal biographies are important. In this way, both ‘history’ and how this constitutes ‘value’ is important.

**Valuing as Practice**

Value and valuing are important in the context of arts teaching because they relate to how teachers ‘connect’ to the arts. The literature describes at least three contrasting states of valuing; intrinsic, instrumental and institutional (Brewer, 2002; McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2001). These three states align with ‘personal valuing’, ‘usefulness valuing’ and a ‘connectedness valuing’ for a teacher and her teaching. For example, an intrinsic or personal valuing means holding the development of each art form with its’ discrete arts elements and forms as important. Likewise, teachers valuing the arts for their usefulness or instrumental value, sees the arts used to highlight cross-curriculum learning opportunities (Brewer, 2002). Similarly, teachers valuing the arts for their connectedness or institutional value use the arts in a way to develop community (Kuttner, 2015).

Each of these ‘states’ are also consistent with practices highlighted by participants in this research. For example, the greater the connection across any of the three ‘value states’, the greater the likelihood of a teacher being open to the mandated curriculum and associated arts planning.
Intrinsic Valuing - Arts Practice

Valuing the personal growth that practice in individual arts subjects provides is one way teachers show intrinsic value (Bumgarner Gee, 2007). In an illustrative way, playing a simple song on the marimba, or creating a sequence of movement in contemporary dance holds valuable learning opportunities in developing perseverance and pride in personal achievements contributing towards personal growth (Hetland & Winner, 2001).

How schools organise for the development of intrinsic value through arts learning and practice is an individual school administration decision, and what the arts pedagogy consists of depends, in many schools, on who is responsible; a specialist teacher or a classroom teacher. For example, one of the schools in the study has a music and a drama specialist teacher. These specialists are responsible for these two performing arts subjects separately with the responsibility for visual arts and media falling to the classroom teachers. In this school at least, this allows for the development of creativity and skill across the performing and visual based art forms for students mandated by the WA curriculum authority.

Value as creativity. Creativity is one form of valuing held by participants and at the heart of a strong arts education program (Brinkman, 2010; Sowden, Clements, Redlich, & Lewis, 2015). More specifically, what teachers’ value is the way that students create their own movement, music, videos, plays, and paintings as part of an arts education in Western Australian schools. It is this engagement with the arts that allows students to explore, experiment, challenge and expand their understanding of how the world works through creative output (Alter, Hays, & O’Hara, 2009).

This creative response by students is valued by arts teachers and classroom teachers as a valuable skill for young people to develop, as it also signifies the ability to think about a problem or issue in different ways – one of the skills for a 21st century learner (Mcllvenny, 2013). Deanne, an experienced classroom teacher, explains her understanding of the creative process for her students in a visual arts activity.

Art creates that feeling, creates that emotion and allows children to be those fantastic problem solvers, to see life through a different eye too. For example, when they were doing these (self
portraits on desks) they did their portraits and put them in the frames. They were concentrating so hard, that they spent two hours finishing them off.

This example shows the way that the arts offer an alternative means of expression; there is no ‘right answer’ or ‘right way of completing a task’ (Maguire, Donovan, Mishook, Gaillande, & Garcia, 2012), and stands in opposition to mathematical reasoning in which the process is methodical and there is one ‘correct’ answer to be found (Eisner, 2004; Rudolph & Wright, 2015). Having no ‘one way to respond’, means controversial subjects can be explored, alternate responses studied, and audiences challenged. This is essentially the development of creativity and drives how the arts are valued in a well-rounded education. Developing connection also requires, on the teachers’ behalf, a degree of competency and understanding in the chosen art form—this being where skill development is vital.

**Value as skill development.** Value for the arts also lies in the development of artistic skills, and practicing these provides an aesthetic experience that offers intrinsic fulfilment coming from the practice itself (Koopman, 2005), and the somaesthetic control and mastery of either body or instrument.

As such, learning the technique of an art form in either a group or individual setting is a traditional approach for the arts (Bamford, 2009). In this study the arts specialist teachers were specifically able to describe arts practice in terms of this more traditional process reflecting a particular value mind-set. For example, Penny an arts specialist teacher teaching music and drama, discusses the process she uses in her arts teaching practice.

> I try to introduce a warmup, like an introduction for a few minutes, just to introduce whatever skill they’re going to do...it could be from music ..., or drama in terms of voice projection and improvisation. So, I do that, then I get them into group work. And then sometimes, just for my own recording and assessment, I will get them to do some writing around it [the group work], and reflection.

In this example, the arts process at the level of a single lesson focuses on skill acquisition. For Penny, this process fits into the school timetable in terms of how long she has for each lesson – one hour, and how she has structured the arts program for each year group across the year. Leanne, a music specialist,
explains that her program focuses on skills and experiences that the students cannot easily get outside of the school environment. Using percussion and in particular the Marimba, skill development is a focus.

No, not many other schools teach Marimba. I also want the students to do stuff here that they don't get the opportunity to do other places. I don't do a lot of technology because I believe that the kids are far more advanced with their understanding of technology than I am, but they don't have one of them (pointing to a marimba) in their house.

In these examples, the specialist teachers are clear in their understanding of the arts learning process, and how it applies to their context and students. The valuing of this artistic development may be due to their own experience and these teachers are now passing on an intrinsic or personal valuing of the arts to their respective classes. Additionally, these teachers have an awareness of the curriculum and are confident in structuring learning programs beyond the single lesson. They have the pre-service education and self-confidence to achieve their teaching goals regardless of the increasing complexity of education generally. The generalist teachers in this study do not have the same background or education to rely on, and therefore use (and value) the arts in different ways - integrated learning being one manifestation.

**Instrumental Valuing - Integrated Learning**

Instrumental valuing describes how the process of using two or more learning areas or subjects works to improve student learning outcomes (Marshall, 2014; May, 2013). Integrating arts subjects with other learning areas supports the notion that the arts are ‘useful’ and therefore of value to schools and teachers. For example, the arts are useful as a tool to further develop mathematical skills when identifying and using the correct number of people to make a hexagon or using drama to explore literature or historical happenings through a drama re-enactment of an event (Chisholm, Whitmore, Shelton, & McGrath, 2016). These examples highlight the practical demonstration of instrumental value, and the usefulness of the arts to teachers in times of a ‘crowded and standardised curriculum’ (Donahue & Stuart, 2008).

**Valuing as efficiency.** Curriculum efficiency explores the idea that the place or value of the arts in the curriculum is maintained through its alignment with other subjects or learning areas, that is, the use of the arts in schools can
'help' learning in other areas, thereby making it a relevant, efficient, and valuable part of the curriculum (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006). As a consequence of pressure to increase efficiency, it is possible to see an increase in integrated learning literature related to arts education over the past decade (Brewer, 2002). This suggests that educators are looking for ways to maintain significance of the arts learning area in the face of curriculum marginalisation and the increase in focus in the 'core areas' of literacy and numeracy (May & Robinson, 2016). For classroom teachers’ curriculum efficiency and integration practices then become a ‘logical’ approach.

Tracey, a graduate classroom teacher, outlines her philosophy on integration and why that is important in her classroom.

No, I don’t see it as stand alone; I think it needs to be integrated. Stand-alone subjects, it’s not the way that the world works, so if the children go and they’re just making something for the hell of it, it’s enjoyable for them but everything that we need to do has a certain element, it needs to have a certain element of intention.

In a different school, Roger an experienced classroom teacher, describes his experience as a graduate working with a visual arts specialist on an integrated project.

I'm useless [at art] but I really value art so my first year as a classroom teacher, there was an art teacher on staff and it was outstanding cause I was able to run a program where I drew her into what I was doing in the class in relation to literacy and maths. So, the children, for example, learnt about Frida Kahlo. They learnt about her life, and through learning about her, they learnt about the relations between men and women, they learnt about geography through the fact that she was from Mexico and then through the art teacher, who was highly talented, they drew a portrait piece like Kahlo herself had done.

The argument for using the arts as one side of the integration model is to increase opportunities for the arts to be seen in the school curriculum. What is seen most has, regardless of intention, more perceived value (Chapman et al., 2018b; Eisner, 2005b). For example, those subjects with more time allocated throughout the day (literacy and numeracy), inevitably have a priority status. Therefore, this recognition of integration and increasing the visibility of the arts learning area, aims to create an ‘efficiency’ for teachers. However, as Hetland and Winner (2001) note, seeking to maintain a curriculum position or relevancy
through secondary learning benefits is an uniquely arts practice.

The teachers interviewed in this study showed substantial support for the idea of arts integration and the perceived benefits of efficiency and time saving. Using integration to cover multiple learning areas across a topic proved to be a popular practice across all four schools. However, learning benefits also come from shared or collaborative arts learning opportunities. The final part of the value framework focuses on shared arts learning experiences rather than individual arts learning.

**Institutional Valuing - Cultural Production.** The third component of the value framework describes the institutional value of the arts; a connectedness value with implications for community and society more generally. Cultural production or social impact of the arts is described as the ability of the arts to influence the cohesion or development of a community (Kuttner, 2015). In this instance, the community is the school, and cohesion refers to the use of the arts to develop and strengthen relationships between teachers, students, administration, parents and community members through arts-based activities. For example, cultural days where the community is invited into the school to share customs and activities with the students can establish awareness of community diversity. The terms ‘cultural production’, ‘social impact’ and ‘community cohesion’ are used interchangeably in the literature, and the slippage between them provides an insight into the perception or understanding of those using arts activities for this purpose.

**Value as cultural production / social impact.** In this cultural view of value, the connectedness of arts practice is between school and community allowing emphasis to be removed from the practice of an art as a form, focusing instead on participation to draw people together. Proponents of this way of thinking focus more on how the arts enrich human life than on technical ability in an art form (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). Emphasising the outcome of the practice also draws teachers away from simple one-off arts lessons.

One more experienced teacher discussed the importance of connection between the school, student and parent.

Learning is all about you, the child and the parent. If that's not right, then the child's not learning. Never more so than the arts
because I think with the core subjects like Maths, English etc....there's kind of ...I'm going to say...expectation that the school has got that covered, whereas the arts always tend to be a bit fringe. It's a bit of colouring in or it's a bit of that whereas if you've got parents that see it in a broader text, to make those links with them then you know you have got a wonderful resource happening out there.

Focusing on cultural identity allows a deeper connection between schools and their communities for those schools that can create links and cultural understandings. This way of understanding value relaxes the need for schools to provide comprehensive study in an art form, and instead allows schools to use the arts in ways that benefit students, families and the community. Tapping into the local community for arts experiences to increase the relevancy and connectedness of opportunities was an important construct for all the schools. The feeling of tradition and attachment that comes with making links between schools and communities was highlighted by Brooke, in relation to her school.

We just did that parade project here ... one of the Mum’s (Jane) was an artist in residence. Parents came and helped during class time, and then we ran a workshop for them to make their own costumes, and on the day, it was just such a really lovely Admiral Hall feeling. Lots of parents and kids turned up, and you know, it’s traditional – there’s lots of traditions with the community in this school, which is just lovely.

Here, cultural production may in turn inspire or create new traditions for a school community which enhances the sense of togetherness. This connection is then valued by all stakeholders in a school setting; teachers, students, parents and administrators. However, each of these three ways of valuing the arts for a school intrinsic, instrumental and institutional require the teacher, who is active at the interface of purpose, value and practice to be central.

**Centrality of the Teacher**

In each of the three identified ways of valuing the arts, the skill and knowledge of the teacher involved is vital. Considering this skill and knowledge on a continuum, from in-depth personal knowledge to a facilitative role, the teacher is the one who provides the most salient frame for arts learning. In this sense, it is the practice of teachers that reveals the enablers and constraints of effective arts learning.

For an intrinsic understanding of arts practice, the teacher is critical in the process of learning an art form as a creative practice. Without detailed
knowledge of the techniques behind the art form it would be impossible for a student to progress his or her understanding beyond the most basic level. For example, in music a student might be able to create a simple composition using a marimba without direction, but an understanding of written sheet music might be required to play a more complex piece thus needing a skilled teacher.

For instrumental understanding and integrated learning, the teacher is not as central to the learning processes, but still requires knowledge and understanding of arts processes to integrate them into the learning opportunities offered. For example, incorporating a visual arts collage of an animal habitat to reinforce a written report may not require the same emphasis on artistic skill as if the habitat creation was completed as an arts activity alone where arts learning outcomes have primacy.

Finally, for institutional understandings and cultural production, the teacher plays a more facilitative role; this being a further step away from the need for a detailed understanding of the learning area. For example, the teacher may act in a secondary role to the community expert as the students work on an arts project. Duty of care is maintained, but the role of teacher as ‘direct instructor’ is relinquished. What is still required though, is an interest in and valuing of the arts, with the ability to network to make the connections necessary. This valuing and connectedness ultimately promotes the transmission of human and cultural values.

So, through each of these iterations of teacher positioning – central to peripheral – making more of arts learning opportunities is fundamental. The focus then becomes aligning teacher practice to purpose and value, and to this idea we now turn.

**Aligning Teacher Practice with Purpose and Value**

Understanding the alignment of purpose, value and practice as related to arts learning in schools is important for improving quality arts education. Improving alignment between these three key concepts requires recognition of the barriers between purpose and value, and the impact that holds for teacher practice in and for arts learning opportunities. Some of these barriers have already been highlighted; arts learning area marginalisation, curriculum expectations, and deficits in personal arts knowledge (Ewing, 2012). These barriers are difficult for
teachers in schools to manage, as in the context of a classroom it becomes hard to see beyond the immediate situation where there is a complex web of priorities and allocated time.

**Time as purpose and value in arts learning.** Time for arts learning is profoundly linked to aligning teacher practice with purpose and value. Highlighted throughout this paper is the notion that value is perceived through attention and the more attention or the more visible a subject is, the more value it holds (Chapman et al., 2018b; Eisner, 2005c). Allocated by school authorities, ‘attention’ is granted as an allocation of curriculum time. For example, an hour a day for mathematics, and two hours for literacy are common practices in primary schools in Western Australia. For the arts, the allocation of time is less rigid and to date this allocation of time has been a decision of the classroom teacher rather than a designated number of minutes from school administrations or curriculum authorities.

However complex and complicated, realities of time are a recurrent theme in the learning area and reflect the marginalisation of the arts and crowded nature of the curriculum (Ewing, 2012). What this research focuses on is the connection of time to the understandings of the three components of value discussed previously; arts practice, integration and cultural production, and through these connections it is possible to see the impact that time has on the development of each.

Time, in a chronological sense, allows for the development of creativity and skill, two components integral to a strong arts practice (Koopman, 2005). Arts practice in and of itself requires time, and in the school setting where teachers are under pressure from a crowded curriculum, provision of time to a learning area is one of the strongest ways to show value. Specialist arts teachers have more time with students on arts learning with only one learning area to focus and report on. This means that they can work with students in more depth than classroom teachers. However, with the requirement for schools to offer both a performing art and a visual art (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2015c), part of the arts ‘load’ still falls within the classroom teacher’s responsibility. One of the ways that classroom teachers try to alleviate the time burden with a focus on efficiency is through integration.
Vicki, an experienced classroom teacher shares her views on integration and its relationship with time.

I think the Arts are just so important and you can include your Arts in Maths, in Society and Environment. You can cross curricular; we're meant to do that otherwise you can't fit everything in. We have a time table that is chock-o-block, it is packed, and we just don't make it.

As a strategy, the inherent value of using the arts in this way becomes apparent. As a coping mechanism to deal with the crowded curriculum, integration becomes an important component of a teacher's daily work and time management routine.

In a similar vein, time is not just about managing the curriculum but is also about maximising the physical time in the school day. This is reflected by Monique, a graduate teacher in this way.

I tend to integrate it [Arts] into everything just because we don’t really have time to set an hour aside…organise the prep for it, clean up if it’s a full-on visual arts thing, so we try and implement it in nearly everything we do.

Time impacts not only the curriculum for the classroom teacher, but also the building of cultural production for specialist teachers wanting to incorporate the whole school or greater aspects of the school in learning opportunities. Rose, a dance / drama specialist teacher, discusses the time that it takes to build community within the school when working on a common arts project.

…but as a community effort it takes time to build and develop [cohesion] but you work together on developing something [an arts project], the classroom teachers could participate in it as well, there is no reason why it has to be an extra. It can also be in a smaller capacity… it doesn't have to be full scale.

So, the impact of time can be experienced across all levels. At the macro level, the impact of time is experienced when decisions are made about what constitutes a valuable education and where the arts fit into that conversation. The impact is experienced at the meso level with curriculum, that is, where systemic decisions are made about the relative importance of subjects and how much time in the school day they receive. The impact at a micro level is experienced with the importance placed by the teacher on how the arts learning is undertaken – as an individual practice, as part of an integration model or, a means of creating community.
This insight about the impact of time clarifies why schools and teachers organise themselves for arts learning in the ways that they do, reflecting the ‘misalignment’ in Arts learning but also the interrelatedness of dynamic concepts both in and out of a teacher’s control. Bringing together the frameworks discussed helps to shed light on the practice of teachers and relationships between purpose and value.

**Conclusion**

Purpose and value are significant concepts to understanding teachers’ practice. This paper has examined how purpose and value are understood in the literature and revealed in practice through the eyes of schools and teachers. This study considered the ‘why, what and how’ of arts curriculum practice in Western Australia uncovering issues surrounding limited teacher knowledge, personal biographies, and time allocations within schools. These three organisers highlight the overlapping nature of purpose, value and practice and differing moments of the participants and their daily struggle to attend to the complexity of teaching practice and all the requirements of the teaching day.

Reconsidering Miss A’s situation from the opening vignette, it is easy to see how her purpose was thwarted by the interactions of value between the curriculum, school processes and her own biography and pedagogical purpose. There was an intent on her behalf to incorporate the arts into her lesson planning, however her request for professional learning was not supported and purpose was consequently weakened. In addition, her limited knowledge restricted the scope of learning offered. Attending the professional learning would have opened new possibilities for this and future tasks, but without it her personal biography meant other priorities in her work day take precedence. However, it does not have to be that way.

**Miss A (re)framed**

*It is 7.30am on a Monday morning and Miss A is already in her Year 3 classroom preparing for the day. There is a knock at the door and the principal enters. “Good morning Miss A, I just wanted to let you know that your request to attend the Media professional learning workshop on Friday has been approved. If you can organise your relief lessons, we will get a substitute teacher for the day. You can share your learning with the rest of the staff at the next staff meeting.”*
meeting.”

This is good news, as it means that Miss A can now go ahead with her plan to use a recent excursion to the zoo to extend her student’s understanding of animals and their habitat’s using an arts-based approach. The mixed media habitat collages the students are working on (currently drying in the art room) will provide the basis for the development of a short movie – drawing on Media Arts - showing their chosen animal and different aspects of their habitat. Miss A is excited to incorporate the arts-based learning into her program and learn new skills incorporating technology. This cross curricular approach allows her to combine arts skills with the associated English and HASS tasks already underway. Miss A is enthusiastic to get started.

If schools can match ideals of purpose to the values of both the school as an entity and teachers as individuals, then a stronger arts program with clear outcomes and practices can result. It is this realignment between purpose, value and practice that helps move teachers beyond a misaligned arts education to a strengthened understanding of the place and role of the arts in schools and resulting benefits for young people themselves.
5.2 The Contribution of ‘Interpreting’ the Relationships in Arts Curriculum Implementation

What this chapter and the associated research article contribute to the project is a deeper comprehension of the complexity of the relationships teachers engage in, and the impact this has on implementing meaningful arts learning opportunities for students.

The research article *Purpose, value and practice in Western Australian schools: understanding misalignment in Arts learning* (2018) outlined the *why, what and how* of arts learning. The centrality of the teacher and importance of time in the provision of learning opportunities for students were offered as reasons for some of the difficulties faced by teachers in bringing together a purpose and value in their practice of arts learning in primary classrooms. Descriptive quotes from participants were continued in this chapter to capture the essence of the discussion, however, the focus was more of an ‘etic’ rather than ‘emic’ perspective.

This ‘etic’ perspective not only provided a detailed *interpretation* of the four contextual dimensions and their role in influencing curriculum implementation, but in line with the second aspect of educational criticism, also termed *interpretation*, the development of the Purpose, Value and Practice (PVP) model provided an interpretive framework for discussion. As a result, there are two approaches to the use of interpretation in this discussion and outlining the differences in the use of the term is important. Therefore, *interpretation* (bold) in the ‘etic’ perspective of the research question focused on exploring the relationship between purpose, value and practice as it happened in the context of the school environment. For example, what the participants said about when, and how they used the arts, was telling in relation to the purpose of the arts, the value placed on the arts, or the practice of the arts by the teacher in question. This representation was highlighted in *Purpose, value and practice in Western Australian schools: understanding misalignment in Arts learning* (2018).

In contrast, *interpretation* (italics) as the second component of an educational criticism process, focused on interpreting the Purpose, Value and Practice (PVP) model by constructing an understanding of curriculum implementation from a complexity theory perspective. Here, the model was used to explore
growth and expansion of the learning system, which is imperative for self-regulation and self-emergence, key aspects of complexity thinking.

### 5.3 Growth, Expansion and Complex Emergence

Through complexity theory, curriculum implementation may be viewed as an opportunity to expand learning, and expansion can be attained on several levels. For example, a changing curriculum is itself an opportunity for teachers and students to engage in learning and reconsider the knower and knowing systems of the previous chapter. On one level, engagement expands the knowledge held by students in terms of arts techniques and processes tried and tested in the classroom, indicating the student as the *knower*. But on another level, a changing curriculum may also expand the pedagogical repertoire of the teacher, in response to the way that the arts techniques and processes are approached in a classroom setting, therefore the teacher and the *knowing*. This duality is significant and sets up several of the requirements for growth and emergence crucial for complex growing systems, but does not represent all conditions necessary for change.

Critically, the ‘discomfort’ of curriculum implementation may also expand opportunities for individual growth or expansion by teachers. Whether teachers appreciate curriculum change; or fully engage with curriculum change, growth or “emergence of expansive possibilities” (Davis & Sumara, 2008, p. 135) is possible through engagement with the implementation of a new curriculum. Being ‘out of their comfort zone’ or ‘far-from-equilibrium’ is where change and growth occurs. It is in this space that teachers decide whether to push through the discomfort of being unsure about new learning processes, pedagogy and assessment until balance is found again or retreat to familiar ground of past practice. In this project patterns of both growth and withdrawal were present in the participant schools.

However, the change process has to fulfil both individual and structural elements for change to occur (Archer, 2000; Fullan, 1993). So, on one hand, while growth and emergence may be thought of as being ‘on the edge’ and an individual requirement which will be returned to in chapter 6, certain structural conditions are also required. In this study, purpose, value and practice represented the structural conditions enabling complex emergence to occur.
Complex emergence then, represents the ability of a system to self-regulate and grow. This growth develops, in part, from the structural relationships forged between the different elements of the system, across the different layers or levels of the nested system; in this case the nested system of teacher, administration and school and the interactions between purpose, value and practice.

The power of a complex system to sustain itself lies in the complexity of its interactions (Mason, 2008). For example, teachers working towards curriculum change and improvement look for professional learning opportunities both within their school environment and outside their immediate environment. Each time a teacher connects with another teacher or a new idea, they are creating a new relationship. The more relationships developed, the more connections between elements. In complexity terms, these relationships have an exponential potential for growth. A richness in the individual connections (Mason, 2008) that induce and sustain the change is then developed.

Purpose, value and practice both as individual terms and through the model, represent the structural interactions possible to teachers to induce change in the system overall. Teachers, schools and systems that align purpose of the arts, recognise value of the arts in similar or complementary ways, and practice the arts in ways that enhance the stated purpose and value, are closer to a state of complex emergence and growth than systems that struggle with these concepts. These aligned schools have a sustainable model of arts inclusion with staff working with a shared outlook. However, complex emergence is also influenced by the individual conditions which are discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 6  ENACTING THE CHANGE IN ARTS CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter focuses on how teachers enact arts curriculum and combines both the ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ perspective from the previous two chapters. More specifically, attention is given to the change processes required to develop the relationships identified in the previous chapters. For example, enactment is described and interpreted through both pedagogic approaches and change processes teachers consider important in their attempts to implement the arts curriculum in their classrooms and across their schools. In particular, how the relationship between context, purpose and value plays out in a teacher’s evolving arts practice is deliberated. In this chapter, the classroom and arts specialist teacher perspectives are highlighted separately in the two publications. The classroom teacher is the focus in Criticality and Connoisseurship in Arts Education: pedagogy, practice and ‘Pinterest©, where the view is more ‘etic’ looking in on what is happening to teachers in trying to implement arts curriculum, whereas the arts specialist teacher is the focus in “I’m really worried for my teaching spirit”: Professional agency, curriculum change and the primary arts specialist teacher where the view is more ‘emic’ and narrative portraiture is used to describe and interpret one teacher’s struggle with change.

This chapter also continues the use of Eisner’s second aspect of criticism, interpretation (from an individual rather than structural perspective), providing an understanding of what has been portrayed using change processes as the foundation. In addition, the supplementary research question used to frame the focus of this chapter is: How does the relationship between context, purpose and value influence a teacher’s ability to change their arts education pedagogy and practice? This research question seeks to further the notion of relationship but here focuses on growth or change as the outcome of the relationship. Therefore, this aspect of interpretation considers context, purpose, and value from an individual or personal viewpoint. What this means is that the focus here is on the personal responses to the interrelationships of context, purpose and value rather than the structural contextual relationships such as material resources and situational contexts. In the concluding section of this chapter, the
contribution of the ideas contained in the publications are examined considering an educational criticism approach and complexity theory perspective.

Finally, the kaleidoscope image for this chapter is presented below in Figure 6.1. Again, the repeating words represent the important elements of this chapter and the **enacting** aspect of the overarching research question, but the differing ways that teachers respond to the curriculum are represented through the rotating angles of the words.
6.1 Article 4

Criticality and Connoisseurship in Arts Education: pedagogy, practice and ‘Pinterest®’.

In time-poor and pressured teaching environments, some classroom teachers look for immediate and simple solutions to resourcing their arts teaching. Online platforms, such as Pinterest, seem to offer ready-made answers for these teachers, however, a lack of criticality can underscore the unexamined ‘advantages’ of such accessible resources. Accessibility and lack of confidence for time poor teachers are two key issues in understanding why teachers prefer online platforms for the sourcing of arts teaching resources rather than curriculum documents written for them by ‘curriculum experts’. Critically competent curriculum decisions require informed knowing about value and how the decision impacts on practice and student learning and in this way criticality and connoisseurship are important capabilities that constantly need to be strengthened in a digitally mediated world. Combined in an arts context and drawing on interviews with sixteen classroom teachers, criticality and connoisseurship are two key concepts used to highlight the systemic issues of context, value and pedagogy that impact on teacher’s practice. Suggestions for increasing teachers’ criticality and connoisseurship are explored as important pathways for improving arts learning for young people.

Key words: connoisseurship, criticality, pedagogy, arts education

Introduction

Classroom primary school teachers (5yrs-12 years old) are tasked with the responsibility of curriculum implementation. In this process curriculum documents are translated into pedagogical practice where the situated contexts of the classroom iteratively shape what gets ‘taught’ and the learning opportunities provided.

In Western Australia the primary school curriculum consists of eight learning areas: English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, The Arts, Health and Physical Education, Technologies and Languages (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2014a), and teachers like their colleagues in similar countries are, for the most part, required to be conversant in seven of
the eight areas\(^6\). Adding to this curriculum load further, the Arts learning area consists of five art forms: dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts. Primary schools are now required to offer at a minimum both a performing art and a visual art to all students across the school year. Therefore, depending on the staffing profile of the school and whether an arts specialist teacher is on staff, a classroom teacher can be responsible for a performing art and a visual based art form, however this mandated curriculum requirement is rarely enforced in practice.

This responsibility can result in a heavy curriculum load for the classroom teacher where competing priorities are persistent. Depending on a teacher’s background, experience and confidence, this ‘load’ may be manageable or onerous. The perceived nature of the ‘load’ may also change between learning areas. For example, a teacher with an interest and experience in English will more likely find the English curriculum easier to understand and implement; the Arts curriculum, by contrast, may seem more difficult to navigate when there is little corresponding teacher experience or knowledge as evident in research. In this curriculum-heavy environment, teachers understandably look for assistance with managing their curriculum responsibilities, often through the online sourcing of teaching activities.

Given this context and in the rapidly developing digital sphere, it is then unsurprising that Western Australian teachers in common with many teachers, are increasingly finding resources for teaching activities on web, mobile and social networking sites. The easy access to, and constantly evolving nature of these sites, means they have the potential to act as resource-rich environments where users both access and contribute to their dynamic nature. This participatory use of the internet (Jenkins, 2006) has exploded in recent years. For example, in 2016 one such platform – Pinterest\(^7\), announced it had reached 150 million users worldwide. This large user base means that content on this platform is continually being added to and updated in real time.

Contributing to this growth is the way that Pinterest and other social media

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\(^6\) Languages, as the eighth area, is offered where possible when there is access to a language teacher, commencing with Year 3 in 2018.

\(^7\) Pinterest is a visual discovery, collection and storage tool self-described as a ‘catalogue of ideas’ that inspires users to ‘go out and do that thing’ appealing in this way to teachers’ pragmatic nature (Nusca, 2015).
platforms encourage this usage. Features such as ‘guided search’, used to make suggestions based on previous key word searches, contribute by narrowing and selecting content based on a user’s history. This process, driven by the platform’s underlying algorithm, generates rules about content selection that leads a user towards more of the same content, most often without the user consciously aware of the practice (Beer, 2009). In an educational context, this lack of awareness impacts on the implementation of arts curriculum in schools, especially when teachers prefer online sourced material to the published curriculum.

As a result, the selection of teaching resources from sites such as Pinterest, raises questions around how teachers both navigate the online world and how they ensure quality in their online resource choices as ways of informing their pedagogical practices. This issue of quality is important, and Eisner (2002) notion of ‘criticality’ and ‘connoisseurship’ helps to understand this issue in richer ways. When connoisseurship is combined with an enhanced ability to make informed decisions by thoughtfully analysing curriculum possibilities, an enhanced level of criticality results; this ability being key to improving pedagogical practice in schools and students learning in the arts.

Interest in criticality and connoisseurship reported here has evolved from a larger study exploring arts curriculum implementation practices in primary schools and appeared as a result of the pressures teachers feel (Chapman et al., 2018b). Semi-structured interviews with sixteen classroom teachers and four specialist arts teachers across four primary schools in metropolitan Perth, Western Australia uncovered clusters of responses to questions regarding sources of arts ideas for learning. More specifically, Pinterest, as a source of teaching ideas, was the most offered response, and often without significant or sufficient regard for the published and mandated curriculum. This lack of critical thinking and awareness about planned teaching, was consistent with other findings from earlier research, such as misalignment of purpose, value and practice (Chapman, Wright, & Pascoe, 2019). It was this misalignment that led to further analysis and the subsequent focus of this paper, with a more detailed exploration of the interviews as data sources discussed elsewhere (Chapman et al., 2018b).
Significantly, what the focus on criticality does highlight is how this study is a microcosm of a larger issue, that is, developing informed curriculum decisions in and for primary education practice that is being felt globally (Assunção Flores, 2005). The ideas expressed in this paper provide one way to explain the larger issues of curriculum implementation that have been contentious for a number of years and across learning areas, especially those more marginalised curriculum areas such as the arts and physical education (Duncombe, Cale, & Harris, 2018; Jess, Carse, & Keay, 2016). The discussion reveals wider issues of impediments and resistance to curriculum reform and change.

This paper comprises of three sections in order to consider why primary classroom teachers use simple, uncurated arts activities over planned mandated curriculum. The first considers definitions of criticality and connoisseurship, the ways they impact on the field of arts education, and why these two concepts are important in understanding this issue. The second section contextualises criticality and connoisseurship as we examine why teachers prefer Pinterest as a source of arts activities for their teaching in the Western Australian education setting. The final section reflects on the development of social media through the rise of a participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006), the multimodality of the online world (Kress, 2003), and how these complex dynamics can be deleterious to high quality pedagogical practices. These key ideas are discussed as ways of improving teaching practice for deeper arts learning.

What is Criticality?

Criticality is a way of being reflective and reflexive, increasing a teachers’ consideration for teaching and learning by disclosing the qualities relevant to the phenomena of interest (Eisner, 2005a). As the process of identifying appropriate and worthwhile activities from a range of options, criticality helps us consider the needs of students along with broader curriculum requirements as important aspects of quality pedagogical practice. Developing criticality skills broadens a teacher’s pedagogy and repertoire when it comes to planning for student needs. For example, a teacher given the option of two activities for a lesson, employs a level of criticality when they decide about which activity to use that is congruent with the age and developmental progression of students.
they teach, and context in which they work. The teacher might base the decision on what best fits the current theme the class is working on or a curriculum concept that requires consolidation. Decisions are made in more sophisticated ways as criticality skills develop.

Criticality skills are refined and developed throughout a teacher’s career, from pre-service school placements onwards. However, criticality first develops in those learning areas that teachers feel most comfortable, in areas where teachers have experienced the most personal learning, and in those learning areas that experience the most accountability, i.e. English and Mathematics with their associated mandated national testing priorities. Importantly though, with a focus on Arts education, the argument for increasing criticality is not about looking for teachers to simply know more about the arts in and of themselves. Although that would be helpful, the arts knowledge issue is well documented elsewhere (Alter, Hays, & O’Hara, 2009; Ewing, 2012; Laird, 2012). Rather, there is a need for teachers to be more discerning in the choices they make regarding arts learning, that is to become connoisseurs in their decision making (Eisner, 2005d).

**What is Connoisseurship?**

Connoisseurship is a way of understanding the important role reflective practice plays in learning. What this term does is to indicates an appreciation of, or a state of being informed about a topic (Eisner, 2005a), in this case, arts teaching and learning. Developing an appreciation of a particular topic does not immediately equate to liking or being very good at the subject but does mean that an awareness and understanding of the qualities and characteristics of the subject have been developed.

Elaborating on what a connoisseur in education looks like, Eisner (2005d) considers the multiple discourses in a school that a teacher makes daily decisions about and suggests that the processing of all daily decisions over time creates a connoisseur in education. In the capacity referred to here, a connoisseur is a teacher who can identify a) what is important to their specific students; b) the requirements of the published arts curriculum; and c) can recognise the significant and fundamental elements of an activity when faced with a choice between activities. Simply put, a connoisseur adds a layer of
richness and discernment to choices teachers make, and in this sense improves student's arts learning.

The notion of connoisseurship is an important concept, separate from the 'how much do teachers know about the arts debate'. This article is not intended to be a criticism or attack on teachers and their practice, but rather a recognition and exposure of the pressures and tensions facing teachers that lead to unexpected curriculum consequences. As such, the role of connoisseurship helps to explain our goal for classroom primary teachers in being able to make informed decisions about online resources they might use. It is this process of being a connoisseur that takes teachers beyond making decisions based on the number of 'likes' in a social media post, or the number of 'repins' a board receives on Pinterest. In this sense, online content is not subject to any authoritative peer review or quality control, and 'liking' or 're-pinng' something gives little confidence about the utility, value or quality of the resource. What this means is that while online sites such as Pinterest might be helpful as collaborative tools, when questions about quality are left unanswered, it becomes the responsibility of the user to establish quality in relation to the context of the learning. Without a degree of connoisseurship, establishment of quality is difficult to achieve.

**Contextualising Criticality and Connoisseurship**

In the context of high-quality arts learning, criticality and connoisseurship are identified here as important constructs in improving the practice of classroom teachers. In this section, the ideas presented around criticality and connoisseurship are considered within the context of the primary education system in Western Australia. Responses from 16 classroom teachers from four schools across the greater metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia are used to illuminate these two key ideas. This evidential basis draws on these participants’ experiences gathered through a series of, individual semi-structured interviews and in particular from the question “Where do you get your ideas for arts learning content from?” The participant responses were then synthesised and used to highlight key concepts, in this way providing a snapshot of teacher thinking and revealing why online platforms like Pinterest are used. Significantly, participants particularly point to ‘knowledge supplementation’ and ‘pedagogical enhancement’ as key reasons for their
choices. As Pinterest was the platform most mentioned by participants as a resource, it is this platform that focuses the following discussion.

**Pinterest as a platform.** The changing role of social media in education, and in effective pedagogy particularly, has seen a rise in the popularity of online spaces targeting teachers and their practice. ‘Pinterest’ is an image sharing social media website with listed topics of interest that registered users sign up to. Pinterest is one of many social media platforms that has risen in popularity and use over the past five years (Statistica, 2018). Alongside platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, Pinterest provides users with the opportunity to share content, in this case “pins”, with other users through the creation and sharing of “boards”. Boards consist of websites, blogs, and images arranged under content headings such as ‘visual arts’ or ‘painting’ as arts-based examples. Once “pinned” onto a user’s board, the information contained within each pin is then readily available to the user. Part of the attraction in Pinterest for teachers is the ability to easily collect and store information, being able to return to ideas as required. This storage facility means that it is not only easy to ‘pin’ an initial idea, but the site then encourages the following of other users who are interested in similar ideas. For example, a user can create a 'board' on Arts Teaching, pinning different ideas as they show in the initial feed, and then also follow other users if they ‘pin’ regularly across the same category. In this way, teachers build up a database of ideas quickly and the collation of these ideas can suggest learning is occurring as a result. However, that may not necessarily be the case.

**Pinterest as an enabler.** The collecting and collection of learning activities on Pinterest is used by teachers in a variety of ways. For some teachers, their collection of activities acts as a ‘crutch’ or ‘enabler’. Having a store of ideas on Pinterest means that when the Arts appear on the timetable the teacher has an idea at hand to attempt with their class. Monique describes the process this way.

I use a lot of things online, Pinterest and there’s like education websites that give you art ideas. We have a couple of publication books that go through steps with kids and things like that, so just yeah mainly – mainly the internet I would say, I find a lot of ideas and even on Facebook there’s a teachers’ page that people share their ideas and photos of activities they’ve done.  

(Monique)

Here Monique talks about ideas, steps and photos, that is, activities to ‘do’ with
the students. For example, her class had been learning about Dr Seuss in writing and so she linked that text with an art activity on how to draw The Cat in The Hat found online “where you draw different bits and then rub them out and change them”. However, there was no discussion about engaging with the mandated curriculum in any meaningful way or mention of line, shape or texture to link the activity with the visual arts curriculum. As a result, connection between the activity and arts learning are not apparent reinforcing the mismatch we address here.

Another reason why Pinterest was highlighted by participants so readily in relation to the arts learning area, was in part to do with the issue of assessment and the subjectivity involved in making assessment decisions. For example, some teachers still find the assessment of the arts to be difficult because of a perceived subjectivity in grading student work and, as a result, display an associated disempowerment around using the arts effectively. Neeve, an early career teacher, highlights the issue in this way.

> When I did do the arts, I looked at the [written curriculum] document. I looked at the objectives and I assessed as best as I could. I found that incredibly hard because I find the arts is quite subjective. (Neeve)

The issue of subjectivity and assessment in the arts is one that involves a professional judgement and knowledge of the art form (Gates, 2017). Knowledge of both the learning area and the continuum of student learning helps make judgements about student work easier. Access to relevant assessment information is also helpful but seemingly difficult to retrieve for overloaded teachers. For example, there is currently one sample assessment task for Year 3 drama and visual art on the Western Australian School, Curriculum and Standards Authority’s website but the documents require a teacher to traverse at least six pages to open. Accessibility is a real issue. Moreover, a teacher who has several years’ experience and seen a variety of art work from students will have a better understanding of the learning that has taken place and be able to assess the work more efficiently. However, the published curriculum in the current text heavy form makes this difficult for early career teachers like Neeve.

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8 The School, Curriculum and Standards Authority is responsible for Kindergarten to Year 12 curriculum, assessment, standards and reporting for all Western Australian Schools.
Therefore, when the complexity of the written curriculum is considered in contrast to activities found online it is easy to understand why teachers prefer online ideas. Visual, immediate, and seemingly 'tested' by others, online ideas for activities are a world away from the text-heavy and jargon-specific curriculum documents produced by curriculum authorities for teachers and schools. It could be the case, for example, that the issue of subjectivity is diminished in the online space by the photographic examples of work that are often included. Teachers can see what the finished product looks like and consider their assessment from that basis. This capacity to have a ‘standard’ to judge against then instils teacher confidence and highlights a focus in arts teaching on product over process (Ewing, 2012). The key issue here is the concern that what ‘appears’ might not best represent the learning outcomes specific to learner’s needs.

However, the use of social media sites would cause less concern if teachers could clearly identify the links between their chosen activities and the written curriculum. Our research suggests that teachers are unable to make those curriculum connections, and as the online sourcing of resources becomes accepted practice, a sense of justification pervades. Then, without any intervention from school administrations or curriculum authorities, the practice grows until the ‘Pinterest solution’ becomes standard arts practice, with simple activities becoming the norm, and arts development and progression the exception.

In mediating the effect of the ‘Pinterest solution’, we recognise arts curriculum implementation is a complex issue, hampered by a variety of constraints which impact on teachers and need to be understood to minimise their influence (Bamford, 2010; Ewing, 2012; Sabol, 2013).

**Constraints Impacting Criticality**

Understanding why teachers use sites such as Pinterest for arts activity generation requires an exploration of the constraints faced daily in teaching and are drawn from previous research in this area. Difficult and complex teaching contexts (Chapman et al., 2018b), a misalignment of purpose in relation to the arts, and inadequate arts knowledge and pedagogical practices (Ewing, 2012; Russell-Bowie, 2011) are three constraints that are important to
be addressed in order to increase criticality.

**Complex contexts.** It is self-evident that teachers work within very complex environments. Contextual dimensions that impact on their work include situational, professional, material and external contexts (Ball et al., 2012; Chapman et al., 2018b). For example, not only do teachers have to manage up to 32 students in their class daily, there are parental, school administration and curriculum expectations to navigate. This navigation must also be managed within the physical layout of the school, and within the budget and resourcing priorities set for the school year by relevant education jurisdictions and school administrations (Chapman et al., 2018b). In addition, pressures of standardised testing regimes prioritising literacy and numeracy over all other curriculum areas creates a hierarchy that is difficult to overcome (Lingard et al., 2013).

What this means is that teachers have competing priorities for their time and energy across a school day. Therefore, when it comes to planning, especially in learning areas that are perceived to have a lower priority, such as the Arts, activities are sourced to keep students ‘busy and happy’ rather than with a critical eye on curriculum development (Bamford, 2010).

**Misalignment of purpose and value.** The second area that impacts on the sourcing and consideration of arts activities used in primary classrooms is the misalignment of purpose and value of the arts in schools. When schools do not have time or make time to consider what art forms will be taught, or how the arts will be approached across the school, teachers decide for themselves. While teacher agency is important, decisions can then be made in time poor and isolated ways. If teachers are confident in their ability to teach the arts, then an individualised decision-making approach is appropriate, reflecting both criticality and connoisseurship. However, when teachers lack knowledge in arts content and pedagogy, they are more inclined to seek easy solutions like Pinterest.

When schools coordinate a purpose for the arts in the school, then a more organised approach to learning is created. For example, themes and ideas are matched across year groups by teachers, teaching practices and resources are shared, and arts learning is more likely to be aligned with the mandated
curriculum because of the coordinated accountability such an approach instils. Continuity of this focus leads to good teaching practices and an overall effective arts education.

**Knowledge, pedagogy and experience.** Closely aligned to purpose and value is the third constraint affecting teachers, that of limited arts knowledge, pedagogical practices and experience. Knowledge, pedagogy and experience are important drivers in thinking about how online platforms such as Pinterest are used, and although as was suggested earlier that a lack of arts knowledge was not ‘the’ focus, it cannot be ignored completely. Here it is acknowledged as having an impact on what teachers feel comfortable in offering as arts activities in their classrooms and is discussed in relation to the sourcing of online arts activities as a practice.

**Knowledge.** Arts knowledge, or the lack of arts knowledge in the teaching force, is well-researched (Ewing, 2012; Garvis, 2008; Russell-Bowie, 2011). A lack of knowledge impacts on a teachers’ understanding of the curriculum both as a document and as a practice. So, when teachers are lacking in knowledge, they look for ways to supplement their requirements quickly, and sites like Pinterest become the ‘go to’ resource. Charlotte points to this practice in this way.

“I go to Pinterest, because that’s got amazing ideas, and a lot of teachers put stuff up.” (Charlotte)

Charlotte’s response is typical of the teachers participating in the study. The collegial and collaborative nature of Pinterest means that there are many ideas to choose from. However, for many teachers in the participant group, laughter often followed the admission of using Pinterest, like a ‘guilty secret’ had just been revealed. The sense of implied guilt was as significant as the identification of Pinterest as the resource source, as if the teachers had exposed themselves in some way, although the admission was generally quickly followed by a justification of the practice. This suggests that there was an awareness that the practice of using online sources for arts activities was in some way inadequate without being able to verbalise exactly what the inadequacy was.

Furthermore, for many teachers their main experience of the arts is limited to
their leisure time or their own time as a student (Lemon & Garvis, 2013; Morris & Lummis, 2014). Remembering what they were taught or how the arts were taught to them becomes the fall-back position for their own knowledge. A limited arts experience for some teachers’ means that they call upon Pinterest and activities they completed as a school aged student, to use with their own class as the teacher. Taryn, an early career teacher suggested this in the following way.

Pinterest is so good, yep Pinterest mainly, and some of the things that I did at school, they can work with the curriculum still. (Taryn) What this lack of depth in arts teaching activities also highlights are the inadequacies of many primary pre-service teaching degrees. Pre-service degrees only devote minimal, if any time in the arts: with some degrees, for example, now only having part of one unit in one semester dedicated to arts content (Chapman et al., 2018b). This lack of depth is highlighted when teachers only experience with the arts is what they experienced themselves as students. What this means is that many teachers do not have the knowledge, skills experience or confidence, and so turn to the ‘Pinterest solution’.

**Pedagogy.** Limited pedagogical practices also act as a constraint on effective pedagogy. It has been suggested that “teachers acquire a useful pedagogical repertoire by virtue of their experience” (Eisner, 2005b, p. 137). Teachers learn what situations warrant particular strategies, and they build on their own knowledge and understanding as they become more experienced. For example, adopting classroom management strategies or group work ideas from mentor teachers in pre-service school placements are ways that experienced teachers share knowledge with new teachers (Leonard, 2012). However, this quite often involves trial and error as new teachers explore ideas that work for them. This exploration is hampered by a paucity of time needed to explore such possibilities.

However, the pedagogical ideas teachers have from their own learning are somewhat undone in an arts learning environment where the traditional teaching strategies for classroom activities may not be appropriate. For example, open spaces, noise, and materials are all components to be managed along with specific pedagogical processes used for arts content with an emphasis on creativity, exploration and expression. Place this into an
environment where the arts are not well aligned to a well-articulated and understood purpose, difficulties for practice arise.

Experience. Experience is the third recognised constraint. In this capacity, an experienced teacher with successful teaching experiences to call on, has a higher number of personal resources available to use in situations where choices must be made. In contrast, a less experienced teacher suggests less resources. For example, experience gives a teacher tools to deal with a challenging student, choosing from a variety of techniques that have been tried and worked previously, these processes reflecting connoisseurship. Experience also gives teachers skills to help a student in need. In this manner, experience should also indicate an understanding of the curriculum, however, in the case of the Arts this is the exception rather than the rule, due, in part, to the lack of coverage of the arts in pre-service degrees and the marginalised nature of the learning area in the curriculum (Alter, Hays, & O'Hara, 2009; Ewing, 2012).

For skilled teachers, higher levels of experience suggest a higher degree of connoisseurship around how a concept is taught and understood. Complexity in thinking about a topic or in the processes used to progress student learning are ways that experience breeds sophistication. For example, experience allows a teacher to use dramatic play or gesture instead of a worksheet to introduce bullying as a topic. Therefore, more experienced teachers are generally more sophisticated in the way they understand learning and have a range of pedagogical processes they use that work for the students they teach. It is these experienced teachers who are more likely to develop a variety of lesson ideas that fit both the curriculum and their pedagogical practices and are critical.

For graduate teachers at the other end of the experience spectrum, limited knowledge and resources create difficulties in the development of engaging and interesting learning opportunities for their students. Reflecting a lack of experience, graduate teachers look for inspiration from a variety of sources. They may recognise the pitfalls of often using sites like Pinterest, even if they still use them. Tracey, a graduate teacher for example, describes her experience this way.
I really try my hardest to avoid Pinterest and I said this to my supervisor, I said to her “I'm turning into a Pinterest teacher” and she laughed and said, “I've never heard that term before”. I said, “well it’s easy but it’s very craft based, so what I normally do is I’ve got a select few blogs that I will go to that will give me some inspiration, I mean they’ve given me exactly what I need so I haven’t had to look up that much, but it’s more blogs that I’ll go to, so they’ll talk about their experience rather than cut and paste Pinterest stuff to print out.”  

(Tracey, graduate teacher)

Interestingly, Tracey is aware of the craft-based nature of Pinterest pages and has coined the term ‘Pinterest teacher’ as an almost derogatory term, but still uses the site in support of other ideas sourced from different platforms. Therefore, there is almost an embarrassed admittance, a recognition that there is something inherently suspect with the practice, but with limited options the use of Pinterest is considered the best solution. Taking Tracey as an example and thinking more broadly about what is needed to better support teachers like Tracey, is a need to go beyond the recognition of the constraints that impact on teachers, constraints that might lead to the ‘Pinterest solution’. Key to ameliorating this impoverished approach is the intentional strengthening of criticality in the sourcing and use of online activities for the betterment of arts education practices generally.

**Increasing Criticality and Connoisseurship**

Increasing criticality and connoisseurship are important concepts in the development of a quality arts education for young people. How though, do teachers ensure that there is quality and relevance in the resources they are using? A better understanding of the participatory nature of the internet and ways to decode multi-modal texts may help.

**Participatory nature of the internet.** Social media has changed the nature of how we relate to each other and how we judge quality (Giebelhausen, 2015). The development of the internet from an information platform, where websites were initially just written text on a digital screen, to a “participatory or collaborative” platform (Beer, 2009, p. 986) where users develop content, share information and interact with each other has changed the traditional notions of how expertise and criticality are viewed. This change can be understood when we consider how traditionally textbooks and curriculum documents are written. For the most part, they are written by experts who we traditionally turn to, in order to learn from someone with
acknowledged skill and expertise. In the education space, authors are either invited by a publisher to develop a textbook based on a topic they are knowledgeable about and experienced in, or the author approaches a publisher with an idea that is then either accepted or rejected based on whether the publisher believes there is a market for the suggested idea, a process underscored by peer review of a proposal. Once completed and in print, there can be a fair degree of confidence that the material produced is factual and relevant, in part because of the time, effort and quality control resources involved in getting a publication to print. In this way, the publication process identifies a more traditional method of recognising expertise.

Social media on the other hand, allows material to be produced and uploaded by anyone in a significantly shorter amount of time than a traditional written text. It is collaborative in nature and encourages participation. For example, notifications back to contributors indicating how many people have read a contribution is one way that social media encourages users to its sites, and this feedback to contributors is almost instantaneous. The development of this participatory culture of social media where users can “archive, annotate, appropriate and recirculate content” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 8) bypasses the traditional notions of how we critically evaluate texts; known author, well regarded publisher, and requires teachers to be aware of and evaluate the multimodality of digital texts (Kress, 2003) in a different way. However, there is little evidence to suggest that teachers can evaluate digital texts successfully in order to enhance student learning across the full spectrum of the curriculum.

**Multimodality of digital texts.** Evaluating the multimodality of digital texts refers to the many ways that digital information is processed by the human brain and how that is prioritised in a learning environment (Kress, 2003). Pangrazio (2013) suggests that printed text only have the written word to process, but the process is slowed by a user only being able to decode or make meaning through linguistic processes. However, in digital text formats images, sounds, icons and the written word are used to engage understanding which often happens at greater speed because of the variety of formats our brains decode with. This variety of inputs means teachers are not only engaging with the critical skills of linguistics, but also navigating the digital world of semiotics (Kress, 2003). In other words, teachers see a resource on
social media, with images, icons, sounds and words and feel they understand the content quicker because they can use semiotics as well as linguistic skills to decode and understand with. This time efficiency becomes important to time-poor or less confident teachers, and in this way becomes an attractive option.

Given this understanding about participatory culture and the speed in which evaluations of digital texts are made, it should not be surprising that teachers use social media sites such as Pinterest over text heavy curriculum documents. Time has always been an issue for busy teachers (Ewing, 2012), and anything that decreases workload, or the time lesson preparation takes, is going to be a popular measure, especially in learning areas where the teacher’s knowledge is limited.

Perhaps what we need to see from curriculum regulatory bodies, if they want their material used more readily, is a greater connection to a multimodal format in syllabus presentation. For example, the Western Australian curriculum used as the context here, is no longer printed and distributed to teachers as a hardcopy. It is now only accessible online, but that digital version is still only text produced for the screen, this being an efficient way to provide access, but not perhaps an effective way to encourage engagement. The use of images, sounds, and icons followed by some words may allow teachers to more quickly decode requirements and process how the scope and sequencing of concepts will work for them in their classroom setting. However, while a multimodal format may be perceived to be attractive, efficiency in and of itself does not constitute effective practice where criticality and connoisseurship are missing.

Conclusion

The reliance on ‘Pinterest’ as a preferred curriculum source reflects a significant confusion about an activity as ‘a thing to do’ and what constitutes effective arts learning. This research reminds us that it is common to see an uncritical approach to completing arts activities divorced from curriculum connection or learning outcomes; this being a serious impediment to effective arts education in many classrooms. What is revealed here is a profound issue in terms of effective learning that is particularly relevant to arts teaching; the activity is the vehicle for the learning, but on its own is not the learning itself.
An awareness of the pervading nature of the participatory culture is important to recognise how the collective ‘us’ of the online community is perpetuating the practice of using arts teaching activities in an uncritical way. Bringing the practice ‘out of the shadows’ and highlighting the positive aspects of the resources available online would be a start. Curriculum regulatory bodies have a role to play here. Making curriculum available online, indicates a tacit approval of using online sources to resource the scope and sequence of a curriculum. Then, only providing limited ideas within curriculum documents means teachers look further afield for content on teaching. Connoisseurship involves looking away from the ‘us’ and recognising the criticality involved to enhance student learning.

Consequentially, the activities on ‘Pinterest’ provide ‘things to do’ but do not necessarily improve arts learning for our students; the critical link between the two being broken. This issue is further amplified by the uncurated nature of social media as represented by Pinterest. As such, the uncritical use of ‘Pinterest’ activities by teachers, becomes a danger to curriculum engagement and student’s authentic learning. A greater understanding of the constraints that impact criticality, potentially helps to decrease the practice of one-off activities disconnected to the wider curriculum and enhance the development of the educational connoisseur.

Finally, what this research reveals in part are possible answers to the long-term conundrum facing arts educators, that is, why has effective arts education curriculum implementation been so difficult? Significantly, the development of connoisseurship within teachers may provide a stronger foundational pathway to begin a process of sustainable educational change, thereby providing these teachers with an informed and authentic voice in the curriculum debate about what is taught and when.
6.2 Article 5

“I’m really worried for my teaching spirit”: Professional agency, curriculum change and the primary Arts specialist teacher.

Arts specialist teachers have a unique place in primary schools. They are often the sole teacher responsible for an entire learning area and hence commonly provide leadership and drive the curriculum implementation of the arts in and for their school. This responsibility finds us asking questions about the ability of arts specialist teachers to create professional agency in an increasingly challenging school environment. Using seven propositions for professional agency developed by Eteläpelto et al. (2013), where both individual and structural elements are considered, we focus on a single teacher in order to consider the propositions from the perspective of an arts specialist. Conditions explored include relationships, time, purpose and constraints, work-related identity, experiences, and work communities. Challenges such as isolation, ongoing support and the development of community are highlighted as potential difficulties in the process of developing agency.

Key words: professional agency, curriculum change, narrative portraiture, arts education, arts specialist teachers

“I’m really worried for my teaching spirit. I’m very sad, if I can say it like that... I love the arts, I love it, but I am really worried in terms of my work load.”

(Penny, arts specialist teacher)

‘Teaching spirit’ is an evocative term that aptly describes the inner drive that gets teachers up and in the classroom every day to educate and inspire young people. This ‘spirit’ or drive also evokes notions of passion, commitment and dedication to the teaching craft by quality teachers. However, in Western Australia, teacher dedication has been continually buffeted by successive waves of educational reform. The latest cycle of curriculum reforms, including the implementation of the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts* and the *Western Australian P – 10 Arts Curriculum* (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2014a), have eroded teacher confidence in curriculum reform processes and
implementation timelines even further (Lingard et al., 2013). This erosion is particularly concerning for arts specialist teachers as the push for standardisation in schooling, especially in literacy and numeracy, impacts on teachers’ enthusiasm and, consequentially, the implementation of the arts curriculum (Chapman et al., 2018a). In this environment, enthusiasm, passion and commitment are most at risk when teachers are not able to work in a way that sustains and supports their perception of how teaching should be and the differences they seek to make. What this means for some dedicated arts teachers, like Penny, is a constant battle to maintain the place of the arts within the school hierarchy, and still feel like they are contributing to and enriching the lives of their students. This tension references questions of status, time, opportunities, and the way passion (or lack thereof) impacts pedagogy (Chapman et al., 2018b).

The focus of this paper is a consequence of questions raised within the context of an examination of arts implementation processes in primary schools. More specifically it follows on from first a focus on policy interpretations (Chapman et al., 2018a), school contexts (Chapman et al., 2018b), purposes and values (Chapman et al., 2019), then criticism and connoisseurship (Chapman, Wright, & Pascoe, 2018c), as ways of better understanding the match and mismatch between curriculum as written, then what is delivered in classrooms. Each of these different foci led to the key element of teacher agency where the teacher herself is enabled or constrained in the ways that arts learning opportunities are presented to students. More specifically, this paper questions how the relationship between the key determinants of context, purpose and value influences the way that a teacher is enabled to change arts education pedagogy and practice, both for themselves and for the students they seek to serve. We begin first by considering teacher agency in the context of change.

**Agency in the Context of Arts Curriculum and Change**

In Western Australia, since the mid 1980’s, there has been capacity for schools to provide specialist teachers from within their staffing allocation. Historically in the arts, these specialist teachers provided programs mainly in music and visual arts (Pascoe et al., 2005). However, in recent years, under self-managed schools, there has been considerable diversity in the provision of specialist support spanning the curriculum from literacy and numeracy, to science and
technology education. The traditional pattern of music and visual art specialist teachers continues in some schools for the Arts, but is being scrutinised, questioned and challenged as the latest curriculum reform package, the Western Australian P – 10 Arts Curriculum, reaches full implementation in 2018 (Collier, 2015).

The intention of this reform package is that schools will plan, teach and report in both the performing arts (dance, drama and music) and visual arts (media and visual) by the end of the first school semester in 2018. However, part of the issues surrounding successful implementation are that schools and teachers are struggling with these new curriculum and reporting requirements, not least of all their capacity to offer both performing and visual arts learning opportunities for their students in an already crowded curriculum (Chapman et al., 2018b). It is the case, for example, that school priorities, resourcing, both human and physical, and external pressures constrain the ability of schools to respond to the new arts curriculum mandate (Chapman et al., 2018b). This tension is felt by both arts specialist teachers and generalist teachers alike.

Further stress is placed on schools with the underlying principle of the new curriculum being that generalist classroom primary teachers are capable of teaching both the breadth and depth of the arts curriculum. However, both Australian and international research suggests that generalist teachers are ill equipped both in content knowledge and confidence to teach across the arts spectrum (Alter et al., 2009; Bamford, 2009; Ewing, 2012; Gibson & Anderson, 2008) with five arts forms mandated in Western Australian schools. In addition, the arts as a field in education continues to be vulnerable because the arts rely on specialist teachers such as Penny, who start their teaching career as generalist teachers and end up in the arts role because an interest is shown. This then also speaks to the value that is placed on the arts by curriculum ‘experts’ in believing that generalist teachers are capable of comprehensively covering the arts with little experience or training based on an enthusiasm rather than a breadth of disciplinary expertise.

It is also the case in Western Australian universities that time for the arts is diminishing across pre-service teacher education (Wright & Pascoe, 2004), meaning that graduates are relying on their own often distant experiences.
rather than specific teacher training in the arts. As a result, in the current staffing climate, schools that have an arts specialist teacher find these specialists maintain primary responsibility for the implementation of the arts as a learning area in their schools. Consequently, the struggle for arts specialist teachers to evolve professionally in the context of arts education is played out in a climate of uncertain relevancy or professional control.

As a result of this stress and pressure, teacher agency, being the ability of teachers to have control and be productive in their work environment (Priestley et al., 2012), is under threat from the uncertainty of change and an environment that many experience as chaotic. The question of how agency is created by teachers in the arts in this uncertain climate is key in understanding curriculum change and development where agency is important because it focuses on the importance of keeping highly skilled arts specialists, crucial to a strong teaching and learning program for all students, in schools. It is the case, for example, that highly skilled teachers are more likely to stay in the profession if they feel a sense of professional satisfaction, and many contextual elements intersect with this sense of professionalism (Scheib, 2006).

These key issues are considered and then animated through the illustration of how one specialist arts teacher experiences agency when seeking to create curriculum and professional change in a school. And then, consequently in an illustrative way, how this teacher’s experience can highlight both the elements of, and conditions necessary, for successful implementation of arts curriculum in primary schools. More specifically, we do this through a person-centred socio-cultural approach to agency (Eteläpelto et al., 2013) in order to frame and examine the challenges arts specialist teachers face in creating professional agency in uncertain times.

This paper then is divided into three sections. The first section introduces Penny\(^9\), one arts specialist teacher attempting to facilitate change in her school. Drawing on the notion of professional agency, and using the heuristic device of narrative portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), the difficulties faced by Penny are illuminated in the narrative tradition by a representation of data collected through semi-structured interviews over a three-year period. Penny

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\(^9\) A pseudonym.
was a consistent presence over the three-year period and interviews were conducted with her during associated professional learning opportunities at the beginning, mid points and end of the first author's residency; this residency comprising of co-teaching dance one day a week over an eight-week school term. A follow-up interview was also conducted six months later. The six interviews in total were transcribed and NVivo software was used to analyse the data. Descriptive coding (Saldana, 2013) drew out initial categories of response highlighting themes of community, support, and individual change. A second stage of coding then examined these identified categories for deeper understandings around individual and structural elements of change, leading to the person-centred socio-cultural positioning of this paper.

Narrative portraiture is described as “a blending of qualitative methodologies—life history, naturalist inquiry, and most prominently, that of ethnographic methods” (Dixson, Chapman, & Hill, 2005, p. 17). What these methods, and the telling of the ‘story’ do, is highlight the lived experiences as authentically as possible. What narrative portraiture also allowed us to do was to “document and illuminate the complexity and detail of a unique experience or place” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 13), recognising the power of localised theory building (Flick, 2014). Building on a person-centred socio-cultural approach (Eteläpelto et al., 2013) then meant we were able to draw on seven propositions in order to better understand what professional agency and leadership in the arts might look like. It is these interactions between agency and person-in-context that are considered vital to the development of agency and processes of arts curriculum development and change.

The second section highlights Penny’s implementation challenges making visible the tensions teachers feel, and challenges faced, providing insights through events grounded in teacher’s everyday experiences.

The final section draws together the challenges identified through the seven propositions considered, and highlights the struggles developing agency creates for arts specialist teachers. The related issues of isolation, a need for support, and the development of community are explored, challenging what is necessary to create agency, whilst also recognising what is local and specific. In addition, questions of structure, context and resources are addressed. It is
also important to note that while these pressures, tensions and challenges are illuminated through the narrative portraiture and experiences of one arts specialist teacher, they resonate more broadly with issues of specialist and generalist teachers, and curriculum change more broadly. We found ourselves asking, for example, why is that arts curriculum has never been consistently and fully implemented in our working lives as professional educators? Penny, as our illustrative example, makes much of this clear.

**Introducing Penny**

Penny is the arts specialist teacher at St Albertine’s, a small kindergarten to year six (5 -12 years old) Catholic school of 190 students in a lower socio-economic regional centre south east of the capital city of Perth, Western Australia. A well-kept school sitting alongside the parish church, the classrooms are set out in an L shape facing a central grassed area, away from the busy main road that the administration block looks out onto. For such a small school it is encouraging that there is an arts specialist teacher on staff, especially considering the curriculum priority for the school, as a response to NAPLAN testing\(^{10}\) results in recent years, has been on improving literacy and numeracy standards across the school.

A deeply spiritual and committed teacher, Penny is vitally interested in the arts but frustrated by the expectations associated with being ‘the’ arts specialist in the school, competing with regimes of systemic testing and the processes of enacting change, all while attempting to unlock her student’s creativity in the one hour of class time she has with each year level each week. In line with the *Western Australian P-10 Arts curriculum* (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2015a) Penny’s role has a multi-art focus with Penny choosing to teach across the performing arts subjects of music, dance and drama. Penny describes herself this way.

*I care about the arts and believe that all children should have opportunities in the arts because this provides time for creation. The*

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\(^{10}\) National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is a standardised testing regime in which all Australian Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students sit annually. Results from this testing program are used by systems, sectors and schools to target strengths and weaknesses in the teaching learning process.
process of creating allows students to unlock their creative voice and authentic self. What I see, for example, is that students develop their identity in different ways at school than they do at home. School can provide a safe place to explore these differences and the arts lets them ‘take their mask off’ and somehow be different. People grow from the inside out, and I probably get too close, my heart strings get torn, but because it is about future building and trying to inspire. I try to instil in students to have an appreciation, to express themselves and understand that they excel in the arts because they know that in the arts they can express themselves in a different way.

In terms of my passion for the arts, because I work in the classroom, refining and strengthening my arts pedagogy, I feel as I learn about the arts, I can give the arts more time. For example, my lessons now are more focused on what is important, what we need to think about – what is the arts skill, what am I drawing from the curriculum, what do I want the kids to get out of this? I like being in the classroom, I don’t see myself as an AP [Associate Principal] or anything like that, no because it is not my calling, I know that. I also know that I didn’t just land here. So, to be given the arts, the way that I’ve been given them is a gift. I’ve been really blessed, it has been a real blessing because it has rejuvenated my teaching.

Penny also notes that she is not ‘arts trained’ and has the position of specialist by default.

So, I was a generalist teacher. I was the Year 6 teacher. And then I did – last year I was Year 3 part-time, and then I was asked to pick up the singing program that they usually have here. So, I took that up. And then this year I was asked if I could do the arts program and reading recovery.

So that’s what I’m doing now. I’m not a trained arts teacher per se, but because, probably just through I guess what I do in the classroom, I try and engage the arts from music to dance, and drama, and visual arts.
Penny’s pleasure however, is mitigated by the nature of her role, the expectations and relational elements to it, and the pressures of context.

*I think a lot of the arts has really landed on my plate. Organising NAIDOC\(^{11}\) week celebrations and supporting the teachers to do it through the arts, is one such project. It involved acting, drama, music and every class did that. It was a lot of work, and now it has become a regular part of the calendar, like our church masses too. The music is now falling onto me to select and put in. So, I try to include that into the songs we are learning and the singing, but it doesn’t always gel. It is the easy solution for the school to say “okay we need some songs, oh, the arts teacher, she’s the one, let’s get her to do it. Or the liturgical dance, or the end of year concert.” So, there is a real challenge for me to separate the event side of the arts and the core curriculum part of the arts, when there is an expectation for me to do both.

What Penny sees then, is an abrogation of teacher responsibilities in the arts.

*I don’t know whether it has something to do with the logistics of timetabling and the overloaded curriculum talk. But the one thing that is dropping off, in terms of integration, is the Arts. Everyone will go and do sports and tag it to Health and Physical Education in the curriculum but when it comes to the Arts, teachers don’t do that every day. They will do something specific, like they might sing a song, but they are not teaching the components of the arts in there, they are just teaching the words.

It is the composite of all these tensions, challenges and pressures that then impact on Penny who, feeling compromised, shares in this way.

*I’m really worried for my teaching spirit. I’m very sad, if I can say it like that…I love the arts, I love it, but I am really worried in terms of my work load. They have given me the arts, reading recovery and then I

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\(^{11}\) NAIDOC stands for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee. Activities in this week aim to increase awareness in the wider community of the status and treatment of Indigenous Australians.
was told I was going into the classroom for a day, and I said no that can't work, I don't know any other teacher here that has to do reporting for a full class, cause that is what will happen. If I go in for a day, then I will have a professional responsibility around that. So, I will have to report, do assessment and reports for the arts and I'll have to do my day to day reading recovery. I know that it is only four students, but it is day in and day out reporting. So, I feel the work load and then I'm expected to do whole school singing to cover DOTT. Well, I have said that is not the purpose of singing, if you are going to do that then you might as well put on a movie for an hour.

What comes across in this portrait of Penny is her passion and commitment to her school and the arts as a learning tool. She works hard to maintain a presence for the arts within the school, however, the contextual constraints of a small school, including physical capacity and staffing means her desire for a strong united arts program is difficult to achieve.

However, three key elements are highlighted throughout the portrait that represent requirements for change. These include (i) discursive (cultural) elements, such as prior experiences, beliefs, values, attitudes and school culture; (ii) relational (structural) elements including, school, teacher and students and the curriculum; and (iii) material resources, such as art supplies, instruments and working space. It is the quality and scope of the interaction between Penny and these key elements that provides the catalyst for change in either affirming or negating ways.

For Penny, this contextual interaction and frustration in the lack of change, led to an understanding of the place of ‘agency’, and how important it was for experienced teachers to feel like they had the capacity for the development of agency in their everyday work. Understanding what constitutes professional agency, what it term, and how agency as a key concept gives arts education teachers a new focus are ideas to which we now turn.

**Understanding Professional Agency**

Professional agency has become an increasingly common way to understand
change in school environments (Lukacs, 2015; Priestley et al., 2012; van der Heijden et al., 2015). Moving away from teacher development or professional learning as the focus of change in schools, professional agency seeks to put the teacher at the centre of the change process and asks what it is teachers do, or look for, to create change in and for their environment. This central focus moves towards a more independent, holistic notion of agency aligned with professional satisfaction. That is, agency is experienced when the individual creates the change wanted or required by current conditions. It is the case, for example, that simply attending a workshop or seminar does not in itself mean change will occur, there also has to be commitment by the teacher to the process and reflection upon successes in order to create long term change (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). To understand the links between professional satisfaction and professional agency, we briefly examine the developmental trajectory of agency, and further elaborate a subject-centred socio-cultural approach; the two concepts key to better understanding processes of curriculum change in the arts.

Agency, in the context used here, is drawn from a sociological understanding of agency (Archer, 2000; King, 2010), an understanding that has been more widely embraced by education and other fields in recent years (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Priestley et al., 2012). Part of the discussion surrounding agency in education has focused on the individual perspective or structural position used (Biesta et al., 2015; Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Edwards, 2015; Priestley et al., 2012; Pyhältö et al., 2014; Sloan, 2006; van der Heijden et al., 2015). This division of individual and structural components has allowed researchers to highlight, specify and explore in detail, the aspects that impact on a person trying to create change in the workplace, and each is considered in turn.

An individual perspective is a personal viewpoint of a situation and involves identifying ways in which people act to influence change. These identified acts or change events become the individualised aspects of a person that are important to the development of agency (Lasky, 2005). This development, for example, might involve personal responses in areas such as beliefs and identity (Biesta et al., 2015; Pyhältö et al., 2014; Sloan, 2006), or attributes or inclinations that play out as a result of action to a particular situation. In the context of this paper, professional background and training in the arts affects
belief about capacity to teach the arts (Biasutti et al., 2015). More specifically, if a teacher believes they are capable and identifies with this capability, they are more likely to perceive success in an arts teaching event or believe their enthusiasm for teaching can influence change. Consequently, an individual perspective is paramount for this discussion of agency but is still closely linked to environmental or structural contexts as well.

By way of contrast, a structural perspective, where agency is explored through a social or cultural lens, involves identifying the surrounding context that influences change in an individual. This might involve, for example, power, gender, language, or employment (Eteläpelto et al., 2013; King, 2010). Furthermore, notions of power are central in a discussion of agency in arts education, as lone teacher representatives of a learning area (as is often the case in the arts) do not have as large a voice in curriculum and staff room discussions as do the many discussing literacy or numeracy, especially when empowered by national regimes of testing. Therefore, an individual’s reaction to socio-cultural inputs and the variations that socio-cultural considerations can place on an individual, are important constructs to consider as part of an integrated professional agency model. Together then, these two perspectives work iteratively to initiate and develop agency. However, this development must also be considered in relation to arts education and the subject-centred socio-cultural approach to agency.

**Seven Propositions for Understanding Professional Agency**

The subject-centred socio-cultural approach to professional agency (Eteläpelto et al., 2013) is valuable to arts education research as it outlines both individual and structural conditions needed to create change. This duality is important as the value of the arts in, and to a school, is dependent on both the people involved, the physical place of the school, the cultural identity of the school, and the interaction between them (Chapman et al., 2018b). What this means is that a supportive school environment (administration, teachers and community) alongside an enthusiastic arts specialist teacher, together tend to see the arts as valuable to global student development and therefore work to create opportunities for students to learn in and through the arts. The subject-centred socio-cultural approach is consequently a constructive device for this rationale.
as it examines both the individual and structural aspects of change creation.

Developed by Eteläpelto et al. (2013), a subject-centred socio-cultural approach to professional agency uses seven propositions to frame the construction of agency. In brief, the propositions cover: (i) the conditions necessary for agency, (ii) the purpose and constraints, (iii) work-related identity, (iv) experiences, (v) the relationship between the individual and the social, (vi) the temporal nature of agency, and (vii) the development of work communities. These seven propositions cover the essential individual attributes and consider the social structures that impact on an arts teacher implementing change. Consequently, we employ these propositions but adapt them to make them more ‘fit for purpose’ in the context of arts education curriculum change.

More specifically, we transmute the ‘subject-centred’ heading to ‘person-centred’ to avoid confusion with an Australian understanding of the term subject, where it is commonly understood to mean a branch of knowledge or topic studied at school. The use of the word ‘person’ provides clarity by focusing on an individual’s contribution to understanding agency. In line with the change from subject to person, the ordering of the propositions is also changed to better reflect the journey of our teacher who becomes the illustrated case study for this paper. Therefore, the order of propositions become: (i) the relationship between the individual and the social, (ii) the temporal nature of agency, (iii) the purpose and constraints, (iv) the conditions necessary for agency, (v) work-related identity, (vi) experiences, and (vii) the development of work communities. This reordering allows us to unpack each proposition in a more coherent way; an order that makes sense to the associated case study in order to further understand the ‘person-centeredness’ of this approach.

Professional Agency in Practice

This next section considers each of the seven propositions from the person-centred socio-cultural approach from our understanding of Penny’s perspective and experience. The challenges and successes faced as a result of this ongoing process of change are highlighted for further discussion in the concluding section of this paper.

The relationship between the individual and the social. In this
discussion of the relationship between the individual and social in professional agency, we note that the human and physical aspects are both important requirements to the change process and as such, operate like two sides of a coin. On one side, administrators, teachers and students form the human component of a school environment, while on the other side, the buildings, culture and practices form the social components of a school. Here, both are discussed separately but with the understanding that each impact on how the other is perceived.

In our context of the primary school and the arts, the human component is primarily the arts specialist teacher. Arts specialists come to their positions with a teaching degree in their specialisation or as a generalist teacher with an interest in the arts who is seconded into the position.

“So, I was a generalist teacher. I was the Year 6 teacher.” We are reminded that Penny is a typical example of one way an individual ‘becomes’ an arts specialist teacher. On appointment to the school, Penny was a generalist classroom teacher who had an interest in the arts. As a result of this interest, and due to staffing requirements at the school, she was asked to take over the arts program. Penny is upfront in not being “trained” in the arts but suggested the appointment came about because of how the arts were used by her in her classroom on a regular basis. Whether Penny would have pursued an arts position if not offered one is unknown, however, this move to an arts position was welcomed by Penny at the time of offer. However, being the arts teacher was not an easy transition, partly because of her relationship with the physical components of the school.

The social or physical components to be accounted for in an investigation of professional agency in a primary school include the physical buildings, staff attitudes, culture and practices of the school. The use of and value placed on the social cultural aspects of a school greatly impact the arts specialist teacher. For example, how the arts are generally viewed and how the work of the arts teacher is specifically viewed by the administration within the school can greatly impact the construction of professional agency and independence of the arts teacher. Likewise, the availability of a dedicated arts space and access to appropriate resources are other areas that influence agency. Both issues
impact Penny’s work.

Penny, as the arts specialist, is located in a classroom within the library complex. While a reasonable sized space, the floor is carpeted and in one corner bookcases are filled with year by year readers. Penny attempts to make the space more arts orientated through arts related posters on the wall, but the location is not ideal. Noise has to be kept to a minimum considering there are often classes in the library at the same time as arts, and there is not a lot of space for students to spread out and work in small groups, let alone individually. Physical resources are also limited. There are a few percussion instruments available, however certainly not a class set, so much of the music program is vocally based with Penny accompanying the students on guitar. Penny enjoys teaching the arts but is hampered by the physical layout of the space given to her. She describes part of the problem in the following way.

There is no storeroom, I had to go looking for shelves. I found some so I’m able to put the music instruments into the cubby hole shelves. It is a good room generally, but it can be awkward for more active lessons.

The conditional relationship between Penny as the individual and the social entities of the school environment had a significant impact on Penny’s practice ultimately impacting her ability to create agency. Adding responsibility and changing circumstances to the situation leads to developing an understanding of the second proposition for agency.

**The temporal nature of agency.** The second proposition of agency recognises that teaching professionals have responsibilities to their school, students, and to the teaching and learning process. However, this responsibility changes over time and circumstances as the conditions of the work change. For example, Penny often finds her teaching load changes from term to term, with the change sometimes instigated by administration (changing staffing requirements), and sometimes personally (career opportunities). This changing relationship with work load impacts on the ability to create agency.

The discursive nature of Penny’s role at St Albertine’s is in part due to working across both the Arts and literacy intervention. This duality means Penny must move mentally and physically between the two roles. In practical terms, Penny works four days a week. So physically, she spends two days a week in the Arts,
where she works with whole classes across the entire student cohort from kindergarten to Year 6. The rest of her teaching time is working one on one with selected students in her literacy support role. Additionally, Duties other than Teaching (DOTT) time across the four days gives Penny time for additional planning and any meetings. The dual role of Arts and literacy intervention forces a mental shift and a significant change of pace in pedagogy and energy in Penny, however as an experienced teacher, she has taken the dual teaching role in her stride. However, her concern for ‘her teaching spirit’ demonstrates uncertainties surrounding teaching focus and loads can put a strain on even the most experienced of teachers. This recognition and concern for spirit was taken from an interview at the end of the teaching year, as the changing nature of a teacher’s work is often most noticeable at the end of the school year when conversations with the administration turn to workloads for the following year.

In a specialist position, there is often an additional stress of waiting to hear whether the specialisation will continue into the following year and what the makeup of the week will look like. By way of contrast, a classroom teacher is more likely to be waiting to hear what year they are taking rather than what the makeup of their position is. Penny described the situation as follows.

*It's just the push and pull factors …and I did request I either do one or the other. But it looks like I'm keeping both roles for next year.*

Penny is quite despondent during this end of year interview. Agency, at this point in time, is difficult to achieve as uncertainty renders Penny powerless. Once certainty is restored, the opportunity for the development of agency also increases, which involves the next proposition of circumstance and constraints.

**The purpose and constraints.** As the third proposition for professional agency, understanding the circumstances that surround the professional and the purpose or need for change is important. Socio-cultural and material circumstances play a major role in the attempts by Penny to create change in and for her school. These attempts at change revolve around the development and implementation of the *Western Australian Curriculum: The Arts*. This curriculum due for full implementation in 2018 (Collier, 2015), and Penny is attempting to get her school on track for that deadline. This is her purpose. However, standing in the way is a history of change fatigue in Western
Australian teachers and schools (Chapman et al., 2018b). More specifically, teachers are resisting the continuing change ideology by not engaging with the curriculum. Additionally, a lack of accountability in implementation processes, to the point where schools ignore directives without specific dates and/or penalties for non-compliance, and a marginalised curriculum area with five discrete arts subjects for teachers to master are barriers to effective change.

Under these circumstances of resistance, Penny struggles to exercise professional agency. Her passion and belief in the arts as a learning area of value to students guide her attempts. Her ongoing involvement in this research project and the professional learning undertaken in her own time since then, are evidence of her desire to see her school meet the current arts curriculum implementation timelines. However, when her value for the arts is not matched by the school administration team, frustration arises, as suggested by the following.

In terms of support, do I think they [the administration] really value the Arts? No, I'll just be upfront and clear about that. I think they take it for granted.

It is this mismatch of value that causes the most concern for Penny and these constraints have a major impact on Penny’s purpose and ability to be agentic, the outcome of which is highlighted further in an examination of the remaining propositions.

**The conditions necessary for agency.** In this fourth proposition, the choices made, and actions taken by teachers to create change highlight opportunities for professional agency. As a teacher in the arts learning area in a primary school, pursuing opportunities for agency requires a great deal of confidence. Confidence is necessary to ‘take a stance’, or ‘exert influence’ or simply be heard in a staff room environment as the sole voice advocating for change for a learning area or learning opportunities for students. Arts teachers often hear words of personal support and encouragement from administration and fellow teachers for their efforts in organising exhibitions or performances, the very visual products of an arts teachers work, but sometimes these words of personal reinforcement are not enough, and this affects professional identity. This proposition is crucial to the process of change, but also dependent on socio-cultural forces outside the control of the individual.
The development of agency in this example is supported in part by Penny’s involvement with this research project over a three-year period. The growth in Penny’s understanding and confidence in her ability to teach the arts has created an awareness and need in her to create further change within her school. The process of influence has been a gradual one and has been a letting go of some undertakings within the school for the development of others. For example, in an effort to concentrate on pedagogy and process in her arts teaching role, Penny has relinquished the organisation of additional arts opportunities, like NAIDOC Week, that she has traditionally taken ownership of for the school, but which inevitably encroached on her own teaching time. This has caused her much concern as her wish for other classroom teachers to take on the responsibility for arts learning in opportunities such as NAIDOC week are not often acted upon. Penny notes:

I said I wouldn’t coordinate certain school activities, which was to enable a different focus for the arts learning. Like NAIDOC Week, I always get the kids to do dreamtime stories, but I wanted to...not that I'm neglecting the indigenous, but I just wanted to try something different this year.

So, for the creation of agency, Penny is learning to take a stance for the growth of her own professional identity, becoming more agentic in the process. This development of self, ties together with the next proposition of identity.

**Work-related identity.** This fifth proposition of agency requires an examination of what interests and drives the professional in question. There are, of course, a variety of interests, motivations and goals driving arts specialist teachers, just as there are for other sections of the teaching workforce. However, many arts specialists are driven by improving the standard of work achieved by their students in artistic endeavours showcased through school-based performances and exhibitions. These performances and exhibitions are a way to display progress and/or excellence in the Arts and are important to a well-rounded education and development of the whole child where skills other than traditional academic pursuits of literacy and numeracy are practiced. Performances may consist of ensemble music pieces, short scripted drama plays, or group dance choreographies and the exhibitions may be class displays of visual art work or afternoon screenings of media compilations. Performances and exhibitions become the ‘face’ of the arts specialist and depending on how positive the feedback provided is, impact on work-related identity in a way that
influences agency and affirms professional identity. Penny, in this regard, is a good example of a changing identity under changing circumstances.

Penny has been very committed to her school and the development of the arts program there. However, her interests and motivations in this area are tempered by the administration’s attitude and the ongoing staffing requirements of the school that draw Penny away from the Arts. Penny has been very clear about where she sees herself heading in that she does not ‘see myself as an AP [Associate Principal]’ and that ‘to be given the arts is a gift.’ However, in the same interview Penny’s enthusiasm and gratitude for being the arts specialist is short-lived as she processes her future opportunities at St Albertine’s as opposed to what might be available in this way.

I have been exploring options. Because it is time for a change, I’ve loved the community here, but I can't keep doing it, life is too short, so I need to go and find a school who will take me for my craziness.

So, while there is a recognition of the opportunities the school has offered her, there is also a sense that Penny has outgrown this environment and what this means is that her contribution to this school is foreclosed. More specifically, her working identity has shifted to the point that her current school can no longer meet her professional needs; she is looking for experiences—explored next—outside what is on offer. If challenging experiences cannot be found, and agency not created, this is a microcosm of where teachers leave the profession to look for this challenge elsewhere.

Experiences. This sixth proposition explores the impact of knowledge accrued by a professional and the ways in which that knowledge is used in practice to improve agency. Arts specialist teachers are somewhat constrained in the development of experiences and knowledge again because they are often the sole teacher of the arts in their school or have little access to the small number of Arts professional development opportunities. For example, professional learning opportunities are often school-based and held on designated student free days throughout the school year. To maximise value, school administration teams make decisions about the content of these days in line with school priorities and needs. This often means that professional learning sessions are based around literacy, numeracy or classroom protocols that impact most classroom teachers reflecting national regimes of ‘testing’. Arts
specialist teachers are required to participate in these sessions with the content being of little direct relevance to their own teaching and learning practice. Finding opportunities in the Arts can be difficult but when learning opportunities are available, they can greatly impact agency.

Penny’s development of agency started with an improvement in knowledge and pedagogy. Her involvement in this research project started the interest in agitating for change in her school. Attending a three-day Arts workshop over the summer break, Penny immersed herself in the Arts, learnt from teaching artists in the five arts subjects, and developed a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) with other workshop participants that involved regular contact and sharing of ideas.

What made this experience more relevant and developmental for Penny, was that she trialled some of the ideas on returning to work to expand and improve her arts practice. Strengthening her arts pedagogy and thinking about skill further ignited her passion for the arts as evidenced here.

I feel, from participating in the course, I can give the Arts more time. For example, my lessons now are more focused on what’s important, what we need to think about - what is the arts skill, what am I drawing from the curriculum, what do I want the kids to get out of this?

This revelation is important to Penny professionally and to arts education generally as the more highly skilled our teachers become the more our students will also grow and learn.

Learning from others is a significant part of growth whether it be as a student or professional. The last proposition to be discussed has a central place in personal growth and the creation of agency for an arts specialist teacher, because without growth or support; here discussed as community, the arts teacher role is very isolating.

The development of work communities. In this seventh and final proposition for the creation of agency, community and renegotiation of work roles are two interrelated components that impact the development of agency. Community is important and the specialist arts teacher needs to create community for themselves because of the isolated nature of the professional role (M. S Barrett, Ballantyne, Harrison, & Temmerman, 2009). In agentic terms,
being the only teacher in a subject area can work in two ways. In the positive, the specialist has a wide scope and relative freedom to cover content as they see fit for their students. This freedom can provide a sense of autonomy for the teacher that enhances their sense of accomplishment and agency. However, as a negative, it can be isolating, in that there is no-one else to discuss ideas or collaborate with. For example, during staff meetings, specialists are often told to join any teaching cluster they like for collaboration and planning. This can be disempowering as they have no vested interest in the main discussion of a year group or cluster of years and therefore no real voice in this whole school forum.

This was the situation at St Albertine’s with Penny as the arts teacher alongside the sport, science and language teacher. Penny’s solution was to suggest and create a specialist cluster group, a ‘solution’ captured in this way.

“No”, I said to the girls “no, we are going to make a specialist cluster and we are going to give it space”. So, every staff meeting we plug a gap - this is what is happening in the specialist science, Arts, LOTE, and sports. And we have minutes and we send it up to the leadership and we flag to the leadership this is what needs to be noted.

This cluster group has been proactive in advocating for their particular specialist learning area and supporting each other, providing a voice to the development of all learning across the school. This group has been particularly effective in maintaining the integrity of their subjects and respective teaching time in the face of poaching by classroom teachers. Penny explained the new-found confidence in this way.

I know it has been a challenge for the classroom teachers because they have always felt it was OK to walk in and take the kids out to test [during specialist classes time]. So, making that evident and saying we understand testing [is necessary] but could you please leave the kids with us for the first 15 minutes, so we can inspire, so they know what is happening. Because when you take them out and they come back they don’t know what is happening. This is where the challenge is happening for us. So, that’s been a positive.

The teachers in this specialist cluster group have become empowered to speak up and advocate for recognition of their teaching practice with the rest of the teaching staff through the formation of this group. In this framing, the process has also shown a renegotiation of work roles and the ‘place or value’ of the arts in the school. In terms of agency this is an important step forward as relevance and feelings of empowerment are important in agentic terms.
Together, all seven propositions provide an insight into the development of agency and the conditions that impact on the success or otherwise of agentic action. What we have revealed here are the challenges faced by a single change agent in a school. In the final section of this paper, the individual and structural elements of professional agency that have had the greatest impact on Penny are considered as themes for particular attention in creating agentic change.

**Isolation, Support and Community**

Several themes emerged from this discussion of agency that provides important insights into the process of arts teacher as change agent. Isolation, support, and development of a community of practice are identified as particular issues that have impacted on Penny as our illustrative example. These three issues can be experienced both individually and structurally, which is why change in these areas may provide greater opportunities for agency generally and improving arts curriculum implementation specifically.

Teacher isolation in the arts is a well-recognised issue (Davidson & Dwyer, 2014; Gates, 2010; Sindberg, 2011). Isolation can be experienced either emotionally or physically. Emotional isolation is experienced when arts teachers feel like they have no-one to talk to, no-one to bounce ideas around with, no-one who is teaching in the same area and so who understands the issues that affect an arts teacher the most. Physical isolation exists when the arts space is non-existent or hidden within the school’s design. Examples of physical isolation include the arts teacher who travels from class to class with a trolley of supplies or must use and share the outside undercover area as a classroom space.

Support is an integral issue in the development of agency and consideration from both an individual and structural viewpoint is required to achieve change. From an individual perspective support is necessary from the school administration in terms of personal growth as a teacher and recognition that what is being taught and how it is being taught, the content and the pedagogy, are also valued by the school community. From a structural perspective, support is identified in a similar way as isolation. That is, providing a teacher with a dedicated space is one very visible way to show support for the teacher and the learning. In cases where a dedicated space is impossible, then it is
imperative that the school administration prioritise the teaching learning program over casual use of a space, allowing the teacher some degree of ownership of a space.

The development of a community of practice is the third area identified as a significant contributor to agentic growth. Individually, the development of a community of practice contributes to a teacher's identity, their self-efficacy and self-worth. The arts specialist teacher’s place in a school is cemented by having a community around them. Structurally, a community of practice provides strength; strength to be a voice of advocacy and to stand up and promote the benefits of learning in and through the arts.

Awareness and attention to isolation, support and community, by individual teachers and school administrations is one step towards improving agency and creating vibrant professional environments for our teachers.

Conclusion

By establishing an argument for the development of agency in arts specialist teachers, we drew on a person-centred socio-cultural approach to agency. The person-centred socio-cultural perspective of professional agency considers seven propositions in the development of agency. These seven propositions have been developed with the ideal of life-long learning being the goal and agentic change as part of this active process (Eteläpelto et al., 2013), and recognise the importance of both individual and structural conditions needed to create change.

The individual and structural conditions identified by Eteläpelto et al. (2013) and extrapolated here have been shown to be important for our participant Penny in manifesting agency. The seven conditions explored concepts of relationships, time, purpose and constraints, conditions, work-related identity, experiences, and work communities. Each of these propositions impacted Penny and her ability to practice agency. For example, the changing role that Penny had within the school created an environment where she felt more supported for her work in literacy support than in her work in the arts. However, each condition provided opportunities for growth and personal challenge.

For Penny, the journey is only just beginning. Attempting to create change for
herself and her school proved to be complex and time consuming, with the three issues of isolation, support and community impacting on her particularly. While not a ‘quick fix’, addressing the issues of isolation, support and community, identifies the areas that teachers and schools can attend to, ensuring that there is creation rather than erosion of agency for our arts specialist teachers, meaning that there can be more effective curriculum implementation, improved pedagogical practice, and enhanced student learning outcomes in the arts. However, when the conditions are not met teachers can either withdraw into themselves, find a school where they feel conditions are more suitable for their agentic ambitions, or leave the profession.

Finally, as a post script to this paper, Penny is no longer at St Albertine’s. She has been offered a teaching position as an arts specialist at another small regional Catholic school. Penny made the decision to move as she finally felt there was no further growth for her at St Albertine’s. She is excited by the future and the opportunities that lay before her at her new school. Perhaps there her development as an agent of change will be smoother and her ‘teaching spirit’ will soar.
6.3 The Contribution of ‘Enacting’ Change in Arts Curriculum Implementation

What this chapter and the two research articles contribute to the project is a deepening appreciation for the complexity of the change process, and the continuing impact these issues have on a teacher’s ability to engage with meaningful arts learning opportunities.

In *Criticality and connoisseurship in arts education: Pedagogy, practice and ‘Pinterest®’*, the challenges faced by classroom teachers in dealing with the systemic issues of context, value and pedagogy were vital in understanding how criticality and connoisseurship may improve arts learning opportunities for young people. Building an awareness of the participatory nature of the internet and how that impacts on resource choice, in tandem with understanding how and why the multi-modality of digital texts was so appealing to time poor teachers, were crucial concepts for increasing opportunities for meaningful arts learning.

In “I’m really worried for my teaching spirit”: Professional agency, curriculum change and the primary arts specialist teacher, the views of the arts specialist teacher were paramount in understanding the complexities of the change process. Penny’s attempts at developing professional agency revealed the challenges faced. Forming supportive staff communities and gaining administration support for change were found to be vital for the growth of professional agency.

These two publications continued both the ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ perspectives of this interpretive research while further considering the second stage of educational criticism, *interpretation*. In the process of enacting change through the lens of *interpretation*, several points are made. First, the research question for this section of the project: *How does the relationship between context, purpose and value influence a teacher’s ability to change their arts education pedagogy and practice*? was designed to consider the process of change in schools and was answered from both a generalist and specialist vantage point. The generalist perspective was covered in the criticality paper and a close relationship between context, purpose and value was revealed, impacting in a myriad of ways depending on the personal circumstances of the teacher involved. Of
particular import, was the understanding that personal change is driven from an internal desire for change, and developing criticality is paramount for both change and improving curriculum engagement by classroom teachers. How to develop this engagement led to the third phase of this project and the final publication.

Understandings about change and relationships were pursued in the final paper on agency where the focus sharpened in on one specialist teacher at one school. The relationship between context, value and practice was mediated by Penny’s ability to create the conditions necessary for lasting change to occur in arts practices in her school. The relationship was volatile, with the development of agency closely tied to community and support. Ultimately, while there were moments when Penny believed she was making headway within the school culture, there was not enough support to maintain the progress. The influence of context and value on pedagogy and practice was considerable and cannot be ignored.

Significantly, enacting change through interpretation can also be considered through the lens of complexity theory. In complexity theory terms, a system can only evolve, change or grow if certain conditions for emergence are met. According to Davis and Sumara (2008) these emergent conditions include: internal diversity, internal redundancy, neighbour interactions, distributed control, randomness and coherence. These conditions or states relate to how the system reacts to its internal parts; the degree of difference or sameness required for the system to work efficiently and effectively. Therefore, considering purpose, value and practice from a complexity stance, the concepts of internal diversity and internal redundancy (Davis & Sumara, 2008) are particularly important in understanding the challenges associated with curriculum enactment.

Internal diversity identifies the number of different or ‘diverse’ roles that teachers take on in a school to maintain equilibrium of the system. In other words, internal diversity in this context, may be considered through the roles teachers play in a school (as a system) in the process of curriculum implementation. For example, one teacher may take on the role of ‘early adopter’ of new curriculum ideas, keen for what they see as curriculum
improvement, another very resistant to curriculum change takes on the role of ‘resister’, and a third happy to be told what to teach and when to teach it takes on the role of ‘embracer’.

This role taking is similarly described by Ball et al. (2011) who considers teachers as actors playing a role in the enactment of policy in their schools. The roles include narrators, enthusiasts and translators. The difference here is the focus of the study. Ball et al. (2011) looked at secondary schools where teachers work in learning areas and are rarely the only educator in a subject area. Head teachers or head of learning area, as well as year group coordinators, are an added level of hierarchy in the secondary system that changes the relationship between ‘actors’ and the policy/curriculum enactment or implementation.

Primary schools have a less tiered staff structure with principals and deputy principals making up the senior staff on one tier and classroom teachers generally on the next tier as a collective. This flattened structure means teachers can take roles that relate to their curriculum interests rather than their seniority. In this way, complexity thinking understandings around role diversity (B. Davis, 2008) work for this context.

Therefore, the three teacher roles or ‘types’ described as part of the diversity example exist within each school, and the number of each ‘teacher types’ represents the diversity within the staff and the capacity of those keen for change to influence change. In other words, this diversity of response to the change process is important to being able to meet and influence change. Moreover, the capacity for change must come from within the specific school setting and cannot be imposed from outside. Therefore, strength is in finding a balance or the “zone of complexity” that exists between stability and chaos (Ambrose, 2014). In the context of this study, this idea represented the attempts of the individuals and the system to balance the purpose for arts learning within each school.

Specifically, internal diversity existed within each of the four schools of this study. The arts specialist teachers were keen to improve the state of the arts in their schools, and therefore these teachers represented one role in the necessary diversity, that of ‘early adopter’. Classroom teachers at each school
fulfilled the other roles or positions creating the required diversity. For example; at St Albertine’s Olive\textsuperscript{12} represented the change resistant state. She was seemingly happy to work at creating change in her arts teaching practice but in reality, did not engage with change at all. The other classroom teachers represented other diversity roles. At St Albertine’s this was exemplified by teachers like Gina\textsuperscript{13} who was involved in the phase two interviews. She was content with her own classroom practices but worked to create change in her practice when processes were put in place to help guide her, representing the ‘embracer’ role. This diversity of teacher type is important to understanding the nature and emergence of complex systems but should also be considered in tandem with internal redundancy, the second condition relevant here.

Internal redundancy complements diversity and represents the sameness among the participants of a system (Davis & Sumara, 2008). Whereas diversity describes teachers taking on different roles within a group, redundancy considers the number of participants with similar characteristics. In this project, redundancy refers to the number of teachers on staff who were either early adopters, change resistant or eventual embracers. The system finds strength in the balance between diversity and redundancy. In contrast though, if there is little diversity, if the system consists of only one type of teacher, then it is very difficult for the system to grow as the variety of response is limited by the sameness of thinking. When considering St Albertine’s in this light, Penny was the only early adopter, Olive and the administration staff could be considered change resistant and the embracers were the rest of the teaching staff waiting to be guided. The balance here was unevenly distributed towards the change resistant rather than the early adopters and therefore meaningful change was difficult to implement, especially as the change resistant were also those in charge of the school.

In terms of developing a deeper understanding in schools around purpose, value and practice in arts learning, the critical element then is developing balance between diversity and redundancy or in complexity speak, the degree of specialisation in the system. Specialisation refers to the system’s unique

\textsuperscript{12} A pseudonym
\textsuperscript{13} A pseudonym
combination of diversity and redundancy (Davis & Sumara, 2008), where the system contains enough variety to push growth and enough redundancy to cover gaps in the way the system operates. At St Albertine’s, Penny led a growing arts program. However, in the end Penny left the school and the arts program was discontinued in its current form. The balance between diversity and redundancy was mismatched. There was not enough redundancy between the skills of the teaching staff to fill the gap left by Penny’s resignation. Therefore, the system as it was structured for the arts collapsed. Had the school encouraged redundancy in arts skills, such as requiring classroom teachers to upskill in arts practice, the outcome may have been different.

Consequently, when schools have a clearer sense of purpose around arts learning, the nested system of teacher, administration and school is able to balance diversity and redundancy in such a way that the school is able to minimise the contextual issues that impact on learning.
CHAPTER 7  ONE FINAL TURN OF THE KALEIDOSCOPE

7.1 Educational Evaluation in the Eisner tradition
This final chapter draws together the separate threads of this project to answer the question how, and in what ways, do primary teachers understand, interpret and enact arts curriculum in Western Australian schools? This interpretive project responding to a curriculum initiative, spanned three phases of development and divided the main research question into three sections relating to the ways teachers understand, interpret and enact arts curriculum. Each of these organising concepts were iteratively investigated, providing detailed understanding and revealing the complexity of the curriculum implementation project overall. As well as answering the research question, this chapter also considers what this research has contributed to theory and practice in the field of arts education and uses the final phase of educational criticism, critical evaluation (Eisner, 2005a) to investigate and comment on these contributions.

First though, is a return to the project metaphor. In drawing together all the component parts the kaleidoscope metaphor is now complete. Here in the final chapter, the image created in Figure 7.1 shows the insights of the previous chapters and arranges them into a form that makes sense both conceptually, in that it is described, and visually, in that it provides an alternative understanding to words alone. The image is the sum of all the previous work and identifies in at least some small way the uniqueness of the whole. Significantly though, although this is the last turn of the kaleidoscope for this final chapter and project, the beauty of the kaleidoscope as an instrument is that whenever it is turned next, a new image will be produced. So, whether this is for a different researcher looking at this topic in a new light or me taking this research in a different direction, the component parts are there for consideration. Accordingly, in drawing together all the elements, the project is outlined highlighting the important findings that contribute to the deeper arts implementation understandings that are then discussed in the critical evaluation.
7.2 Phase One

The first phase of the project considered the macro conceptualisation of curriculum implementation and focused on the available arts curriculum leaders in Western Australia. Four contextual dimensions from policy enactment theory (Ball et al., 2012) were used heuristically to explore curriculum implementation practices from an ‘inside out’ or ‘emic’ perspective. These four dimensions included the situational, material, professional and external dimensions. These dimensions impact on a teacher’s ability to implement curriculum but also focused more specifically on what happens outside the classroom, as opposed to an individual’s understanding of, and comfort with, arts knowledge and practice. For example, where the school is geographically located, or how resources are allocated to the arts were ideas considered. The specific questions guiding this phase of the research included:
a) What impact do situated contexts of the school have on enacting arts curriculum?
b) How do the professional cultures of the school impact curriculum enactment processes (for arts learning)?
c) What role do material contexts of the school play in supporting or inhibiting curriculum enactment in the arts?
d) How do external contexts impact the curriculum enactment process for the arts?

These questions and this focus were important first considerations for the project as this set up how the curriculum was conceptualised and used across the three different educational jurisdictions in Western Australia – Government, Catholic and Independent. The participants in this phase were curriculum leaders identified by their systems. Understanding this perspective identified that there were intended, and unintended outcomes of the current curriculum implementation practices being used. From a big picture perspective, the curriculum leaders interviewed prioritised ease of use and accessibility as intended outcomes of the new arts curriculum, whereas, marginalisation and disconnection of teachers from the curriculum were identified as unintended outcomes of the implementation process.

This exploration of the contextual landscape of the project led to an appreciation of the big picture views of arts education in Western Australia, and how reliant curriculum leaders are on the “corporate” view of curriculum. A “corporate” view was identified by the common language and phraseology of the curriculum documents witnessed in each of the curriculum leaders. This was exemplified by the ‘adopt and adapt’ mantra used to represent the process of curriculum change by the regulatory body School, Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) through the curriculum documents and by the eleven curriculum leaders interviewed. In particular, it was discovered that those in positions of curriculum leadership and authority tend to hold the corporate line – they ‘walk the walk’ and ‘talk the talk’ to see implementation from a top down, big picture perspective. The implication of this corporate approach was that curriculum was provided for teachers, but it was the teachers’ and schools’ responsibility to unpack, understand and implement the content. However, this top down corporatized view of curriculum was not a popular approach with teachers in
schools, regardless of whether it was SCSA policy or not.

As a result, the curriculum leader participants were constrained by their mandate and by being the only arts specialist working in and for their jurisdiction. Creating meaningful change in any one school within their area of responsibility was seemingly beyond their reach. Their message and delivery had to be broad to catch as many teachers and schools as possible, which ultimately weakened their relevance as the contextual differences between schools limited the reach of such an approach. The misalignment between the message and the approach to implementation was a valuable early understanding for this research. This understanding was also critical to the second phase of the project as the focus moved from arts curriculum leaders to teachers in schools, effectively setting up the initial direction for discussions with the participant teachers.

7.3 Phase Two

The second phase of the project focused on schools and the implementation of arts curriculum. It involved four schools across the three educational jurisdictions, the principals of these schools, four arts specialist teachers, and sixteen classroom teachers. The same contextual dimensions and questions identified in phase one, were used in individual semi-structured interviews with participants to develop an understanding of curriculum implementation practices at the school level. There were several important outcomes established from this phase of the research.

Significantly, and in line with other research, curriculum change fatigue was identified as a substantial issue for classroom teachers (Andrich, 2009). This fatigue ‘state’ impacted on teachers’ initial willingness to engage with curriculum and had a bearing on how the arts were approached in classrooms. Beyond this significant finding, the study revealed that resourcing levels and available support also influenced the implementation of arts learning. For example, lack of space for dance and drama, or wet areas for visual arts, often required the classroom to become a makeshift arts space. Moving furniture and preserving carpet then had to be considered in the timing of arts opportunities. As a result, there was often not enough time to implement effective arts learning activities as envisaged by the curriculum, because the focus was on not making a mess.
As a consequence, arts learning programs were simplified or shortened to better fit what time and teacher enthusiasm was available. Importantly, these findings pointed to reasons why understanding the contextual landscape was critical to improving arts curriculum implementation practices.

Essentially, policy enactment theory and the associated four contextual dimensions provided ways to encompass and discuss contextual issues teachers faced. For example, the participant teachers initially highlighted their lack of time and physical space to give thought to contextual constraints during the interviews. However, once contemplated, teachers realised they were able to identify more clearly “what they didn’t know they didn’t know” and articulate a plan for changing their relationship with the recognised constraints. This realisation was valuable to teachers and schools (administrators) willing and able to make the changes required, such as providing space or designated resources. Greater understanding of the significance of contextual factors allowed for consideration of what else was working for and against teachers trying to implement the arts curriculum. Interpretation of the complex relationships within each contextual landscape led to a more in-depth understanding of why some teachers found difficulties where others did not.

Consequently, understanding the impact of the contextual dimensions developed the ideas in chapter 4: Understanding the Contextual Landscape through the two journal publications Arts curriculum implementation. "Adopt and adapt" as policy translation and “Content without context is noise”: Looking for curriculum harmony in primary arts education in Western Australia. The focus on context and developing alignment in and for arts learning directed the investigation further and led to a deeper understanding of how teachers interpret arts curriculum.

The research focus then shifted from context to curriculum alignment. Alignment in this way was understood to mean the bringing together of the macro, meso and micro understandings of curriculum implementation for both teachers and school administrations. The three states of alignment necessary for curriculum implementation unpacked and developed further in this research were purpose, value and practice. The question guiding the investigation of this concept was: What is the relationship between purpose, value and practice in the
implementation of a primary arts curriculum? Each alignment state was identified as having a macro, meso and micro dimension to it. In the first instance, purpose was identified as a broad arts position impacting on society, curriculum and schools. At a macro or Australian society level, the arts were identified as necessary in curriculum through government policy reports such as the *Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008). At a meso level, the state education regulatory body highlighted the arts as important by adopting the national arts curriculum into the state curriculum document, and at a micro level, schools signified a purpose for the arts through provision in the school timetable and through staffing.

Considering the same three levels for value led to the alignment of institutional, instrumental and intrinsic valuing as the macro, meso and micro understandings of a teacher and their relationship with the arts. Here, teachers identified with community engagement practices as a macro valuing, integrated classroom approaches such as STEAM\(^{14}\) as a meso valuing and arts skill development as a micro valuing. Aligning a teacher’s value of the arts with the school administration’s value of the arts and even the school’s jurisdictions value of the arts is a crucial key to providing alignment and better learning outcomes for students.

Practice, as the third level, considered how the teacher approached arts learning opportunities. The approach reflects either a personal perspective, a usefulness perspective or a connectedness perspective. In many respects this level also highlights the pedagogy of the value held in the arts. For example, teachers using the arts in a personal way were looking to develop skill in their students, and skill development practice requires detailed knowledge of the art form selected. However, teachers using the arts in a useful way required less personal knowledge but enough awareness to find ways to combine the arts with other learning areas to enhance learning, and teachers using the arts in a connectedness way need only an interest in the arts to source arts opportunities to improve community relationships. Understanding purpose, value and practice in these three ways led to the development of the Purpose, Value, and Practice

\(^{14}\) STEAM: an educational approach that uses Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics as a tool for inquiry learning.
(PVP) model. What this model does is to underscore the connections and relationships between and across the levels of purpose, value and practice that has the potential to increase opportunities for arts learning in schools.

Therefore, chapter 5: Interpreting Arts Curriculum Implementation reflected the ways teachers interpret the curriculum through the concepts of purpose, value and practice. These concepts were derived iteratively from the analysis of the first phase of the research project involving the four contextual dimensions and were revealed in the third publication Purpose, value and practice in Western Australian schools: Understanding misalignment in arts learning. From the understandings developed here, the project moved into its third phase.

7.4 Phase Three

The third phase of the project sharpened the focus from schools to teachers and their practice; specifically, how teachers enact the curriculum. Exploring curriculum implementation from a teacher practice perspective led to a focus on the classroom teacher and the arts specialist teacher separately as it became obvious that the two teacher outlooks had different perspectives to reveal, insights to share, and stories to tell. The research question that guided this phase of the study was: How does the relationship between context and value play out in a teacher’s ability to construct and change their arts education pedagogy and practice? First, the notion of where classroom teachers accessed resources from and how they decided whether the resource was appropriate for their classroom setting was considered. Under consideration here was why was the activity more important than the learning and how could that be changed? The ‘guilty laugh’ that was often expressed when resource sharing apps such as Pinterest were given as the answer to where teachers found their arts lesson ideas, gave rise to considering criticality and connoisseurship (Eisner, 2005a) as indicative of the issues facing implementation.

Recognising that classroom teachers work in an increasing participatory online environment led to understanding why the singular modality of current online curriculum documents is less than ideal for the changing teacher demographic. Embracing a multimodality approach was revealed as a way of aligning teacher practice and planning more appropriately. The value in this deepening understanding of the impact that contextual issues have on arts learning lies in
understanding that a teacher does not have to be an expert or master of the arts to create a masterful arts learning program. Teachers do need to apply a degree of criticality to their activity choices to provide real learning though.

The specialist arts teacher was also a focus of this third phase. Working as a participant researcher to understand the change process more clearly, the constraints and enablers of professional agency were elaborated for teachers in a specialist arts role. The crucial role of support, from both administration and staff was identified as a critical component of creating and sustaining change. Support from the administration in valuing the curriculum contributions of the arts, support from other school staff in recognising the importance of the learning area and development of community support to combat issues of isolation were all significant understandings developed.

Chapter 6: Enacting the Change in Arts Curriculum Implementation highlighted the crucial aspects of criticality and agency. The two included articles provided the embodiment of these ideas; Criticality in arts education: Pedagogy, practice and ‘Pinterest©’ which focused on the classroom teacher’s perspective and “I’m really worried for my teaching spirit”: Professional agency and the primary arts specialist teacher which approached enactment issues from the arts specialist teacher’s perspective.

The development of this project over the three phases narrowed the focus from a macro curriculum perspective, to a meso school contextual perspective and finally a micro teacher practical perspective. Each iteration provided another viewpoint from which to consider the overarching issue of curriculum implementation. Utilising the research question concepts of understanding, interpreting and enacting provided an avenue of critical thinking that has led to both theoretical and practical significances, which are now discussed from an educational criticism perspective.

7.5 Educational Criticism - Evaluation

Using educational criticism as the lens to scrutinise the phenomenon of implementation practices, this final chapter now considers the third aspect of educational criticism – critical evaluation and assesses the educational import and significance of the events described and interpreted in the previous three chapters. This critical evaluation also brings together the key contributions of
this project in answering the main research question. First though, the parameters of this critical evaluation are established.

There are many functions of an educational evaluation. Functions include “to diagnose, to revise curricula, to compare, to anticipate educational needs or determine if objectives have been achieved” (Eisner, 1994, p. 171). For this study, the function of the critical evaluation was to consider the contextual landscape of the curricula, not for the students per say, although that is still an important consideration, but for the teachers. The significance and difference in this critical evaluation lies in the teacher’s perception of the place of the curriculum, the value held in the curriculum, and the contextual constraints that impact on a teacher’s ability to implement the content of the curriculum. However, it must be noted that this critical evaluation provides only one viewpoint and interpretation of the issue. Another evaluation may well approach this topic from a different perspective altogether.

Ultimately, this critical evaluation helps to understand and improve classroom teacher’s arts practice. This research was needed to better understand why teachers have issues implementing arts curriculum beyond the well-researched personal areas of a lack of self-efficacy in and personal knowledge of the arts (Bamford, 2010; Ewing, 2012; Lummis et al., 2014). Trying to break the passive compliance or more colloquial ‘lip service’ given to curriculum implementation by focussing on those contextual issues that impact teachers work and develop an approach / framework for moving past those identified barriers was an important part of this critical evaluation.

The critical evaluation of this research project is considered through the theoretical and practical outcomes found.

7.6 Theoretical Significance – Curriculum and Policy Enactment Theory
Theoretically, this work adds to an understanding of the connections between curriculum, policy, criticism and complexity theory. First, at the intersection of curriculum theory and policy enactment theory I identified and elaborated on the ways that policy enactment theory can be used with a curriculum focus. In particular, I focused on the relationship between the contextual dimensions from Ball et al. (2012) policy enactment theory and curriculum implementation processes. Situational, material, professional and external factors were the four
dimensions used from policy enactment theory to unpack and consider curriculum implementation from. Specifically, Ball et al. (2012) suggested that policy enactment theory involved interpreting, translating and reconstructing policy. I suggested that this processing is much like what teachers do with curriculum during implementation. In addition, Ball et al. (2012) argue that policy is not enacted in a vacuum and is often coded and decoded by individual schools and teachers in a messy, creative and negotiated process of enactment. This dissertation suggests that teachers use a similar process for curriculum, however in many instances without conscious understanding. The use of policy enactment theory in and for curriculum in this way identified how the four contextual dimensions impact on teacher engagement and the unintended results of implementation. As a result of this positioning, the unintended outcomes of marginalisation, implementation apathy and resultant lack of interest in or opportunity for professional learning were identified. In terms of the critical evaluation, identifying the intended and unintended outcomes, were a direct result of “seeing with” and “seeing about” the curriculum leaders as stakeholders (Uhrmacher et al., 2017) finding meaning in their experiences of the arts curriculum.

Furthermore, I illustrated the theoretical relationship between curriculum content, context and practice in an arts education environment. This outcome embodies Eisner (1994) “intended and operational curriculum” and similarly Aoki (2009) definition of “curriculum as written” and “curriculum as plan” dichotomies. Curriculum leaders embraced the written notion of the curriculum while teachers planned and implemented learning opportunities based more on an operational needs’ basis. I identified here that schools with a better understanding of the relationship between content, context and practice are better placed to deliver an integrated arts program.

In addition, a more detailed understanding of the notion of a ‘complicated conversation’ (Pinar, 2011) has been addressed. The idea that curriculum ‘talks’ to teachers and they respond, creating a dialogue of interaction was an important starting point for this research. However, it became clear that the conversation between Western Australian primary teachers and the arts curriculum was less than complicated and, in some cases, non-existent. Striving for a complicated conversation requires an understanding and critical
engagement with the subject matter. This criticality was lacking in many of the teacher participants. I identified that the result of this lack of interaction has impacted the planning and practice of the arts in schools, specifically in the critical selection of resources for arts learning. Addressing this critical selection process involves addressing the way curriculum documents are presented to teachers. A multi-modality approach that incorporates both visual and linguistic methods of decoding text was suggested and is an avenue of further research.

Moreover, this work also addresses the more recent call from Apple (2018) to reconnect curriculum theory with teachers and schools. His call for ‘action in education’ as the method of understanding and advancing curriculum theory is timely. This project focused on the ‘doing’ of arts curriculum in schools. In focusing on the ‘doing’ what became essential was understanding that there are many approaches to curriculum implementation. However, what is essential is that schools develop a collective understanding of what the arts mean to them to better control the narrative of what is then important.

This collective narrative control is crucial in the struggle with identity and authority. This thesis unpacked how schools that identify with a purpose for the arts, speak and act with an authority about the value and the place of the arts in their school. When schools speak and act with authority, practice becomes clear. In this vernacular, when these states are collectively aligned the concerns of Apple (2018) around whose knowledge is important, how is it organised and taught become less fraught because the collective, being the teachers of the school, have had interest and input into the decision making. What becomes important from here is giving schools and teachers time to develop the identity and authority needed to collectively move forward.

7.7 Theoretical Significance – Complexity Theory
Understandings developed in this project from arts curriculum implementation processes were also strengthened by and through complexity theory. Complexity theory, as one way to understand systems and how they interact, considered each component of this project as a bounded system. For example, teachers, schools and educational jurisdictions are all components of a bounded system. Understanding through complexity theory, that teachers are inherently self-organising, in that they turn up to school each day, interact with
their surroundings, and make decisions that impact their student’s learning, was key to describing, interpreting and evaluating their contextual relationship with their environment. In this way, each bounded system is also nested within the layers of understanding, interpreting and enacting, giving rise to the notion that interactions are multiple and multiply connected (Byrne & Callaghan, 2014; Cochran-Smith et al., 2014; Davis & Sumara, 2005).

Theoretically, understanding the boundaries of the nested systems that exist between teacher, school and system and critically evaluating them from a contextual standpoint adds to knowledge of how and why implementation is so contextually based. For example, different possibilities and ways of viewing implementation exist for every teacher within a single school let alone the variations that exist with teachers across schools.

Complex school systems such as those in this study are open systems, they exchange information within a level and across the levels of the system. In the case of this project, establishing the notion of a self-regulating system identified the three states of purpose value and practice as being integral at each level of the system.

Figure 7.2 Nested complexity diagram. Adapted from Complexity and Education. Inquiries into Learning, Teaching and Research (p. 6), by B Davis & D Sumara, 2008, New York, NY: Routledge. Copyright 2006 by “Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc”.
As Figure 7.2 indicates, the links then between the PVP model and complexity theory established where each of the nested systems interacted. This mapping made clear that contextual complexity, when handled well, can promote the development of both the system and the individual. When mishandled, instead of system complexity and growth there is a system breakdown, resulting in curriculum marginalisation and teacher isolation.

In addition, the impact of complexity thinking on professional agency added significant insights into the way that teachers approach change. Teachers, trying to bring about change are challenged by both structural and individual contexts which become embodied in experience and action. Understanding the specifics of these structural and individual actions, such as support, resources or resilience provided greater clarity to the change process. However, recognition that structural and individual actions happen at different levels of a system, within different timeframes, also provides clarity around why it is difficult to discuss these concepts as a single entity.

### 7.8 Practical Significance

In practical terms this thesis contributes a greater understanding of the contextual constraints and enablers in curriculum implementation to the field of arts education. These understandings and the PVP model provide a new way to discuss contextual differences facing schools which makes the “one size fits all” curriculum so difficult to implement in the first place. This study has made a practical contribution to the field by unpacking the contextual dimensions that impact on teachers and how teachers can then plan to minimise their influence. For example, one of the strengths of the interviews was giving teachers the opportunity to reflect on their practice. Several participants remarked that they had not deliberately considered the impact the contextual dimensions had on their practice before. The interview and the chance to stop and think provided a path for reflection.

In addition, by highlighting and unpacking the change process for an arts teacher, some of the barriers identified can be mitigated for teachers in different contexts. In particular, the development of a community of practice with other specialist teachers in the primary school context, is a powerful way for teachers to find their voice when individually they may lack one.
Also important is the ability of the PVP model to offer a similar language for use across multiple contexts when describing the contextual difficulties faced. For example, Penny was keen to develop a support group of arts teachers in her region. Being able to use the language and shared understanding of purpose, value and practice through the developed framework is an exciting opportunity to increase identity and authority for arts teachers collectively as a group and individually in their schools.

7.9 Implications for Policy Makers and Teacher Education

The lessons learned by this research project offers several ways policy makers and teacher education programs could consider curriculum implementation and arts curriculum practice for stronger arts learning in schools. For example, the links between context, purpose and practice cannot be underemphasised. For policy (and curriculum) makers understanding and providing ways for schools to explicitly link the purpose of the arts to their local context is important. Using the language of connection and shared understanding may unify school programs in a way that supports classroom teachers and benefits student learning in the arts.

Likewise, the implications for teacher education is strong. There has long been a call for more arts content in pre-service teacher education programs (de Vries, 2011, 2013b; Garvis, 2009; Lummis et al., 2014) and this research adds to that call. Of equal importance though is the engagement and development of criticality in arts resource selection and use by classroom primary teachers. Discussion, understanding and practice in the process of choosing appropriate resources would be a valuable addition to the limited arts content time in university teacher preparation programs.

7.10 Limitations

This research study sought to understand curriculum implementation practices in the Western Australian context. The detailed focus on context means that while there were ideas and relationships transferrable to other settings, the bounded nature of contextual work means the findings cannot be generalised beyond the schools and teachers that were involved.

The aim of this research was not to answer direct questions where a quantitative approach would have been more appropriate. Rather this project
was interpretative in nature and sought to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of those living the phenomena. Therefore, a qualitative approach with a sharpening focus of the research question from a broad macro outlook of arts curriculum leaders, to a meso understanding of a selected group of four schools and then micro perspective of one teacher in one school was a deliberate choice but one constrained by the availability of schools.

A limitation of this project involved the similarity of staffing profiles of the schools involved. It would have been an interesting addition to have a school without an arts specialist teacher on staff as one of the participant schools. The perspectives of the classroom teachers would have been particularly valuable in this scenario where the classroom teacher would have been the sole provider of arts learning opportunities. How they planned and implemented for the arts under those circumstances would have been an interesting addition to the project.

Additionally, one interesting challenge and resultant limitation of this project was in negotiating agreement for active participation by teachers. Part of the teacher professional agency and change process was abandoned in the third phase of the project when active participation was not forthcoming. There was an initial attempt to include a classroom teacher in an integrated arts project and track her progress across the course of the school term. This aspect of the project failed to gain any momentum and in the end was abandoned. As an early career teacher Olive had different priorities, her focus was literacy and numeracy and the arts were sidelined when the weeks got ‘busy’. So, although she agreed to be part of an integrated arts project and track the learning through interview, her lack of engagement meant that there was no real progress with the project. Considering how to better engage teachers in aspects of professional agency is one avenue of further research to be considered.

**7.11 Future Research**

Developing an understanding of contextual complexity requires the investigation of many different contextual landscapes to see if there are similarities across constructs. Further work in schools that do not have an arts specialist teacher would add to this understanding of contextual complexity. Working with individual teachers or groups of teachers with the PVP model, identifying the
purpose and value of the arts across a variety of educational settings and schools to see if there is reliability and trustworthiness in the construct would be beneficial.

Additionally, in light of the issues Penny had creating professional agency for herself, and Olive had even contemplating change, developing a more detailed understanding of the career path of a primary teacher and where the arts fits into that trajectory would be a valuable addition to understanding and improving arts curriculum implementation opportunities. For example, what factors encourage classroom teachers to look for professional learning in the arts? What knowledge and understandings do teachers need a solid grasp of before they look outside the content of numeracy and literacy for professional learning opportunities? Similarly, is there a length of teaching service required to consolidate understandings of those learning areas controlled by standardised testing before teachers look to improving their understandings in other learning areas? And, therefore, when is the best time to push development of the arts with classroom teachers? Examination of each of these questions would add to the understandings developed over the course of this project.

Contextually, this research provides a more in depth understanding of the alignment or praxis of purpose, value and practice for systems, schools and teachers, but was not the only understanding to be made.

7.12 Final Thoughts: On Becoming a Connoisseur

Over the course of this research project and in the writing of this dissertation, one of my aims has been to see and understand the process of research more deeply. In the process of understanding more deeply I have engaged with Elliot Eisner’s notion of ‘educational connoisseurship and criticism’. Criticism was engaged in and through this dissertation by describing, interpreting and evaluating the complexity of arts curriculum implementation practices in primary schools. According to Eisner (2017) the development of connoisseurship goes hand in hand with educational criticism.

Connoisseurship is often described as the art of appreciation, and where criticism is a public statement, connoisseurship is a more private undertaking (Eisner, 2005a). Most often thought about in relationship to wine or cars, connoisseurship involves developing an in-depth understanding of a subject.
Connoisseurship has three elements: discernment, appreciation, and valuing (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). I briefly consider each of these elements in turn for the role they have played in my development as a researcher and educational connoisseur.

Discernment. Discernment is “the ability to notice and differentiate qualities” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). Developing the ability to discern or discriminate between different aspects of a problem has been an ongoing part of the research project and describes how the first element of connoisseurship has been used here. Separating the personal experiences of teachers to focus on the contextual understandings required a degree of discrimination and understanding in the first instance. More specifically, in the early stages of the doctoral journey, an interest in teacher development and reading about self-efficacy led to an awareness of how much research was available on why teachers do not engage with the arts due to underlying issues around a lack of self-efficacy. Developing a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding self-efficacy led me to consider the external contextual factors that impact on teachers as a place to start this research project. The selection of external contextual factors over personal factors or classroom activities in this manner, making a choice of the external over the internal, provided the first contextual embodiment of discernment. Further examples of discernment throughout this project included the identification of the intended and unintended outcomes of delayed curriculum implementation, the recognition and development of how purpose, value and practice interrelate, the importance of criticality to a strong arts practice and the enablers and constraints to the development of professional agency in arts specialist teachers.

Discerning between the multitude of ontological ‘truths’ presented throughout this project was challenging. Upholding the participant realities required a deliberate attention to the intent of their involvement in this project, and the ontological layering of structural and individual aspects of professional agency and complexity was an important insight. However, discernment is only one aspect of the connoisseur experience. The second aspect is appreciation.

Appreciation. Second, appreciation is about understanding what to look for in a research context and why it is important (Uhrmacher et al., 2017).
Recognising the essential characteristics of a qualitative experience is one such way. At the centre of a qualitative project is the participant and their story. For this project, developing an appreciation of the experiences of the participants and being true to their perceptions of the topic was an essential component of developing appreciation and connoisseurship. Providing the participants with transcripts of their interviews was an initial way that appreciation was applied. In the latter stages of the project when working with Penny, I was very conscious of how she was being portrayed in the project. The final article was sent to her for critique before being sent to the journal for publication consideration.

While looking after the participants was one way of developing appreciation; knowing the customs and standards of qualitative research and applying them to this research project, in a way that was sympathetic to the topic and the participants, was also paramount. The creative use of curriculum theory and policy enactment theory, as conceptual framework elements, was part of the appreciation process. This ‘bricolage’ of components of relevant theories strengthened the direction of this project, but also followed the protocols of qualitative research design and implementation.

In addition, the learning curve associated with completing a research project and associated dissertation provides a frame for appreciating the complexity of the project topic. The attention to detail in considering conceptual and methodological frameworks, collecting and analysing data, and then writing the thesis are all elements demonstrating a strong appreciation of the process of qualitative research.

**Valuing.** The third element, valuing, suggests knowing something about what constitutes goodness in the domain of education (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). For this project, ‘goodness’ was defined by identifying and commenting on the similarities and differences of the contextual spaces in a way that increased understanding of the issues of implementation and enactment. Identifying what was happening within the primary arts curriculum enactment space and being able to discuss why the findings were important to the participants, schools and sectors has been an important contribution.

Notwithstanding this, recognising that there are a range of opinions and therefore competing values that impact on schools and teachers was also key.
Keeping an open mind, listening and actively reflecting on what teachers said gave the project a greater insight into the variety of factors that were at work. For example, this was especially important when considering my personal response to teachers using online resource sites such as Pinterest when planning arts learning activities. My first instinct was to dismiss the use of social media platforms, however on further reflection and research, the reasoning behind the use and appropriateness of use in the overloaded curriculum space was valid. New research is needed to support teachers in developing their own criticality and connoisseurship around the use of such platforms for teaching ideas.

In conclusion, as an educational connoisseur, identifying the major themes of this work guides new thinking and ideas. But sometimes it is important to look back to look forward. Therefore, in returning to Dewey’s quote from 1911 which finishes with the hope that the arts will finally be recognised as “fundamental forces of development”, the aspiration is that understandings developed here will provide a platform and impetus to move a step closer to that long held wish.
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APPENDIX 1

Ethics Approval Letters

Government of Western Australia
Department of Education

Your ref : [Redacted]
Our ref : D15/0092657
Enquiries :

Ms Sian Chapman
Rm 1.002 School of Education
Murdoch University
South Street
MURDOCH WA 6150

Dear Ms Chapman

Thank you for your application received 9 February 2015 to conduct research on Department of Education sites.

The focus and outcomes of your research project, Understanding, interpreting and enacting arts curriculum: A mixed methods study into the Western Australian Experience, are of interest to the Department. I give permission for you to approach site managers to invite their participation in Phase 1 and 2 of your project as outlined in your application – i.e. to conduct interviews with Central Office staff with curriculum and arts responsibilities and interviews with teachers in a public primary school. It is a condition of approval, however, that upon conclusion the results of this study are forwarded to the Department at the email address below.

Consistent with Department policy, participation in your research project will be the decision of the sites invited to participate and individual staff members in those sites. A copy of this letter must be provided to site managers when requesting their participation in the research. Researchers are required to sign a confidential declaration upon arrival at Department of Education schools.

Responsibility for quality control of ethics and methodology of the proposed research resides with the institution supervising the research. The Department notes a copy of a letter confirming that you have received ethical approval for Phase 1 and 2 of your research protocol from the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Any proposed changes to the research project will need to be submitted for Department approval prior to implementation.

Please contact Ms Beverley Vickers, Principal Evaluation Officer, on (08) 9264 4649 or researchandpolicy@education.wa.edu.au if you have further enquiries.

Very best wishes for the successful completion of Phase 1 and 2 of your project.

Yours sincerely,

ALAN DODSON
DIRECTOR
EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

10 March 2015

161 Royal Street, East Perth Western Australia 6004
17 February 2015

Associate Professor Peter Wright  
Murdoch University  
90 South Street  
MURDOCH WA 6150

Dear Professor Wright

RE: UNDERSTANDING, INTERPRETING AND ENACTING ARTS CURRICULUM; A MIXED METHOD STUDY INTO THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

Thank you for your completed application received 6 February 2015 which forms part of the requirements of a Doctor of Philosophy Degree undertaken by doctoral candidate Ms Sian Chapman.

I give in principle support for selected secondary Catholic schools in Western Australia to participate in this valuable study. However, consistent with Catholic Education policy, participation in your research project will be the decision of the individual principal and staff members. A copy of this letter must be provided to principals when requesting their participation in the research.

The conditions of CEWA approval are as follows:
1. A final copy of the survey questions is to be provided to the CEWA, if they differ from the current draft provided.
2. Consistent with a condition in your HREC approval, permission will need to be sought to commence Phase Three of your research. At this point, your revised HREC approval from Murdoch University will also be required. For Phase Three, Catholic schools will be individually approached and a final list of participating schools will be submitted before research commences.

Responsibility for quality control of ethics and methodology of the proposed research resides with the institution supervising the research. The CEWA notes that the Murdoch University Research Ethics and Integrity Division has provided provisional HREC approval. We will require a resubmission of approval for Phase Three as well as research questions for this Phase.

Any changes to the proposed methodology will need to be submitted for CEWA approval prior to implementation. The focus and outcomes of your research project are of interest to the CEWA. It is therefore a condition of approval that the research findings of this study are forwarded to the CEWA.

Further enquiries may be directed to John Nelson at nelson.john@cao.wa.edu.au or 08 6380 5313.

I wish you all the best with your research.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr Tim McDonald
Friday, 20 March 2015

A/Prof Peter Wright
School of Education
Murdoch University

Dear Peter,

**Project No.** 2014/250

**Project Title** Understanding, Interpreting and Enacting Arts Curriculum. A mixed methods study into the Western Australian experience

Thank you for addressing the conditions placed on the above application to the Education Expedited Sub-Committee of the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee. On behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to advise the application now has:

**OUTRIGHT APPROVAL**

Approval is granted on the understanding that research will be conducted according the standards of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*, the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007)* and Murdoch University policies at all times. You must also abide by the Human Research Ethics Committee's standard conditions of approval (see attached). All reporting forms are available on the Research Ethics and Integrity web-site.

I wish you every success for your research.

Please quote your ethics project number in all correspondence.

Kind Regards,

[Signature]

Dr. Erich von Dietze
Manager
Research Ethics and Integrity

cc: Mr Robin Pascoe and Sian Chapman
School of Education – Dr Lindy Norris
Human Research Ethics Committee: Standard Conditions of Approval

a) The project must be conducted in accordance with the approved application, including any conditions and amendments that have been approved. You must comply with all of the conditions imposed by the HREC, and any subsequent conditions that the HREC may require.

b) You must report immediately anything, which might affect ethical acceptance of your project, including:
   - Adverse effects on participants
   - Significant unforeseen events
   - Other matters that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

c) Proposed changes or amendments to the research must be applied for, using an Amendment Application form, and approved by the HREC before these may be implemented.

d) An Annual Report for the project must be provided by the due date specified each year (usually the anniversary of approval).

e) A Closure Report must be provided at the conclusion of the project (once all contact with participants has been completed).

f) If, for any reason, the project does not proceed or is discontinued, you must advise the committee in writing, using a Closure Report form.

g) If an extension is required beyond the end date of the approved project, an Extension Application should be made allowing sufficient time for its consideration by the committee. Extensions of approval cannot be granted retrospectively.

h) You must advise the HREC immediately, in writing, if any complaint is made about the conduct of the project.

i) Other Murdoch approvals (e.g. fieldwork approval) or approval form other institutions may also be necessary before the research can commence.

j) Any equipment used must meet current safety standards. Purpose built or modified equipment must be tested and certified by independent experts for compliance with safety standards.

k) Graduate research degree candidates must normally have their Program of Study approved prior to commencing the research. Exceptions to this must be approved by the HREC.

l) You must notify Research Ethics & Integrity of any changes in contact details including address, phone number and email address.

m) Researchers should be aware that the HREC may conduct random audits and/or require additional reports concerning the research project.

Failure to comply with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and with the conditions of approval may result in the suspension or withdrawal of approval for the project.

The HREC seeks to support researchers in achieving strong results and positive outcomes.

The HREC promotes a research culture in which ethics is considered and discussed at all stages of the research.

If you have any issues you wish to raise, please contact the Research Ethics Office in the first instance.
Dear Peter,

Project No. 2014/250
Project Title Understanding, Interpreting and Enacting Arts Curriculum. The experiences of classroom teachers and Arts specialist teachers in Western Australian primary schools.

On behalf of the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee, I certify that this project is extended until 31 March 2019, subject to any conditions listed below. This approval is effective ONLY with respect to the project as described in the original application and any subsequent amendments that have received approval.

As a condition of the approval of your human research ethics application you are required to report immediately anything, which might affect ethical acceptance of your project’s protocols, including:

- Adverse effects on subjects
- Proposed changes in the protocols
- Unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

Kind Regards,

[Signature]

Dr. Erich von Dietze
Manager
Research Ethics and Integrity

cc: Mr Robin Pascoe; Sian Chapman
APPENDIX 2

Information Letters

Murdoch UNIVERSITY

Information Letter

Understanding, Interpreting and Enacting Arts Curriculum.
A mixed methods study into the Western Australian experience.

Investigator (s)  AP Peter Wright
                 Robin Pascoe
                 Sian Chapman

Contact Person    Sian Chapman
Address           School of Education
                 Murdoch University
                 90 South St, Murdoch WA 6150
Telephone No.     0417 932 295

You are invited to participate in this study.

Background
This research is informed by the national standardisation of curriculum in Australia and upcoming implementation of the Australian Curriculum – the Arts. The current requirement for primary teachers to teach across the full range of learning areas (the Arts being one such learning area) has resulted in a very crowded curriculum (Russell-Bowie, 2011). The depth and breadth of Arts subjects taught depends on many factors outside the physical classroom. Understanding these factors is the focus of this research. We are interested in your views as a curriculum leader so we are inviting you to participate in an interview at a time suitable to you over the next few weeks.

This research forms part of the requirements of a Doctor of Philosophy degree undertaken by doctoral candidate Sian Chapman, supervised by Associate Professor Peter Wright.

Aim of the Study
The study aims to explore the aspects of a teacher’s environment that impact on their ability to undertake a teaching program in the Arts.

What Does Your Participation Involve?
Participation involves one 30-40 minute interview where your views on the aspects outside the classroom that impact on curriculum implementation will be sought. Questions will consider four area of interest: the school environment, professional understandings, external factors and material resources. After the interview the conversation will be transcribed and returned to you for checking. A follow-up visual mapping activity will be included at this point to confirm your ideas and views.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study
It is important that you understand that your involvement is this study is voluntary. While we would be pleased to have you participate, we respect your right to decline. There will be no consequences to you if you decide not to participate. If you decide to discontinue participation at any time, you may do so without providing an explanation. If you withdraw, all information you have provided will be destroyed.
Your privacy
Your privacy is very important to us. Your participation in this study and any information will be treated in a confidential manner. Your name and identifying details will not be used in any publication arising out of the research. Following the study the data will be kept in a de-identified format, in a locked cabinet in the office of the Chief Investigator.

Possible Benefits
Participation in this research will allow you to be part of a study that seeks to understand some of the difficulties facing classroom teachers during curriculum implementation. This may have a positive impact on your work with teachers in schools.

Possible Risks
There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study.

Questions
If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact either AP Peter Wright on ph. 9360 2242 or Sian Chapman on ph. 0417 932 295. Either of us would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you.

Once we have analysed the information from this study we will email you a summary of our findings. You can expect to receive this feedback in late 2015.

If you are happy to participate in this study please return the attached letter (in the self-addressed envelope). We would like to thank you in advance for your assistance with this research project. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 2014/250). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University’s Research Ethics Office (Tel. 08 9360 6677 (for overseas studies, +61 8 9360 6677) or e-mail ethics@murdoch.edu.au). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Information Letter

Understanding, Interpreting and Enacting Arts Curriculum. A mixed methods study into the Western Australian experience.

Investigator (s)  AP Peter Wright
                    Robin Pascoe
                    Sian Chapman

Contact Person  Sian Chapman
Address  School of Education
          Murdoch University
          South St, Murdoch WA 6152
Telephone No.  0417 932 295

You are invited to participate in this study.

Background
As part of the national standardisation of curriculum and upcoming implementation of the Australian Curriculum – the Arts, primary teachers are required to teach across the full range of learning areas, The Arts being one such learning area. A few studies have been conducted to date suggesting that The Arts as a learning area is marginalised both in depth of study (time spent in arts learning) and in breadth of coverage of the five arts subjects (dance, drama, music, media arts and visual arts). This situation is also impacted by contexts outside the physical classroom. Understanding what and how variables outside of the classroom environment impact on primary teachers is the focus of this research. We are interested to learn whether this is the case with ___________ Primary School so we are inviting you to participate in an interview at a time suitable to you over the next few weeks.

This research forms part of the requirements of a Doctor of Philosophy degree undertaken by doctoral candidate Sian Chapman, supervised by Associate Professor Peter Wright.

Aim of the Study
The study aims to explore the aspects of a teacher’s environment that impact on their ability to undertake a teaching program in the Arts.

What Does Your Participation Involve?
Participation involves one 30-40 minute interview where your views on the aspects outside the classroom that impact on curriculum implementation will be sought. Questions will consider four area of interest: the school environment, professional understandings, external factors and material resources. After the interview the conversation will be transcribed and returned to you for checking. A follow-up visual mapping activity will be included at this point to confirm your ideas and views.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study
It is important that you understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary. While we would be pleased to have you participate, we respect your right to decline. There will be no consequences to you if you decide not to participate. If you decide to discontinue participation at any time, you may do so without providing an explanation. If you withdraw, all information you have provided will be destroyed.
Your privacy
Your privacy is very important to us. Your participation in this study and any information will be treated in a confidential manner. Your name and identifying details will not be used in any publication arising out of the research. Following the study the data will be kept in a de-identified format, in a locked cabinet in the office of the Chief Investigator.

Possible Benefits
As a classroom teacher it is not always easy to have your views heard. Participation in this research will allow you to be part of a study that seeks to understand some of the difficulties facing classroom teachers during curriculum implementation.

Possible Risks
There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study.

Questions
If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact either AP Peter Wright on ph 9360 2242 or Sian Chapman on ph 0417 932 295. Either of us would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you.

Once we have analysed the information from this study we will email you a summary of our findings. You can expect to receive this feedback in late 2015.

If you are happy to participate in this study please return the attached letter (in the self-addressed envelope). We would like to thank you in advance for your assistance with this research project. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval xxxx/xx). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University’s Research Ethics Office (Tel. 08 9360 6677 for overseas studies, +61 8 9360 6677) or e-mail ethics@murdoch.edu.au). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Information Letter

Understanding, Interpreting and Enacting Arts Curriculum. 
The experiences of classroom teachers and Arts specialist 
teachers in Western Australian primary schools.

Investigator (s) AP Peter Wright
Robin Pascoe
Slan Chapman

Contact Person Slan Chapman
Address School of Education
Murdoch University
90 South St, Murdoch WA 6150

Telephone No. 0417 932 295

Dear Principal

My name is Slan Chapman and I am conducting a research project that explores how a teacher’s environment impacts on their ability to undertake a learning program in the Arts. This research is informed by the national standardisation of curriculum in Australia and upcoming implementation of the Australian Curriculum – the Arts. The current requirement for primary teachers to teach across the full range of learning areas (the Arts being one such learning area) has resulted in a very crowded curriculum (Russell-Bowle, 2011). The depth and breadth of Arts subjects taught depends on many factors outside the physical classroom. Understanding these factors is the focus of this research. This research forms part of the requirements of a Doctor of Philosophy degree undertaken by myself, supervised by Associate Professor Peter Wright and Mr. Robin Pascoe at Murdoch University.

I would like to invite [Primary School] to take part in the third phase of this project. [Primary School] is the only school in Western Australia approached for their participation in this third phase.

What Does Participation in this Research Involve?
I am looking to work with the arts specialist teacher and one classroom teacher in Term 4, 2016. The arts teacher and I will collaborate on upcoming arts activities and together explore the relationship between purpose, value and practice in arts implementation practices. The researcher will work alongside the Arts specialist teacher developing arts understandings in this particular school context, sharing the insights found about arts practice, integration and cultural production from phase 2 findings of the research project. These understandings will be shared with the classroom teacher to inform her classroom arts practice as a comparison measure. The researcher will observe lessons of the two participants when using Arts content in their classrooms (if and when convenient).
As part of the process, short 15-20 minute interviews in Weeks 1, 3, 5 and 7 where views on purpose and value that impact on curriculum implementation will be sought. Questions will consider the personal value, usefulness value and the connectedness value of the arts to current arts learning programs at Primary School. After each interview the conversation will be transcribed and returned to participants for checking.

I will keep Primary School’s involvement in the administration of the research procedures to a minimum.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary.

If either participant decides to participate and then later changes their mind, they are able to withdraw their participation at any time. On withdrawal, all information provided will be destroyed. There will be no consequences relating to any decision by an individual or Primary School regarding participation, other than those already described in this letter. Decisions made will not affect the relationship with the research team or Murdoch University.

Privacy

Participant privacy is very important to us. Participation in this study and all information gathered will be treated in a confidential manner. Names and identifying details will not be used in any publication arising out of the research. Following the study the data will be kept in a de-identified format, in a locked cabinet in the office of the Chief Investigator.

The data will be used only for this project, and will not be used in any extended or future research without first obtaining explicit written consent from participants.

Consistent with Catholic Education WA’s policy, a summary of the research findings will be made available to Primary School and the CEDWA. You can expect this to be available in 2017.

Possible Benefits

Participation in this research will allow Primary School to be part of a study that seeks to understand some of the difficulties facing classroom teachers during curriculum implementation. This may have a positive impact on implementation processes within your school.

Possible Risks

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study.

Questions

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact either AP Peter Wright on ph. 9360 2242 or Stan Chapman on ph. 0417 932 295. Either of us would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you.

If you are happy to participate in this study please return the attached consent form via email. We would like to thank you in advance for your assistance with this research project. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 2014/250). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University’s Research Ethics Office (Tel. 08 9360 6677 or e-mail ethics@murdoch.edu.au). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Information Letter

Understanding, Interpreting and Enacting Arts Curriculum. The experiences of classroom teachers and Arts specialist teachers in Western Australian primary schools.

Investigator(s)  AP Peter Wright
                      Robin Pascoe
                      Sian Chapman

Contact Person          Sian Chapman
Address                  School of Education
                                      Murdoch University
                                          90 South St, Murdoch WA 6150
Telephone No.           0417 932 295

You are invited to participate in this study.

Background
This research is informed by the national standardisation of curriculum in Australia and implementation of the Western Australian Curriculum – The Arts. The current requirement for primary teachers to teach across the full range of learning areas (the Arts being one such learning area) has resulted in a very crowded curriculum (Russell-Bowie, 2011). The depth and breadth of Arts subjects taught depends on many factors outside the physical classroom. Understanding these factors is the focus of this research. We are interested to learn how these factors impact on the purpose and value of the arts at ____ Catholic Primary School so we are inviting you to participate in this research project during Term 4, 2016.

This research forms part of the requirements of a Doctor of Philosophy degree undertaken by doctoral candidate Sian Chapman, supervised by Associate Professor Peter Wright.

Aim of the Study – Phase 3
This phase of the study aims to explore the purpose and value of the Arts at ____ Catholic Primary School and the impact this has on the teaching program.

What Does Your Participation Involve?
Working alongside the researcher, arts understandings for this particular school context are developed, sharing the insights found about arts practice, integration and cultural production identified in phase 2 of the research project. The researcher will observe lessons across the term (if and when convenient) of you when using Arts content in your classrooms.

Participation also involves four 15 - 20 minute interviews in Weeks 3, 5, 7 and 9 where your views on the purpose and value of the arts as they relate to ____ are sought. Questions will consider the personal value, usefulness value and the connectedness value of the arts to current arts learning programs at ____ Catholic Primary School. After each interview the conversation will be transcribed and returned to you for checking.
Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study
It is important that you understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary. While we would be pleased to have you participate, we respect your right to decline. There will be no consequences to you if you decide not to participate. If you decide to discontinue participation at any time, you may do so without providing an explanation. If you withdraw, all information you have provided will be destroyed.

Your privacy
Your privacy is very important to us. Your participation in this study and any information will be treated in a confidential manner. Your name and identifying details will not be used in any publication arising out of the research. Following the study, the data will be kept in a de-identified format, in a locked cabinet in the office of the Chief Investigator.

Possible Benefits
As a teacher it is not always easy to have your views heard. Participation in this research will allow you to be part of a study that seeks to understand some of the difficulties facing classroom teachers during curriculum implementation. Working with the researcher over the course of the term will hopefully increase understanding of the arts curriculum and its implementation.

Possible Risks
There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study.

Questions
If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact either AP Peter Wright on ph 9360 2242 or Sian Chapman on ph 0417 932 295. Either of us would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you.

Once we have analysed the information from this study we will email you a summary of our findings. You can expect to receive this feedback in 2017.

This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 2014/250). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University’s Research Ethics Office (Tel. 08 9360 6677 (for overseas studies, +61 8 9360 6677) or e-mail ethics@murdoch.edu.au). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Understanding, Interpreting and Enacting Arts Curriculum. 
A mixed methods study into the Western Australian experience.

I have read the participant information sheet, which explains the nature of the research and the possible risks. The information has been explained to me and all my questions have been satisfactorily answered. I have been given a copy of the information sheet to keep.

I am happy to be interviewed and for the interview to be audio recorded as part of this research. I understand that I do not have to answer particular questions if I do not want to and that I can withdraw at any time without needing to give a reason and without consequences to myself.

I agree that research data from the results of the study may be published provided my name or any identifying data is not used. I have also been informed that I may not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study.

I understand that all information provided by me is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.

Participant's name: ____________________

Signature of Participant: ____________________ Date: ........../........./........

I confirm that I have provided the Information Letter concerning this study to the above participant; I have explained the study and have answered all questions asked of me.

Signature of researcher: ____________________ Date: ........../........./........
Understanding, Interpreting and Enacting Arts Curriculum.  
A mixed methods study into the Western Australian experience.

Consent Form

- I have read this document and understand the aims, procedures, and risks of this project, as described within it.
- For any questions I may have had, I have taken up the invitation to ask those questions, and I am satisfied with the answers I received.
- I am willing for Statewide Support Services to become involved in the research project, as described.
- I understand that participation in the project is entirely voluntarily.
- I understand that Statewide Support Services is free to withdraw its participation at any time, without affecting the relationship with the research team or Murdoch University.
- I understand that this research may be published in a journal, provided that the participants or the department are not identified in any way.
- I understand that Statewide Support Services will be provided with a copy of the findings from this research upon its completion.

Name of Site Manager (printed): 

Signature: ___________________________ Date: / / 

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APPENDIX 3

Interview Questions

Interview Questions – Phase 1 and 2

*What impact do the situated contexts of the school have on enacting arts curriculum?*

1. Tell me about your impression of this school – physically, student body?
   Prompts might include:
   - Where are the students from – ethnicity, teacher impression of socio-economic status?
   - What is the student’s background in the arts? Do they talk about outside interests in class?

2. How do your students respond to arts-based lessons?
   - Generally?
   - Arts subjects specifically?
   - What impacts on their behaviour?

*How do the professional cultures of the school impact on curriculum enactment processes (for arts learning)?*

1. Which arts subjects do you feel most comfortable teaching? Why?

2. What is your background in relation to the Arts?

3. Describe your most memorable arts learning experience (as a teacher or student teacher)? What made it memorable?

4. In what ways does the school organise for learning opportunities in each of the Arts subjects?

5. What would you say to the suggestion that the arts aren’t taught in primary schools because of the background and skill level of the classroom teacher?

6. The school is expected to manage a number of different policies at any one time. How does the school leadership involve staff in this process?

7. Where do the Arts sit in these curriculum discussions?

8. What is your understanding of the arts policy management processes within the school?

9. Who has carriage of arts curriculum in this school? Why?
What role do the material contexts of the school play in supporting or inhibiting curriculum enactment in the Arts?

1. How does the physical layout of the school impact on your ability to offer arts activities to your students?

2. What role does the staffing profile of the school play in your ability to teach the arts curriculum?

How do external contexts impact the curriculum enactment process for the Arts?

1. What policies or initiatives have been given priority in this school for the current planning cycle? How does this impact on the teaching of arts subjects?

2. What is your understanding of the timeline for implementation of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts in Western Australian schools?

3. Research talks about the messy, contested process of “enacting” policy and curriculum. What do you think makes the process “messy”? What challenges do you face when implementing new policy or curriculum?

4. What do you need from the school leadership and/or Department of Education to make this process of enactment easier?
Interview Questions – Phase 3

Proposed Interview Questions – Phase 3

First interview

1. What is your understanding of the purpose of the arts for this school?
   Prompts - Is it to improve arts skills?
   - Is it to help with learning in other areas?
   - Is it to promote the sense of community within the school?
   - A combination or something else entirely?

2. What is an example of this purpose in the way the arts are used in the school? By you or other teachers?

3. How do you show value for the arts in your own teaching practice?

4. Does your sense of value for the arts align with what you see as how the school as a whole/school leadership/school community value? In what ways?

5. How easily do the current arts curriculum documents work for you in achieving your arts aims for the school?

6. What do you need, if anything, to make the curriculum easier to use?

7. What do you see as our plan for the next couple of weeks?

Proposed Interview Questions – Subsequent interviews

1. Has your understanding of the purpose of the arts for this school changed in any way since our last conversation?

2. Have you seen / experienced any examples of alternate purposes since our last conversation? Can you describe how that came about?

3. Do you sense a change in the way other staff see the arts as a result of our work? Either in purpose or value?

4. How comfortable do you feel with using the arts curriculum as a result of our work together? Has it changed your practice?

5. What do you see as our plan for the next couple of weeks?