The Potential of Professional Learning Communities for Teacher Learning

in the Community High Schools in the Solomon Islands

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education at Massey University (Manawatu), New Zealand

By

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2013

Abstract

The rapid growth of community high schools throughout the Solomon Islands, since the 1990s, has put pressure on the government to provide trained teachers, together with school curriculum materials and resources. Moreover, the Solomon Islands are expected to experience a shortage of trained teachers over the next decade. An effective approach that could be used to address the shortage of trained teachers is the establishment of professional learning communities. This study explores the pre-existing 'cultures' of teachers within two community high schools, in order to illuminate the formal and non-formal learning experiences of teachers (together with other significant contextual factors related to these community high schools), which could be built upon, to develop effective professional learning communities that would lead to quality teacher learning.

This study draws on qualitative research methods and uses a case study approach. Ten teachers in two community high schools participated in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. A reflective journal was also used to gather data. The research question that guided the data collection was:

> *What are the formal and informal learning experiences of teachers in community high schools that may provide the basis for developing professional learning communities for teachers' learning?*

The key findings of this research include the potential teaching and learning experiences of the teachers in these two community high schools, which could be further improved, in order to develop effective professional learning communities. Shared values and norms; collaborative practices and structures; reflective practices; and a focus on student learning lend support to professional learning communities. The findings also highlight existing obstacles and hindrances to teachers' learning experiences and practices that need to be addressed, in order for professional learning communities to be established successfully in these schools. This study suggests six recommendations for the establishment of professional learning communities in community high schools which includes: shared responsibilities; sharing information and ideas; active leadership roles; frequent departmental staff meetings; staff devotions; and support from all stakeholders.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to God for with You and through You all things are made possible in my study journey.

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Acknowledgement

I wish to acknowledge a number of individuals and institutions, that without their support this research study would not have been completed.

Firstly, I am greatly indebted to my first supervisors, Gloria Slater and Dr. Marg Gilling, who have supported and encouraged me to pursue my research interest. I also thank them for guiding me in developing a deeper understanding of my research topic and the qualitative research methods and processes needed for my field study. I would also like to express my sincere thanks and acknowledgement to my later supervisors, Associate Professor Tracy Riley and Jodie Hunter, who willingly agreed to supervise the writing stage of my study. I am most grateful for their encouragement, guidance and advice.

Secondly, I would like to thank Dr. Jenny Poskitt, Director of the Graduate School of Education, for providing me with sufficient time to complete my study.

Thirdly, my deepest gratitude goes to the New Zealand Government for providing me with a scholarship and the opportunity to study at Massey University. My sincere thanks go to the Manawatu Campus International Support Staff, the Pasifika Student Services, Karilyn Andrews and Lynley Hayward for their advice, encouragement and support. Special thanks to Jasmine Waleafea for the transcription of the interviews. I acknowledge the professional help and advice of Christine Beach in my writing and for being a mentor to me. Justin Grayson has also provided assistance with figures and tables. Thanks to Nguyen Buu Huan, lecturer in English (Vietnam) for his advices in my writing. My appreciation also goes to Lar Sau for some financial assistance.

Fourthly, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to Jane, Peter, Andrew, Paul, Dorcas, Mary, Anna, Matthew, Dennis and Luke, who have devoted their time to willingly participate in this study and to share their ideas on the research topic. *Barava big tagio tumas lo ufala everiwan nao.*

Fifthly, I would like to thank the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development of the Solomon Islands for granting me permission to conduct my research in the Solomon Islands. I am also thankful to the Education Authorities – Honiara City Council Authority and the South Seas Evangelical Church Authority – for allowing me access to the Sunshine Com-

munity High School and the Roadway Community High School for data collection. My sincere thanks go to the principals and administrators of Sunshine Community High School and Roadway Community High School for accepting me into their schools and providing time for me to meet with their teachers.

Sixthly, I would like to express my appreciation to Salumata Tanito for her company during the fieldwork at Roadway Community High School. My humble thanks also go to Sharon Phillip for providing me with accommodation whilst in Honiara.

Seventhly, I would like to acknowledge the support and prayers of all my colleagues and friends whom I cannot name them all. I owe much gratitude to Raynier Tutuo and family, Tozen Leokana and family, Adi Galokepoto and Samson Kakadi for their friendship, support and prayers. Also, my sincere thanks go to the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Palmerston North for their prayers and support during my study in New Zealand. I also thank Meryl Strawbridge for her continuous kindness and support during my stay in the Blair residence.

Next, I would like to convey my uttermost thanks to my dear parents, Pastor Newton Galokale and Ruth Galokale. I thank them for faithfully encouraging me to pursue my dreams and goals in my academic life. I thank them for nurturing in me this motto: "If somebody can do it, why can't I?" which has kept me focused on what I wanted to achieve in life, no matter how challenging this journey has seemed to be. Their teachings and advices have helped me to understand the value of my learning. Without their prayers, guidance and understanding, I would not have reached my academic goals. I also would like to thank my siblings: Karen Bari Galokale, Karlrick Galokale, Gaby Zeff Tanakaka Galokale, Zarren Sabazu Galokale and Zillaren Chrizelno Pezagu Galokale, for their prayers and support. Also, thanks is extended to Derek Futaiasi (though far) for keeping me awake during the final stages of my writing, when energy is waning and motivation is fading.

Finally, all glory, honour and praise is accredited to God for knowledge, wisdom and understanding. I praise God for never ever leaving me alone to walk this journey. I thank God for His faithfulness, His love, mercy and grace in providing me with all my needs throughout my study, so that I can fulfil His plans for my life.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

After finishing Form Five, Jane found herself as a village girl in the Solomon Islands because there were no other means for her family to support her nursing studies any further, which was her great passion. One year had passed and the hope of becoming a nurse in the near future had started to slip away, when an opening of light paved the way for Jane[1], as she discovered that there was a desperate need for teachers (whether qualified or unqualified) at Roadway Community High School (RCHS[2]), a remote school located in her area. Therefore, with no teacher training experience, Jane became an untrained teacher teaching the Grade Three Class at that school. While teaching as an untrained teacher, golden opportunities started to open up for her and soon she was enrolled in an Adult Learner Training Program at Kaotave RTC provided by the South Seas Evangelical Church Education Authority, which was comprised of a three-block training over two years. After completing the first block during the first three months, the school principal asked her to leave her primary class, in order to teach the Home Economics subject in Form One to Form Three classes, despite her lack of teaching experience in that subject. Later, when she had completed her third block, she was accepted to take up full time study at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education for three years. When Jane finally received her Diploma in Secondary Teaching, she came back to teach in RCHS as a qualified Home Economics teacher. Although Jane is now a qualified teacher, she still faces many challenges and difficulties in her teaching and learning experiences. This is mainly due to working in isolation being the only female teacher in the community high school (CHS), in addition to the lack of a classroom and materials for the Home Economics subject.

This story of Jane (who is one of the participants in this study) is common amongst many teachers in CHSs in the Solomon Islands. There are teachers who entered into teaching as unqualified primary teachers and who are now teachers in CHSs, without formal teacher training, and there are teachers like Jane, who have teaching qualifications, but still face dif-

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[1] A pseudonym is used for the name.
[2] A pseudonym is used for the community high school name.

ficulties in their teaching and learning experiences. This study seeks to address the difficulties that teachers, like Jane face in their teaching and learning experiences in CHSs throughout the Solomon Islands.

This chapter provides a brief background on this research. Firstly, it offers readers information about the Solomon Islands. Secondly, the chapter introduces the research questions and the objectives of the study. Thirdly, I introduce my interest in this research. Fourthly, the chapter presents the significance of the study within the Solomon Islands context. The later part of this chapter outlines the organisation of the thesis.

1.2 A brief background on the Solomon Islands

1.2.1 Geographical and physical features

The Solomon Islands is a scattered archipelago (the third largest archipelago in the South Pacific) comprised of approximately 992 mostly rugged mountainous islands and some low-lying coral atolls. The Solomon Islands is located east of Papua New Guinea and 1,800 km east of Australia in the southwest Pacific, spreading across 1,300 km of the Pacific Ocean. Approximately, 350 of the islands are populated. See Figure 1 which shows the location of the Solomon Islands and its' neighbouring countries in the Southwest Pacific.

Figure 1: The location of the Solomon Islands in the Southwest Pacific
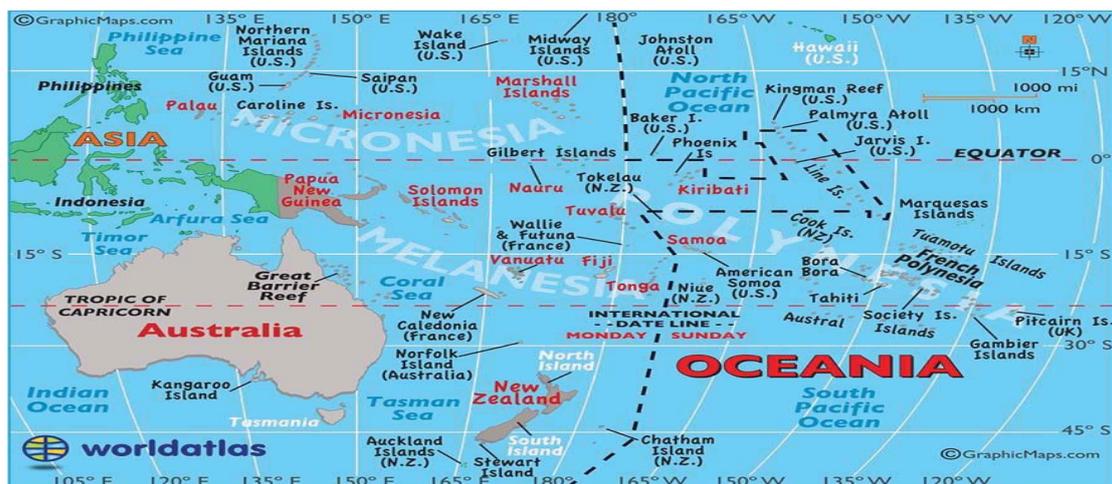
Source: GraphicMaps (n.d).

The Solomon Islands has six main islands, namely, Guadalcanal, Malaita, Santa Isable, San Critobal, Choiseul, New Georgia and Santa Cruz, which comprise the nine provinces of the country. The island of Guadalcanal is the largest island on which the capital city, Honiara, is located. See Figure 2 which shows the map of the Solomon Islands and its six main islands.

Figure 2: Map of the Solomon Islands
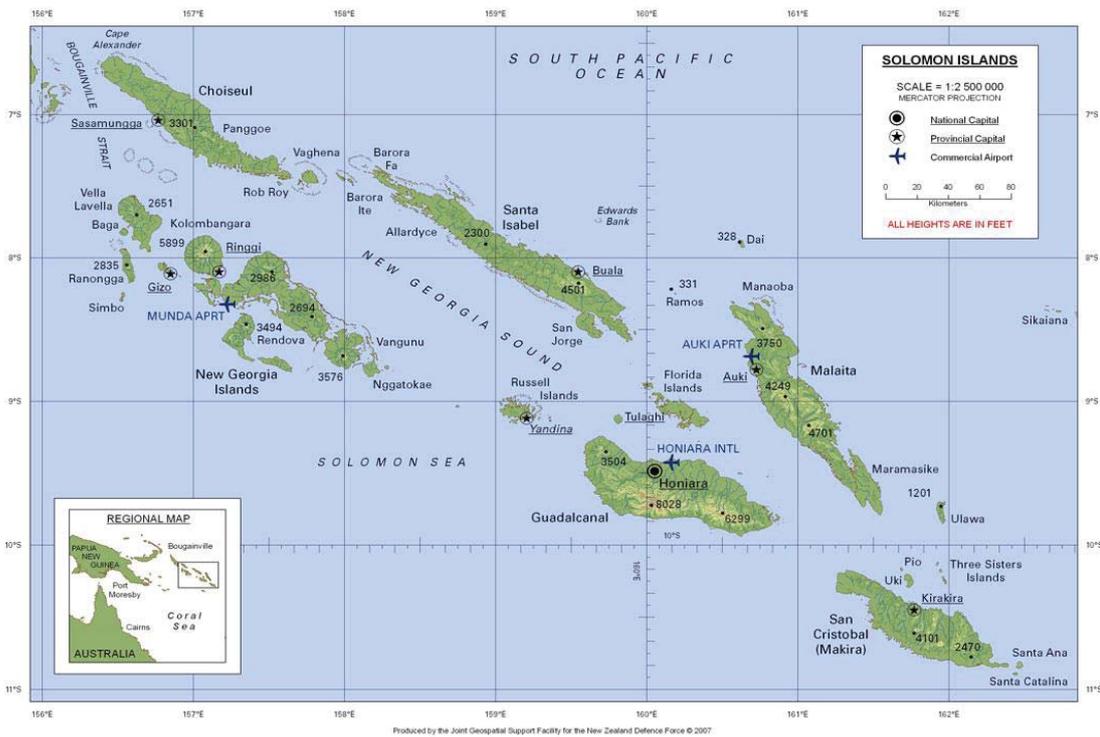
Source: Joint Geospatial Support Facility (2007).

The main islands are rain-forested and mountainous with deep ravines and palm-lined beaches, ringed by coral reefs. The Solomon Islands comprise of many groups of islands, some of which are quite rocky (see Figure 3), while most are high, rugged and mountainous (see Figure 4). There are also many groups of small islands and atolls scattered throughout the country (see Figure 5).

Figure 3: One of the rocky islands in the Solomon Islands

Source: Daams (2005).

Figure 4: High and rugged mountains of one of the six main islands

Source: Galokale (2012a).

Figure 5: A group of smaller islands in one of the provinces

Source: Robichon (n.d.).

Geologically, the Solomon Islands are located along 'The Ring of Fire' with frequent earth-quakes, tremors, tsunamis and volcanic activity. The most recent earthquake and tsunami which hit one of the provinces on 6th February 2013 damaged houses and buildings including schools and claimed a number of lives (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: The Solomon Islands earthquake and tsunami in 2013

Source: HuffPost Social News (2013).

The islands have a tropical equatorial climate with high humidity, but this is altered by trade winds from the sea. The temperature is fairly consistent at 28-30 C, but in the evenings it may drop to 23 C. November to April are generally the higher humidity and higher rainfall

months (St Barbara Limited, 2012; The World Fact Book, 2013; UNESCO Office in Bangkok, 2013).

Thus, the geographical and physical features of the Solomon Islands, along with a large number of small isolated rural communities, make communication and the provision of educational services to schools and communities around the country costly and inefficient (Aruhu, 2010; Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007a).

1.2.2 Socio-economic and cultural context
The population of the Solomon Islands is 584,578 (2012 estimate) and its growth rate of 2.17% (2012 est.) is ranked 40th in the countries of the world (The World Fact Book, 2013). Approximately, 95% of the population are Melanesian and the other 5% is comprised of Polynesians, Micronesians, Chinese and other European communities. Up to 120 indigenous languages and dialects are spoken in the islands and only 1-2% of the population speak English, which is the official language. Thus, most islanders tend to communicate informally in Melanesian pidgin (St Barbara Limited, 2012).

The social structure of each island group is diverse and unique from each other. Each island has its own customs, values, beliefs and strong kinship links and obligations that extend beyond the immediate family group. Another chief characteristic of most communities is that people's status and relationships within their communities is mainly acquired rather than inherited: and there is a strong attachment of the people to the land (Aruhu, 2010).

Religion plays an important role in the Solomon Islands where approximately 96% of the population belong to the Christian faith. This includes the Church of Melanesia, the South Seas Evangelical Church, the Seventh-day Adventists, the United Church, the Christian Fellowship Church and Roman Catholics and other smaller Christian groups (The World Fact Book, 2013).

Approximately, 81% of the total population live in rural areas where they mostly live in widely dispersed settlements along the coasts as seen in Figure 7, while a few isolated settlements are located inland along the rugged mountains and valleys as shown in Figure 8. Only 19% of the total population live in urban areas. The vast majority of the population depends on agriculture, fishing and forestry for their livelihoods, in addition to small-scale incomes from marketing their surplus produce (The World Fact Book, 2013).

Figure 7: A coastal village in the Solomon Islands

Source: Solomon Islands in Pictures (2013).

Figure 8: A village settlement located inland

Source: Galokale (2012b).

1.3 The educational system in the Solomon Islands

Education in the Solomon Islands is governed by the Education Act of 1978 and it is pat-terned after the British education system. Under this act, the Ministry of Education and Hu-man Resources Development (MEHRD) has overall responsibility for the management of the education system within the Solomon Islands. From the top down, education management includes the MEHRD, Education Authorities, schools and communities. In addition, the gov-

ernment recognises the roles of the following stakeholders within the education system: Church Education Authorities; Honiara City Council Education Authority; and Provincial Education Authorities, which are located in the nine provinces. However, according to the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (2007a, p. 15), "A highly centralised system has become increasingly alienated from the very diverse local and provincial priorities and specific demands of its clients and fails to lead in establishing and achieving priorities." Hence, the centralised education system is still an issue faced by the Solomon Islands government when it comes to the delivery of quality education services throughout the country.

1.3.1 The Pre-Primary Level, the Primary Level and the Secondary Level

The Solomon Islands education system consists of Early Childhood Education for ages 3-5; Primary Education for ages 6-11 (Years 1-6); Secondary Education for ages 12-18 (Forms 1-7); and Higher Education for students over the age of 18. The law does not make education compulsory although primary education is free which is the main reason why only 60% of students attend primary school. The basic education system suffers from a lack of qualified teachers, poor facilities (see Figure 9), overcrowded classrooms (see Figure 10), and a shortage of basic teaching materials and an inadequate supply of textbooks (see Figure 11) (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007a).

Figure 9: A classroom can also be used as a student dinning hall

Source: Galokale (2012c).

Figure 10: A crowded classroom
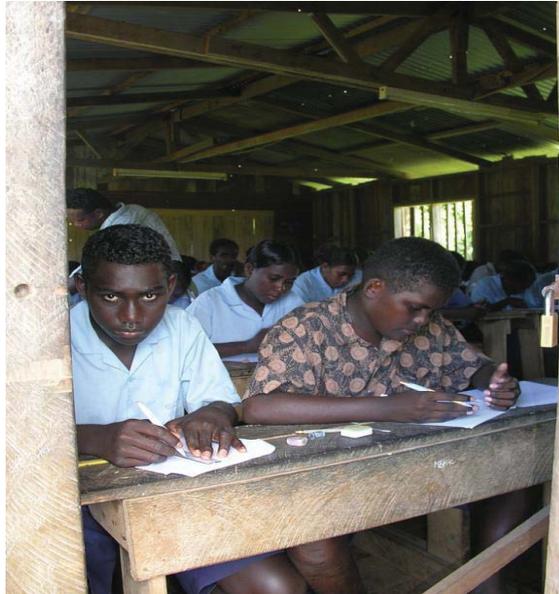
Source: New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2013a)**.**

Figure 11: Boards and chalks- The two main teaching resources for most teachers in remote-ly located schools

Source: New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2013b)**.**

Entry into Secondary school is highly competitive and it is based on students' performance in end of year examinations, with fewer and fewer places being made available at secondary

level (International Council for Open and Distance Education, 2013).The total number of schools and the total number of student enrolments relative to the total number of teachers at each level in 2005, illustrate the challenges faced within the Solomon Islands' education system (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Schools, enrolment and number of teachers in 2005

School level	Total number of schools at each level	Total number of enrolments	Total number of teachers	Student to teacher ratio
Early Childhood Education (Pre-Primary level)	331	11, 251	739	15: 1
Primary Education	650	100, 356	3, 964	25: 1
Secondary Education	142	25, 017	938	27:1

Source: International Council for Open and Distance Education (2013).

1.3.2 Secondary Level

Secondary education (which is the focus of this study) follows on after primary schooling and covers Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary. Junior Secondary refers to secondary schools that offer Form 1 to Form 3 or for some schools they offer Form 1 to Form 5. Senior Secondary refers to secondary schools which offer Form 1 to Form 6- and for a small number of schools, it extends to Form 7. There are three types of secondary schools and these include: National Secondary Schools (there were nine such schools in 2005); Provincial Secondary Schools (16 schools in 2005); and Community High Schools (117 schools in 2005), which also offered primary education (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007a). The National Secondary Schools and the Provincial Secondary Schools are mostly Senior Secondary and the Community High Schools are considered Junior Secondary.

The enrolment data for secondary schools shows 25,017 Secondary Schools in 2005: Community High Schools reported the highest enrolment of 16,188 students; Provincial Secondary schools, 5,377; and finally, National Secondary Schools, 3,452 (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007a).

National Secondary Schools are boarding schools run by the Solomon Islands Government or church authorities and they accept students from across the country. Provincial Secondary Schools were established in the 1980s, in order to expand the number of Junior Secondary School places. In many cases, the existing facilities have not been expanded since that time. These schools are managed by the provincial governments and their students are mostly restricted to the provinces only. CHSs, which were established in the early 1990s, are secondary schools that began as primary schools, but were later expanded to provide secondary classes. Thus, CHSs are often referred to as 'top-up' schools. These schools are built and managed by communities, with the assistance of the church authorities or the provinces (International Council for Open and Distance Education, 2013; Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007a).

At secondary level, the Principal is the leader of the school, followed by the Deputy Principal and then the Chaplain who usually make up the main members of the school administration committee. For secondary schools with Form 6 and Form 7, they have a tutor. Then in each subject department, there is the Subject Head of Department, Senior Secondary teacher and the Secondary teacher (See Figure 13 for a brief description of the post titles, scope of duties and who they are responsible to and report to) (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2011).

Figure 13: The post titles in the secondary level

Post titles	Responsible to	Scope of duties	Reports to
Secondary Teacher	Principal	Teach subject and classes allocated by the Principal and assist with the running of the school	- Senior Secondary Teacher/Heads of Department for all teaching related matters, and curriculum requirements; - Principal for all students discipline, academic matters, pedagogical issues and oth-

			er administrative matters; and - Parents on the academic progress of the students under their responsibility.
Senior Secondary Teacher	Principal	- Teach classes allocated by the Principal; assist with the running of the school and provide professional leadership in a curriculum area.	- Principal for professional, financial and other related matters as required; - Deputy Principal for academic matters and pedagogical issues and for student discipline and other administrative matters; and - Parents on the academic progress of the students under their responsibility.
Subject Head of Department	Principal	- Supervise three teachers and above in a department; - Teach classes allocated by the Principal; Provide professional guidance and administrative leadership to other teachers in curriculum areas and assist with the running of the school.	- Principal for professional, financially and other related matters as required; - Deputy Principal for academic matters and pedagogical issues and for student discipline and other administrative matters; - Other Subject Department Heads for all academic related matters, curriculum requirements; and - Parents on the academic progress of the students under their responsibility.
Form 6 & 7 Tutor	Principal	- Provide career and academic guidance to Form 6 & Form 7 students and supervise the administration of External Assessments.	- Senior Secondary Teacher/Heads of Department for all teaching related matters and curriculum requirements; - Principal for all students discipline, academic matters, pedagogical issues and other administrative matters; and - Parents on the academic progress of their students under their responsibility.
Chaplain	Principal	Teach subject and classes allocated by the Principal and provide pastoral care for stu-	- Senior Secondary Teacher/Heads of Department for all teaching related matters,

		dents.	and curriculum requirements; - Principal for all students discipline, academic matters, pedagogical issues and other administrative matters; and - Parents on the academic progress of the students under their responsibility.
Deputy Principal	Principal	Assist the Principal in the administration and leadership of the school	- Principal and School board for all students discipline, academic matters, pedagogical issues and other administrative matters; - Other subject Department Heads for all academic related matters, and curriculum requirements; and - Parents on the academic progress of the students under their responsibility.
Principal	Chief Education Officer	Manage and implement the school development plan and all teaching and administrative staff at the school. Liaise well with the school board and increase active involvement of the community in the co-management of the school.	- Ensure that school fees and other funds are properly accounted for and reported to the School Committee/Board of Governors and Education Authority; - Keep proper records of staff and students of the school and report quarterly to the Education Authority; and - Timely bi-annual retirements of school grants and be properly accountable for all school funds as prescribed in the School Financial Manual.

Source: Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (2011).

1.3.4 Tertiary Institutions for Education

There are three established tertiary institutions in the Solomon Islands. Firstly, the main state supported tertiary institution is the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) established in 1984 and it offers both vocational and tertiary courses. SICHE has seven schools, which include: Industrial Development; Natural Resources; Finance and Ad-

ministration; Humanities, Science and Media; Nursing and Health Studies; Education; and Marine and Fisheries. In the School of Education, SICHE offers the following qualifications:

- Certificate in Teaching Early Childhood Education
- Certificate in Teaching Primary
- Certificate in Teaching Secondary
- Certificate in Education Adult Learners
- Diploma of Early Childhood Education
- Diploma of Teaching Primary
- Diploma of Teaching Secondary
- Diploma of Teaching Primary - In Service
- Graduate Diploma in Teaching Secondary

In 2012, the Solomon Islands National Parliament enacted the Solomon Islands National University Act to establish SICHE as the Solomon Islands National University.

The second established tertiary institution is The University of the South Pacific (USP) in which the Solomon Islands is a regional partner, operating a campus in Honiara, the capital city. The USP has been in the country since the early 1970s and it provides local USP students with access to video broadcast courses, online learning materials and teleconferencing facilities, which were all upgraded in 2006. USP offers a wide range of distance education courses for local students. The third tertiary institution is The University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), which entered the country in 2009 and established its open campus in Honiara. UPNG also offers distance education courses.

Apart from SICHE also being a vocational education and training (TVET) provider, Church groups, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and community-based organisations, provide TVET through Community-Based Training Centres (CBTCs) and Rural Training Centres (RTCs) in rural and remote areas of the country. Courses delivered at local centres include literacy, agriculture, carpentry, building, mechanics, home economics, bookkeeping, business skills, and life skills.

1.3.5 How one can become a teacher in the Solomon Islands

The College of Education accepts students who have successfully completed their Form Six and Form Seven qualifications with good grades. In addition, those who already hold a certificate in teaching (and who have been teaching for ten or more years) can also apply to upgrade their skills and qualifications. Those students, who have completed some USP foundation units, education courses or UPNG foundation units, can also apply to the College of Education. Students wishing to further their studies in Bachelor's Degree, Masters or PhD in Education, can apply to attend the tertiary education institutions of Papua New Guinea, the main campus of USP in Suva, Fiji, or tertiary institutions in Australia, New Zealand and tertiary institutions in other overseas countries.

1.3.6 How untrained teachers enter schools in the Solomon Islands

A person may become an untrained teacher in the Solomon Islands, when he or she enters directly into teaching without a teacher training qualification. This is due to the demand for teachers especially in CHSs located in remote areas. Consequently, anyone finishing high school (without any opportunity for tertiary study) can enter into teaching. For others who have successfully completed a qualification in a subject area other than education, but unable to find a job in his or her field, teaching is often seen as another pathway for employment. In most cases, when someone begins teaching as an untrained teacher, the school principal will look for opportunities for them to attend courses/blocks provided by CBTCs and RTCs or SICHE. When completing a set of courses or blocks, one can apply to SICHE to undertake full-time study, in order to acquire a teaching qualification or to become a qualified teacher.

1.3.7 The Development of Community High Schools

Since the early 1990s, there has been a rapid growth in CHSs established throughout the Solomon Islands (Ministry of Education and Human Resources 2007a). According to Sikua and Alcorn (2010), the establishment of CHSs has been influenced by a number of factors:

- The rising population which contributes to a lack of secondary spaces and thus, the number of dropouts is increasing each year;
- To address the issue arising from the country's geography and scattered population, and to ensure that there is a balance of educational opportunities for people in both urban and rural areas;

- To reduce costs, since the majority of CHSs would be day schools and less costly to run than secondary schools, which are generally boarding schools; and
- CHSs can develop a sense of ownership and pride within local communities and thus encourage partnerships between central government, provincial education authorities, schools, and communities.

However, the rapid growth of CHSs has put pressure on "the capacity of governments to provide trained teachers, equipment and curriculum support materials. Most do not possess the buildings required to teach all subjects" (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007a, p. 67).

In 2007, the Solomon Islands Government, through the MEHRD and all the education authorities (provincial, church and private education authorities), endorsed the Teacher Education and Development Policy Statement 2007-2009, which was the first step in developing policies and implementation strategies for teacher education and teacher development (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007b). The vision of this policy is for all teachers in the Solomon Islands to get the best possible professional development and training at all levels of education, in order to provide effective learning for students. One of the important rationale for this policy is to ensure that "there are enough well-trained and motivated teachers to deliver a quality education" (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007a, p. 6). According to the findings of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (2007a), it is projected that the Solomon Islands will experience a shortage of qualified teachers over the next decade. Thus, one of the immediate policy priorities in the Teacher Education and Development Plan is to provide continuing professional development training for teachers (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007b).

In addition, the MEHRD has encouraged teacher education, training and continuing professional development from providers, in order to explore a range of methods, models and approaches to the delivery of teacher training and development. These approaches include distance and flexible learning modes, which teachers can use in order to pursue studies offered by overseas based institutions; in-service upgrading and pre-service training at Diplo-

ma level at the School of Education at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education; and a field-based delivery mode (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007a).

However, to date, the Solomon Islands government is still questioning whether the current teacher education and development plan has met the needs for professional development and training of all existing teachers: and whether the implementation of this plan over the three-year period (2007-2009) has met the teacher supply demand needs of the country. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Office of the High Commioner for Human Rights (2011), the country still suffers from a shortage of qualified teachers and limited learning resources. These problems will remain as crucial issues for a while, given the high growth rate of the country's population, which means that even *more* qualified teachers and learning resources are needed each year.

1.4 Research question and objectives

The general research question that guided this study is: **What are the formal and informal learning experiences of teachers in Community High Schools that may provide the basis for developing professional learning communities for teachers' learning?**

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1) To identify the existing formal and informal learning experiences of teachers, together with the supporting contextual factors that may provide the basis for developing professional learning communities within Community High Schools;
2) To consider the learning experiences of teachers and the contextual factors that may hinder the creation and development of effective professional learning communities within Community High Schools.

Thus, this study has explored the pre-existing 'cultures' of teachers in secondary schools, especially in the CHSs, in order to illuminate the current learning experiences of the teachers. Of particular interest are the formal and non-formal learning experiences of teachers, together with other significant contextual factors related to community high schools, which could be built upon, in order to develop effective professional learning communities within

schools in the future, in addition to identifying those factors that may be constraints to the development of professional learning communities.

1.5 My research interest

In 2010, the head of the English department at my previous school, Crystal College[3], where I taught before taking up this study, drew up a plan for professional development for English teachers (including myself) in my school and our sister-school. It was only a two-hour programme from 3-5pm after school. The main focus of this professional development programme was to encourage the English teachers to collaborate and share our teaching methods and approaches, for the purpose of enhancing students' learning development. This professional development programme was implemented because, in 2010, the majority of English teachers were beginner teachers, who had just started teaching and there was a need for experienced teachers to mentor and collaborate with the beginner teachers. The facilitator of the professional development programme was the head teacher of the English department, with seven years teaching experience. During the programme, a senior teacher, the head teacher, and I shared with the other teachers a teaching method and a student learning activity, which we had taught in our English classes. Subsequently, there was no further discussion (due to limited time) and the facilitator summed up the professional development programme. However, during my three years teaching in that school, this was the only professional development programme of this sort facilitated for staff professional development. Similarly, in the two previous CHSs where I had taught, there were not any continuous professional development programmes offered to the teachers.

Overall, this professional development programme was largely ineffective in facilitating any long-term sustainable change at Crystal College for the English teachers. The question of why this professional development programme was not effective has been in my mind since attending the professional development programme. Further queries about this were triggered when I undertook postgraduate study in 2011. One of the papers, *263701 Enhancing Teacher Learning,* provoked serious consideration about how best to support teacher learning. This paper focuses on studying teachers' professional learning, covering theoretical and practical issues related to teacher learning. One of the ideas studied in the paper, which can

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[3] A pseudonym is used for the College name.

enhance teacher learning, is the notion of a professional learning community and this idea caught my attention, since I believe that professional learning communities may be one possible approach (if established in schools in the Solomon Islands) that might help to develop and support teachers' professional development and professional learning. Furthermore, by reflecting on this paper, I realised that there were a number of issues and constraints to the professional development programme offered in the past to Crystal College teachers and their sister-school – and the establishment of a professional learning community in these schools might help to address these issues. Briefly, the issues and constraints are as follows:

- Meeting times were not held for the teachers, following the first meeting;
- The limited time of two hurried hours for this professional development programme provided minimum opportunities for the teachers to hold professional conversations and dialogues with each other;
- Coaching or mentoring was not put in place for the beginner teachers following the professional development programme and generally teachers work in isolation;
- Minimum support from the school principal when the head of the English department approached him for resources and financial support;
- Expertise was not available due to financial constraints on the school: and an external expert, who was sought to help with the professional development programmes, could not attend;
- An evaluation was not undertaken to determine whether the programme was effective for the teachers (or not): or what improvement was needed for future professional development programmes.

The issues related to the Crystal College professional development programme, which needed to be addressed in order for teachers' professional learning be supported, are identified by a range of researchers (Guskey, 2002a, 2002b; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Hill, Hawk, & Taylor, 2001; Huebner, 2009; Little, 2002; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008) and also addressed in the literature review in Chapter Two.

Through undertaking research in this area, I believe that the findings in this study will make a significant contribution toward addressing the issues relating to the lack of professional

development programmes: and also help school leaders to run professional development programmes that meet the needs of each teacher or participant.

1.6 Significance of this study

Information gathered from this study will develop an awareness, within individual teachers (such as Jane) of their learning experiences – whether formal or informal –and how these learning experiences have influenced their daily teaching and learning practices. Moreover, individual teachers needs to become aware that their daily learning experiences may be nurtured within developing professional learning communities within their schools. As a result, this may bring immense benefits to their professional learning, in addition to providing on-going professional support for their development, resulting in benefits for their students.

This study also intends to address the issue of 'mixed qualifications', by encouraging qualified teachers to discuss practices with unqualified teachers, in order to upgrade and enhance the professionalism of all teachers.

Furthermore, this study will provide recommendations for school leaders and school administrators on how their leadership roles can nurture pre-existing school cultures, and strengthen structures and conditions within their schools, in order to develop strong professional learning communities: and to consider possible barriers that may hinder this development. Furthermore, this study aspires to ensure that school leaders are aware of the leadership abilities of their teachers, who may be willing to take leadership roles within other aspects of school life, such as being lead teachers in professional learning activities or professional development programmes.

Finally, this study aims to inform the MEHRD, provincial authorities, church authorities, private authorities, the Solomon Islands educators and researchers of ways to work and learn together, in order to put in place effective policies and structures that recognise teachers' daily learning experiences (whether formal or informal). These would be useful in developing a model that can be used in any school for the identification of pre-existing supports and barriers to establishing professional learning communities. The notion of a professional learning community is new in the Solomon Islands context, since there appears to be limited research available on teachers' professional development and learning in the country.

1.7 Thesis Organisation

This thesis is comprised of six chapters. Chapter One has provided a brief background of the Solomon Islands context; its educational system; the research question and objectives; and the significance of the study. Chapter Two reviews the literature relevant to professional learning communities. Chapter Three describes the research methodology of the study, which includes the following: the research methods; ethical considerations; the research procedures; data analysis; and trustworthiness of the research process. Chapter Four presents the main findings of the research. Chapter Five discusses the findings in relation to themes outlined in the literature review. Chapter Six summarises the significant findings and gives recommendations and implications for further research, which may promote the development of professional learning communities for teachers' learning within the existing school cultures in the Solomon Islands. Also, the final chapter outlines the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Research on teachers' professional development and professional learning has gained momentum in this century, as researchers in the field of education have increasingly recognized the complexities associated with teaching and learning. In addition, it is evident that the building of teachers' capacity is more than just attaining new knowledge and skills. In order to deal with these complexities in a rapidly changing global environment, a new approach to professional development and professional learning is required: that is, Professional Learning Communities, or PLCs.

This literature review will begin by firstly introducing the concepts Professional Development (PD) and Professional Learning (PL) and then PLC as a notion for PD and PL of teachers, followed by literature review of key themes which informed this study about PLC. The themes gathered from international literature and key studies from other developed countries are grouped into the following six questions:

- What is a professional learning community?
- What are the benefits of professional learning communities?
- What factors support/or hinder the development process of effective professional learning communities?
- What other factors hinder the sustainability of effective professional learning communities?
- What makes a professional learning community effective?
- What can schools do to sustain effective professional learning communities?

An examination of the research on the topic shows there is little literature on teachers' PL experiences in CHSs in the Solomon Islands, which can be built on for developing PLC for teachers' learning. Most of the studies on the topic are done in developed countries like Australia, New Zealand, the United States and other developed countries. This gap will therefore be partially filled by this research.

2.2 Professional Development (PD) and Professional Learning (PL)

Traditionally, PD in education refers to short term development opportunities for teachers, which include motivating talks for teaching staff on the school's future plans and goals; a specialist offering training to teachers to increase their knowledge on education policies and state standards; or a university professor lecturing to educators in an educational course for advancement of their career and salary (Easton, 2008; Richardson, 2003). However, in this century, many view this form of PD as ineffective (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Chappius, Chappius, & Stiggins, 2009). Guskey (2002b) noted three main purposes for PD include the following: to improve teachers' classroom practice; to improve students' learning outcomes; and to improve teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Guskey pointed out that, unfortunately, the majority of traditional PD programs have failed to meet the expected PD goals, because they have not considered teachers' motivation to participate in PD: and the process of change that occurs for teachers.

Therefore, a new paradigm for PD has been developed called PL, which is, "continuing, active, social and related to practice" (Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 703). This means that PL provides on-going opportunities for teachers to interact with each other and engage in active learning practices, rather than engaging in abstract discussions during workshops (traditional PD). In addition, PL promotes both teachers' learning and teaching, in order to make changes in their professional practice. Effective PL enhances the growth of teachers' knowledge and skills and gives them opportunities to learn new ideas, in addition to sharing, practicing, reflecting on this new knowledge, and embedding changes in their practice (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007).

2.3 Professional learning community: Is it a notion for professional development and professional learning of teachers?

The PD and PL of teachers are important aspects of policies, in order to improve, make a lasting change and ultimately enhance the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms and schools (Chappius et al., 2009; Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005; Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000). There are ways in which teachers' professional learning may be supported.

Firstly, scheduled planning time and frequent contact is important for the implementation of new teaching practices and pedagogy (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Secondly, teacher learning is optimised when teachers have opportunities for group interactions and collaboration with their professional peers (Huebner, 2009). Thirdly, teacher learning is most likely to occur when there is follow-up and helpful feedback on the effects of teachers' efforts on student learning (Guskey, 2002b; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Fourthly, teacher learning is enhanced when there is active support from the school administration, together with active leadership involvement (Hill et al., 2001). If school principals are actively involved in PD programmes, then the heads of departments and teachers will also be motivated and committed to sustaining PD programmes. In addition, external expertise can also support teacher learning (Vescio et al., 2008). External expertise brings in new ideas and practices, which may also be relevant to PD programmes. Moreover, teacher learning is supported when evaluation is undertaken on PD programmes (Guskey, 2002a). Evaluation provides information on whether a PD programme is effective for the teachers (or not) or whether the programme has achieved its purpose. Finally, the PD and PL of teachers must be school-based, in order for PL activities to occur and be sustained (Easton, 2008). As such, an approach that meets the notion of PL is PLC (Little, 2002; Vescio et al., 2008).

A PLC located in a teachers' real world, provides on-going opportunities for them to learn something new and try out the new practices within their specific context (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). A PLC located in a teachers' workplace may also create a supportive environment that minimizes any isolation of the members: and where members care and trust each other even if there is a disagreement (Chappius et al., 2009). Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) noted that, in order to identify problems, members of a PLC must make their practices known to colleagues and take an inquiry stance. Thus, a PLC enables teachers and administrators to continuously seek and share their PL: to critically interrogate new knowledge and understanding into their practice; and then act on this PL to promote and sustain growth and development within their school (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009).

2.4 What is a professional learning community?

There is no universal definition of a PLC because its meaning and interpretation differ from one culture to another. However, each of the words 'professional learning community' makes up the important meaning of the term.

According to Talbert and McLaughlin (1994), the word *professional* implies that a community's work is strengthened by: A specialized and technical knowledge base; A strong and committed service ethic to serve the needs of clients; strong personal identity and professional commitment; and professional collegial support and control over standards and practice.

Friedman and Phillips (2004) further supported these underpinnings of *professional* by suggesting that members in professional associations should maintain and develop their knowledge and practice further, committing themselves to service and reflective practice, personal autonomy and responsibility, judgement and abidance to ethical norms.

Furthermore, Kruse, Louise, and Bryk (1994, p. 4) discussed that in a strong professional community, teachers "can work collectively to set and enforce standards of instruction and learning." These authors further argued that professional communities are strong when teachers engaged in:

- Reflective dialogue;
- De-privatization of their practices;
- In a collective focus on student learning;
- Collaboration; and
- Shared norms.

Also, Hord (1997b, p. 1) found that in a professional community of learners, teachers and administrators in a school "continuously seek and share learning and then act on what they learn." Hord explained that the goal of the teachers' and administrators' actions is to improve and maintain their effectiveness as professionals purposely to positively impact on students' learning.

A related concept to a PLC is a learning community. The idea of a learning community is adapted from Senge's concept of learning organizations (V. Boyd & Hord, 1994; Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). According to Senge (1990), learning organizations are:

> …organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. (p.3)

V. Boyd and Hord (1994, p. 1) further supported this concept of learning organizations by describing a learning community as "a place where critical inquiry is practiced by collegial partners who share a common vision and engage in shared decision-making." They asserted that this continuous critical inquiry provides a foundation for school improvement. Building on the concept of learning community, Hord (1997b) noted seven attributes that support a PLC as:

- Supportive and shared leadership;
- Collective learning;
- Shared values and vision;
- Supportive conditions;
- Structural arrangements;
- Collegial relationships; and
- Shared personal practice.

Easton (2011) identified Hord (1997b) as being the first to use the term *professional learning community.* In contrast, in a more recent study, Edwards (2012, p. 2) argued that there is no distinction between a learning community and a PLC because both concepts are "a social process for turning information into knowledge." In addition, Edwards maintained that both concepts deal with how teachers learn to change their practice.

However, Timperley and Parr (2004) have made distinguishing features between a professional community and a professional *learning* community. They argued that a professional community shares idea, work together and provide support for each other. A PLC on the other hand, focuses on raising student achievement and it does so through learning conversations that focus on analysing and discussing student achievement. Nevertheless,

McLaughline and Talbert (2006, p. 4), have further expanded the definition of a PLC to: "where teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their practice, examine evidence about the relationship between practice and student outcomes, and make changes that improve teaching and learning for the particular students in their classes." They further noted that teacher learning communities within schools hold inter-related functions (build and manage knowledge; create shared language and standards for practice and student outcomes; and maintain a school culture of consistent norms and instructional practice) that provide support for teachers' knowledge base, professionalism, and potential to make decisions on what they learn.

According to Huffman and Jacobson (2003), the concept of PLC provides a process for its members to mutually work together for building the community. Roberts and Pruitt (2009) also recognised that in order to build a successful learning community in a school, every member including the principal, teachers, students, parents and all other community members need to engage collaboratively and collectively. As mentioned earlier by V. Boyd and Hord (1994), continuous critical inquiry is the basis for school improvement and student achievement. Thus, Roberts and Pruitt argued that in order to accomplish the goals of their learning community, the community members must engage in dialogue about issues that affect the learning opportunities that are available and offered to all members of the school community.

The process of having the community members working together and being mutually responsible for building the community is also cited in the work of DuFour and Eaker (1998). According to DuFour and Eaker (1998), when members of a learning community in a school work together as a PLC, their members are able to achieve the following:

- Collectively pursue a shared mission, vision, values and goals;
- Collaboratively work in teams focussed on learning;
- Collectively engage in continuous inquiry into best practice, students' current learning achievement and accepted practices of the school;
- Apply action orientation and experimentation;
- Involve systematic conditions to promote continuous improvement; and
- Maintain a determined focus on results.

Furthermore, DuFour (2004) believed that these characteristics are driven by "Three Big Ideas" that represent the core principles of PLCs: ensure that students learn; engage in a culture of collaboration rather than work in isolation; and constantly focus on results of student learning so that the evidence and indicators of students' learning may help identify what additional help students need and also improve classroom practice.

Underpinning the discussions of *professional learning community* is the interpretation of the term provided by Stoll and Louis (2007). In their study, they claimed that the focus of a PLC is not only on individual teachers' learning but also on PL of teachers within the context of a united or whole group that focusses on collective knowledge and takes place within an environment of interpersonal caring relationships that impact the life of students, teachers and school leaders. Edwards (2012) further reiterated that a PLC puts emphasis on group participation rather than on individual understanding. He mentioned that:

> Learning can occur, and group members hopefully weave relationships based on trust and respect in order to increase their sense of belonging and mutual commitment. Through communal reflection as individuals collaborate, learning communities work to extend each individual's understanding of important knowledge but also add to the knowledge base of the entire community, and create new knowledge that will benefit its members, in a unique location. (p. 3)

However, in a more recent study DuFour (2011a) has argued that a school does not qualify to become a PLC by participating in a program, re-considering current practices, or adopting the PLC pledge. Instead, "A school becomes a professional learning community only when the educators within it align their practices with PLC concept" (DuFour, 2011a, p. 159).

2.5 What are the benefits of professional learning communities?

PD plays a significant role in enhancing teacher learning to help students improve in their learning (Chappius et al., 2009; Ingvarson et al., 2005; Newmann et al., 2000). This recognition is further supported by Poskitt and Taylor (2007, p. 1) who noted that, "the ultimate purpose of PD in education is to impact on the learning of teachers and students, given that teachers and their practices have the most effect on student learning."

A review of research literature both from New Zealand and internationally has shown that in schools where staff are engaged together in PLCs, immense benefits were experienced by

the staff and the students (S. Boyd, December 2005; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Edwards, 2012; Feger & Arruda, 2008; Hord, 1997b; Huffman & Jacobson, 2003; Kilpatrick, Barrett, & Jones, 2003; Lujan & Day, 2010; Morrissey, 2000; Nelson, LeBard, & Waters, 2010; Owens, 2010; Snow-Gerono, 2005; Voulalas & Sharpe, 2005; Wong, 2010).

One of the key benefits experienced by the staff and reported in research is the reduction of isolation of teachers engaging in PLCs (Hord, 1997b; Kilpatrick et al., 2003; Lujan & Day, 2010; Snow-Gerono, 2005). These studies have shown that PLCs reduced isolation by providing opportunities for teachers to meet; promoting teachers to collaborate; and have professional dialogue with each other on daily basis. In addition, these studies show that teachers feel safe and supported, thus shifting the teachers from traditional isolation to community-based culture.

Another benefit experienced by teachers is increased teacher development. Wong (2010) reported that PLCs provide opportunities for teachers to access, share and discuss different kinds of knowledge that encourage teachers to shift their pedagogical skills from traditional-teacher-centred approach to student-oriented learning approach. Also, through adopting a collective responsibility for ensuring high quality intellectual work for their students, teachers shift from focusing on particular topics to paying attention to a constantly changing agenda which serves the school's and community's needs. Accordingly, Wong found that teachers began to accept new ideas and views and to take challenges and risks which further developed teachers' sense of professionalism.

Moreover, teachers share responsibility for student success which is also a benefit engaging in PLCs. Owens (2010) found that teachers, through their participation in PLCs and developing better understanding of their own classroom practice and beliefs in terms of teaching and learning, teachers felt more capable of helping students to become more self-managed and self-directed learners. Feger and Arruda (2008) also reported that the teaching culture and collaboration of teachers improved, and they became more focused on student learning than they were prior to implementation of PLCs. Therefore, when teachers share responsibility for student success and school improvement in PLCs, teachers experience increased satisfaction and morale which result from seeing their students' successes and improved learning (Kilpatrick et al., 2003; Voulalas & Sharpe, 2005).

In addition, Edwards (2012) reported that the discussions and reflection time shared in the PLC gave opportunities for less experienced teachers to grow professionally. Edwards found that more experienced members were able to help their colleagues by sharing their experiences and expertise. Thus, by being able to share successes, failures, and challenges in a trusting environment, all members were able to contribute to one another's efficacy.

Development of new relationships with people and organizations outside of the schools is another benefit brought about by PLCs. As Huffman and Jacobson (2003) mentioned, with increasing diversity in our schools, building partnerships among families, schools, and communities creates opportunities for understanding and for creating strong relationships among stakeholders. S. Boyd (December 2005) found that when teachers form new relationships with individuals, groups, and organisations outside the school, these new relationships provided opportunities for teachers to access recent research and developments in their subject area, which are crucial in developing a deeper knowledge of their subjects and to gain new skills.

Increased leadership development is also another benefit gained through engaging in PLCs. Owens (2010) highlighted that school leaders involved in PLCs felt that they developed a wide range of strategies for supporting teacher learning and a better understanding of effective ways to work with different teams in their school. Also, Owens (2010) reported that they developed a better appreciation of the complex nature of everyday leadership within their school and of the power and possibilities of collaborative work. S. Boyd (December 2005) also mentioned that some teachers have developed their facilitation and leadership abilities from engaging in PLCs, either through a planned process or as a result of new responsibilities and collaborations with others. Hence, S. Boyd confirmed that the lead teachers, facilitators and other staff were more willing to take on leadership roles in other aspects of school life, perceiving themselves to be professional learners and educators.

Finally, teachers are the means by which quality education takes place. Teachers play a fundamental role in transmitting meaningful values, skills and knowledge to their students. When a PD is effective, the students will experience the most significant effect on their learning (Poskitt, 2005).

2.6 What factors support or hinder the development process of effective professional learning communities?

Changes from common approaches to new ideas of enhancing teacher learning need to occur, in order for PLCs to be effective. Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, and Mannings (2001) noted that attention to change processes is necessary, if new ideas are to be implemented. Four factors supporting change processes (which appear to work together) in PLCs will be discussed in this section. These four factors are external expertise; adequate time; positive relationships; and leadership.

2.6.1 External expertise

It is argued that in order to support the development process of effective PLCs, schools need external support and expertise (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). Reeves, Forde, O'Brien, Smith, and Tomlinson (2002) identified expert practitioners as having understanding of their practice at a meta-cognitive level along with having an awareness of the purpose and value of their work which gives them mastery over their performance and deep understanding that enables appropriate use of behaviour in different situations. Poskitt (2005) who used the term *facilitator* to refer to experts, found in her research that outside facilitators had possessed a range of knowledge, process and interpersonal skills. Expertise is then one of the supports necessary for deep change (Heirdsfield, Lamb, & Spry, 2010). Vescio et al. (2008) noted that it is crucial that schools seek external perspectives from different constituents which include families, educators working outside schools' environments, educational research and sociological research, so that all aspects of schools' practices for improvement in teaching and learning be seen as essential efforts of the school members. In addition, strong support with higher educational institutions, social service agencies, businesses and other entities may be powerful means of support, additional funding or technical assistance (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009).

On the same note, external expertise brings new perspectives and skills in regards to new content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Baldwin, 2008; Heirdsfield et al., 2010). Hord (1997a, p. 22) wrote that:

> A powerful form of teacher learning comes from membership in professional communities that extend beyond classrooms and school campuses. Such com-

munities engage individuals in collective work and bring them into contact with other people and possibilities. These settings provide opportunities for teachers to reflect critically on their practice, thus creating new knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning.

Underpinning Hord's assertion is S. Boyd's (December 2005) research which showed that when teachers develop new relationships with external expertise it enables the teachers to engage in professional dialogue with the experts. Also, Boyd's research revealed that teachers gained access to recent research and developments in their subject areas and other useful ideas and skills to support their PD. In addition, Snow-Gerono (2005) reported that teachers feel safe and strengthened by the presence of experts who help them by creating safe places for uncertainty and community, enabling the teachers to feel safe asking questions and inquiring collaboratively on issues of concern. Thus, Jacobson (2010) argued that collaborative expertise is one of the necessary supports for a productive course of inquiry.

Furthermore, it is vital for schools to have networking and partnerships with other learning communities in order to operate successfully (Edwards, 2012). Edwards (2012, p. 8) insisted that "Without wider links to other groups and outside experts, professional learning communities may founder." Similarly, Jackson and Temperley (2007) supported the idea of having a cluster of schools working in partnership. They believed that it is possible for schools to learn from other schools' strengths through networking and this enables more effective internal collaboration.

However, other research has also shown that external supports and outside influence may also act as obstacles for teachers in performing in their jobs effectively (Norwood, 2007). Maloney and Konza (2011) felt that although teachers in their research appeared comfortable with the university researchers and that PL had occurred in the familiar school environment, these outside influences may add additional pressure and constraints on the teachers' general confidence to communicate and voice their differing opinions and willingness to participate and contribute.

Furthermore, seeking help from outside the school may also mean that those within a school or district lack opportunities to develop expertise (Easton, 2011). Easton (2011) argued that school staff or districts can develop their own expertise with powerful PL experiences like identifying their needs within their environment and selecting powerful PL strate-

gies that will help them learn, and also identifying people within the school or district who can be their lead learners. Garreth (2010, p. 9) claimed that, "having reform efforts driven by experienced, respected local teachers is transformation."

Other research however, focuses on the balanced use of inside and outside expertise to inform professional practice in schools and district as necessary (Morris, Chrispeels, & Burke, 2003; Speck & Knipe, 2001). Morris et al. (2003) found that teachers, who participated in successful external teacher networks to improve and strengthen their content and pedagogical knowledge, were able to collaboratively share their expertise at team meetings. These teachers confirmed that the impact of PD doubled their effectiveness as teachers.

2.6.2 Adequate time

Many researchers have considered time as a very important factor to support change process in PLCs (Baldwin, 2008; Easton, 2008; Heirdsfield et al., 2010; Hord, 1997b; Kruse et al., 1994; Lujan & Day, 2010; Morrissey, 2000; Poskitt, 2005; Reichstetter, 2006; Speck & Knipe, 2001). Although time is not the only condition that is important, it is needed for effective learning because teachers needed time to personalize information before they can adapt their ideas or behaviours (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Poskitt, 2005). In addition, Stoll et al. (2006, p. 240) agreed that "time is critical for any non-superficial learning."

Teachers' learning needs to be sustained and extended over time, in order for them to have more opportunities for active learning and deep understanding of new knowledge: before they try out the new practices for improvement (Birman et al., 2000). Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) found that 30-100 hours spread over 6-12 months have larger effects on teacher learning than PD that lasts 14 hours or less which showed no effects on learning. William (2007/2008) suggested a monthly meeting for at least 75 minutes, while Poskitt (2005) believed that due to the different phases of the change process, there is a need for 3-5 years for successful PD.

In addition, Easton (2011) insisted that putting aside time for PL is not enough because the type of time teachers have for learning is also important. Easton further reiterated that faculties need regular and continuous time of sufficient length to engage in learning because what faculties do with their time is important along with the nature of the PLCs' activities, which indicate how well time to learn is used.

However, other research has revealed that it is still common for teachers to rarely have the time to hold professional dialogues with their peers whether in their school sites or across schools or in their district (Snow-Gerono, 2005). Although, time has been built into the school day or school year along with common planning time for teacher teams to come together as learners to engage in collaborative inquiry process, often schools do not make good use of this time resource and members may even become discouraged (Jacobson, 2010).

Another research study by Voulalas and Sharpe (2005) found time to be the main administrative barrier which hinders any transformation as the majority of the research respondents referred to the time conflict between their own roles as leaders of the transformation process along with their on-going administrative responsibilities in the school . Giles and Hargreaves (2006) have also argued that workload brought about by loss of time and the scope of reform, has seriously affected the nature of social interaction and threatens to undermine a school's collaborative team approaches to planning and decision making. Time of the day also impacted teachers' willingness to attend and their level of interaction and participation (Maloney & Konza, 2011). Maloney and Konza (2011, p. 81) reported a participants' comment who says that, "sometimes it is hard to effectively articulate my thoughts due to tiredness (end of the day)."

Nevertheless, the issue of time as a barrier and a dilemma to support teacher learning can be addressed by schools (Blankstein, 2004; Hord, 1997b). For example, in a school where research was undertaken, the administrators and teachers decided to embed regular PD time into the school day (Phillips, 2003). Phillips (2003) found that all the school staff made a commitment to dismiss students early on Friday afternoons and teachers met for PD from 1: 35pm to 3:30pm. These teachers are reported to have greatly benefitted. In other words, formally scheduled time is necessary to implement significant change and to maintain innovation (Easton, 2008; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). Time is needed to reduce staff isolation, increase staff capacity, encourage a caring and productive environment and improve quality of student programs (Reichstetter, 2006). The benefits of time set aside specifically for PD is best articulated by Leo and Cowan (2000, p. 10) who confirmed that "regular and meaningful faculty meetings served as a vehicle to bring all the staff together to discuss issues of importance to student learning."

2.6.3 Positive relationships

Positive relationships are also important to support changes and growth in teacher learning and to encourage members within PLCs to working together productively (Baldwin, 2008; Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Stoll et al., 2006). Two attributes highly recommended by various researchers as necessary to develop positive relationships are trust and respect (Edwards, 2012; Hord, 1997a; Stoll et al., 2006). Hord (1997a) argued that respect and trust among colleagues at the school and district level are relationship qualities that are necessary to build a caring and productive environment that is conducive to change and improvement. Lee (2008, pp. 98-99) stated that "building strong respectful and responsive relationship is a central goal" in building a community. More so, Edwards (2012, pp. 2-3) presented the analogy that "the community forms the fabric on which the learning can occur, and group members hopefully weave relationships based on trust and respect in order to increase their sense of belonging and mutual commitment." When there is trust and respect, other characteristics of effective PLCs like collaboration, reflective dialogue and deprivatization may be encouraged and supported (Stoll et al., 2006).

Furthermore, researchers have also discovered that with increasing diversity in our schools, respect is necessary to improve the learning capacity of a community (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003; Kilpatrick et al., 2003). These researchers argued that in healthy communities, opportunities for diversity of contributions are clear and that acceptance of diversity is an indicator of willingness to entertain new ideas and accept change for PD. Also, respecting diversity promotes learning by encouraging risk-taking. In fact, according to Calderon (1999, p. 95), "the richness of diversity in a faculty must be acknowledged as a powerful learning tool. We need to create spaces where individual talents of teachers can emerge." Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) supported this line of argument by pointing out that mutual respect along with professional knowledge and a climate that invited risk-taking and innovations are human and social resources much needed for professional community. For instance, a study by Lujan and Day (2010) found that PLCs promoted collaboration and helped teachers build relationships, whereby, the majority of teachers reported that they felt PLCs provide a more supportive environment for teachers .

Forming positive relationships with external networks are also an important aspect of a successful PLC (Louis et al., 1996; Vescio et al., 2008; Wong, 2010). Vescio et al. (2008) believed

that teachers working within PLCs need to develop collaborative relationships with re-searchers so that they may be able to help the teachers document the impact of their teaching and learning efforts.

In another study in China, a strong network with outside research and teaching institutions by mathematics teachers within their PLC has shown to provide space for its members to share their views and reflect on their individual practices at a more academic and holistic level (Wong, 2010). However, Wong (2010) also found that lack of interpersonal relationships with outside teacher education institutes had impacted on the English teachers resulting in them becoming less innovative in their PLC.

Hence, Doolittle, Sudeck, and Rattigan (2008, p. 305) argued that "when a learning community has been developed through an effective PDS (professional development school) relationship, educational change can be effectively undertaken." Also, Morrissey (2000) has noted that collegial relationships include:

- Positive educator attitudes;
- Widely shared vision or sense of purpose;
- Norms of continuous critical inquiry and improvement;
- Respect;
- Trust; and
- Positive, caring relationships.

 All these are supporting conditions to maintaining the growth and development of PLCs.

2.6.4 Leadership

It is increasingly recognized that leadership is one of the factors that has the most important role in the change process (Bryk et al., 1999; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Nehring & Fitzsimons, 2011; Owens, 2010; Voulalas & Sharpe, 2005). Stoll et al. (2006) posited that a school's learning culture is significantly influenced by the nature and quality of leadership provided by the principal and senior staff. Nehring and Fitzsimons (2011, p. 158) argued that "an effective PLC leader both regularly exhibits PLC traits and actively fosters their development among faculty." Halverson (2007, p. 94) also pointed out that "the role of school

leaders in stimulating professional community is to create structures for building and fulfilling obligations around issues vital to instructional improvement."

However, Stoll et al. (2006) argued that those in the leading role, like the principals, can only create conditions to develop PLCs but they cannot guarantee that these conditions will work out well. Leadership requires the willingness, trust and respect of all teachers to make the necessary changes (Hord, 1997b; Kilpatrick et al., 2003; Tarnoczi, 2006). In most cases, despite the support the school administration or executive provided, some staff resisted full participation resulting in the school administration having to take full control and power over decisions, thus, making leadership in the PLC to be top-down(Maloney & Konza, 2011).

Nevertheless, Hord (1997a) and S. Boyd (December 2005) noted that when leaders place themselves at the centre of staff learning (rather than at the 'top' of the staff), they may be successful in developing PLC and nurturing and sustaining change. For example, two directors with leadership roles in one school physically located their desks in the teachers' common room, rather than in a separate room, thus, making themselves accessible to the teachers as well as taking the advantage of having conversations with their staff on a daily basis (Hord, 1997a).

A study by Graham (2007) also provided evidence that with leadership practices like commitment, collaboration and supporting teacher team development, teachers identified their principal as being a facilitator and mentor of collaborative learning. The principal was also seen as a motivator, who successfully used many approaches to encourage teachers' involvement in PL activities.

When leaders place themselves at the centre of stakeholders (which include students, teachers, families and community), they set an example of themselves as change agents in re-culturing their school (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003). Huffman and Jacobson (2003, p. 242) maintained that leaders who are effective change agents may lead "the school collaboratively to develop and articulate a shared vision, to learn collectively, to share personally and professionally, and to engage in meaningful long-range planning that provides support for teachers and students."

A leader as a change agent can also be a *champion leader.* According to Stoll, Robertson, Butler-Kisber, Sklar, and Whittingham (2007, p. 71), champions refer to "individuals who will champion the cause at all ends of the communities, who have the energy and commitment, as well as the innovation to try out new ideas and take risks and leaps into an unknown but exciting future." Also, Huffman (2003, p. 32) suggested that, "visionary leadership, combined with shared and collaborative strategies, can provide support for faculty members to invest the time and effort needed to create…the why, what, who and how…values and vision for their school." A study by Phillips (2003) also confirmed that when administrators and teachers collaboratively developed and implemented their reform work, they no longer worked in isolation but offered professional and personal support to each other.

Furthermore, when leaders involve all the stakeholders in bringing reforms to their schools, leadership and power is shared. Shared or supportive leadership is a style or quality that helps schools to become effective PLCs (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Leo & Cowan, 2000; Louis et al., 1996; Morrissey, 2000; Reichstetter, 2006). These researchers provided evidence that with shared leadership, administrators along with teachers work together to question, investigate, and then seek practical answers and decisions for their school improvement. It is also important to note that supportive and shared leadership develops as principals (or leaders) accept collegial relationships with their staff, and are friendly and facilitative in sharing leadership and power (Hord, 1998; Reichstetter, 2006).

Similarly, Voulalas and Sharpe (2005) demonstrated evidence in their study that the majority of the respondents believe that the most important leadership characteristics in the transformation process in learning communities were the ability of leaders to maintain professional awareness and to be exemplary learners themselves. According to Easton (2011), learning leaders are aware that decision-making is less risky when shared across different teams or groups than entrusted to an individual with expertise. Easton also argued that learning leaders are aware that different roles of leadership are needed for an organization to become successful, and leadership needed to be distributed among the faculty and staff. Nelson et al. (2010) described that PLCs are characterized by strong leadership that is distributed across teachers and school administrators. More so, in their study, Benneth, Wise, Woods, and Harvey (2003) reported three distinctive elements of the concept of distributed leadership which are:

- Leadership belongs to a group or network of interacting individuals;
- Leadership is not enclosed within boundaries but it is open; and
- Varieties of expertise are distributed across the many rather than the few.

These three elements further qualify Easton's (2011) reiteration that apart from the formal leadership roles of the principals and assistant principals whose roles are not usually distributed, in distributed leadership, every school staff member is considered a leader. This is whether they are teachers on special assignment, the coaches, the mentors, the department chairs, the team leaders, or the managers of special projects or informal leaders. Earl and Katz (2007) also revealed that with distributed leadership in a network, leadership is not connected to role or position but to activities and practices that are entrusted to many interacting people who work together to influence teaching and learning.

On the other hand of distributed leadership is authoritarian leadership. According to Skytt (2003) research and experience, authoritarian or top- down leadership approaches have limited chance of success and are more likely to face resistance. However, in China where leadership style tends to be more directive and authoritarian, a case study on two subject-based PLCs provides the evidence that the PLC for the mathematics teachers tend to have less conflict and common goals were achieved more easily when they follow rather than challenge tasks and ideas delivered by experts. However, the PLC of English teachers who lack the leadership of experts appeared to be working in isolation and had less clear instruction and guidelines to follow (Wong, 2010). Therefore, Wong (2010, p. 635) concluded that "the success and sustenance of professional learning communities in China seems to follow an authoritarian approach."

Nevertheless, other research still strongly supports that leadership cannot be entrusted to one individual or a small group because successes of the work and practices of PLCs depend on the interactions of many people (Earl & Katz, 2007; Stoll et al., 2006). Thus, Earl and Katz (2007, p. 255) concluded that leadership, both formal and distributed is an important dimension as: "Leadership does not take on a new meaning when qualified by the term 'distributed'. It still means the exercise of influence over the beliefs, actions and values of others. What may be different is how that influence is exercised and to what end."

2.7 What other factors hinder the sustainability of effective professional learning communities?

In developing PLCs, it is also important to consider other factors that may hinder the sustainability of effective PLCs. The development of PLCs will possibly bring changes to the culture of schools. According to Edwards (2012), change is an important process for participants whose knowledge and perspectives are involved. However, change may be complex, challenging, often slow and filled with conflicts, silences and misunderstandings in some schools because often these schools lack the capacities needed to support and sustain change efforts (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Speck & Knipe, 2001). Some challenges and issues faced in the development or sustainability of effective PLCs will be discussed, citing examples from the literature.

Stoll et al. (2006) outlined how school context can impact on teachers' learning. They argued that learning is affected by the contexts in which it takes place. Thus, school size has been found to impact on teachers' learning, with large schools often having more difficulties in developing a strong sense of group identification across the whole school community. Also, improvement is generally more challenging in secondary schools due to a greater diversity of purposes, objectives and department structures. Other factors that impact on teachers' learning include a school's location whether in a rural or isolated area, diversity and mix of students in the school, and historical development of the school. In addition, there are also external factors, which impact teacher learning which include influences from surrounding local communities and broader communities, policy decisions and the availability of learning infrastructure like access to university faculty and PD programs.

Doolittle et al. (2008) reported that while teachers may be exposed to different innovations in both content and curriculum, however their lack of clarity about best practices may also lead to unsuccessful implementation of these innovations. In addition, insufficient common planning time and support for PD may result in schools continue to maintain norms of privacy and isolation and distance themselves from efforts to improve learning. Underpinning Doolittle, Sudeck and Rattigan's work is Dooner, Mandzuk, and Clifton's (2008) finding that teachers might struggle with conflicting views of effective teaching practice, with vague in-

terpretations of educational goals, or with the uncertainty associated with their own professional knowledge base. Often in this case, teachers deal with these conflicts by avoiding interactions and engaging in superficial discussions.

Another case study done by Maloney and Konza (2011) found on-going challenges in the project of developing a community of teachers' PL. These challenges include participants being reluctant to share beliefs that conflicted with those with the strongest voices in the group. As a result, some teachers became passive and refrained from attending group meetings and collegial relationships became difficult. Also, time of the day impacted teachers' willingness to attend and their level of interaction and participation, along with meeting during out of school hours. These factors are underpinned in Baldwin's (2008) work whereby two views were identified to have hindered the effectiveness of professional learning groups. This includes teachers feeling a sense that their involvement is constrained because of their high demands of work; and the mixture of people in many groups results in a variety of personalities and preferred ways of working which may impact on the level of collegiality.

Finally, a study by Poskitt and Taylor (2008) on sustaining PD in reference to the Assess to Learn (AToL) project across New Zealand found that sustaining development was difficult especially when the principal or lead teacher or a number of staff left the school and documentation or systems in the school was poor. Other challenges mentioned were change of facilitator, ineffective relationship between facilitator and principal or lead teacher, resistant staff culture, perceptions of work overload or perceptions of irrelevance of the project to teacher practice.

Despite these challenges faced in development or sustaining of PLCs, research has shown that these issues offer valuable opportunities for in-depth educational discussions and opportunities to understand how these issues affect teacher growth and development (Dooner et al., 2008; Lieberman, 2000). Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009, p. 50) argued that, "persistently working through and reflecting on these challenges creates avenues for community to emerge."

2.8 What makes a professional learning community effective?

PLCs need to be effective in order for teachers' PD and PL to occur. There are as many researches and writing on the characteristics of PLCs that make them effective as there are authors who published on PLCs. In the early 1990s, Kruse et al. (1994) suggested five characteristics that make a PLC effective. These include:

- Reflective dialogue among educators;
- De-privation of practice;
- Collective focus on student learning;
- Collaboration; and
- Shared norms.

In the late 1990s, Hord (1997a) added the importance of supportive conditions, including human and physical or structural capacity as one of the important characteristics. DuFour and Eaker (1998), argued that along with the other characteristics, results-orientation is also important to make a PLC effective. Blankstein (2004) further built on this early work by suggesting five characteristics of a PLC which still over-lap and correlate to the early work on characteristics of PLCs and these include:

- Common mission, vision, values, and goals;
- Ensuring achievement for all students, creating systems for prevention and intervention;
- Collaborative teaming focused on teaching and learning;
- Using data to guide decision making and continuous improvement; and
- Building sustainable leadership capacity.

While there are many other works surrounding characteristics of PLCs, this literature review identifies four key themes that make the PLCs effective and successful and these are shared values and norms; collaborative culture; reflective dialogue inquiry; and focus on student learning.

2.8.1 Shared values and norms

In the current context, vision is used to refer to a school's mission, purpose, goals or objectives. Hord (1997b) in her work identified that shared vision is not just agreeing to an idea but shared vision is a particular mental picture of what is important to an individual or an organization. Hord further noted that a core characteristic of a shared vision is a focus on student learning whereby the potential for achievement of each individual student is taken into consideration and supported by staff. Morrissey (2000) supported Hord's argument by stating that vision is "a total quality focus" on all students' learning (p. 5). Values describe how school staff intends to engage on day-to-day actions, pursing the commitment and talents of all members in a group effort for high intellectual learning, on-going renewal and improvement (Morrissey, 2000). These shared values and vision, then create norms of behaviour that the school staff supports and upholds (Hord, 1997b; Morrissey, 2000).

However, Huffman (2003) cautioned that knowing that values are important for school communities does not guarantee success in a school. Earlier research studies (Hord, 1997b; Kruse et al., 1994; Louis et al., 1996) found that through language and action, teachers affirmed common values and beliefs in professional communities concerning educational issues and in support of the collective focus on student learning. Underpinning these early findings, Huffman argued that there must be an organized structure to highlight and impact values in the actions of the members. The researcher further suggested that "developing the vision statement is one way to achieve the inclusion of values in the school culture" (Huffman, 2003, p. 5).

A number of researchers (Hord, 1998; Reichstetter, 2006; Tara & D'Ette, 2000) argued that shared values and vision should act as guidepost in making decisions about teaching and learning to ensure that all students learn through collaborative and interdependent practice of teachers. Also, shared values make schools to be "less alienating places for learning…members can see themselves as engaged in a shared project to which they are committed to one another for this reason" (Strike, 1999, p. 69). In a more recent work, Lujan and Day (2010) and Vescio et al. (2008) also found that shared values and vision address the problem of isolation among teachers and teachers develop collective views about students' potential and ability to learn, school priorities for use of time and space, and proper roles of parents, teachers and administrators.

However, Huffman (2003) again warned that the vision statement of the school may also fail if it: is a lengthy statement; is loose and without focus; is unrealistic and impractical; and is composed of clichés and catch words. Accordingly, when vision and goals of a school lack clarity and are inconsistent, teachers may be confused and unfocused about the purpose of teaching approaches for students to learn (Nehring & Fitzsimons, 2011). Also, when a school leader does not engage internal and external stakeholders to develop the vision, efforts to work together is weak and fragmented (Huffman, 2003).

2.8.2 Collaborative culture

Collaboration is a relevant factor in building up and maintaining a community of learners (Konza & Maloney, 2011; Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). Collaboration is argued to be a powerful tool to use when working within teams or groups (Kilpatrick et al., 2003). Research has shown that PLCs are based on the idea that through collaboration, members share a common purpose and they are able to learn and achieve more than working individually, leading to continued improvement and organizational growth (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Speck (1999, p. 104) also supported the basis of collaboration by arguing that, "collaboration within a learning community means people working together, breaking down the walls of isolation built by solitary efforts of individuals inside and outside the school". In more recent research, Reichstetter (2006, p. 2) also found that the process of collaboration within PLCs involves members "working together toward common purpose, all the while learning together and continually improving".

Furthermore, collaboration provides a means for teachers to share responsibility for better teaching for student learning (Reichstetter, 2006; Stoll et al., 2006). Research has shown that in a strong PLC, collaboration engages teachers to question, analyse, exchange and reflect on their classroom practices together (Bryk et al., 1999; Dooner et al., 2008; Graham, 2007; Lujan & Day, 2010; Nehring & Fitzsimons, 2011; Owens, 2010; Snow-Gerono, 2005). Kruse et al. (1994) highlighted that collaboration encourages teachers to work together not only to share understandings of students, curriculum and instructional policy, but also it gives opportunities for teachers to design materials and activities for improved instruction, curriculum and assessment for students and to talk about new and different approaches to staff development for the teachers themselves. Vescio et al. (2008) further pointed out that successful collaborative efforts include strategies that open practice in ways that encourage

sharing, reflecting, and taking the risks necessary for change. These strategies encourage members to:

- Share lessons;
- Use protocols for decision making;
- Rely on systematic note taking to inform colleagues about their work;
- Observe each other in their classroom, videotaping and reviewing lessons;
- Investigate teaching problems and collectively talk about new ideas for practice; and
- Engage in literature study circles and professional reading.

However, despite evidence that collaboration is a best practice and tool for teachers and members in PLCs to work together, researchers have also showed that teachers in many schools still work in isolation even when collaboration is promoted and encouraged (DuFour, 2004). Snow-Gerono (2005) found that teachers isolate themselves as a means of protecting themselves, or as a means of avoiding being caught in a rigid system. Moreover, researchers have found that some staff use collaboration to focus on just building a group of trusted friends they have known for a long time, while other staff use collaboration to focus only on operational procedures like student lateness, recess supervision, discipline, technology and social climate (DuFour, 2004; Maloney & Konza, 2011). These researchers reiterated that even though these activities have a meaningful purpose, these activities do not necessarily promote the kind of professional dialogue that can change a school into a PLC. Other researchers found that teachers collaborated instead in a superficial way (Lujan & Day, 2010; Wong, 2010). Teachers needed guidance and PD to learn to collaborate more effectively. As Thessin and Starr (2011, p. 50) emphasised, "simply putting-well-meaning individuals together and expecting them to collaborate was not enough".

Nevertheless, collaboration is widely promoted as critical to the development of schools as PLCs, having positive outcomes for teachers' PL (Konza & Maloney, 2011). Hord (1997a) supported the positive outcomes of collaboration relating that collaboration encourages teachers to:

- Have mutual respect and understanding for each other;
- Help, support and trust each other;
- Tolerate or encourage debate, discussion and disagreement;

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- Comfortably sharing their successes and their failures;

- Praise and recognize one another's triumphs and offer empathy and support for one another's troubles; and

- Support hard work, acceptance of challenging tasks and risk taking.

More recently, other researches have also found that when members collaboratively share their professional practices, it helps them to analyse their own (and their peers') teaching strategies for improvement: and it provides a social network that they can draw on for help to overcome challenges, in order to support each other's learning (Bryk et al., 1999; Dooner et al., 2008; Graham, 2007; Lujan & Day, 2010; Nehring & Fitzsimons, 2011; Owens, 2010; Snow-Gerono, 2005). Also, researchers reported that interdependence (not isolation) and risk-taking (trying new ideas and pedagogy) are encouraged and valued within PLCs, in order for improvement and deep learning to take place (DuFour, 2004; Hill et al., 2001; Huffman & Jacobson, 2003; Snow-Gerono, 2005; Stoll et al., 2006).

2.8.3 Reflective dialogue inquiry

Reflective dialogue inquiry is an important aspect of collaboration. Kwakman (2003) placed reflection as the foundation of PD as it is a requirement to recognize and adapt routine behaviour. Louis et al. (1996, p. 761) defined reflective practice as "self-awareness about one's work as a teacher." Further supporting the work of Louis, Marks and Kruse is Hord's (1997a, p. 20) argument that reflective dialogue occurs when "staff conduct conversations about students and teaching and learning, identifying related issues and problems." Taking another step further on reflective practice is the aspect of dialogue which is relevant for professional growth and educational change. Snow-Gerono (2005) argued that PLCs are successful by the combination of people and dialogue in collaboration around the inquiry process. There needs to be continual dialogue to examine practices and student performance and to develop and implement more effective instructional practices (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). Moreover, Roberts and Pruitt (2009) claimed that reflective practice involves teachers stepping back and thinking deeply about their and others' practice and then developing a new understanding of individual or group goals, beliefs and practices.

When teachers are involved in reflective inquiry, they have the space to express and reflect their own views and ideas, in regards to teaching and learning, which may involve:

- Challenging and questioning one another's practice (in a respectful manner);
- Collectively solving problems and learning through applying new ideas, new strategies and information that meet students' needs;
- Working together to analyse and observing one another's current practices in relation to student achievements;
- Experimenting new practices; and
- Assessing the relationship between current practices and new practices (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Owens, 2010; Reichstetter, 2006; Stoll et al., 2006).

However, this notion of inquiry according to Dooner et al. (2008, p. 565), "is a substantial source of interpersonal tension." These researchers found that conflicts and tensions from different views are clear when professional tensions are seen as personal attacks making teachers and members of the community uncomfortable, unwilling to contribute to the learning and unable to trust each other. Also, in other research, some teachers engaging in collaboration and dialogue, viewed group learning as a waste of their valuable time with little motivation and confidence to express their personal views and adapt to changes and innovations (Maloney & Konza, 2011). Poskitt and Taylor (2007) in their research also found that even though professional conversations provide good opportunities for teachers to gain new knowledge, few teachers have the time, opportunity and skill to engage in professional conversations.

Whether or not dialogue creates tensions or disagreement, Snow-Gerono (2005, p. 251) challenged that "when they do not reach consensus they have still engaged in a productive exercise where learning and growth occurs in connection to uncertainty" (p. 251). Graham (2007) also verified that whether the dialogue is positive or negative, active learning had actually occurred when he found teachers interactively exchanging ideas and practices and reflecting with their peers on lesson plans, student work, and common assessment. Hence, reflective dialogue inquiry within PLCs is important for professional growth and educational change (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Snow-Gerono, 2005).

2.8.4 Focus on student learning

Focus on student learning should be promoted in PLCs. Speck and Knipe (2001) qualified that successful PD needs to focus on continuous improvement and achievement for students. This view is further maintained by Poskitt and Taylor (2007, p. 1) who noted that, "the ultimate purpose of professional development in education is to impact on the learning of teachers and students, given that teachers and their practices have the most effect on student learning." It is claimed that the efforts of a PLC to develop its shared mission, vision, and values; engaging in collective enquiry; build collaborative teams; take action; and focus on continuous improvement must be assessed on the basis of results rather than intentions (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Reichstetter (2006) further reiterated that assessment of student results shows the effectiveness of teaching and whether students have learned or have not learned the relevant curriculum.

Moreover, focus in PLCs goes beyond working together to looking at data. Schools that have committed to using student assessment date use it to: monitor student progress; evaluate where assessment converge and diverge; and judge the efficacy of local curriculum and instructional practices (Cromey, 2000). Supporting the notion of looking at data is the improving approach which looks at student work (Nelson et al., 2010). According Nelson et al. (2010, p. 39), "an improving approach is where teachers hold a view that teaching can always be improved in relation to students' conceptual understandings" by examining student work or engaging in classroom talk to identify students' misconceptions and analyse these in relation to learning expectations. Easton (2008) argued that it is important to examine student growth and achievement, using a range of indicators from anecdotal records to test scores, from actual work of students to graduation rates.

In addition, results of common formative assessments should also be shared amongst team members in PLCs (Reichstetter, 2006). William (2007/2008) argued that meeting regularly in teacher learning communities is one of the best ways for teachers to enhance their skill in using formative assessment. William further commented that formative assessment has the power to promote student achievement, but teachers need continuous support and guidance to link formative assessment into their practice, of which teacher learning communities have the potential to provide such support to teachers.

Research has shown that when teachers participate in assessment activities: it enhances their expertise; and it builds peer-based community with common language which values professional judgment, collaboration, dialogue and decision making (Cromey, 2000). Building on these positive outcomes of teachers' participation in assessment activities is the work of Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) who also found that analysing students' work provides opportunities for teachers to develop a common understanding on what good work is, what common misconceptions students have, and what instructional strategies are working. Therefore, data encourages and motivates teachers to visualize what is occurring and what they need to do together to impact positively on students learning (White & McIntosh, 2007).

2.9 What can schools do to sustain effective professional learning communities?

Educators have found that it is easier to make changes than to maintain changes (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). Roberts and Pruitt (2009) argued that it is not enough to just establish a PLC but measures needed to be put in place in order for the learning community to sustain itself. These authors posed a crucial question that is needed to be taken into consideration from the beginning which is: *What elements must firmly be in place to motivate and encourage teachers to continually engage in learning activities and act on what they have learned for the benefit of students?*

Well, firstly, what is educational sustainability? According to Blankstein (2004) sustainability in educational change comprises six key characteristics which are:

- Improvement that sustains learning, not merely change that alters schooling;
- Improvement that endures over time;
- Improvement that can be supported by available or achievable resources;
- Improvement that is a shared responsibility;
- Improvement that doesn't impact negatively on the surrounding environment of other schools and systems; and
- Improvement that promotes ecological diversity and capacity throughout the educational and community environment.

Poskitt and Taylor (2008, p. 16) viewed sustainability as "a process of questioning and re-flecting on current knowledge and practice, ascertaining the value of practices, monitoring the implementation of any changes, and the capacity to adapt practices to suit the culture of the organisation." Poskitt and Taylor (2008) believed that critical awareness of research and practices outside the organization is crucial to the process of sustainability as effective, and on-going PL requires focus, coherence and resilience under pressure.

It is challenging for schools to sustain effective PLCs, because it requires a commitment from teachers and administrators to work hard and learning together along with having structural support in place (DuFour, 2004; Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). As DuFour and Eaker (1998, p. 129) argued that "the challenge of sustaining the change process is the challenge of creating a critical mass of educators within the school who are willing and able to function as change agents." Stoll et al. (2006) also acknowledged that little research is yet known on the sus-tainability of effective PLCs. Therefore, mostly recommendations were offered in literature on sustainability of PLCs which included the following:

- Shared and supportive leadership teams (Voulalas & Sharpe, 2005);
- Distributed leadership (Owens, 2010);
- Continuous climate of trust, respect and interpersonal relationships (Louis et al., 1996);
- Commitment to improvement, challenges and risks (Kruse, 2001);
- Critical dialogue and a deeper understanding of PLCs (Dooner et al., 2008);
- governments capacity to flourish PLCs by *relaxing* their regimes of standardization (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006);
- Time must be kept sacred, deep meaningful discussions about planning, instruction and assessment, and training for new faculty (Lujan & Day, 2010);
- Consideration of socio-cultural factors like collectivism, authoritarian-oriented prac-tice, and interpersonal relationships (Wong, 2010);
- Teachers needed to be continuous learners, reflective practitioners, and enthusiastic colleagues (Wood & Whitford, 2010); and
- Attention to communication, collaboration and culture (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Finally, Stoll et al. (2006) argued that school culture is one of the most important elements of school life. The authors noted that school culture is the way things are done in a school, which includes the combination and mixture of values, beliefs, and practices of the teachers, staff and students. Furthermore, school culture is created through relationships and experiences of members of PLCs, and reinforced in the traditions, rituals, and ceremonies that evolve over time. Hence, for school improvement to be lasting, the school's culture must support it. Poskitt and Taylor (2008, p. 26) underpinned the importance of school culture in sustaining change by stating that, "only in cultures of continuous improvement can deep, sustaining change occur."

2.10 Conclusions

Based on the literature, effective PLCs have the potential to impact on and enhance teacher PL and practices. It has been found that PLCs may be effective in some schools or may be slow to develop in other schools. However, there are enabling factors that may support and sustain the change efforts. Highlighted in this review are findings or what PLCs are and include the following: the benefits of PLCs to teacher learning; the factors that either support or hinder the development process of effective PLCs; other factors that hinder the sustainability of effective PLCs; the characteristics of PLCs; and the factors that may sustain PLCs. It is critical that researchers, educators and teachers identify the possible barriers to development of PLCs and the help they need in order to make the necessary changes in teacher learning and teaching practices. A PLC has the capacity to develop, grow, improve and sustain professional teacher learning.

In the case of the Solomon Islands where the existing need for continuous PD of trained and untrained teachers remains high, establishment of PLCs in schools offers an alternative yet effective approach to address the need for continuous PL of teachers. Some research has already made invaluable contributions and insights in the CHSs context in the Solomon Islands. For example, Sikua and Alcorn (2010) researched on the growth of CHSs in the Solomon Islands; Ruqebatu (2008) investigated school principalship in the context of CHSs; and Aruhu (2010) investigated school planning in CHSs from principals' perspectives. While another research explored the PL experiences of beginner teachers in CHSs (Rodie, 2011).

However, because the notion of PLC is new in the Solomon Islands educational context, little study has been done on the potential of PLC for teacher learning in CHSs. Therefore, this small study had explored the formal and informal learning experiences of ten teachers in two CHSs in the Solomon Islands, which may provide the basis for developing effective PLCs for teachers' learning. In the following chapter, I will describe the research methods used in this study to gather information on the focus of this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Educational research is a disciplined inquiry, in addition to being a systematic collection and analysis of data relating to educational problems and questions. This inquiry adds knowledge to existing information about educational issues; improves educational practices with new ideas and approaches; and informs policy makers (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010; Creswell, 2012; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005; McMillan, 2004). In attempting to establish effective PLCs for teacher learning in schools in the Solomon Islands, I chose to undertake a qualitative research project in the form of a case study. Case study was chosen in order to explore the formal and informal learning experiences of teachers in two CHSs, which can provide the basis for the development of PLCs within these schools. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and reflective journals as the research methods. Subsequently, data was recorded and transcribed, followed by analysis and finally, the write-up of the report.

This chapter outlines the research methodology, together with the research methods of data collection; ethical considerations; research procedures; analysis of data; and the trustworthiness of the research process. The chapter then concludes with a summary of the research process.

3.2 Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers are interested in how human beings organise themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings or environment, through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, social interactions etc. (Berg, 2009; Gall et al., 2005). Qualitative research acknowledges the different social realities that individuals (within a social situation) construct as they participate in the research, together with an acknowledgment of the researchers' role as the data gathering instrument, in order to make sense of the actions, intentions and understandings of those being studied (Gall et al., 2005; Hatch, 2002). According to Lichtman (2013, p. 7), qualitative research "is a

way of knowing in which a researcher gathers, organizes, and interprets information obtained from humans using his or her eyes and ears as filters."

Qualitative research is generally located within the interpretive paradigm, in which the ultimate aim of the researcher is to: "begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2009, p. 22). According to Cohen, Manion and Richardson, theory is formed from particular situations upon which the researchers build their theory – and this theory must make sense to those to whom it applies: that is, "theory becomes sets of meaning which yield insight and understanding of people's behaviour" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 22).

There are different approaches to qualitative research which include: ethnographic study, which describes a group's culture; grounded theory research, which generates theory from the field studied; phenomenology, which is based on description and understanding of one or more individuals' lived experiences, who may have gone through a particular experience; narrative approaches, which focus on the stories of participants, in order to bring understanding and interpretation of others' lives; and a case study, which is an in-depth investigation of an individual or a group with a primary purpose of describing one or more behaviours or characteristics (Lichtman, 2013). This study adopted a case study approach.

3.3 Case Study Research

Case studies are employed in many disciplines, such as business, psychology and sociology and – since qualitaı ve methods began to be accepted in educaı on – case study research is also being recognised in the field of education (Lichtman, 2013). In educational research, researchers conduct case studies in order to describe, explain or evaluate particular social phenomena (Gall et al., 2005). It is "an approach to qualitative research [that]involves the specific and detailed study of a case or cases" (Lichtman, 2013, p. 91). This study adopted a case study approach which according to Basit (2010) is appropriate for a lone researcher enrolled in a master's programme. A case study is appropriate as it provides a unique example of teachers in real situations, thus gathering a rich description of the details of the lived experiences of the teachers in this study: and offering an understanding of how these teachers perceive the various phenomena in their social world: and the effects of these phenomenon

on their learning and teaching (Basit, 2010; Cohen et al., 2009). In this study, the teachers' perception of their formal and informal learning experiences within their community high schools was investigated.

A case is defined as a bounded system and a case study relates a story about a bounded system, or a set of interrelated elements that form an organised whole (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In addition, a case study is set in temporal, geographical, organisational, institutional and other contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn around the case. These case studies can be defined by individuals and groups involved; as well as defined by the participants' roles and functions in the case (Cohen et al., 2009). Therefore, the two schools studied formed a case of a bounded system that is particular to them. Sunshine Community High School (SCHS) is located in an urban area and it comes under the Honiara City Council Education Authority: and Roadway Community High School (RCHS) is situated in a rural area and operates under the South Seas Evangelical Church Authority. Initially, I interviewed teachers who had volunteered to participate in the interviews and focus group discussions. I then gathered data from these two schools about the teachers' formal and informal learning experiences, in order to provide insights into the basis for developing PLCs for teachers' learning. In analysing and interpreting the data of these schools, I draw out the existing practices and structures within these two schools, which may potentially be built on or developed further, in order to establish PLCs within these schools. I also draw out factors that may hinder or present barriers to the development of PLCs. This aspect also forms the boundary of this case study.

A case study "allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real live events" (Burns, 2000, p. 460). As such, this case study research also took into account the holistic description of the schools, which included other components of the schools, such as students and classrooms and the schools' specific external (social, economic and demographic characteristics) and internal context (school leadership, physical and instructional facilities, etc.) and how the bounded system operates (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

A case study may involve the collection of very extensive data, in order to produce an in-depth understanding of the entity being studied (Burns, 2000), but it may also involve more

modest, closely focussed studies (Berg, 2009). The main techniques used in a case study approach are usually observation (both participant and non-participant, depending on the case); interviewing (unstructured and structured); and survey questionnaires and document analysis (Burns, 2000; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). However, in this case study, survey questionnaires and observation are specifically excluded. Questionnaires were not chosen because they would have been superfluous, given the other data sources selected. Time constraints also meant that observations, if included, would likely have resulted in producing only superficial and biased information, because the observations might have been too selective, by overlooking "unintended outcomes which may have significance" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 403).

In a case study, it is, however, important to use multiple sources for data collection, to allow for triangulation through converging lines of inquiry, thus improving the truthfulness of the data and findings (Burns, 2000). Triangulation is the use of three or more methods of data collection in a research study and it "is powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity, particularly in qualitative research" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 141). Therefore, although surveys and observation were ruled out in this research, given the time constraints and accessibility to the study sites, this research adopted a case study approach that involved the collection of multiple sources of data from the semi-structured interviews, the focus group discussions, and the reflective journal.

3.4 Methods of data collection

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews
Interviews are often used as a method for collecting qualitative data within educational research (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). Interviews provide the opportunity for interviewer and interviewee "to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 349). There are four types of interviews: the structured interview; the guided or semi-structured interview; the depth or unstructured interview; and the casual or unplanned interviews (Lichtman, 2013). For this study, I used semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth data rather quickly on the learning experiences of the teachers and their perceptions of their formal and informal learning experiences, as teachers in the two CHSs.

The use of semi-structured interviews in this study are intended to provide richer data, which supplements that from the focus groups, especially when semi-structured interviews give freedom to the interviewers to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared questions. This is important in order to provide clarification, additional information or follow-up – and it also gives freedom to the interviewees to explain their thoughts and to point out their individual interests and expertise (Berg, 2009; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; McMillan, 2004). Drever (1995, p. 8) stated that semi-structured interviewing is "a very flexible technique, suitable for gathering information and opinions and exploring peoples' thinking and motivations" in detail. In addition, semi-structured interviews in a study provide the following advantages to both the researcher and the individual participants:

- more than one contact between the researcher and the individual participant, which increases rapport;
- the participant's perspective is provided, rather than the researcher's perspective being forced;
- the participant is allowed to use language natural to him/her; and
- the individual participant has equal status to the researcher within the dialogue (Berg, 2009; Burns, 2000).

In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer enters the interview session with a plan (written by the researcher before the interview session) to explore specific topics and to ask specific open-ended questions of the interviewee (Drever, 1995; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). However, the interviewer is also be prepared to pose supplementary questions that s/he devises during the interview, which are linked to the interviewees' responses to earlier questions, solely to achieve a more in-depth response (Basit, 2010).

In this study, the guided questions in the semi-structured interviews are outlined below in Figure 14 (see Appendix A for full interview schedule). These questions were drawn from the five themes identified in the literature on PLC and they allowed the teachers to share their formal and informal learning experiences, together with their existing practices and their perceptions on their teaching and learning experiences.

Figure 14: The guided questions in the semi-structured interviews

Literature Themes	Guided Questions
Shared values and norms	1. Why did you choose teaching to be your career? 2. What is your vision for your students and for the school? 3. What are some professional developments you have had during your teaching career?
Collaborative culture	1. Do you find it easy to talk about your teaching difficulties to other teachers? Why or why not? 2. Do you feel that other teachers are comfortable to share ideas about what they teach in their classrooms to other teachers? Why or why not? 3. How does collaborating with other teachers help you? 4. What are your ideas for improving and encouraging teachers to work together?
Reflective dialogue and inquiry	1. How do you record your thoughts after teaching a lesson? 2. Do you have time to reflect about your teaching? Why or why not? 3. Do you have opportunities to express your views at staff meetings, to share personal opinions and to discuss matters of teaching and instruction with colleagues? Why or why not?
Focus on student learning	1. What do you normally do about your students' results? 2. Do you discuss your students' work with other teachers? Why or why not? 3. Do teachers share the results from their assessments with their colleagues? Why or why not?

In semi-structured interviews, although the general structure is the same for all interviewees, the interviewer can vary the questions as the situation demands (Basit, 2010; Lichtman, 2013). According to Basit (2010), not all questions may have to be asked because the interviewees may be answering a question and (when giving a detailed response to that question) s/he may be answering one of the later questions. Basit further explained that, unlike a questionnaire or a structured interview, there is no need to ask the same questions of all participants, so long as the questions asked relate to the research questions.

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussions

A focus group is a type of discussion that is conducted and facilitated by a researcher(s) with a group of participants, whereby data and information emerge from the interaction of the group who discuss a topic of interest supplied by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2009; Lichtman, 2013). A focus group is particularly helpful when the researcher does not necessarily know what issues are involved in a particular research situation: and s/he wants to generate ideas that lead to further questions in questionnaires or individual interviews, or items for observation checklists (Basit, 2010).

However, in this research study, following the individual interviews, the focus group discussions were used to generate and trigger thoughts and ideas among the participants, which did not emerge during their individual interviews (Gall et al., 2005; Lichtman, 2013). Key ideas emerging from the individual interviews were organised into an interview schedule for the focus group discussions. Figure 15 provides is an outline of the discussion schedule (See Appendix B for full discussion schedule).

<u>Figure 15: An outline of the discussion schedule</u>

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What do you think and feel about your school's vision statement and what does it mean for you in your teaching and learning practices in this school?
2. How would you work together to achieve this vision for your school?
3. How do you see yourselves as a working team in this school and how can working together in this school be further improved?
4. What are some ways that teachers can reflect together about their teaching practic-

> es?
>
> 5. How could teachers work together to promote student learning and student results?

Cohen et al. (2009, p. 376) stated that with focus groups, "their contrived nature is both their strengths and their weaknesses: they are unnatural settings yet they are very focused on a particular issue and, therefore will yield insights that might not otherwise have been available in a straightforward interview". Also, focus group discussions were very useful and appropriate in this study because they were "economical on time" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 376) and they provided in-depth information for the researcher (in a limited time) to collect information (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Lichtman, 2013). It was also a cost effective way of gathering information from a number of people in this study (Basit, 2010).

A focus group is typically composed of four to six participants purposively selected because they can provide the type of information of interest to the researcher (Creswell, 2012). In this study, the participants in the focus groups were also the same participants for the semi-structured interviews. The size of the focus groups was also advantageous, since the participants were comfortable to share their ideas in a small-sized group, rather than in a large group while, at the same time, they were not feeling 'exposed', as individuals might be within a smaller group.

3.4.3 Reflective Journal Writing

Journal writing has a variety of different forms for many purposes and it can be used in a number of different ways to promote reflection (Boud, 2001). Boud further stated that, "the conditions under which journal writing takes place can have a powerful influence on what is produced and the extent to which writers can engage in critical reflection" (p.17). Although journaling may be viewed as a time-consuming activity and an activity that requires a lot of effort (Harris, 2008), other writers have experienced their writings to "express knowledge … faithful and in consonance with the reality we experienced. There will not be space for nonsense, the vacuum or the silence of enigma" (Ryan, Amorim, & Kusch, 2010).

Therefore, as reflective journal writing was one of my research techniques, it was intended as a form of reflective writing which I, as a researcher, engaged in during the whole process of my research and through which I documented my "personal experience of the research

process" (Borg, 2001, p. 157). While working on my research proposal, I started recording my personal thoughts and experiences about the research topic in my journal, whenever it was appropriate. The recordings in my reflective journal continued while I worked on my research questions for the interviews and the group discussions. Subsequently, while out in the field or in the schools, I continued recording in my reflective journal whenever appropriate, such as on my visits to the CHSs and before and after the interviews and the focus group discussions.

In a research study, reflective journal writing may provide the researcher with process benefits which include:

- Helping the researcher to explore concerns and to identify ways of addressing them in terms of the conceptual framework of his or her research;
- Giving the researcher space to air and examine anxieties experienced, thus, providing way to possible solutions;
- A medium for the researcher to distance him or herself from a challenging situation, and to make clear these challenges or problems he or she faced and to gain new insights on these problems which gives the researcher the opportunity to overcome those problems; and
- Allowing "undeveloped thoughts to be transformed into a tangible form amendable to further analysis and development" (Borg, 2001, p. 169).

In addition, Borg (2001) also stated the product benefits of a research journal to a researcher and a writer which include:

- A reminder of the researcher's past ideas and events which guide future actions; a written account of the researcher's plans and achievements which guide judgements;
- A record of events and procedures which paved way for a more detailed write of the researcher's study;
- An avenue for the researcher to use to recall and to bring into his or her memory the key decisions or themes or ideas in his or her work;
- A story of the researcher's professional growth as a researcher; and

- Physical evidence of work progress, bringing into light sense of achievement and further motivation; and finally, journal provided a written account of experiences and ideas which when referring back to them often lead to further new ideas.

3.5 Ethical considerations

In qualitative research, Hatch (2002, p. 65) described researchers as "interested in exploring the world from the perspective of cultural insiders. Their methods are designed to allow them to get close to the action and close to their informants." For that reason, educational research, which involves the interaction of participants or people, would usually have ethical issues. Ethical issues can relate to both the subject matter of the research, in addition to its methods, procedures and appropriate treatment of the participants (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2009). Thus, the researcher has a duty to identify the ethical issues that are important in the research: and to act ethically at each stage of the research, as ethical issues emerge and change as the research proceeds. Research ethics are described as "a guiding set of principles that are to assist researchers in conducting ethical studies" (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Hatch (2002) outlined some questions that may be important to consider, in relation to the ethical issues that are particular to individual research contexts. The questions are as follows: Why am I doing this study? Why am I doing it at this site? What is my relationship to the participants? What are the participants' roles in the design, data collection, analysis and authorship of this study? Who owns the study? How do I benefit? How do the participants benefit? Who benefits most? Who may be at risk in the contexts I am studying? Should I intervene on behalf of those at risk? These, therefore, are the type of questions I considered at each stage of my research, whereby the following issues of ethics were raised from the nature of my research.

3.5.1 Low-risk notification to Massey Human Ethics Committee

This research involved ten teachers in two CHSs in the Solomon Islands: and thus, ethical considerations needed to comply with the *Code of ethical conduct for research, teaching and evaluations involving participants* of Massey University. In consultation with my supervisors, the research had been designed as a low risk study and I submitted a notification of low risk research/evaluation involving human participants to the Massey University Human

Ethics Committee for Approval, prior to conducting this research in the Solomon Islands from August to September, 2012. See appendix C for the low risk notification approval.

3.5.2 Access to institutions and participants

The Solomon Islands Research Act (1984) requires any person wanting to enter the Solomon Islands to conduct research to obtain permission from the MEHRD. The MEHRD is responsible for granting permission for any educational research conducted in the country. Accordingly, I first sought approval to conduct this research in the Solomon Islands from the MEHRD (see Appendix D). With the research permit granted to me by the MEHRD, I contacted Honiara Town Council Education Authority and South Seas Evangelical Church Education Authority (see Appendix E) and they granted me the permission to enter the two schools, respectively. Through the Education Authorities, I then contacted the school principals for permission to involve some of their teachers in my study (see Appendix F). See Appendix G for the information sheet given to the MEHRD, the Education Authorities and the school principals. The school principals, after granting me approval to undertake research in their schools, identified teachers who volunteered to participate in this study and submitted their names to me. After receiving the names of the volunteer participants in my study, I then made personal contact with these participants.

3.5.3 Informed consent

Prior to the participants giving their consent (by signing the participant consent form and completing a question sheet), I held a brief meeting with them, where I formally introduced myself and my research interest and why their school had been chosen to participate in my research study. I then gave each one time to introduce themselves and what role/s they play within the school. After introducing themselves, I gave each participant a letter (see Appendix H), in addition to an information sheet (see Appendix I) about my research study and I briefly went through the information sheet with them. Subsequently, I gave each participant a consent form to sign, if they agreed to participate in this study: and also a question sheet (see Appendix J), which would provide me with brief background information on each participant. Time was also given for them to ask questions concerning the research. They were given one day to read the information sheet and to understand clearly their involvement and participation in the research, before giving their consent (see Appendix K) to participate in my research study. After receiving this consent the following day, the partici-

pants were reminded on how the individual interviews and the focus group discussions would be conducted and how their information was going to be used in this study. At this time, times and venues, which would be convenient for the participants during the interviews and discussions, were also discussed. In this way, I ensured that the participants in my study understood the nature and purpose of the research, which might impact on them personally and professionally. In addition, I ensured that the participants gave their consent without coercion.

Furthermore, I was also aware of possible stress that the participants might face, especially when the process of obtaining permission to undertake research in the Solomon Islands was granted from the MEHRD: and therefore the participants might feel obligated to participate, thus causing them stress. However, I tried to lighten this potential stress by firstly having informal conversations with the participants and allowing them to talk about their school or their work and any subject of interest to them, during my first personal contact with them. When I felt that I had started to build positive support and a relationship with my participants, I went through the process of providing information about my study, as previously explained. In addition, I used the Pidgin language with which all my participants were comfortable.

3.5.4 Confidentiality
The participants in this research were assured that confidentiality would be maintained throughout the study: that is, their schools and their names would not be identified in this study and only pseudonyms would be used. Furthermore, the participants were assured that the raw data provided by them would be kept confidential and the only people (aside from the researcher), who would have access to the data, would be my supervisors.

3.5.5 Potential harm to participants
This study involved teachers in these two CHSs and my purpose was to understand how their formal and informal learning experiences might provide the basis for developing professional learning communities for teachers' learning in their schools. Thus, I hoped that their participation in the interviews and the discussions would be beneficial to their teaching and learning experiences. However, I was also aware that some issues might cause harm, if confidential information was shared with any non-participants. In order to avoid causing harm to the participants, I ensured that all interviews and discussions were kept confiden-

tial. Moreover, I also ensured that the participants were physically, socially and culturally protected.

3.5.6 Participant right to decline to participate

The participants were fully informed that their choice to participate in the research study was voluntary and that their choice was respected. They were made aware that, although they had signed the consent form to participate in the study, they could withdraw from the interview at any time, or even withdraw from the study at any time up to the focus group data being collected.

3.6 The Research Procedures

3.6.1 Selection of schools and participants

Two CHSs in the Solomon Islands were selected as the sample for this research project. SCHS was selected as one of the schools because it is in Honiara Town: and it is a day school. In addition, due to the limited time of my research, SCHS is located at a central location that I could easily travel to, in order to undertake my research. RCHS was selected because it is outside Honiara Town and located in a very remote area: and it is a boarding school. These two CHSs were chosen because they also operated under different Education Authorities: SCHS operates under the Honiara City Council Education Authority; and RCHS operates under the South Seas Evangelical Church Education Authority. These two schools provided different contexts for me to study and to understand their formal and informal learning experiences.

As already mentioned, teachers in these two CHSs volunteered to participate in the research study. In RCHS, four teachers volunteered to participate and in SCHS, six teachers voluntarily participated in the study. All these participants also voluntarily participated in the semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions. Therefore, the only criterion in the selection of participants in the study was that they were CHS teachers and other factors, such as gender, age, qualifications or teaching experiences, were not considered.

3.6.2 Conducting the interview and the focus group discussions

The participants decided on times that fitted in with their timetables and venues that they found comfortable for the interviews and discussions. In RCHS, the venues were the participants' houses and the principal's house for the interviews and the staffroom for the group

discussion. In SCHS, individual interviews were held in the Career Master's office and the group discussion was held in the Industrial Art Classroom. Two digital voice recorders were used for the interviews and discussions. In addition, the interviews were conducted in Pidgin English (Lingua Franca of the Solomon Islands) which all the participants were comfortable to use.

Prior to conducting the semi-structured interviews, I gave a brief introduction of myself and the purpose of my research, followed by the participants being offered the opportunity to introduce their teaching job as outlined in Figure 16.

Figure 16: An outline of my brief introduction to the participants

The Researcher:

1. Thank you to the participants for their willingness to participate and their time coming to the interview.
2. Introduce myself (Where I come from and my teaching background; What I am doing now for my research and its purpose; Why I am interviewing the participants).

To the participant:

1. Tell me about your teaching job.
2. Tell me what you like about your teaching job.
3. Tell me about the challenges you face in your teaching job.

Since the participants had already filled in a question sheet before the interviews, I already had some knowledge about them. The purpose of the question sheet, which was given to each participant before the interviews, was for the teachers to provide to me with a brief background of their teaching years in the school: their teacher training background; their present teaching role/s; and their other role/s in the school. It was an advantage for me to know this background information on each participant, because knowing their background helped me to decide upon what type of questions to ask each participant. Thus, I used the questionnaire as a guide to my questions.

During the interview sessions, I had my plan or interview guide questions to guide me. However, the questions were asked in a flexible or informal manner whereby I did not directly ask the questions but, instead I introduced my questions in a narrative style. For example, I mainly used the phrase "You save storim come…" ("Tell me about …") so they would be encouraged to reply freely and as extensively as they wished. I gave them time to share their 'story' and after its telling, I ensured that I had understood them clearly, by either rephrasing what they had discussed or I asked them to explain further. The participants were also free to ask me questions during the interviews, if they were not sure about any questions. Since I wanted to concentrate on the conversations between me and the participants, I only took down notes when it seemed necessary.

At the end of the interview sessions, which generally lasted for one hour, I briefly summarised the idea of a PLC and then I gave them the opportunity to share their thoughts about developing a PLC in their school. I followed this by thanking them for their participation. Figure 17 provides an outline of the conclusion of the interview process.

Figure 17: An outline of the conclusion of the interview process

The Researcher:

1. A professional learning community includes the following:
   - A focus on raising student achievement through learning conversations which focus on analysing and discussing student achievement
   - Teachers working collaboratively, in order to reflect on their practice; examine evidence about the relationship between practice and student outcomes; and make changes that will improve teaching and learning for the particular students in their classes.
   - An organisation where group members (teachers and administrators) of a school share common values and norms; engage in collaboration; involve themselves in reflective dialogue and professional inquiry; and actively interact with each other to promote the potential of all members, in order that new knowledge of teacher learning may be created, supported and sustained.

To the participant:

2. Tell me your thoughts about professional learning community:
    - If we introduce the idea of PLC in this school, do you think it will work?
    - What are some structures in this school that you think will make it work?
    - What are some barriers that may hinder it from working?

The Researcher:

    - Thank you to the participants again for their willingness and time.

The focus group discussions followed the interviews, which occurred on the second week of study in each school and the discussions lasted for approximately one hour. By this time, there was already good support and relationships formed between the participants and myself. Therefore, the session began with my words of thanks for their participation in my study, followed by the purpose of the focus group discussion and my role as a facilitator in the discussion. Together with the focus group schedule, which had emerged from the interviews, I introduced each theme one at a time, thus giving the participants the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas about the themes. I was there to guide the discussion, but most of the discussions involved the participants interactively. At the end, I summarised the discussions and offered each participant a gift, as a token of appreciation for their participation in my research, in addition to the personal and professional relationships that had been formed between us.

3.6.3 Transcription

Each interview was transcribed in Solomon Islands Pidgin by a transcriber, during the third week of study in each school. I transcribed the focus group discussions myself into the English language. Since I undertook my study first on RCHS, after the transcription of their interviews and the group discussion, I was able to visit the participants and to have them confirm the transcribed data or make any changes to the data. However, in the case of SCHS, their school break followed the focus group discussion and also, given that my research time had not allowed me to stay another week in the Solomon Islands, it was, therefore, after anoth-

er two weeks before the transcriptions of the interviews were emailed to the participants for their confirmation or any changes they wanted to make to the data.

3.7 Analysis of data

Qualitative analysis involves "making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 461). In this research study, a thematic analysis was adopted, since it is a process commonly used with qualitative information (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method "for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). In other words, this thematic analysis may involve the identification of themes through reading and re-reading data, whereby these identified themes or patterns from the data may become the categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2008).

Accordingly, this research study considered six steps, when performing the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first step was familiarisation with the data. In this first step, I gathered the notes in my journal, in addition to making hard copies of each participant's transcription. I also made a summary of each participant's contribution (including their background) and I provided each participant with a pseudonym. The second step was to form the initial codes. In this step, I went through each transcription from the interviews and the group discussions and I used a colour for each literature review theme: shared values; collaborative culture; reflective dialogue; and focus on student learning. I coded the main ideas of each participant with the literature themes. The third step was to identify the common themes. During this stage, I produced a table for each participant and divided each table into the four literature themes. These were coded as the main findings from each participant interview, in relation to the literature themes, in addition to any unexpected findings from each participant. At this time, I also began to identify the most frequently occurring ideas under the literature themes found in the interviews and the focus group discussions: in addition to those from the journal, together with any unexpected ideas found in the data (see Appendix L). The fourth step was reviewing the common themes and at this stage I produced three tables. The first table included the emergent ideas from the inter-

views (see Appendix M): the second table included the main ideas from the focus group discussions (see Appendix N); and the third table consisted of the common ideas from my reflective journals (see Appendix O). I divided each table into two columns, whereby I labelled the first column of each table *Potential* (the potential in the schools for developing PLC); and the second column *Barriers* (the barriers to developing PLC in the schools). The fifth step was defining and naming the themes. At this stage, I further categorised the literature themes as follow: shared values and norms; existing collaborative culture and practices which included teacher sharing, school committees, professional development in workshops and high school learning experiences; reflective dialogue and inquiry; and focus on student learning. Furthermore, from the tables in the fourth step, I named the potential and the barriers for developing PLCs within the CHSs. The sixth step was writing the report, which also included relating the themes to the research question and literature.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the Research

Qualitative researchers use the term *validity* or *trustworthiness* to refer to research that is "plausible, credible, trustworthy, and therefore defensible" (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 264). Researchers have their own lists of what should be included in a good piece of qualitative research, based on their own philosophy and assumptions made by other writers or researchers. Thus, in this study, I have developed my personal criteria of the *trustworthiness* of my research, based on my philosophy as a researcher, in addition to what other researchers have said about *trustworthiness* – and these are transparency; literature and my findings; and triangulation.

3.8.1 Transparency

The term *transparency* in qualitative research refers to qualitative research that is undertaken in "a publicly accessible manner" (Yin, 2011, p. 19). Yin further stated that *transparency* involves describing and documenting qualitative research procedures, so that other people can review and try to understand. Moreover, all data need to be available for inspection, or in other words, others should be able to scrutinise your work and the evidence used to support your findings and conclusions.

In this research, two of my supervisors were the scrutinisers. Prior to conducting this research in the Solomon Islands, my two supervisors examined how I would conduct my study, together with my interview questions. Furthermore, the two supervisors had access to the raw data of my study, including the audio and transcriptions of the raw data. The study participants were also able to confirm the raw data which were transcribed before the analysis was conducted.

The final report of my study will also be made available to future students of Massey University, in addition to being made available to the MEHRD and schools in the Solomon Islands.

3.8.2 Literature and my findings

A qualitative research is *trustworthy* when the researcher or writer is able to convince a reader that what is studied is important: and it fits into a larger context (Lichtman, 2013). The first stage of my research involved the study of journal articles and literature on PLCs and the identification of common themes on that topic, followed by a literature review. From this literature review, I developed the research questions and objectives of my research study. In addition, when analysing my findings, the literature was also used to support the findings and to identify gaps between the findings and the literature. Therefore, although the notion of a PLC is new within the Solomon Islands context, the research topic fits into the larger context.

3.8.3 Triangulation

Triangulation is a key means of ensuring that a study has *trustworthiness* (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). These writers have emphasised that the most common means of triangulation uses existing theory in the form of a literature review and a variety of methods, in order to investigate the same question(s). Triangulation is a means which I had considered for this study. I therefore worked to achieve data triangulation, which is the use of multiple data sources that are used to help understand a phenomenon: and methods triangulation, which is the use of multiple research methods to study a phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In the case of the data triangulation in this study, I began by analysing and then grouping the raw data from the interviews, discussions and my journal into tables, according to themes identified in the literature. In the case of the methods triangulation (interviews, discussions

and journal), I worked to describe clearly their significance in the study, together with the steps I took for each method.

3.9 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have discussed the method and methodologies that have been considered relevant for the purpose of this study. Using a qualitative research approach, I chose the case study approach, in order to understand the formal and informal learning experiences of the participant teachers within the two CHSs, which can be built upon, in order to develop PLCs for teacher learning in those schools. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were relevant methods of data collection, which provided opportunities for the participants to tell their story, together with my reflective journal, which was also relevant, in regards to my thoughts and viewpoints on the entire research process. Relevant ethical issues were also identified and discussed in this chapter. It was also significant to describe the research procedures and the approach taken to analyse the data, together with the *trustworthiness* of the whole research process.

The following chapter will discuss the findings of the research study.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with ten teachers in two CHSs, in regards to their formal and informal learning experiences, in addition to reflective journals. This study was based on the following research question:

> *What are the formal and informal learning experiences of teachers in two community high schools in the Solomon Islands that may provide the basis for developing professional learning communities for teachers' learning?*

In this chapter, firstly background information is provided on each school and each participant. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms are used for the participants and the CHSs. The names used are not in any way related to the real names of the schools or the participants.

Secondly, six emergent themes are outlined. These themes were identified through the use of a thematic analysis of the data.

The interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in the Solomon Islands Pidgin language, because all the participants were more comfortable to use the Solomon Islands Pidgin. Therefore, quotations from these teachers (in the Solomon Islands Pidgin) from the interviews are included in this chapter under the themes, together with the English version of the quotations. Quotations from the teachers' discussions are also included under the themes and the quotations are already in the English version.

4.2 The community high schools and the teachers

4.2.1 Roadway Community High School
RCHS is a boarding school located in a remote area in Guadalcanal Province in the Solomon Islands. The surrounding villages and communities are scattered far from the school and there is no road access for vehicles to reach the school, except for a bush trail, which involves approximately two hours of walking through the jungle and then crossing and re-

crossing a river to reach the school. The main medium of communication for this school is a two-way wireless radio. The school is often referred to as a top-up school because it began as a primary school which comprised of Grade One to Grade Six, and then later expanded to provide Junior secondary classes of Form One to Form Three (Year 7 to Year 9). There are six primary school teachers with an enrolment of 82 students, and seven high school teachers with an enrolment of 162 students. Although the primary school has its own principal, it is the CHS principal who is seen as the leader of the schools and this principal oversees the entire school. Thus, both the primary and secondary high schools come under one administration. All teachers (both primary and secondary high school teachers), together with the school administrators, share one working space/staffroom, where all their desks are lined up in a rectangle shape and thus, the teachers work facing each other. This is a church school run by the South Seas Evangelical Church Authority (SSEC) within the Solomon Islands. The school's daily programme begins at 5:30am and finishes at 9:30pm. Apart from formal classes, the teachers are also responsible for extra-curricular activities. The main extra-curricular activities in this school include taking the morning and evening devotions for the students; supervising the students' work programme in the mornings before classes and in the afternoons after classes; supervising students' meals; supervising students' study periods in the evenings; supervising students in the school's private gardens; supervising students' sports day; supervising student discipline; and participating/or being responsible for the religious activities of the school.

Four teachers in RCHS participated in this study. The first secondary teacher is Jane who currently teaches home economics in the school. After finishing secondary high school, Jane came to teach in this school as an untrained primary school teacher: at the same time she was enrolled in the Adult Learner Training Program (ALTP) provided by the SSEC Authority. After finishing the ALTP, she enrolled in the SICHE and studied for a Diploma in Secondary Teaching, majoring in Home Economics. Jane has been teaching at this school as a trained home economics teacher for four years. She also teaches business.

The second secondary teacher is Peter who teaches English and Social Science in the school. After completing high school, Peter enrolled in SICHE and studied for a Diploma in Secondary Teaching, majoring in English and social science. Peter has already been teaching as a

trained teacher for some years in other secondary high schools, prior to teaching in RCHS and this year is his first year teaching at this school.

The third teacher is Andrew, Head of Science Department, who teaches science in the school. Apart from teaching, Andrew is also the deputy principal of RCHS. From secondary high school, Andrew went to SICHE and studied for a Diploma in Science. This year is his fourth year teaching at this school as a qualified teacher.

The fourth teacher is Paul, a secondary teacher who teaches New Testament studies, which is a religious subject taught in the school. Paul is also the school chaplain and school counsellor. While living in his home village, Paul was called by the school principal of a vocational Rural Training Centre (RTC) to teach there. Therefore, Paul began teaching in RTC as an untrained teacher and later he studied for a certificate in ALTP in SICHE. He taught for nine years in the RTC (where he was also an administrator) and this is his first year teaching at RCHS.

4.2.2 Sunshine Community High School
SCHS is a day school located in the capital town of the Solomon Islands, Honiara Town. The school is surrounded by urban communities. A few teachers live on the school campus, while the majority live outside the school campus. The school is a top-up of a primary school comprised of a Prep-Class to Grade Six: and Junior Secondary classes which is comprised of Forms One to Form Five (Year 7-Year 11). There are 17 primary school teachers, with an enrolment of 390 primary school students. The secondary high school has 22 teachers and 331 students. The primary school has a principal and a deputy. Similar to RCHS, the CHS principal is seen as the leader of the SCHS. Together with the high school principal is his deputy principal. There is also one administration committee for SCHS, which is comprised of the primary school administrators and the high school administrators. The primary school teachers have their own working spaces and the secondary high school teachers share one working space/staffroom, where their tables are located next to each other. The administrators have their own space/offices. The school is run by the Honiara Town Council Education Authority. The school's daily programme begins at 8am and although classes end at 2pm, the teachers are expected to continue on working in the school till 4pm. Apart from the teachers' formal classes, teachers are also expected to attend other extra-curricular activities. The main ex-

tra-curricular activities of teachers in SCHS are supervising the Friday afternoon work programme for the students; taking the students' devotions which occurs once a week; looking after the school gate in the mornings when students arrive and in the afternoons when students leave the school; supervising students' discipline; and leading student participation in any educational or religious programmes hosted outside the school campus.

The other six teachers in this study are teaching in SCHS. The first teacher is Dorcas, a senior secondary teacher, who teaches home economics in the school. From secondary high school, she enrolled in SICHE and graduated with a Diploma in Secondary Teaching, majoring in Home Economics. Dorcas had previously taught for some years in other schools before coming to teach in SCHS. She has been teaching home economics at SCHS for four years.

The second teacher is Mary, Head of Science, who teaches science in SCHS. From secondary high school, she attended the Pacific Adventist University in Papua New Guinea and studied for a Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education, majoring in Science. Mary had previously taught for some years in other schools and this year is her first year teaching at SCHS.

The third teacher is Anna, a secondary teacher, who teaches English in this school. After completing secondary high school, she studied for a Diploma in Secondary Teaching at SICHE, majoring in English and Social Science. From SICHE, Anna came to work at this school and this year is her second year of teaching at this school.

The fourth teacher is Matthew, a secondary teacher and his subject is the teaching of New Testament studies. Matthew's previous field of employment was in business, prior to studying for the Diploma in Secondary Teaching, majoring in Religious Education and English. Matthew has taught for some years in other secondary high schools and this is his first year teaching at SCHS.

The fifth teacher is Dennis, Head of Maths Department, who teaches maths. Dennis began teaching as an untrained teacher and then later he enrolled at SICHE, where he graduated with a Diploma in Secondary Teaching, majoring in Maths. Dennis has previously taught in other secondary high schools and when this research was conducted in SCHS, this was his fourth week teaching maths at the school.

The sixth teacher is Luke, Head of the Industrial Art Department, who teaches industrial art in SCHS. His previous field of employment was being a mechanic, prior to studying for a Diploma in Secondary Teaching at SICHE, majoring in Industrial Art. Since leaving SICHE, Luke has been teaching at SCHS for almost seven years.

Thus, ten teachers participated in this study, four from RCHS, a church boarding school located in a remote area in Guadalcanal Province and six teachers from SCHS, a town council school, located in Honiara Town. Three of the teachers began their careers as untrained teachers and the remainder began their teaching as trained teachers. Nine of these teachers acquired their teaching qualifications from SICHE and one studied for her teacher training in Papua New Guinea. Their years of teaching range from four weeks to seven years. Two of the teachers had previous fields of employment, prior to becoming a trained teacher. The teachers either teach English, social science, maths, science, home economics, industrial art, business or New Testament studies — or they teach two of these subjects in their schools. One of these teachers is also an administrator, while the remainder are either secondary teachers, or senior secondary teachers or heads of their departments.

4.3 Emergent Themes

While the first section has considered the background and context of the CHSs and the participants, the following section describes a range of emergent themes across the data.

4.3.1 Teachers' learning experiences in two community high schools in the Solomon Islands

The international literature has provided a basis for the construction of the semi-structured interviews questions; the focus group discussion questions; and the guidelines for the observations and recordings in the reflective journals. In this study, six learning experiences of the teachers in RCHS and SCHS emerge from the data: and themes from the literature also guided the analysis. The six learning experiences of these teachers discussed in this section are as follows: shared values and norms; professional development through workshops; high school learning experiences; collaborative culture and learning; reflective dialogue and inquiry; and focus on student learning. Figure 18 illustrates these and supporting evidence is presented under each type of learning experiences in the following sub-sections.

Figure 18: Six learning experiences of the RCHS and SCHS teachers.

4.3.2 Shared Values and Norms

It was necessary to find out about the shared values and norms within the CHSs, which included the schools' vision statements and how the teachers relate to these vision statements in their teaching and learning practices. It has been recorded in the reflective journal that both schools have vision statements: and RCHS also has a mission statement. The vision statement of RCHS is as follows:

Growing a mature church to impact the nation and touch the world.

RCHS mission statement:

Our mission is to establish and maintain Christ-centred high quality and progressive learning communities that will develop the potential in Solomon Islanders and inspire and empower them for meaningful ministries of service in Solomon Islands.

During the focus group discussions, the teachers were asked to share their thoughts on their mission statement. Here are some responses from the RCHS teachers on their vision and mission statements:

The vision and the mission statements have influenced the culture of the school. Like the activities we do. We must start with devotions, focusing on "growing a mature church". So basically, every teachers that comes we just try to organise ourselves, trying to fulfil the vision. We have activities that everyone takes part in like devotions in the evening and devotions in the morning, whereby, we usually share, which is closely related to the vision and the mission statement given by our education authority. I personally feel that the vision and the mission statements really help us a lot to bring up the students, in terms of the spiritual aspects. (Andrew, Head of Science Department/Deputy Principal, teaches Science, RCHS)

Andrew expresses that the vision and mission statements have actually influenced the culture of their school and the school's activities and programmes. Andrew feels that the vision and mission statements help the teachers to bring up their students, in terms of the students' spiritual growth and experiences.

Paul (Secondary teacher/Chaplain, teaches New Testament Studies, RCHS) states that:

When I see the mission statement, I see a link towards the vision statement. It is Christ-centred which further develops the high-quality performances of us teachers towards the students and we will see that the students will progress in their learning within communities.

Paul sees connections between the mission statement and the vision statement, which are both Christ-centred. Therefore, it should further develop teachers to help with their students' learning progress within their communities.

I think that this mission statement is a good one, whereby, we try to put the learning of the students centred on Christian principles. With the vision statement, I think it is one-sided on the spiritual growth of the students or human beings only. I think we should expand the vision statement more, rather than having it centred around church only where it says "Growing a church to impact the nation and to touch the world". We might need to ex-

pand this vision statement to include other areas so that a person can edu-
cate himself/herself to grow up into a full human being not only on one
side, so that a person is matured socially, spiritually, mentally and physical-
ly. (Peter, Secondary Teacher, teaches English/Social Science, RCHS)

Peter agrees with the mission statement placing focus on the learning of students, which is centred on Christian principles. However, he thinks the vision statement needs to be expanded to include the other areas to develop a person.

During the focus group discussions, the RCHS teachers were also asked to share how they could work together within their school, in order to achieve the mission and vision goals of their school and here are some of their comments:

How I see it is that teachers cannot accomplish this mission statement and
the vision statement. We need the effort of the stakeholders of this school
including: parents, school board, church, village chiefs. These stakeholders
should also contribute towards achieving the mission and the vision of the
school. I see that teachers are now playing their part or their roles towards
achieving the mission and the vision of the school by trying their best to
teach the students using holistic approaches. However, it is quite difficult
because I see that this school has not experienced changes for achieving the
mission and the vision of the school …. the churches within our communi-
ties, the village leaders and chiefs, members of the school board, and all the
stakeholders. If only they give in their strong support to us teachers, we all
can accomplish the school mission and the vision. (Peter, Secondary Teach-
er, teaches English/Social Science, RCHS)

We teachers must work together to impact on our students what they
should learn. Also, working together, as I see in this school, is including edu-
cating the physical, social, mental and spiritual learning of the students.
Working together is all teachers trying to achieve their individual goals and
aims in order to reach the school's mission and the vision. (Paul, Secondary
Teacher/Chaplain, teaches New Testament Studies, RCHS)

Peter and Paul both commented that support from all stakeholders is important in achieving the mission and vision of the school. In addition, teachers need to work together to achieve their aims and goals in teaching, in order to also achieve the school's mission and vision goals.

In summary, the RCHS teachers thought that having a vision statement and a mission statement have actually influenced their school culture, which promotes Christian principles, values and practices. The teachers believed that support from all stakeholders is needed to achieve the school's vision and mission.

For SCHS, their vision statement is as follows:

> *We … Community High School aim to be an excellent school, we will provide quality educational opportunities for all of our pupils, we will actively encourage all pupils to achieve the best that they can, we will seek to promote within our students a positive vision for their futures and help our pupils become balanced and successful citizens.*

The SCHS teachers, during the focus group discussion, were also asked to share their thoughts and ideas on their vision statement, as teachers in the school. The following are some of their responses:

> *I agree about the vision statement. It is a very good vision statement that provides quality education for an excellent school, encouraging each student to achieve: and also a positive vision for the future for the students to become balanced and successful citizens. One thing that I am impressed with about this vision statement is this part on quality education. .. Why is it that we are to provide quality education but we do not have the resources to deliver these education services? I think that when we do not have enough resources, there is no quality education. We fall short of this statement. (Mary, Head of Science Department, teaches Science, SCHS)*

Mary expresses that she agrees with the school's vision statement, whereby the focus is to provide quality education for the students. However, she thinks their school is not providing quality education, due to resource problems faced by their school.

The statement itself is an excellent one. But we lack providing quality education in this school. Just look at us teachers: we are not well paid and we do not have enough houses. I think that if teachers are provided with good salaries and good houses, the aim of quality education may be achieved. At the moment, I do not think that we have achieved the aim of quality education yet. (Dorcas, Senior Secondary Teacher, teaches Home Economies, SCHS)

Dorcas thinks that their vision statement is an excellent statement. However, she feels that they are not providing quality education in their school because some of the teachers' needs are not met.

I also think that it is to do with teacher attitude and how we teachers work to achieve the aim of the vision statement. If the Ministry of Education and our authority look into these areas, it will help the teachers to put more effort into their teaching and working together. Another thing is resources. When teachers come out from college and come into schools, there should be resources available in the schools. What will teachers use in their teaching if schools do not have resources? ... Another thing is housing. Most of us teachers live in leaf thatched houses and live in garden houses ... and thus, we cannot provide quality education. (Luke, Head of the Industrial Art, teaches Industrial Art, SCHS)

Luke points out some factors that prevent the school from providing quality education. The first one is the teachers' personal attitudes to their work. In addition, the Ministry of Education should look into teachers' needs so that teachers may be encouraged to work together. Another idea is for the school to provide resources for teachers to use in their teaching. The last idea is the need for improved housing for teachers.

Like with the few resources we have in this school, we teachers have tried our best and we have made some achievements but not to the fullest of the expectations of this vision statement. (Matthew, Secondary Teacher, teaches New Testament Studies, SCHS)

Matthew notes that teachers have actually tried their best with some achievements, even though they face resource problems.

> It is true that we have something that we fall short of in the vision statement but for me personally, I am happy and I really like the vision statement. The vision statement gives guidelines to us as to what we have achieved and what we have not achieved. That will help us to promote quality education for our pupils and communities around us. So I am happy about this vision statement and feel really impressed about the last part of the statement: whereby we build ourselves up and become balanced persons, either in this school or elsewhere, instead of being a useless person in the community. (Dennis, Head of Maths Department, teaches Maths, SCHS)

Finally, Dennis sees the vision statement of their school as providing guidelines for the teachers as to what they have achieved or not achieved in the school. Personally, he feels happy and impressed about their vision statement.

The SCHS teachers were also asked to further elaborate on how best to get teachers to work together towards achieving the shared vision of their school and some of their suggestions are as follows:

> This vision statement, I have just seen it too. I have taught in this school for five years, but I haven't seen it … this vision statement should be pinned outside or in the staffroom so that it reminds us. (Dorcas, Senior Secondary Teacher, teaches Home Economies, SCHS)

Dorcas suggests that the vision statement be made available and visible to everyone in their school.

> Every time the vision statement changes when a new principal comes into a school. I think that it is better for a headmaster or a principal to remain in a school for … at least within a good timeframe, so that a principal may be able to support the school well and its activities, providing good and quality education, before moving to another new school. (Dennis, Head of Maths, teaches Maths, SCHS)

Dennis offers another suggestion that a principal remains in their school for some years, so that s/he may be able to support the school and its activities, in order to achieve the school's vision before leaving the school.

> *No matter that prospective resources are not available in the school or poor administration support; it depends on individual teachers to try his/her best. Like, when everything else fails, it just depends on each teacher to try his/her best to teach, to be motivated, despite the low-paid salary. If things work together, us teachers would be dedicating our time and effort to work together. (Matthew, Secondary Teacher, teaches New Testament Studies, SCHS)*

Matthew feels that it depends on each individual teacher and the effort and time they put into their teaching, although they are faced with some challenges within the school.

> *Another thought is for a school to have a clean and healthy environment for the students. Like, we learn in a previous workshop, that when the environment is clean and healthy, students may be able to learn well. When the learning environment is not healthy, it will affect the learning of students. (Luke, Head of Industrial Art, teaches Industrial Art, SCHS)*

Luke suggests that their school needs to have a clean and healthy learning environment, so that their students may be able to learn well.

In summary, the SCHS teachers agree having a vision statement for their school. However, the teachers thought that their school is not fulfilling the vision of their school due to lack of resources in the school and teachers' needs unmet. The teachers believe that each individual teacher along with the school principal need to work together to achieve the vision for their school.

4.3.3 Professional Development Workshops

The majority of the teachers in this study have had the opportunity to attend workshops held either on or off school-site. A number of teachers have been fortunate to attend more than one workshop during their years of teaching in these CHSs, or they have attended oth-

er workshops while teaching in their previous schools. A few teachers have only attended one workshop throughout their years of teaching.

RCHS teachers have been fortunate to attend a workshop held once at their school. This workshop was run by the SSEC Authority and ı tled — 'Effecı ve Chrisı an Teaching'. And all four teachers had the opportunity to attend. For Jane, this workshop held at their school is the only workshop she has ever attended since starting teaching. Andrew also attended the Christian Effective Teaching workshop and another workshop on budgeting held at the school and run by the school's previous principal. Peter, while working at his previous school located close to Honiara Town, had the opportunity to attend other workshops, such as one on library skills run by the National Library; a workshop on 'Live and Learn' conducted by the Live and Learn organisation; and two other workshops conducted by the Ministry of Health on health programmes for a school. Paul has also attended two principals' workshops conducted by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development of the Solomon Islands (MEHRD), while teaching in his previous school. The teachers were asked in the interviews about how these workshops have helped them in their teaching and learning.

Jane (Secondary Teacher, teaches Home Economics, RCHS) mentions:

> *Yeah; fo mi seleva becos hem kam fo tekem mifalla, kaen mifalla go familar lo college yia, hem helpem mifalla too lo saet lo biblical. An most importantly oloketa that wan oloketa no go yet fo train yia na, that wan hem olsem really helpem oloketa, becos wat hem mekem yia, oloketa no luk lukim yet wat lesson plan and olsem. Den taim hem kam, mifalla helpem oloketa.*

> *While the workshop has helped me in terms of effective Christian teaching, it has also helped those who have not gone through teacher training and they have little understanding on how to write a lesson plan, and we (the trained teachers) were able to help those untrained teachers on how to write lesson plan.*

Jane, during her interview, mentions that the workshop she attended on effective Christian teaching held on the school-site had provided opportunities for the trained teachers to help those untrained teachers in their school: and to share their

knowledge and understanding on certain teaching and learning topics, such as the writing of lesson plans.

Peter (Secondary Teacher, teaches English/Social Science, RCHS) comments:

> *Yes. A lot of tings mi faedem from workshop olsem hem givim mi broader idea wea mi save kam an usim olsem teaching tool or resources blo m. Especially lo olketa information an materials mifalla tekem from oloketa workshops yia.*

> *I have found a lot of new things in the workshop, which broaden my current knowledge and understanding. I have used the new ideas and the new information I learnt and gathered from the workshop as my teaching resources.*

Peter mentions in the interview that the workshops have provided him new information and resources to use in his teaching practices.

Paul (Secondary Teacher/Chaplain, teaches New Testament Studies, RCHS) expresses:

> *Me attend two falla principals' workshop; mi faedem really interesting, plende niu things… me save garem taim for share an discuss wetim other teachers… an wetim communication and olsem get to know each fo mekem mifalla save, hao fo mifalla save doim teaching according lo biblical principles.*

> *I attended two principals' workshops and I found them to be interesting with many new things ... I had time to share and discuss with other teachers* (in the Effective Christian Teaching workshop) *… and communicate with them, getting to know each other and how best to apply Biblical principles in our teaching.*

Paul expresses that the principals' workshops held at off-school sites were interesting with many new ideas. The workshop on effective Christian teaching, provided him with opportunities to interact and share with other teachers, thus learning together how to improve their teaching approaches and applying Biblical principles.

Andrew (Head of Science/Deputy Principal, teaches Science, RCHS) states:

Hem moa laek mifalla just revisim nomoa wat mifalla lanem lo college yet. Ab-aotim hao fo mifalla teach; oloketa students… Hem barava helpem mi olsem mekem mi garem moa, commitment becos lo Christian perspective hem say pikinini hem image blo God too yia, so iumi must teachim oloketa gud.

The workshop was like a revision on what we learnt in college and how to teach the students … the workshop really helped me in my commitment to teaching, especially having a Christian perspective of seeing my students as images of God and therefore, we must teach them well.

Andrew expresses that this workshop on effective Christian teaching refreshed what they had learnt about how to teach students during their teacher training in college. The workshop also helped him, as a teacher in RCHS, to be committed to his teaching and to help the students because they are images of God.

In summary, the RCHS teachers expressed that attending workshops provided them opportunities to interact and share with other teachers, learn new skills and knowledge and thus, improve their teaching approaches.

The majority of the SCHS teachers have also attended other workshops, which were mainly held off-school site. The main workshop attended by most of the SCHS teachers was on a healthy school environment and this was run by the Honiara Town Council Health Department. After the workshop, a Health Committee was formed in the school and this committee ran a three-day workshop, to promote a healthy school environment within the school for the remainder of the teachers. Other workshops that some of these teachers have attended include the following: Anna attended a workshop relating to the Solomon Islands art and culture run by the Festival of Pacific Arts; Mary attended a workshop on tutorial skills and teaching adult students, while working at her previous school, hosted by the University of the South Pacific in Suva; and Luke attended a workshop on technical vocational education and training. The SCHS teachers were also asked in the interviews about how the workshops they had attended had helped them in their teaching and learning.

Dennis (Head of Maths, teaches Maths, SCHS) expresses:

So luking at that falla workshop wea mifalla tekem yia, hem barava helpful… dis falla environment wea pikinini hem save learn, bae fo example insaet lo classroom; if hem too crowded tumas, luking at healthy aspect blo that falla tingting, hem no healthy fo oloketa students yia…tru becos everi learning blo oloketa pikinini hem kam from – hem garem different way fo oloketa pikinini tekem information yia.

The workshop that we attended was very helpful … the environment that students learn in, for example, inside a classroom, if it is over-crowded, it is unhealthy for students to learn effectively … students learn and gather information in different ways.

Dennis expresses that the workshop on a clean and healthy environment reminded him of the importance of having a clean and healthy environment that is less crowded for the students, because each student learns in a different way.

Dorcas (Senior Secondary Teacher, teaches Home Economics, SCHS) states:

Lo subject area blo mi, wanem oloketa yia covem mifalla – hem lo syllabus blo mifalla… hem laek sort of remindim mi moa fo keepim surround healty.

What they have covered (in the workshop) is also in my subject syllabus … it is like reminding me again on keeping the surroundings healthy.

Dorcas mentions that the workshop on a healthy school environment that she attended was relevant to the content of the home economics subject she is teaching at the school and the workshop reminded her again about keeping the surrounding school environment clean.

Luke (Head of Industrial Art, teaches Industrial Art, SCHS) finds that:

More hem insaet lo practical part lo saet lo subject blo mi ya, and mi learnim staka samting from there, hem really developim ting ting blo mi ya, for wat nao mi sapos for duim and wat nao mi shuld no duim, kaen olsem ya. Hem barava realy helpful lo mi.

It was more on the practical side of my subject and I learnt many new ideas that got me to think about what I am supposed to do and what I am not supposed to do. It was very helpful for me.

Luke feels that the workshop he attended was also relevant to the practical side of his subject and he had learnt many new ideas, including what he was supposed to do and what not to do in his teaching.

Mary (Head of Science, teaches Science, SCHS) indicates:

No lo hia. Hem no applicable lo hia.

It was not applicable for me in this school.

Mary mentions that the workshop she attended was not applicable to where she is teaching, because the workshop was on adult learning and at SCHS she is teaching high school students and not adult learners.

In summary, the SCHS teachers expressed that attending the workshop on environment, provided them new perspectives on how to improve the learning environment of their students. Only one teacher mentioned that the workshop she attended was not applicable to her teaching and learning in the school.

4.3.4 High School Learning Experiences

The theme 'High School Learning Experiences' emerged during the interviews, when the teachers were asked a question about sharing their experiences about the subjects they are teaching and about their teaching career. Only one teacher mentioned applying what she had learnt during her high school learning, to her present day teaching. Jane, the home economics teacher in RCHS, comments on teaching a subject that is not her subject area. She was asked to teach the business subject because the business teacher had gone for training at SICHE. In a semi-structured interview, Jane mentions:

Business mi no much samting but kaen mi interest and background knowledge lelebet nomoa taim mi Form 1 to 3, so mi lelebet save lo samfalla ting abaotim Business… usim oloketa textbooks yia den mi tingting back den mi mekem nomoa follom.

I don't really know much about business but it is just one of my interests and I had a little background knowledge of it when I was in Form One to Form Three, so I know a little about business … I just use the textbooks and then recall back to what I have learnt before.

In summary, Jane (although she is a home economics teacher) also teaches the business subject, which is one of her interests and she uses the background knowledge she has acquired on this subject when she was in high school, to teach the subject, together with using the business textbooks.

4.3.5 Collaborative culture and learning

In regards to the theme, 'Collaborative Culture and learning', it was necessary to find out the ways in which these teachers collaboratively work with other teachers within their school —and how this has helped them in their teaching and learning pracιces. Therefore, the teachers were asked in the interviews about whether they find it easy to talk about their teaching difficulties with the other teachers.

Peter (Secondary Teacher, teaches English/Social Science, RCHS) feels:

Hem nomoa mi olsem mi klos lo hem maybe becos mi tufalla garem same interest yia; laek mi tufalla save sharem smoke an betel nut an mi tufalla save go together most taims, so mi faedem hem easy fo sharem ideas wetim hem.

*He (*a teacher in his department*) is the only one I am close to because we have the same interests. We share smoke and betel nut[4] and most times we are together, so I find it easy to share my ideas with him.*

Similarly, other teachers mention:

Ani thing mi faedem difficult or wat, mi have to lukim hem. (Mathew, Secondary Teacher, teaches New Testament Studies, SCHS)

Any difficulty I come across, I talk to him (a teacher in his department)

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[4] Betel nut is the seed of the fruit from a palm. Betel nut chewing is becoming a common pastime for a lot of Solomon Islanders.

Yeah samtaims lo saed lo share wetim especially lo English department. (Anna, Secondary Teacher, teaches English, SCHS)

Sometimes, I share with those especially in the English Department.

Lo oloketa lo department blo mi, mi findim isi for gut for tok waitim oloketa bikos olketa also experiencim same samting. (Mary, Head of Science, teaches Science, SCHS)

I find it easy to talk with those in my department because we have the same experiences.

Peter, Matthew, Anna and Mary, feel that it is easier for them to share their difficulties (in relation to teaching) with teachers in their departments, because they have the same interests and the same experiences in their teaching and learning.

Andrew (Head of Science/Deputy Principal, teaches Science, RCHS) states:

Mi only open up for teachers wea save open up yia, save stori share olsem. So mi save sharem oloketa challenges yia, especially wetim oloketa other teachers wea mifalla save stori and share yia.

I am only open to those teachers who are open to share. So I usually share my challenges with those teachers.

Andrew comments that he is only open to sharing with teachers who are also open to sharing with him.

However, Paul (Secondary Teacher/Chaplain, teaches New Testament Studies, RCHS) says:

Mi wanfalla man mi save open tumas lo discussion yia wetem oloketa teachers.

I am someone who is open to discuss with other teachers.

Paul says that he is usually open to share or discuss with the other teachers.

The teachers were also asked in the interviews about how sharing their difficulties or sharing their teaching practices, or working together with other teachers, have helped them in their teaching and learning practices. The following are some of their responses:

> *Taim mi sharem olsem oloketa save contribute fo helpem mi lo samfala areas. (Paul, Secondary Teacher/Chaplain, teaches New Testament Studies, RCHS)*

> *When I share with others, they would usually help me in some areas.*

> *Laek mitufalla help each other. (Dorcas, Senior Secondary Teacher, teaches Home Economics, SCHS)*

> *We usually help each other.*

> *Mi findim hem gud and mi barava learn tu from samfala samting wea mi bae mi no save mi go askem… Sometimes mi kam discuss waitim nao science teacher then mitufala save discus. (Luke, Head of Industrial Art, teaches Industrial Art, SCHS)*

> *I find it helpful when I don't know some things and I seek help. Sometimes, I discuss with the science teacher too.*

Paul, Dorcas and Luke mention that sharing with other teachers is mostly helpful for them as they share, because they are also helping each other to solve some of their difficulties or problems in their teaching or learning.

Andrew and Mary mention:

> *Mi faedem taim mi sharem ideas blo mi, hem givim mi confidence. Hem givim confidence lo mi lo wat na mi save finish an mi should maintainim. (Andrew, Head of Science/Deputy Principal, teaches Science, RCHS)*

> *When I share my ideas with others, it gives me confidence on what I already know and what I should maintain.*

> *Mi findim out new something. (Mary, Head of Science, teaches Science, SCHS)*

I find out new ideas.

Andrew says that sharing gives him confidence, as he is a teacher learner and Mary thinks that sharing brings new ideas.

During the interviews, the teachers were also asked to share their viewpoints on why sharing their teaching and learning practices with other teachers may not be easily practiced amongst the teachers in their CHSs. These teachers offer various possible reasons, as illustrated below:

> *Most of them oloketa much feel isolated…but mostly sam times olsem oloketa not much feel fo share. (Paul, Secondary Teacher/Chaplain, teaches New Testament Studies, RCHS)*

> *Most of them isolate themselves … they don't share.*

> *Mifalla no same same especially samfalla nomoa oloketa open up fo stori, others they tend to keep their own ideas yia. (Andrew, Head of Science Department/Deputy Principal, teaches Science, RCHS)*

> *We are not same and only some are open to talk, and others tend to keep their own ideas.*

> *Other teachers mind sharing ideas so I felt they sapos to be, I guess maybe dis is da way. (Matthew, Secondary Teacher, teaches New Testament Studies, SCHS)*

> *Other teachers they mind sharing their ideas so I thought that's the way it should be.*

> *Oloketa stick to themselves nomoa or stay nomoa. (Dennis, Head of Maths, teaches Maths, SCHS)*

> *They just stick to themselves.*

> *Hem kipim hem seleva olsem bae hem no save kam out and really open up lo mifala and story and discuss. (Luke, Head of Industrial Art, teaches Industrial Art, SCHS)*

S/he keeps to him/herself and doesn't open up to sharing and discussing.

Paul, Andrew, Matthew, Dennis and Luke mention that the teachers just tend to keep to themselves: or they isolate themselves and maybe they prefer to work in isolation, which prevents teachers sharing openly about their teaching and learning practices.

Dorcas (Senior Secondary Teacher, teaches Home Economies, SCHS) comments:

Becos mitufalla no klos.

Because we are not close.

Dorcas thinks there is not a close relationship amongst the teachers, which is another reason why collaboration is difficult.

Anna (Secondary Teacher, teaches English, SCHS) states:

Oloketa lelebet fraet or ating hem might be first year blo oloketa fo be in-saet lo schul.

They may feel scared because it may be their first year in this school.

Here, Anna refers to beginner teachers who may feel new or scared in their new school environment and therefore, they find collaboration difficult.

Jane and Peter state:

Kastom…Hem nomoa mekem mifalla olsem no open, samfalla bae cousin, an if mi tambu. Taboo for mitufalla sit down fo share na yia. (Jane, Secondary Teacher, teaches Home Economics, RCHS)

Custom … it makes it difficult for us to share because it is taboo for cousins (a cousin brother and a cousin sister) or in-laws (sister in-law and brother in-law) to sit down together and share.

One or two teachers lo hia mi falla laek family related yia, so hem hat fo mi kam an sit down wetim oloketa sister blo mi. (Peter, Secondary Teacher, teaches English/Social Sciences, RCHS)

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One or two teachers here, we are family-related, so it is inappropriate for
me to sit with my sisters.

In RCHS, another reason mentioned by Jane and Peter that makes collaboration difficult for some teachers is their custom and culture, because it is inappropriate for cousins and in-laws of the opposite sex to sit together and discuss or share openly.

During the interviews, the teachers were also asked about their ideas for improving teachers working together in their CHSs. When this question was asked, there were various responses. The following comments demonstrate the teachers' thoughts and ideas on how to get teachers to work together within their CHSs.

Sharem responsibilities lo insaet lo schuls na ting hem important yia. (Pe-
ter, Secondary Teacher, teaches English/Social Sciences, RCHS)

Sharing of responsibilities in the schools is important.

Oloketa extracurricular, that wan save, laek fo take part lo sports; bae iu
lukim everi teachers together … through lo workline or yia oloketa extracur-
ricular olsem yia. (Anna, Secondary Teacher, teaches English, SCHS)

Through the extra-curricular activities, like sports, it brings teachers togeth-
er … through workline or all those extracurricular activities.

Peter and Anna suggest that responsibilities be shared and that also teachers need to get involved in extra-curricular activities, in order to see an improvement in teachers working together.

Andrew and Luke comment:

Administration hem should organisim samfalla activities wea bae hem in-
volvim each teachers fo hem save doim presentation. (Andrew, Head of
Science Department/Deputy Principal, teaches Science, RCHS)

The administration should organise some activities that would involve
teachers doing some presentations.

If admin hem really distributim out oloketa responsibility lo mifala. (Luke, Head of Industrial Art, teaches Industrial Art, SCHS)

The administration should distribute responsibilities to us.

Andrew and Luke think that it is the responsibility of the administration to organise activities that will involve delegating responsibilities to the teachers.

Dennis (Head of Maths, teaches Maths, SCHS) suggests:

Hem gud fo iumi must garem oloketa fellowship together so that iumi save gud lo each other moa an environment iumi waka insaet yia, hem free yia.

It would be good if we organise some fellowship together so that we get to know each other more and create a free environment.

Dennis believes that it would be good if SCHS teachers have fellowships together and in that way they will get to know each other well: and also fellowship will help to create a friendly environment for all the teachers.

Mary (Head of Science, teaches Science, SCHS) expresses:

Staff meeting and also departmental meetings tu. Mifala should be garem I mean more often ya.

The staff meetings and also department meetings should happen more often.

Mary suggests that having frequent staff meetings and departmental meetings should improve their working together.

This theme on learning within a collaborative culture was further explored in the focus group discussions. It was recorded in the reflective journal that each CHS has committees in their schools comprised of teachers and school administrators. RCHS has eight committees, which include: Religious Committee; Works Committee; Social Committee; Sports Committee; Health Committee; Fundraising Committee; Discipline Committee; and Graduation Committee. SCHS has seven committees which include: Health Committee; Sports Committee; Disciplinary Committee; Graduation Committee; Canteen Committee; and Maintenance Commit-

tee. During the focus group discussions, the teachers were asked to share their opinions about the different committees of which they are members and their experiences in these committees. It is clear also that, due to the small number of teachers teaching in this school, each teacher belongs to two or three committees. The following responses are from the RCHS teachers:

> I am on the Health Committee and we met once only in the first semester. We came up with some goals to achieve and plans to do in this school. One of our priorities is to improve the students' toilets. We plan to dig holes for toilets but then we could not carry on the task … only once did we meet last semester but we will still meet as it was agreed at the last staff meeting. (Peter, Secondary Teacher, teaches English/Social Science, RCHS)

> I am a member of three committees: Graduation Committee; Disciplinary Committee; and Sports Committee… the Disciplinary Committee met three times this year … the Sports Committee, we have not really sat down together to meet and discuss sports activities. However, we have organised some sporting activities for the students. The last committee is the Graduation Committee and we are yet to meet. (Andrew, Head of Science, teaches Science, RCHS)

> I am also a member of three committees: Religious Committee; Health Committee; and Disciplinary Committee. With the Religious Committee, we met twice in the first semester. We have our plans to work and achieve. Some of our plans, we have achieved already. Other plans, we are yet to achieve. (Paul, Secondary Teacher/Chaplain, teaches New Testament Studies, RCHS)

In relation to these responses, it can be seen that RCHS have existing structures of eight committees in their school. These committees have met (some have met once and other committees have met more than once) and they also have their goals and plans for working towards achieving these goals. The majority of the committees have yet to achieve their goals and plans, as the teachers' responses indicate.

During the focus group discussion with the RCHS teachers, they were also asked to share their ideas on how to make these committees successful, or what is needed for success in working together in the different groupings they have in their school. Two RCHS teachers responded to this question with suggestions for collaboration:

> *One way to keep teachers to work together as a team working together is to engage all the teachers in group work like sharing responsibilities … getting teachers involved in these committees …... When we have good leadership, it will encourage the team to work together … Teachers need to share. Like if a teacher has a problem, even though if s/he is from a different department, by sharing, it may help him or her. (Peter, Secondary Teacher, teaches English/Social Science, RCHS)*

> *When teachers work together in the area of discipline, it helps teachers to work together in a team. It also maintains team work. Other important areas may include the area of students' academic work. If I see the poor performance of a student, I can go and share with another teacher. By sharing with another teacher, it will help us to discuss together the solutions to that problem or to identify the problem of this particular student. (Andrew, Head of Science/Deputy Principal, teaches Science, RCHS)*

Peter and Andrew think that the sharing of responsibilities in these committees or subject departments is one way of getting the teachers to work together as a team. Also, the teachers comment on the need for teachers to share difficulties or problems they come across: and by sharing, they may be able to help each other to identify solutions to those problems. Peter, in particular, expresses the need for good leadership that will encourage teachers to work together.

The SCHS teachers were also asked, during the focus group discussion, how they see themselves as a working team/s within their school. Luke and Mary responded to this question and their responses show that these SCHS teachers feel that they can work together because they are already open to each other to share their problems, such as resource problems within their departments. They only need support from their administration:

The way I see ourselves, I think we are very much co-operatively working together. Like, as I compare the previous years, this year I see that we teachers can work together. We just need the administration to support us. (Luke, Head of Industrial Art, teaches Industrial Art, SCHS)

We are open to each other and share the problems of our department to-gether. Like, when our department faces resource problems, we share with each other as well as other problems. So, with openness between each de-partment, I would say that there is sharing between departments. What we need is support from administration to organise the departments and help us on how to achieve some things or aims in the school because, if we can share our problems together, then it is not difficult for us to work together. (Mary, Head of Science, teaches Science, SCHS)

The question on how the SCHS teachers see themselves as a working team/s in this school was further prompted in the focus group discussion by asking them to share how the com-mittees function in their school and Dorcas and Luke responded:

For the Health Committee this year, we have three members in the second-ary and other three members in the primary. Our first meeting was in the first term and we met about having a clean environment in this school. Af-ter our first meeting, we came up with some ideas to keep our school healthy and clean. So the school provided us with plastic bags for rubbish. Later on, our committee had an awareness workshop for the teachers on having a clean and healthy environment. It went well and we all worked to-gether to keep our school clean, healthy and tidy but now, as you can see, the school environment is dirty … Some of these developments depend on money as well. (Dorcas, Senior Secondary Teacher, teaches Home Econom-ics, SCHS)

The Disciplinary Committee, we do have but we don't usually meet. Not un-til two students committed perhaps a serious offence and then we met and suspended these two students. That was our first and last meeting. (Dorcas, Senior Secondary Teacher, teaches Home Economics, SCHS)

*At the beginning of this year, we had all these committees starting but
these committees hardly meet. Only the Health Committee and Disciplinary
Committee had their meetings. It depends on the leader of each committee.
If the leader is active and willing, then the committee may function well in
the school. (Luke, Head of Industrial Art, teaches Industrial Art, SCHS)*

As explained by Dorcas and Luke, only two committees in SCHS, the Health Committee and
the Disciplinary Committee have had their meetings. Dorcas mentions that the Health Com-
mittee have already done some work in the school and also the Disciplinary Committee. In
addition, Dorcas mentions that the Health committee depends on finance and Luke men-
tions that all these committees depend on their leaders, in order to function well in their
school.

In regards to the theme on collaboration, it has been found that teachers in these CHSs were
either finding it easy to talk about their teaching difficulties to other teachers, or they found
sharing with other teachers was difficult. For teachers who share with other teachers about
their teaching difficulties or matters of teaching that concern them, they find sharing helpful,
as they were able to receive help from other teachers and new ideas, in addition to help
with their teaching. This study also finds that there are reasons why collaboration may also
be difficult amongst teachers in these schools. However, the teachers in this study also be-
lieve that they are capable of working together. Finally, the study also finds that these CHSs
have existing committees in their schools and the teachers and their school administrators
are members of these committees.

4.3.6 Reflective Dialogue Practices
In regards to the theme 'Reflective Dialogue Practices', the teachers were asked how they
reflect upon their own work as teachers within their CHS. During the interviews, the teachers
were asked whether they have opportunities to reflect or think deeply about their own
teaching and some of their comments are as follows:

*For honest, that wan yia mi no save luk back na fo mi evaluatim na lesson
blo mi yia. But bae after end lo day na bae mi sa – I mean mi seleva mi kam
lo house bae mi samting back lo everi lesson mi tekem yia. (Jane, Secondary
Teacher, teaches Home Economics/Business, RCHS)*

To be honest, I don't usually reflect about my teaching but when I go back home, sometimes I think about my day's lessons.

Usually if – everi taim after teaching olsem mi no garem taim moa fo sit down an taim mi save go back lo haus olsem mi save tingim oh wanemn oslem na, bae mi should doim lo oloketea next day. (Dorcas, Senior Secondary Teacher, teaches Home Economics, SCHS)

Usually, after my teaching, I don't have time to sit down but to go back home and it's usually at home that I think about my teaching and what I will do the next day.

Jane and Dorcas mention that, when they go back home after school, they then have the time to reflect upon their days' work or teaching.

Lo schedule dis taim yia, mi no garem taim yia, fo reflect. (Andrew, Head of Science Department/Deputy Principal, teaches Science, RCHS)

With the tight schedule now, I don't have time for reflect.

Andrew explains that he does not have time for reflection, mainly due to his workload.

Dennis and Matthew sometimes have time to reflect, since they state:

Samtaims nomoa. (Dennis, Head of Maths, teaches Maths, SCHS)

Sometimes only.

Sam taims mi save ting abaotim. (Matthew, Secondary Teacher, teaches New Testament Studies, SCHS)

Sometimes I think.

Mary speaks about having time to reflect because she feels that her workload is light. Thus, she usually reflects and thinks about what to provide for her students and how to make her presentations, so that students would learn easily. She says:

For mi seleva mi garem enough for reflection, since olsem workload hem no high ya … Mi save duim reflection olsem mi think abaotim wat nao mi been

givim … and mi save think olsem … hao nao bae mi presentim next taem whereby mekem oloketa pikinini for easily takem. (Mary, Head of Science Department, teaches Science, SCHS)

For myself, I have enough time for reflection because my workload is light … So I usually reflect about what I give … and think about it … how I will present my next lesson in a way that my students will grasp.

Luke and Anna both mention having the time and opportunity to reflect. However, Luke states that he needs to discipline himself, so that he can manage his time well. Anna she mentions that, after her classes, she allows herself time to reflect and think about her work, or whether she has achieved her aims. Here are their responses:

Mi tingim mi garem taem nomoa for kam baek and really think, the only thing nomoa if mi programim mi seleva ya. (Luke, Head of Industrial Art, teaches Industrial Art, SCHS)

I think I have enough time to really think, but the only thing is I need to program myself.

Yeah fo that wan, mi garem too oloketa opportunity … from class den kam back, sit down insaet office na reflect back "oh yia man lesson today hem olsem, olsem" or "mi achievim oloketa aims blo mi or no achievim". (Anna, Secondary Teacher, teaches English, SCHS)

Yes, I have the opportunity … after class, I would come back and sit in the office and reflect on whether I have achieved my aims or not.

In summary, teachers with heavy workloads have little time for reflection while in the school and mostly, they reflect about their teaching that day when they return home after school. Teachers with light workloads expressed that they have time and opportunity for reflection but at times, need to discipline themselves and manage their time.

During the interviews, the teachers who mentioned reflecting upon their work were also asked how they recorded their thoughts: and these two responses were typical of the majority of the teachers who reflect:

Mi ya mi no save write nomoa, mi tingim nomoa. (Mary, Head of Science, teaches Science, SCHS)

For me, I don't usually write, but record my thoughts in my mind.

Mi tingim mi have to wraetem. (Matthew, Secondary Teacher, teaches New Testament Studies, SCHS)

When I think, I have to write.

In summary, teachers who indicate reflecting on their teaching (whether routinely or just sometimes) either record their thoughts and reflections in their minds or they write their thoughts down.

During the interviews, the teachers who reflect were also asked whether they have opportunities to express their viewpoints or discuss matters of teaching and instruction with their colleagues: and only one teacher mentions expressing his viewpoints to his colleague, when he says:

De only ting nomoa is hem depend lo taim situation hem happen lo there nomoa. Laek olsem hem, if hem garem problem lo that wan during wan lesson, hem kam back same taim mitufalla discuss na yia, mitufalla storim na yia. (Dennis, Head of Maths, teaches Maths, SCHS)

It mainly depends on the time situation, whereby, if any of us have a problem during a lesson and we come back from the class at the same time, we usually discuss and talk together.

During the interviews, the teachers, who have opportunities to reflect upon their work, were also asked how these reflective practices have helped them in their teaching practices and learning: only three teachers clearly indicate how reflective practices have helped in their teaching and learning. Dennis expresses:

Taim mi tufalla discuss hem broadenim mind blo iu moa fo iu garem moa idea. Yeah iumi should go olsem moa; way out fo iumi solvim problem yia…. helpful becos hao nara colleague hem approachim hem different from hao

mi approachim yia. So hem mekem mi tufalla garem two falla option fo mi tufalla approachim that wan question. (Dennis, Head of Maths, teaches Maths, SCHS)

When we discuss, it broadens my thinking for more ideas and it shows me how I should go about solving a problem … it is also helpful in a way that I am able to see my colleagues' approaches which may be different from my approach and in the end, we have two approaches to a particular question.

Dennis finds that discussion with his colleague brings more ideas and it also helps him in problem-solving, especially when his colleagues provide a different idea or a new approach to his own ideas or approaches.

Mary comments:

Mi save duim that wan, for improvim nomoa. Olsem last year mi have to adjustim oloketa waka olsem same nomoa mi teachim last year then this year moa. So mi try for adjustim nao whatever mi, oloketa notes blo mi, oloketa examples mi try for findim out moa wat kaen examples nao bae mi givim for oloketa pikini ya for oloketa takem olsem ya. So mi improve from that fala teaching blo mi lo last year kasem this year mi improve. (Mary, Head of Science, teaches Science, SCHS)

I do that for improvement. Like, from last year's work, I have to adjust my work this year. So I try to adjust my notes. I look for examples to use that students will understand. So, I have improved in my teaching this year.

Mary believes that her reflective practice has helped to improve her teaching from last year. She has been able to adjust her notes from last year and look for more examples to use in her teaching, which her students may be able to understand.

Anna (Secondary Teacher, teaches English, SCHS) mentions:

Wan ting taim mi reflect mi save faedem out strength an weaknesses blo mi insaet teaching. Or even hao mi preparim lesson fo oloketa pikinini… which area iu need fo improve lo hem yia.

> *One thing when I reflect is I find out my strengths and weaknesses and also*
> *how to prepare lessons for the students ... which areas I need I improve on.*

Anna feels that her reflective practice has helped her to identify strengths and weaknesses in her teaching and what areas she needs to improve on. In addition, reflective practice helps her in her lesson preparations for the students.

In summary, the teachers expressed that having reflective dialogue with their colleagues and reflecting themselves, helped them in their learning and teaching practices.

This theme on reflective practices was further brought up in the focus group discussions, where teachers were asked to share their thoughts and ideas on how they could encourage all teachers to think together about their practices. The thoughts and ideas of some of the teachers are as follows:

> *I think that it is important to consider the background of the teachers in this*
> *school. Some teachers in this school are beginner teachers who have just*
> *finished their training from SICHE Teachers College, while other teachers*
> *are experienced teachers who have been teaching for some years already.*
> *One of the community high school teachers here comes from RTC (Rural*
> *Training Centre) ... Thus, teachers in this school have different backgrounds,*
> *different experiences, skills and knowledge. So I think it is very important*
> *for teachers in this school to share their practices together, so that we may*
> *be able to teach our students well. For example, teachers can share their*
> *different teaching and learning experiences and their teaching approaches.*
> *(Peter, Secondary Teacher, teaches English/Social Science, RCHS)*

Peter mentions that teachers come from different backgrounds of teaching and with different learning experiences. Therefore, these different backgrounds may bring teachers together to share their practices, in order to improve their teaching with students.

> *The way I see it is that the principal being the head of the school needs to*
> *check us teachers regularly. Whenever we have sharing meetings, the prin-*
> *cipal also needs to remind us teachers of important matters of teaching and*
> *learning. Like for example, the principal needs to check our lesson plans and*

*our programmes. Also, the principal needs to take the active role of in-
structing us and guiding us in our teaching and learning practices, so that
we teachers have the shared values and mission to work together with our
principal for the benefit of our students. By having the principal checking us
teachers, this will also help the principal to know more about his teachers
and what further help the teachers need. (Paul, Secondary Teach-
er/Chaplain, teaches New Testament Studies, RCHS)*

Mary suggests that the principal takes an active role in leading and guiding the teachers on
their teaching and learning practices, including checking the teachers regularly: and in that
way, the principal may also get to know his/her teachers well.

*A school should have a coach leader who works closely with teachers to
provide guidance and to help to teachers concerning teachers' learning and
teaching practices and experiences. A coach leader may help teachers in
their lesson preparation, presentation and evaluation. When there is no
coach leader, the teachers may face difficulties and problems in their lesson
preparation and presentation. Also, when there is no coach leader, teachers
may not consider seriously their teaching approaches and learning experi-
ences. (Andrew, Head of Science Department/Deputy Principal, teaches Sci-
ence, RCHS)*

Andrew states the importance of having a coach leader whose role is to work closely with
the teachers, by helping them with their lesson preparation, presentation and evaluation.

*I think we should have departmental meetings and staff meetings, whereby
these meetings provide a venue for teachers to talk and think together. Al-
so, these staff meetings and departmental meetings should not always
have agendas like planning, but sometimes in our staff meetings and de-
partmental meetings we should have opportunities to share our teaching
practices, share student results, etc. I think it is the responsibility of the
heads to inform teachers about teaching practices. (Mary, Head of Science,
teaches Science, SCHS)*

Again, Mary suggests the need to have departmental meetings and staff meetings for teachers to talk about their teaching practices or to share their students' results. In addition, Mary thought that it should be the responsibility of the heads of departments to work with the teachers about their teaching practices.

> *I think another thing too is that most times we teachers usually sit together and talk, we mostly talk about the negatives. But I think our discussion today is good because it reminds us that sometimes, when we sit together to talk and share, we discuss about how we should be improving our teaching and learning practices. Most times when we sit together, we complain about the administration of the school, and the weaknesses of the administration. It is good that next time we sit together, we discuss about how to improve the learning of the students. (Dorcas, Senior Secondary Teacher, teaches Home Economics, SCHS)*

Dorcas expresses how most times, when teachers sit together and talk, they generally talk about problems. She thought that the focus group discussion was good because it reminds them that next time the teachers share together, it would be helpful if they focus on improving their students' learning.

> *The more we have meetings and we departments meet, maybe that will help us in our teaching practices. (Dennis, Head of Maths, teaches Maths, SCHS)*

Dennis supports the idea that teachers have frequent meetings together, or have departmental meetings, in order to help them with their teaching practices.

In summary, the teachers believed that they need to be open to sharing their practices and teaching experiences with each other for improvement. Also, they thought that there needs to be good leadership to work with teachers and to organize departmental and staff meetings purposely to discuss teaching and learning matters.

4.3.7 Focusing On Student Learning

It was important to find out how the teachers personally promote their students' learning and how focusing on student results helps the teachers' teaching and their learning practic-

es. Therefore, during the interviews, the teachers were asked to share some types of activities that they provide for their students, in order to promote learning. The following responses demonstrate the various types of activities that most teachers offer their students:

> *Mi save givim fo oloketa yia na laek lo taim mifalla doim practical yia… But Form 3 dis year na oloketa really laekem, but mi no save able na… Full taim bae mi theory, mi sore. (Jane, Secondary Teacher, teaches Home Economics, RCHS)*

> *I usually give them practical work … but the Form 3 this year, I am not able to give them practical work … and this year, it is just giving them theory, and it's sad doing that to them.*

Jane comments that she usually offers her students practical work, such as getting her students to sew or do cooking but, for her Form 3 this year, she is not able to offer this practical work and therefore, it is mainly theory, where she just provides her students with information and content about the topics she needs to cover in the home economics syllabus.

> *Question and answer… mi save givim exercise home work olsem... Samtime oloketa quiz an olsem. (Paul, Secondary Teacher/Chaplain, teaches New Testament Studies, RCHS)*

> *Question and answer … I usually give them exercises for homework … sometimes, I give them a quiz too.*

Paul mentions that the activities he provides for his students include question and answer acι viι es and exercises for homework — and someι mes he gives quizzes to his students.

> *Mi givim note an den mi givim na activity fo oloketa doim den mi explainim activity. (Matthew, Secondary Teacher, teaches New Testament Studies, SCHS)*

> *I give them notes and then an activity relating to the notes …*

Matthew states that he also gives his students notes followed by an activity.

Wan falla activity if mi givim mi lukim students oloketa save learn abaot fo gud na, group work yia. Oloketa save learn fo gud yia. (Anna, Secondary Teacher, teaches English, SCHS)

One activity that I see students really learn a lot from is group work.

Here, Anna comments on how involving students in group discussions really helps them to learn.

Practical work … tests nomoa, activity nomoa, hem, oloketa common things ya nomoa. (Mary, Head of Science, teaches Science, SCHS)

Practical work … tests, activity and just these common works.

Mary provides practical work for her students, which involve students doing simple science experiments. Mary also provides tests and other activities for her students.

Practical waitim saet lo theory … mi givim oloketa tests, ya oloketa unit tests. (Luke, Head of Industrial Art, teaches Industrial Art, SCHS)

Practical and theory … I give unit tests.

Luke provides work activities for his students that are mainly practical and they involve his students making furniture, such as desks, tables or boxes. In regards to the theory of his subject, Luke provides information on content for his students on a particular topic in a unit, followed by unit tests.

During the interviews, the teachers were also asked what they normally do with their students' work. The following responses are typical of the majority of the teachers:

Oloketa waka wea mi save markim nomoa hem essays yia. (Peter, Secondary Teacher, teaches English/Social Science, RCHS)

The work that I usually mark is essays.

Mi save collectim exercise, mi markim an den mi givim back. (Andrew, Head of Science/Deputy Principal, RCHS)

I usually collect the exercises, mark them and then give them back.

Oloketa activity wea mi doim everi day mi tekem mark lo hem. Not only assignment or term tests; but homework or activity, mi tekem marks lo hem. (Matthew, Secondary Teacher, teaches New Testament Studies, SCHS)

The activities I do every day, I take their marks. Not only the assignment or term tests, but also I take marks for their homework or activity.

Mi collectim den bae mi markim… Returnim back den bae mi go through wetim oloketa. (Anna, Secondary Teacher, teaches English, SCHS)

I collect and mark … then I return their work and go through with them.

Peter, Andrew, Matthew and Anna mention collecting the work of their students, marking it and then returning the marked work to their students.

Dennis tells of not collecting his students' work, but providing opportunities for his students to share or show their work to other students in the class:

Mi no collectim na oloketa exercise buk yia. Leavim fo class taim na, wat mi save doim na is re-wraetem everi question den mi askim ani volunteer iu kam displayim everi waka blo iu lo hia. (Dennis, Head of Maths, teaches Maths, SCHS)

I don't collect their exercise books. I leave it until the next class. I usually re-write the question on the board and ask volunteers to come and display their work.

During the interviews, the teachers were also asked whether they have opportunities to discuss their students' work or show their students' work to other teachers, in order to get their feedback. Some of the teachers explain:

Mi no save sharem but mi save talem out, mi no save showim oloketa but talem out "oh dis student hem weak or hem waswe?" So mi save askem nara wan nomoa, taim mi tufalla stori mi save talem out, wat na performance blo pikinini yia lo subject blo iu olsem. (Peter, Secondary Teacher, teaches English/Social Science, RCHS)

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I don't usually show my students' work to other teachers but I would just speak out and say "This student is weak or what is the students' problem?" So I usually ask the other teacher when we talk together about the performance of a particular student in the other teachers' subject.

Peter explains that he does not usually show his students' work or results but he would just talk or ask about particular students and how these students are doing in other teachers' subject.

Me save stori wetim oloketa other colleagues … mi save doim findings too lo other colleagues teachers blo mi too yia. Hao na student olsem? (Paul, Secondary Teacher/Chaplain, teaches New Testament Studies, RCHS)

I usually talk with my other colleagues … I also do my own findings on how a student is doing in the other subjects by talking to my colleagues.

Paul relates that he usually shares with his colleagues about his students and he asks these teachers what they think about the students.

Sam taims mi tufalla save discuss lo oloketa waka blo oloketa pikinini, sam taims nomoa too, not everi taim. (Matthew, Secondary Teacher, teaches New Testament Studies, SCHS)

Sometimes, two of us usually discuss our student work, other times not, so, not every time.

Matthew relates about sometimes discussing his students' work with another teacher in his department.

Mi sapos mark olsem ya mi save talem, 'eh man oloketa student blo mi do gud or student ya do nogud'. Mi no save hidim ya. Mi talem nomoa ya. then oloketa bae respond tu, talem tu hao nao performance blo class. (Mary, Head of Science, teaches Science, SCHS)

> *When I mark, I usually speak out "this student is doing well or this student is not doing well". I don't usually hide it but I speak out to them. And they will also share the performance of that student in their class.*

Mary speaks about how she usually speaks to other teachers about the performance of her students when she is doing her marking.

> *Mi save doim; especially wetim nara tufalla lo English yia, mi save go show-im lo tufalla, an tufalla too save doim kam same ting. (Anna, Secondary Teacher, teaches English, SCHS)*

> *I usually do that, especially with the other English teacher. I usually show them and they would also do the same.*

Only Anna mentions showing her students' work to her colleagues in their English department.

Under the theme on focusing on student learning, the teachers were also asked, during the interviews, about how they sharing their students' work and results with other teachers help them in their teaching and learning experiences. Here are some of their responses:

> *Taim iu sharem wetim oloketa other teachers oloketa save talem kam, den bae iu save workim out strength an weaknesses blo oloketa students yia. (Peter, Secondary Teacher, teaches English/Social Science, RCHS)*

> *When you share with other teachers, they will also share what they know, and then you may be able to work out the strengths and weaknesses of the students.*

Peter explains that, by sharing with other teachers about students' work or results, it usually gives him information about his students' weaknesses and strengths in their learning.

> *Hem givim challenge lo mi fo mi need fo talk wetim student yia or share wetim student yia. For example wat na problem blo iu that is why iu olsem? (Paul, Secondary Teacher/Chaplain, teaches New Testament Studies, RCHS)*

It gives me a challenge to talk with my students and ask them what their learning problem is.

Paul mentions that sharing with other teachers about students' work or results challenges him further to ask his students about their learning problem/s.

Hem givim mi idea lo dis particular student. At the same taim too bae hem helpim mi too, lo hao fo mi down. Trae fo go down moa simpler so that pikinini yia at least hem garem lelebet idea lo wat mi laek fo teachim insaet lo class. (Matthew, Secondary Teacher, teaches New Testament Studies, SCHS)

It gives me ideas about a particular student. Also, it helps me on how I can become simple in my teaching so that students may be able to understand and learn.

Matthew comments that sharing students' work or results with other teachers gives him ideas about particular students and also, this sharing helps him to provide more simple teaching for his students.

Hem helpim mi fo gud taim discussion mifalla doim, especially lo samfalla areas if mi no discovem or no idea lo hem … hem olsem garem new ideas lo wat mi no lukim before an den mi just save. (Anna, Secondary Teacher, teaches English, SCHS)

When discussing, it really helps me a lot especially in some areas that I don't have any ideas about … and my colleague(s) give me new ideas I wasn't aware of before.

Anna recalls that discussions with her colleagues about her students' work (or results) bring new ideas to her.

Hem barava helpem mi nao. Mi save identifym nao oloketa students ya, who nao nidim help, oloketa garem capability, nidim help or kaen olsem mi save find outim that way. (Mary, Head of Science Department, teaches Science, SCHS)

> *It really helps me. I usually identify my students and which students in particular need help or are capable learners.*

Mary shares about her students to other teachers and this sharing really helps her to identify her students and which students need further help from her.

> *No ani taim … But wat na tingting blo iu, hem best fo mi showim? (Dorcas, Senior Secondary Teacher, teaches Home Economics, SCHS)*
>
> *Not once … but what do you think, is it best for me to show them?*

Dorcas mentions that she does not usually show her students' work or results to her colleagues: and she questioned the researcher as to whether it is a good idea to show students' work or results to other teachers.

In summary, the teachers recognized the importance of providing activities for their students as well as marking students' work and returning the work back to the students. Also, some of the teachers mentioned not sharing their students' work with other teachers, while other teachers stated discussing their students' work with other teachers. These teachers expressed how sharing students' work or results has helped in their teaching and learning, as well as identifying the learning needs of their students.

4.4 Conclusions

In summary, the main objective in this chapter was to present the results of this study on the formal and informal learning experiences of teachers in RCHS and SCHS. A range of learning experiences of teachers in RCHS and SCHS have been described in this chapter. These learning experiences came about from: shared values and norms; workshops; high school learning experiences; collaborative culture; reflective dialogue and inquiry and focus on student learning. There are teaching difficulties that teachers come across in their learning experiences. However, the teachers suggested that there are possible ways to build upon their learning experiences to benefit their students.

The next chapter will discuss these results in the light of the literature review.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study has explored the formal and informal learning experiences of ten teachers in two community high schools in the Solomon Islands. While some research has already made helpful contributions into issues within the Solomon Islands' education (Alcorn, 2010), this study seeks to contribute further useful information on teachers' learning experiences in two CHSs, which can be built on when developing effective PLCs for teachers' PL in the future. The notion of a *professional learning community* is new in the Solomon Islands context and this study has been designed to address the gap in the literature, in relation to developing a PLC for teacher learning within a developing Pacific country: in this case, the Solomon Islands.

This chapter discusses the common themes found in the findings chapter, which reveal the current and past learning experiences of the participant teachers in the Solomon Islands, together with other significant contextual factors relating to these CHSs, which could be built upon, in order to develop effective PLCs in these schools in the future. These findings also take into account the literature review presented in Chapter Two. Furthermore, in addition to the literature, this chapter identifies those factors that may hinder or present barriers to the development of PLCs.

Accordingly, the four themes which will be discussed in this chapter are as follows: shared values and norms; existing collaborative practices and structures; reflective practices; focusing on student learning.

5.2 Shared values and norms

A school's vision (or mission) statement is very important, because a vision (or mission) is one way to achieve the inclusion of values within a school (Huffman, 2003). The school's mission is based on a set of values that answers basic questions about the school's purpose of education and how educational programmes should be carried out within the school (Boerema, 2006). Boerema further stated that the school's mission provides the basis for

decision-making in the school together with the way the school is managed. It was shown in the study's findings that each of the CHSs has a vision/mission statement which potentially directs, to the teachers, the shared values which they need to uphold together and engage in during day-to-day actions, in relation to all of their students' learning. Unfortunately, the majority of the teachers did not have access to (or have even seen) their schools' vision/mission statement until this research was conducted in their schools.

However, the study's findings reveal that, although these CHSs teachers may not have seen their schools' vision/mission statements, these teachers are guided by their passion and interest in teaching, in addition to receiving verbal encouragement or words of advice from their school principals, who do have the copies of the schools' mission/vision statements. A core characteristic of a PLC is for all the members to have a shared vision of what is important to them as teachers in a school (Hord, 1997b). Morrissey (2000) further argued that the focus of a school's vision should be on all students' learning that requires the support, commitment and hard work of the school staff members. The study's findings reveal shared values within these CHSs, which can potentially be utilised and developed further, when forming PLCs within their schools. Each CHS is presented individually in the next subsections.

5.2.1 Roadway Community High School

RCHS is a private school operated by a church organisation and the school has a vision statement and a mission statement. According to the study of Boerema (2006, p. 5), in most faith-based private schools, religious development is their fundamental goal, "based on beliefs about the nature of good life, the human task, and the role that education should play in preparing for that life and task."

Similarly, the study's findings reveal that the fundamental goal or focus of the school's vision statement and the mission statement is based on Christian philosophy, where the religious development of their students is the most important goal. There are key values that teachers share in this school, which can support the development of a PLC within their school and these will now be discussed: meeting students' religious needs; teacher commitment; and teamwork.

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5.2.1a Meeting students' religious needs

The findings reveal that holistic approaches, activities and programmes within RCHS are upheld by their teachers, who aim to positively impact on their students' religious needs, which is the core of their vision and mission statements. It was also found that the school's Education Authority runs workshops for these teachers on how to apply Christian values in their teaching approaches. The findings showed that both teachers and students within RCHS participate together in religious activities every morning and evening, as part of the school's daily programme. Edwards (2012) reported that a reason for several schools in New Zealand progressing well with their PLCs, is that these schools have mission statements based on Christian philosophy: and some of these schools even used Biblical references to shape their key goals. Edwards further stated that this shared philosophy and ethos provided a basis from which curriculum issues could be discussed and it also provided a basis for whatever further development work was needed in the schools. Hence, teachers in these New Zealand schools were able to share connections, respect, integrity, community engagement and relationships with each other and thus build up their capacity together.

5.2.1b Commitment

Teachers within RCHS recognise the commitment they have for their students, their school, the surrounding communities and the country as a whole. It was found that, although RCHS is located in a remote area and the school has faced financial difficulties which have also affected the teaching of the teachers, these teachers continue to show their commitment by teaching their classes and participating in school activities and programmes for the upbringing of their students. Shared values make members of a PLC within a school see themselves as participating in a shared project, to which they are committed to each other. For this reason, they hold collective viewpoints about their students' learning and school priorities for the use of time, resource, space and support of the stakeholders (Lujan & Day, 2010; Strike, 1999; Vescio et al., 2008).

5.2.1c Teamwork

It was also revealed that teachers within RCHS share a belief in the importance of teamwork. The study's findings show that teachers work as a team, when it comes to making very important decisions on issues that concern the school programmes or school activities. For instance, there was shared decision-making on closing the school early due to financial

difficulties; shared decision-making and teamwork when disciplining students; teamwork in relation to the school's graduation programme and team-work to keep the school environment clean. Furthermore, these teachers also work as a team, when providing accommodation and food for visitors who visit their school on school-related matters or the community's matters. The school culture of teamwork within RCHS is a potential strength of the school, which can be utilised to develop and then to sustain a PLC within their school. Teamwork involves the shared responsibility of all stakeholders (not only the teachers in the school) to identify school goals and development priorities: and then increase the effectiveness of the school programmes by focusing on student learning (Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Hipp, Huffman, Pankake, & Olivier, 2008; Hord, 1997a).

5.2.1d Hindrances to upholding shared values
Although teachers in RCHS share these values, there are also some hindrances, which are affecting the school when attempting to accomplish its mission and vision and thus, this may also affect the formation of a PLC within the school. These hindrances are a lack of support from stakeholders and the teachers' differing beliefs and values.

Lack of support from stakeholders
According to Epstein and Salinas (2004), support from all stakeholders, including partnering with families and communities in school programmes, is essential for a school to benefit, as well as for the students. When stakeholders give their support to bring about positive changes to their schools, these schools can become effective PLCs (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Reichstetter, 2006). It was found in this study that there is lack of support from stakeholders, which possibly makes it quite difficult for the school to experience positive changes, in regards to achieving the school's mission and vision for the students' improved learning. The study's findings reveal that RCHS strongly needs support from its stakeholders to work with teachers to achieve the vision and mission of their school. It was pointed out that teachers appealed to parents, the school board, village chiefs and the church authority to contribute towards the school's achievement for student learning.

Interestingly, the remoteness of the RCHS has not been strongly voiced by the teacher participants as affecting them because remoteness and their school location may be already part of their teaching experiences in RCHS. However, it can be said that the remoteness of their school together with the lack of road access and lack of communication access to the

school is one of the main reasons why there is lack of support from the stakeholders, thus affecting the development progress of their school.

Teacher's differing beliefs and values

The study findings provide evidence of teachers having differing beliefs and values towards teaching within RCHS, which may be a hindrance to achieving the school's mission and vision. It is clear that teachers form their own beliefs about religion in the school. For example, some teachers believe that some of the religious programmes in the school are not necessary and they may be time-wasting, while other teachers see all religious programmes in the school as being important for all teachers and students. Furthermore, it appears that the vision statement of the school is lacking the social, mental and physical aspects of a student, because its focus is mainly on the spiritual aspects of a student. Therefore, differing beliefs and values exist amongst teachers, which may affect teachers' working together to achieve the vision and mission of their school. However, Nehring and Fitzsimons (2011) reported that teachers may become confused and unfocused about their purpose of teaching and about the learning of their students, when the vision or goals of a school lack clarity. On the other hand, points of differences or disagreement should be seen as normal within group work (Dooner et al., 2008).

Furthermore, teachers with differing beliefs and values should be seen as a potential opportunity for the Education Authority to bring these teachers together and clearly express to them the vision of the school and how the teachers can work together to integrate the vision of the school within their teaching, which should then benefit the students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The authors also implied that the school's vision should be emanating from the hard work of the teachers, which emerges from constant dialogue and negotiation of disagreements.

5.2.2 Sunshine Community High School

SCHS is similar to a public school and it is operated by the Honiara City Council. Boerema's (2006) study revealed that the focus of public schools is more on providing equal education for everyone, for the purpose of training citizens to be productive through the promotion of economic growth, rather than the religious development of students, as in private schools.

Similarly, SCHS has a vision statement that aims to provide quality educational opportunities for everyone, in order to promote the students to become good citizens. The SCHS teachers also share two key values which can support the development of a PLC within their school: teachers' commitment to meet the learning needs of their students; and teamwork.

5.2.2a Teachers' commitment to meet the learning needs of their students
It was highlighted in the study's findings that teachers within SCHS have shown commitment in their work as teachers in the school and in putting in their efforts to provide quality education for their students, which is the focus of their vision statement. For example, teachers show commitment in teaching their classes, although most of them face resource problems within their subject departments: and they look for other options, in terms of resources to use in their teaching. In addition, although some teachers mention a lack of housing provided by the school and poor salaries for the teachers, these teachers still prioritise the learning of their students.

5.2.2b Teamwork
It was also found that teachers within SCHS value the importance of teamwork. It was pointed out that, although there may be a lack of support from the school administration, teachers within SCHS would normally find themselves working as a team in any school programme or school activity. In addition, the teachers are usually concerned about each other in the school. For example, if a teacher is not attending his or her classes, the other teachers would usually, ask this particular teacher if he or she has a problem and how they could they help him or her with the problem.

5.2.2c Hindrances to values and beliefs upheld by teachers
There are also some hindrances to teachers' shared values which may hinder teachers' working together to provide quality education for their students: teachers' needs are unmet; and change of leadership.

Teachers' needs unmet
The findings in this study indicate that teachers' needs are just as important as students' needs for teachers within SCHS. The teachers in this school feel that when their needs, such as minimal administration support, low paid salaries and a lack of proper housing accommodation for them on school campus, are unmet, it sometimes make them feel demotivated in regards to teaching their students. As a result, this may be affecting how

teachers work towards achieving the vision of their school. Other studies have also revealed that when teachers' needs and expectations are unmet, teachers may leave the profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007).

Change of leadership
According to the findings in a study by Fink and Brayman (2006, p. 63), in many schools in Ontario, where school boards rotate principals from school to school on a regular basis, " teachers see their principals come and go like revolving doors- and quickly learn how to resist and ignore their leader's effort." The result of the regular rotation of principals, as revealed in their study, is that schools fail to adjust to improvement and changes and thus, this affects the learning of their students. Similarly, it was pointed out in this study's findings that changes of leadership within SCHS have also affected their programmes and activities, when attempting to achieve their school's vision. For example, the teachers felt that every time a new principal comes into their school, he or she brings in a new vision and new ideas for the school and these teachers have lost sight of the priorities of the school, since their vision statement changes whenever there is a new principal.

With these findings on RCHS and SCHS, it can be said that, together with the vision statements and mission statement of the CHSs, these teachers share common values and norms on what is important to them as teachers in these schools – and what is important for their students. However, there are also some hindrances to upholding these shared values and norms. Hence, the study's findings stress the importance of having a clear vision and purpose within a school. Shared values and norms can potentially bring teachers to work together, which is relevant to the establishment of PLCs (Huffman, 2003).

5.3 Existing collaborative practices and structures

Collaboration is important for building up and binding a community of learners together (Konza & Maloney, 2011; Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). This study finds potential existing practices and structures within these two CHSs which include: teacher sharing; school committees; workshops; and high school learning experiences, which can be built upon to develop PLCs within these schools. However, there are also some barriers to these existing practices and

structures which need to be addressed, in order to effectively develop PLCs within these CHSs.

5.3.1 Teacher sharing

Collaboration is an effective process in PLCs, in which teachers engage together to question, analyse, exchange and reflect on their classroom practices (Bryk et al., 1999; Dooner et al., 2008; Graham, 2007; Lujan & Day, 2010; Nehring & Fitzsimons, 2011; Owens, 2010; Snow-Gerono, 2005). The findings in this study reveal that teachers in these CHSs engage in certain sharing, especially when sharing their difficulties (in relation to teaching) with other teachers in their schools who face similar teaching difficulties. The teachers who engage in sharing mainly talk about shortage of resources, such as textbooks, which they encounter in their subject departments; a lack of equipment and classrooms for their students to undertake experiments; their difficulty or lack of knowledge in understanding their subject syllabus; and/or their difficulty in meeting the aims and objectives of their subject syllabus.

The study's findings also reveal that those teachers, who engage in sharing their teaching and learning difficulties, find it comfortable to share with teachers with whom they share the same interests and experiences. For example, the study's findings show that teachers who chew betel nut or smoke together during class breaks (or when they are not teaching) tend to have opportunities to talk about and share their teaching difficulties. It was also revealed in the study that teachers, who have formed friendships during their teacher training in the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education and consequently teach in the same school, are more open to each other for sharing and working together.

The existing practices of teachers sharing their teaching and learning difficulties in these CHSs are potential learning experiences for these teachers since, with the development of PLCs in their schools, these existing practices can be developed further, in order to create a positive collaborative culture. A study (Snow-Gerono, 2005) had found that collaboration within a PLC had shifted the community from traditional isolation to a more collaborative community, where interdependence and risk-taking were encouraged and valued, in order for improvement and deep learning to take place.

If PLCs are established within these two CHSs, the PLCs can encourage these teachers to not only share their teaching difficulties, but also this sharing with other teachers can extend to

other strategies of collaboration, such as other important matters relating to teaching and learning. The literature had confirmed that collaboration within a PLC encourages teachers to engage in various strategies of collaboration (Bryk et al., 1999; Dooner et al., 2008; Graham, 2007; Kruse et al., 1994; Lujan & Day, 2010; Nehring & Fitzsimons, 2011; Owens, 2010; Snow-Gerono, 2005; Vescio et al., 2008). These studies found that, when members of a PLC collaboratively share their professional practices, it actually helps them to further analyse their own (and their peers) teaching strategies for improvement: and it provides a social network that they can draw on for help, in order to overcome challenges and support one another's learning.

Similarly, teachers in this study mentioned that, when they share and talk about their teaching difficulties with other teachers, it helped them in their teaching and learning practices. For example, for most participant teachers, sharing and working together has enabled them to discuss and collectively solve their problems (but not all problems) and difficulties in their teaching and learning. For some teachers, sharing gives them confidence in their work as a teacher in their school: and for other teachers, sharing brings in new ideas for their practices. The sharing, talking and working together of teachers within these CHSs show that, with collaboration, there are further immense benefits to teachers' learning experiences. The literature has confirmed that, when teachers collaboratively share their professional practices, it brings these teachers together to support one another in their teaching and learning practices (Bryk et al., 1999; Dooner et al., 2008; Graham, 2007; Lujan & Day, 2010; Nehring & Fitzsimons, 2011; Owens, 2010; Snow-Gerono, 2005).

5.3.2 School committees

The findings in this study also show that each of the CHSs have working teams within their schools, which they refer to as a school committees. These include a Religious Committee; Work Committee; Social Committee; Sports Committee; Health Committee; Fundraising Committee; Discipline Committee; Graduation Committee and other committees, as mentioned in the previous chapter. These committees are comprised of teachers and administrators within these CHSs. The committees are set up by the school administration and the teachers' background experiences and interests are considered when setting up membership of these committees. Each committee has a leader who is responsible for the organisation of meetings and discussions, in addition to reporting back the committee's activities to

the school's administration. Each committee is said to set up their yearly plans and then to work together to achieve their goals. The presence of existing structures of working groups within these two schools is a potential culture of collaboration, which can be further developed, in order to create PLCs. DuFour and Eaker (1998) and Reichstetter (2006) found that a PLC usually involves its members working together towards achieving a common goal or purpose, thus leading to learning and improvement. Furthermore, collaboration is argued to be a powerful tool for use when working within teams or groups (Kilpatrick et al., 2003).

5.3.3 Professional development in workshops

A workshop is an organised approach to PD that usually occurs outside the teachers' own classroom and it involves a leader(s) with special expertise and participants who attend sessions at scheduled times (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). The study's findings reveal that most participant teachers have had the opportunity to attend workshops (held on or off school-sites) and these teachers indicated that this benefited their teaching practices, in addition to the learning of their students.

The study of Guskey and Yoon (2009) revealed remarkable improvements in student learning, following teachers' PD workshops. In addition, these workshops promoted active-learning experiences for teachers and also provided opportunities for teachers to make changes to their classroom situations. Similarly, the teachers in this study mentioned the positive learning experiences they acquired from attending the workshops. They mentioned how the workshops provided them with information, new ideas and resources for their teaching. In addition, the workshops provided opportunities for trained and untrained teachers to share their teaching and learning practices and learn from one another's experiences. The teachers also indicated how the workshops have been refreshing for them, in relation to what they had learnt in college: and how the workshops renewed their commitment to teaching. It gave them opportunity to interact and share their teaching and learning practices with other teachers. The study's findings also support the study of Poskitt (2005, p. 59) which revealed teachers perceiving benefits of PD as "increased knowledge and information, greater awareness of available help and support, and increased confidence ... increased their repertoire of practical ideas and strategies, and helped in the identification and assessment of learners with special needs." Workshops are catalysts for change and fur-

ther learning and they are successful when they are on-site, job embedded, sustained-over time and focussed on active learning and student outcomes (Chappius et al., 2009).

Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) identified a paradigm for PD which provides content that is centred on student learning and helps teachers to develop their pedagogical skills, in order to teach specific types of content – a context integrated with school improvement and not isolating the PD programme from other programmes within the school, but linking curriculum, assessment and PL opportunities; and active collaborative and sustained learning for teachers. According to these researchers, an approach that meets these criteria for PD is a PLC. Hence, if a PLC is to be developed within these CHSs, it will provide more PD opportunities for the teachers in their teaching and learning practices and experiences. Borko (2004) study also revealed strong PLCs provide PD programmes for groups of teachers to work together to analyse and improve their practice.

5.3.4 High school learning experiences

Some of the teachers who participated in this study are teaching subjects that are not their area of teaching expertise, due to the shortage of teachers experienced in their school. These teachers usually apply to their teaching what they had learnt and observed during their own high school learning experiences. A study (Rodie, 2011) conducted in the Solomon Islands context found that high school learning experiences have a role in forming teachers' perceptions of teaching. For example, teachers in Rodie's study bring to their schools perceptions of what they thought secondary teaching would be like, based on what they had experienced and observed during their own time as high school students. Consequently, it is important to note that teachers who teach subjects, not in their area of expertise, may put into their teaching practices simply what they learnt and experienced during their own high school learning.

If PLCs are to be developed in these CHSs, it will provide opportunities for those teachers (who are teaching subjects not related to their teaching expertise) to share their similar experiences and practices together, thus evaluating their own and other's teaching practices and ensuring changes are made for improvement. When PLCs study and research their practices together, teachers will be able to collaboratively draw out new strategies and ideas and support each other in putting these new ideas into practice (Darling-Hammond &

Richardson, 2009). DuFour (2011b, p. 61) stated that "As members of collaborative teams, educators in a PLC work collectively to develop a guaranteed and viable curriculum to ensure that students have access to the same essential knowledge and skills regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned." Therefore, teacher learning is most likely to occur when teachers collaborate and are working collegially with other teachers (and across the school) for improvement (Baldwin, 2008).

5.3.5 Barriers to teachers working together in their teaching and learning practices

This study shows that the sharing of teaching and learning practices may not be easily practiced by some teachers within these two CHSs: and a teacher working in isolation is a common practice in these schools. Teacher isolation may be situated with an individual teacher or it may be situated within a school structure (Sindberg, 2011). Teacher isolation is a situation whereby a teacher has minimal interaction with the other staff members in a school (Bakkenes, Brabander, & Imants, 1999). The study's findings reveal that, in both these CHSs, teachers share one working space where all their desks are next to each other in their staffroom. However, the study also shows that some teachers hold the belief that working in isolation is a professional practice. For instance, they observe that some other teachers around them are mostly working alone and they then thought that it is a professional practice that everyone else is doing – and if other teachers are doing it, then it is an acceptable practice in the school for all the teachers. The findings of this study have shown three possible reasons why working in isolation is a practice (or may be seen as a professional practice) within these two CHSs. These reasons are relationship power; cultural values, beliefs and practices; and subject hierarchy.

5.3.5a Relationship power

Teachers within these two CHSs may find sharing with other teachers in their school challenging, due to relationship issues that pre-existed, as revealed in the study's findings. As various international studies have shown positive relationships are pivotal to teacher learning within a PLC (Baldwin, 2008; Bryk et al., 1999; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Stoll et al., 2006).

The findings of this study have identified three types of relationships that pre-existed in either both, or one, of these two CHSs. The first type of relationship is family relationships, whereby teachers are either related to each other through birth or through marriage and

thus, there are family relationships amongst them. The second type of relationship is personal relationships. This study identifies personal relationships of teachers as a relationship that was formed when these teachers were undertaking training together at teachers' college and later they came to teach in the same school. Furthermore, this study also identifies a personal relationship as a relationship that is formed when teachers share common interests and experiences, which thus bring them together to form a personal relationship. For example, teachers who chew betel nut or smoke together, or face similar teaching difficulties, tend to form personal relationships with each other. The third relationship classified in this study is the collegial relationship formed amongst teachers within their subject departments and across departments within the school.

The study's findings have revealed that teachers who lack personal relationships and collegial relationships find sharing and working with other teachers difficult: and they prefer to work in isolation. It is also important to note in this chapter that relationships are often linked to sensitive cultural issues: and this area is not explored further on in the study in the interviews and discussions (as a result of the diversity of the participant teachers' cultures, beliefs and practices), in order to investigate why personal relationships and collegial relationships are not easily developed amongst some teachers. However, the literature has revealed that respect and trust amongst teachers and their colleagues are essential to building up a caring environment that is conducive to necessary changes and improvements (Edwards, 2012; Hord, 1997a; Lee, 2008). When trust and respect exists, teachers can be encouraged to collaborate and openly discuss their practices (Stoll et al., 2006).

5.3.5b Cultural values, beliefs and practices
A society's cultural values, beliefs and practices may also be a hindrance to teachers' collaboration and working together. The literature on this study has not located any studies on cultural values, beliefs and practices being barriers to developing a PLC in schools. However, the study's findings reveal that the RCHS is located in a remote society, where there are still strong ties to traditions and cultural values, beliefs and practices. Jane, the only high school female teacher, mentioned feeling isolated when working in an environment that is male dominated. Interestingly, this society practices a matrilineal system, however, a woman such as Jane in this society, still feels alienated within her working environment. Kirton and Greene (2000) gave an explanation for women's inequality which emerged as a truth or re-

ality to most people: that women are meant to be of lower status than men. Consequently, men and women are guided in their behaviour by the hegemonic ideas of men and women's status within their societies. Therefore, being the only female high school teacher working in the RCHS, the study shows that generally Jane works in isolation.

Similarly, the study's findings disclose that a teacher working in isolation within RCHS is a result of the type of family relationships that exist in their working environment. It has been revealed in this study that RCHS teachers are either brothers or sisters, or cousins or in-laws. As a result, some teachers feel that it is inappropriate for them to sit together and discuss or share openly, especially with teachers of the opposite sex, because other teachers or other members in their cultural society may form suspicious opinions about them. In order to avoid any suspicions arising about them within their social and cultural society, some teachers prefer to work alone.

5.3.5c Subject hierarchy

The practice of working in isolation within these two CHSs is also due to subject hierarchy, as uncovered in the study's findings. Sindberg's (2011) study found that music teachers, who are usually outnumbered by teachers of other academic subjects, are often working in isolation. Similarly, this study's findings reveal that some teachers who are teaching so-called minor subjects, such as agriculture, business, industrial art, home economics, physical education and Christian education, find it difficult to share or talk to other teachers about their subject or their teaching difficulties. This is because they feel that other teachers, who are teaching core subjects such as English, maths, social science and science, may look down on their subject, as being of lesser importance for students' preparation for the external examinations. In addition, the study's findings show that, for some teachers within these CHSs, working in isolation is practiced because a teacher may be teaching his or her subject alone in the subject department, and thus, he or she tends to work in isolation.

Thus, the study's findings have revealed existing collaborative practices and structures within the CHSs, together with barriers to teachers working together. It is therefore important to note that, in order for PLCs to be established effectively within the CHSs, teachers need to engage in collaborative practices – rather than working individually. Collaboration has posi-

tive outcomes for teachers and it ultimately leads to students' improved learning (Hord, 1997a; Konza & Maloney, 2011).

5.4 Reflective dialogue inquiry practices

The literature has defined reflective dialogue inquiry as teachers becoming aware of their work as teachers and where teachers have the space to express and reflect on their viewpoints and ideas, in regards to teaching and learning, in addition to having conversations about students and teaching and learning (Bryk et al., 1999; Graham, 2007; Hord, 1997b; Owens, 2010; Snow-Gerono, 2005). Furthermore, reflective dialogue inquiry is an important aspect of collaboration, which provides on-going opportunities for teachers to learn together, to apply learning to classroom practices and then to reflect on what works for them and what has not worked for them and why (Chappius et al., 2009). The findings of this study show that only a few teachers in these two CHSs have engaged in reflective practices, while the majority of the other teachers admit to not having the opportunity to engage in reflective practices (due to some factors which are discussed later). It is evident in this study that those teachers, who have engaged in reflective practices, either have the opportunity to think about their work after their classes, or they reflect on their day's teaching and work when they return to their homes. The study also found that either teachers record their thoughts and reflections in their minds, or they write their thoughts down.

In addition, Sindberg (2011) found that the unique culture of teaching allows for discussions about everyday issues and general complaints about students or the school, but for teachers to talk to each other about teaching (or what goes on inside their classroom) is just not practical. A school culture that promotes independence may make it difficult for teachers to share feelings and insecurities about their work (Sindberg, 2011). Similarly, the study's findings reveal that only one teacher mentions sometimes having the opportunity to discuss or have conversation with his colleague, if a problem arises during a lesson for either of them. According to the findings of Poskitt and Taylor (2007), only a few teachers have the opportunity, time and skills to engage in professional conversations, even though professional conversations provide useful opportunities for teachers to acquire new knowledge and understanding.

However, despite only a few teachers in this study currently engaging in reflective practices, the development of PLCs in these two CHSs can provide these teachers with opportunities, time and skills for them to practice reflective dialogue inquiry (Snow-Gerono, 2005). The literature has confirmed that reflective practices are an important aspect of collaboration within a PLC, which involves teachers thinking deeply about their work and others' practice and also having continual dialogue about their students, teaching and learning for effective instructional practices (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Hord, 1997a; Louis et al., 1996; Roberts & Pruitt, 2009; Snow-Gerono, 2005).

5.4.1 Benefits of reflective practices

Apparently, the few teachers who have been involved in reflective practices indicate that these reflective practices have helped them in their teaching and learning practices. In the case of one teacher, he believed that when he engages in reflective dialogue with his colleague it provides the opportunity for them to collectively solve problems. In the case of another teacher, reflective practices have helped her to improve her teaching from last year and for one other teacher, reflective practices have helped her to identify her strengths and weaknesses in teaching and what areas she needs to improve on. Similar findings in the literature have found that reflective practices provide the space for teachers to express and reflect their own viewpoints and ideas and those of other teachers, which ultimately lead to professional growth and educational change (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Snow-Gerono, 2005). Furthermore, the literature has revealed that reflective practices provide reflective skills that will enable teachers to question and challenge one another's practice and solve problems collectively, in addition to learning about new ideas and new information and applying this new knowledge (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Owens, 2010; Reichstetter, 2006; Stoll et al., 2006).

5.4.2 Barriers to reflective practices

As mentioned previously, only a few of the participant teachers have engaged in reflective practices within their teaching and learning. Findings in this study reveal five possible reasons why reflective practices are not practiced by the majority of these teachers: time; workload; teacher availability; and lack of skills.

5.4.2a Time

In the literature on PLC, time is an important factor that is needed, in order to support a change process, because teachers need time to process information to fit their individual needs, before they can apply changes to their ideas or behaviour (Baldwin, 2008; Easton, 2008; Heirdsfield et al., 2010; Hord, 1997b; Kruse et al., 1994; Lujan & Day, 2010; Morrissey, 2000; Poskitt, 2005; Reichstetter, 2006; Speck & Knipe, 2001). Teacher learning is built-up when teachers have the time and opportunities for group interactions and collaboration with their professional peers (Huebner, 2009). It is evident in the study's findings that the majority of the teachers do not have the time to reflect on their work after teaching a lesson, since their class periods usually follow on, one after another. Furthermore, one teacher admitted to not having the time to engage in reflective practices after her classes, as she usually has family commitments to attend to.

Another reason found, for teachers not engaging in reflective practices, is due to RCHS sometimes experiencing changes within their school programmes, which places an extra burden on its teachers to meet the requirement of their subject syllabus prior to the external examinations. For example, sometimes, due to food shortages for students in the school, RCHS would have a shorter semester, thus giving teachers no time for reflective practices, since they would need to concentrate on covering the topics in their syllabus. This situation does not allow any time for the teachers to think deeply about their work, or even to hold professional conversations with their colleagues. The literature has revealed that it is still uncommon for teachers to have time to hold professional dialogues with their peers (Snow-Gerono, 2005). The study's findings also found that lack of time discipline is also a barrier to teachers being involved in reflective practices. Jacobson (2010) mentioned that often schools do not make use of the time resources they have for collaborative inquiry.

5.4.2b Workloads

Evidence in the study's findings show that teacher workload is also a barrier for teachers to engage in reflective practices. A study has shown that teachers who are faced with high workloads experience stress and strain (Dick & Wagner, 2001). In addition, Carr and Chambers (2006, p. 274) stated that "allocating time out of what is perceived as an excessive workload is unlikely to occur unless the activity is highly valued by schools and by teachers." The study's findings reveal that the participant teachers, who have a heavy load-

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ing of class periods to teach, have less time to engage in reflective practices, than those teachers who have a light load of class periods. Also, this study found that a teacher who has administrative roles within the school, apart from teaching classes, may basically have no time at all to engage in reflective practices. Giles and Hargreaves (2006) have supported that the nature of social interactions within a school can be affected by workloads and loss of time.

5.4.2c Availability of teachers
This study also identified a reason why most teachers do not practice reflective dialogue in their teaching and learning. This is because they claim that, most times, other teachers are not available for them to hold conversations together. For example, a teacher finishing his or her classes may find that he or she needs to talk about a problem that has arisen in his or her class but, upon coming into the staffroom, most teachers are busy reading or writing and basically, there is not a teacher available with whom he or she can hold a dialogue.

5.4.2d Lack of reflective practice skills
The study of Mueller (2003) has revealed that teachers lack reflective practice skills since, in that particular study they did not know what to write about or how to write about their learning experiences and practices. Similarly, this study's findings show that most teachers may also lack reflective practice skills. This fact is clearly demonstrated in a teacher's comment when she admits that she knows very little about recording/writing one's thoughts and ideas about work, teaching and learning. Some teachers also express that reflective practice is not their practice, especially when they usually teach lessons without any lesson plans.

Therefore, from the study's findings on teachers' reflective practices, it can be said that teachers working within these CHSs, who have engaged in some reflective practices, have experienced benefits in their teaching and learning practices. However, the study's findings also show that there are barriers to reflective practices which need to be addressed, in order for teachers to engage effectively in reflective practices. Reflective practice is relevant for professional growth and improvement in teacher learning and practices within PLCs (Snow-Gerono, 2005).

5.5 Focusing on student learning

Teachers' practices focusing on improving student learning should be the ultimate purpose and aim of PD in education (Poskitt & Taylor, 2007; Speck & Knipe, 2001). The study's findings found that focusing on student learning seemed to be important for the majority of teachers, although there seemed to be some other factors (which will be discussed later) that hinder these teachers' promotion of student learning within their CHSs. The study's findings show that the most common student activities that these teachers provide for their students are providing notes and information on particular topics for the students followed by questions and quizzes or tests relating to the covered topics. For those teachers who teach subjects, such as industrial art and home economics, it is common to divide their subjects into theory and practical. For theory, the teachers provide information about a particular topic or skill and for practical, the teachers then engage the students to put into practice what they have learnt in class, by using their skills and knowledge to make furniture, in the case of industrial art students, or sewing a shirt in the case of home economic students. So, if PLCs are developed within these two CHSs, teachers will not only be providing information together with quizzes and tests for their students, but they will also be able to test new approaches and instructional strategies for continuous improvement and achievement for their students (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

In addition, assessing their students' results or work is relevant to identifying what teaching practices work: and why and whether students have learned or have not learned the relevant curriculum (Reichstetter, 2006). In the area of assessing students' work, the study's findings reveal that the majority of the participant teachers usually collect their students' work, mark it and then return the marked work to the students. Only one teacher mentions generally not collecting students' work but instead allowing students to participate in marking their own work. Furthermore, it was also shown in the study's findings that most teachers do not usually show their students' work or results to other teachers but, when they have the opportunity to do so, they generally share with other teachers about their students, or they ask other teachers about certain students. The literature supports the argument that PLCs have the potential to provide support and guidance for teachers to integrate

formative assessment into their teaching practices, in order to promote student achievement (Reichstetter, 2006; William, 2007/2008).

5.5.1 Benefits of sharing about student work and results

The majority of teachers in this study claim that sharing and talking about their students' work and results, to other teachers, has helped them in their teaching and learning. This has also been found in other studies (Cromey, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). As mentioned previously, most teachers do not usually show their students' work or results to other teachers but, instead, they just discuss generally with other teachers. The teachers in these two CHSs suggested in the interviews and the discussions that, if they go beyond discussing to actually examining students' work and results, their students' learning will be further promoted. In addition, from the study's findings, it has also been suggested that, if teachers work together on the assessment of students' results, it will show whether their students have learned or not learned information. Furthermore, working together on students' assessment and results will help teachers to identify students' misconceptions and it will also help the teachers to decide on what instructional strategies may work for their students. The teachers' expertise in assessment activities will also improve. These teachers also suggested that, if they work together, they would be able to build up a peer-based community that provides support and guidance to them. PLCs have the potential to develop a common understanding on what 'good work' is for teachers and it will improve students' learning (Cromey, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Reichstetter, 2006).

5.5.2 Why *focusing on student learning* does not always work for teachers

It is clear from this study that the teachers in these two CHSs face some difficulties in their teaching, which also affects the learning of their students. This study has identified five hindrances that teachers face which include: lack of resources; poor communication skills; teacher's lack of understanding of their subject syllabus; unawareness of sharing practices; and time.

5.5.2a Lack of resources

Sikua and Alcorn (2010) reported that one common issue faced by CHSs in the Solomon Islands is a shortage of textbooks and equipment. Furthermore, these authors revealed that the central government grants for CHSs were insufficient and (although parents made their contribution to resourcing the schools) not all communities were able to easily provide

building materials for their schools. The study's findings indicate evidence of a shortage of resources in these two CHSs, which is a limitation to teachers when they attempt to promote the learning of their students. For example, the lack of a classroom and sewing machines for the home economics teachers in RCHS has disadvantaged her students from practicing their sewing and cooking skills. In addition, the lack of a science laboratory and science equipment and apparatus for the science teachers, in both CHSs, has resulted in students not having the opportunity to participate in science laboratory experiments. There is also a shortage of textbooks for students to use: and teachers in these CHSs also lack the updated information required for students to learn.

5.5.2b Poor communication skills

According to Roberts and Pruitt (2009), effective communication skills about learning activities in learning community schools are important for those in leadership positions to possess. The authors argued that teachers need to communicate effectively within their roles as leaders and when participating in learning activities with individuals and groups. There is evidence of poor communication skills amongst the teachers and the heads of subject departments and their school leaders, which hinder some teachers in this study in promoting their student learning. Some teachers indicate that, when they put forward their request for the resources needed for their students' learning to the heads of their department or to their school administration, they receive negative responses, or there is no response at all. For the majority of these teachers, when they receive such responses from their heads or their school leaders, they become de-motivated to put their efforts into teaching their students. Well-developed communication structures are essential to a well-functioning PLC and conversational skills are the first skills a principal must develop amongst staff members, in order to encourage, enhance and sustain a PLC (Hord & Sommers, 2008).

5.5.2c Teacher's lack of understanding in their subject syllabus

According to Yip, Chung, and Mak (1998), a teacher's lack of understanding and knowledge of subject matter will affect that teacher's performance, as well as the learning of the students. Hord and Sommers (2008) stated that teacher's limited understanding and knowledge may also be a result of teachers remaining disconnected from other teachers and not engaging in conversation with others. The study's findings found that some teachers experience difficulty in understanding their subject syllabus and this difficulty may have an

influence on how they promote their student learning. These teachers mention that the subject syllabus may seem either too general for them: or the instructions for the learning activities for the students provided in the subject syllabus are unclear to the teachers. Saunders and Ngxolo (2009) have argued that, if teachers' concerns about their subject matter are not answered in the early stages of teaching, these teachers will not make any progress during curriculum innovation. However, the authors stated that knowing about and understanding teachers' concerns, at that particular time, may help service providers to develop appropriate strategies to help these teachers. The development of a PLC can address teachers' lack of understanding in their subject syllabus, since sharing of information is encouraged within a PLC and this will then promote teachers' understanding and knowledge of their particular subjects (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009).

5.5.2d Unawareness of the sharing practice

It is possible that some teachers in this study may not have shown or shared their student work or results with other teachers because, for these teachers, it is not considered to be a professional practice. For example, one teacher questioned the researcher as to whether it is a good idea for a teacher to share and show their students' work to other teachers. Seeing that most teachers tend not to show their students' work or results to other teachers, a teacher may possibly feel that this is the common practice for every teacher. However, through sharing information and helping each other, teachers will be able to reduce the sense of working in isolation which teachers typically experience and thus, collegiality is promoted (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). According to Hord and Sommers (2008, p. 85) "When in dialogue with others, the process of dialogue creates conversations that share information."

5.5.2e Time

Time is another important finding in this study that is seen to affect teachers' promotion of student learning. The study's findings reveal that teachers sometimes have short semesters for teaching, which does not give them sufficient time to meet the requirements of their subject syllabus. As a result, these teachers concentrate on providing information and notes about the topics in the syllabus to the students: and they generally have less time to engage their students in learning activities and less time to work with other teachers. Common planning time within regular workdays can provide teachers with professional time that is

essential for collaborative work, without affecting their personal time (Huffman & Hipp, 2003).

Henceforth, findings from this study on the theme *Focusing on student learning* support what Cromey (2000) and Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) found in their study: that is, analysing students' work and results provides opportunities for teachers to identify the learning needs of their students and what instructional strategies and teaching approaches work best to promote the students' learning. Although this study's findings also reveal barriers to effectively focusing on student learning in these CHSs, PLCs have the potential to provide continuous support and guidance to help teachers to apply formative assessment in their practices, in order to promote students' learning and improvement (William, 2007/2008).

5.6 Conclusions

This chapter has presented the themes associated with PLCs. In particular, it has discussed teachers' teaching and learning experiences within two CHSs, which can be enhanced and improved further, in order to develop effective PLCs for the teachers' PL and ultimately for the students' improved learning. Firstly, this chapter discussed the shared values, in particular the schools' vision and mission statements and values that teachers share within these schools. Secondly, this chapter examined the existing collaborative practices and structures within the schools, which include teacher sharing, school committees, PD workshops, and previous high school learning experiences. Thirdly, the chapter explored the existing reflective practices of the teachers. Fourthly, the chapter discussed the teachers' practices and approaches when focusing on student learning. Together with these potential teaching and learning experiences of the teachers (and the benefits of these existing practices and structures on teacher learning) are the existing obstacles and hindrances to teachers' learning experiences and practices that these CHSs need to address, in order for PLCs to be established successfully in their schools.

The next chapter will conclude this research, providing recommendations to improvement of school's existing practices and structures for developing PLC, and implications for further research on establishing PLCs in the schools.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides conclusions of the research based on the significant findings. Thereafter, recommendations will be made in relation to how teachers, school leaders, education authorities and the MEHRD can work to improve (or build on) the existing practices and structures within CHSs, in order to develop PLCs for teacher learning in the Solomon Islands. Implications for further research will also be discussed, followed by limitations of the study. The chapter then will end with concluding remarks on the study.

6.2 Conclusions on the significant findings

The formal and informal learning experiences of teachers in RCHS and SCHS could provide the basis for developing PLCs for teachers' learning within these schools. Both CHSs are guided by shared values and norms on what is important for them as teachers in the schools – and what they want their students to achieve. The sharing of values and norms is a core characteristic of a PLC, which need to be shared by all members. The study also found existing collaborative practices and structures within these CHSs, which include teacher sharing, school committees, professional development workshops for teachers and high school learning experiences. These collaborative practices are potential areas that could be improved and developed further, in order to establish PLCs. Furthermore, some teachers are already engaged in some type of reflective dialogue inquiry, which is one of the bases for developing a PLC. These teachers have also recognised the importance of a focus on student learning – and that this should be the ultimate goal in their teaching and learning. Therefore, the teacher participants' present PL activities, practices and perceptions collected in this study, together with the researcher's critical reflection (as an indigenous researcher) have shown that schools (such as RCHS and SCHS) throughout the Solomon Islands have the potential to develop PLCs for teacher learning and purposely, for students' improved learning and achievement.

The study also found some factors that need to be addressed, in order to establish effective PLCs in the schools. Some hindrances to teachers having shared values and norms are: lack of support from stakeholders; teachers' differing beliefs and values; teachers' needs unmet; and changes of leadership. Barriers to teachers' collaborative practices include the following: a lack of personal and collegial relationships, different cultural values, beliefs and practices and subject hierarchy. There are also some hindrances to teachers' reflective practices, such as inadequate time, workloads, unavailability of teachers and a lack of reflective practice skills. Other hindrances that need to be addressed in order for teachers to effectively focus on student learning include a lack of resources; poor communication skills between teachers and between teachers and school leaders; teachers' lack of understanding in their subject syllabus; teachers' unawareness of the sharing practice of teaching and learning; and time limitations. Therefore, these are the factors and hindrances that are impacting on teachers' learning and teaching and they need immediate attention, in order to pave the way for the establishment of PLCs in these two schools.

Furthermore, the teachers' existing practices, structures and teaching and learning experiences can be encouraged and improved upon. Similarly, the hindrances need to be addressed, in order for PLCs to be established effectively within these schools. These two schools have the potential and the capability to build and develop effective PLCs for their teachers, which will impact positively on the learning of their students. From this research, recommendations for improvement of teacher learning and establishment of PLCs have developed.

6.3 Recommendations for improvement of teacher learning and establishment of Professional Learning Communities

Six main recommendations have emerged from the findings from this study, in regards to ways for improving teacher learning and for establishing effective PLCs in the RCHS and SCHS.

6.3.1 Shared responsibilities

Shared responsibilities would encourage teachers to collaborate effectively and also guide them towards working together. These shared responsibilities for teachers would also include the school's extra-curricular activities.

6.3.2 Sharing information and ideas

Teachers need to share their knowledge, in relation to their practices and information and ideas about their teaching and learning experiences. Sharing could encourage all the teachers to collaborate and develop reflective practices and skills within their teaching and learning experiences. Furthermore, this sharing would provide them with opportunities to learn from one another's experiences and to analyse their own and others' practices, which could then lead to development of new understandings for improvement.

6.3.3 Active leadership role

School leaders and administration should organise activities and delegate responsibilities to teachers. Teachers need support, instruction and guidance from their principals, in regards to their PL and PD. The principals should take on the role of checking teachers' work and programmes regularly. This checking can possibly encourage some teachers to take their work more seriously, in addition to helping the principals to interact with their teachers and to identify what further help they need.

CHSs need leaders whose role is to work closely with teachers and provide coaching or mentoring in relation to their teaching and learning practices, which would include lesson preparation, presentation and evaluation.

6.3.4 Frequent departmental and staff meetings

There needs to be departmental and staff meetings to encourage teachers to share and talk about their teaching practices and learning experiences. Teaching practices, student results and other teaching and learning matters should also be put forward and discussed at such meetings.

6.3.5 Staff devotions

Another potential area highlighted in this study, which could encourage teachers to collaborate and work together as a team of teachers in their school, is staff devotions. Staff devotions and the combined worships every day potentially bring teachers together: and the de-

votions also help to create a friendly working environment for the teachers each day. In addition, having devotions together, as teachers in their school, would certainly create a sense of togetherness for the teachers: and the teachers would also have the opportunity to interact with each other and get to know each other better.

6.3.6 Support from all the stakeholders
The need to have on-going support from stakeholders has also been highlighted in this study. These CHSs need the support of parents, churches, communities, authorities and the MEHRD to work with them, in order to accomplish their mission statement and their vision statement which daily guide their school developments and plans.

6.4 Implications for further research

This research, which explored the formal and informal learning experiences of teachers in the two CHSs, could provide the basis for developing PLCs for teacher learning in these two schools. This study also has supported some of the findings of international research on PLC, specifically, on the importance of having shared values and norms in a school. In addition, this study has supported the benefits and some barriers of collaborative practices, reflective dialogue inquiry and focusing on student learning. Furthermore, this study has addressed a gap in the literature on developing PLCs within the Solomon Islands, since research has not previously been undertaken in this area. Therefore, it would be useful to undertake further action research (over a longer period of time) on establishing and implementing PLCs within the two schools that were studied – and the findings of this study could be used as the basis of this action research. The results of the suggested action research would provide data on how to effectively establish PLCs in CHSs and how to sustain these PLCs within the context of the Solomon Islands.

6.5 Limitations of the study

While the conclusions of this study can be considered in relation to RCHS, a school located in a remote location and SCHS, a school located in Honiara Town, time has been a major limitation of the study. The NZAID sponsorship only allowed the researcher eight weeks to be spent on data collection. However, out of those eight weeks, six weeks were used for the

actual data collection. The first two weeks were spent following-up on my application for a research permit from the MEHRD, despite having submitted the research application two weeks before arriving in the Solomon Islands.

The limited time given for data collection also affected my school sample, since I was only able to collect data from two CHSs. A longer period for data collection would have enabled the opportunity to collect data from other CHSs in other provinces. Hearing their stories and comments would have been beneficial to the research by increasing the sample size and its composition. Therefore, because of these limitations, the results of this study cannot be generalised to all schools in the Solomon Islands, which is a culturally diverse country.

Another limitation relates to the methodology of this study. This study is a case study and it has used interviews, discussions and reflective journals to collect data. My analysis and interpretation of the data gathered as an insider researcher may differ from the perspective of an outsider researcher or other researchers.

6.6 Concluding comments

Having taught in three secondary high schools in the Solomon Islands before undertaking this master's study, I have personally experienced the need to establish on-going support and PD for teachers in the Solomon Islands. This study has taught me that teachers need guidance, mentoring and professional growth in their teaching and learning practices. In a complex and changing world, effective and timely approaches to teachers' PD are greatly needed. This study has identified and offered an approach with which to tackle the increasing demand for teachers' PD and PL – that is, the noı on of a PLC.

Although stakeholders still need to work collaboratively, in order to put into action the recommendations put forward in this study, I believe that this thesis takes a step forward in the documentation of existing practices of teachers, together with school structures and systems, which could provide the basis for developing PLCs. The study also highlights the hindrances that need to be addressed, if PLCs are to be successfully implemented within the Solomon Islands. There will be many challenges to this implementation, taking into consideration the geographical, physical and socio-economic factors of the Solomon Islands. However, the ultimate goal for this study is to make a pathway towards supporting teachers,

such as Jane, to better meet the needs of their students, thus preparing them to participate fully within their own community, at national level – and also within the Pacific Region and the international contexts.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Semi-structured interview schedule

Research Project: Understanding teachers' professional learning activities, practices and perceptions in community high schools in the Solomon Islands to establish the potential of developing professional learning communities for teacher learning.

Research Question: What are the formal and informal learning experiences of teachers in community high schools in the Solomon Islands that may provide the basis for developing professional learning communities for teachers' learning?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Themes	Key Questions	Prompts
1. SHARED VALUES AND NORMS - School's mission, purpose, goals or objectives; - Shared vision- mental picture of what is important to an individual or organization; - Shared vision- focus on student learning is taken into consideration; - Values- how staff engage on day-to-day actions- commitment/talents of all members;	*1. Tell me about why you choose teaching to be your career*	1. What is your vision for the school? 2. What is your everyday goal for your students? 3. How do you communicate your vision to other teachers and to your students?
- Shared values + shared vision= Norms of behaviour school staff supports; - Through language/action- teachers affirmed common values and beliefs about educational issues and student learning; - Shared values/vision- should act as guidepost in making decisions about teaching/learning; - Members committed to one another- less alienating; - Have collective views about students'	*2. Tell me about some relevant examples of decisions that you have made this year about your teaching/learning* *3. Tell me how you came to make those decisions*	1. How has your learning in the workplace influence your decision making?

potential and ability to learn, school priorities, proper roles of parents, teachers and administrators; and - School leader need to engage internal/external stakeholders to develop vision.		
2. COLLABORATIVE CULTURE - Working in teams or groups; - Members share a common purpose to learn and achieve for improvement and growth; - Breaking down walls of isolation; - Share responsibility for better teaching for student learning; - Teachers question, analyse, exchange and reflect on their practices together; - Teachers design materials/activities for improved instruction, curriculum and assessment for students; - Teachers talk about new and different approaches to staff development for themselves; and - Encourages sharing, reflecting and taking risks necessary for change: use protocols for decision making; rely on systematic note taking to inform colleagues of their work; observe each other in their classroom, videotaping and reviewing lessons; investigating teaching problems and collectively talk about new ideas for practice; and engage in literature study circles and professional reading .	*Tell me how collaborating or working with other teachers in your department(s) or in the school help you personally in your teaching and learning practices*	1. Do you find it easy to talk about your teaching difficulties to other teachers? Why or why not? 2. What do you do when you come across something new or a new teaching practice? 3. Do you feel that other teachers are comfortable to share ideas about what they teach in their classrooms to others? Why or why not? 4. What are your ideas for improving teachers to work together? 5. If you have more time to collaborate, what would you do?
3. REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE AND INQUIRY - Aspect of collaboration and a require-	*Tell me about how think about your own work as*	1. Do you have opportunities to reflect or think

ment to recognize and adapt routine behaviour; - Reflective practice- "self-awareness about one's work as a teacher." - Staff engages in conversations about students, teaching and learning and identifying problems and issues; - Continual dialogue to examine practices and student performance and to develop and implement more effective instructional practices; - Thinking deeply about their work and others' practice and develop new understanding of individual or group goals, beliefs and practices; and - Have opportunities to express and reflect their own views/ideas on teaching/learning: challenging/questioning each other's practice; collectively solving problems and learning through applying new ideas, new strategies and information that meet students' needs; working together to analyse and observing each other's current practices in relation to student achievement; experimenting new practices; and assessing the relationship between current practices and new practices.	*a teacher in this school: For example, when a problem arises during your class, how do you go about thinking it through?*	deeply about your own teaching? Why or why not? 2. How do you record your thoughts after teaching a lesson? 3. Do you have opportunities to express your views or discuss matters of teaching and instruction with colleagues? Why or why not? 4. How does thinking about your work help your teaching practices and learning?
4. FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING - Results orientation is promoted; - Assessment of student results shows the effectiveness of teaching and whether students have learned or have not learned the relevant curriculum; - Looking at student data to: monitor stu-	*Tell me about some activities or teaching/learning practices that you personally do to promote your students' learning*	1. What do you normally do about your students' results? 2. Do you have opportunities to discuss your student work or show your student work to other teachers to get their feedback? Why or why

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dent progress; evaluate where assessment converge and diverge; and judge the efficacy of local curriculum and instructional practices; - Looking at student work together or engaging in classroom talk to identify students' misconceptions and analyse these in relation to learning expectations; and - Visualize what is occurring and what they need to do together to impact positively on students learning.		not? 3. Besides sharing results, do you talk together on how to help students who have learning difficulties? 4. How does focusing on student results help your teaching and learning practices?

Appendix B : Focus group schedule

Research Project: Understanding teachers' professional learning activities, practices and perceptions in community high schools in the Solomon Islands to establish the potential of developing professional learning communities for teacher learning

Research Question: What are the formal and informal learning experiences of teachers in community high schools that may provide the basis for developing professional learning communities for teachers' learning?

<div align="center">FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION</div>

	Key Questions	Prompts
1. SHARED VALUES AND NORMS - School's mission, purpose, goals or objectives; - Shared vision- mental picture of what is important to an individual or organization; - Shared vision- focus on student learning is taken into consideration;	*1. Tell me what you think and feel about your mission statement as a group*	1. What goals have you achieved so far this year for your school? 2. How do teachers keep up with the job with new developments? 3. What are some challenging situations faced by the school? 4. How is decision made in these challenging situations?
- Values- how staff engage on day-to-day actions- commitment/talents of all members; - Shared values + shared vision= Norms of behaviour school staff supports; - Through language/action- teachers affirmed common values and beliefs about educational issues and student learning; - Shared values/vision- should act as guidepost in making decisions about teaching/learning; - Members committed to one another- less alienating; - Have collective views about students' potential and ability to learn, school pri-	*2. Tell me how you work together to achieve the shared vision for the school*	

orities, proper roles of parents, teachers and administrators; and - School leader need to engage internal/external stakeholders to develop vision.		
2. COLLABORATIVE CULTURE - Working in teams or groups; - Members share a common purpose to learn and achieve for improvement and growth; - Breaking down walls of isolation; - Share responsibility for better teaching for student learning; - Teachers question, analyse, exchange and reflect on their practices together; - Teachers design materials/activities for improved instruction, curriculum and assessment for students; - Teachers talk about new and different approaches to staff development for themselves; and - Encourages sharing, reflecting and taking risks necessary for change: use protocols for decision making; rely on systematic note taking to inform colleagues of their work; observe each other in their classroom, videotaping and reviewing lessons; investigating teaching problems and collectively talk about new ideas for practice; and engage in literature study circles and professional reading .	*Tell me about how you see yourselves as working teams in this school*	1. What different groups or teams do you have in the school? 2. How often do you meet together? 3. What makes the success of your team? 4. What are some difficulties you face working together? 5. What kinds of things do you talk about in your team meetings? 6. What structures in your school support your working together?
3. REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE AND INQUIRY - Aspect of collaboration and a require-	*Tell me about some ways that*	1. Do teachers have opportunities to think deeply together about

ment to recognize and adapt routine behaviour; - Reflective practice- "self-awareness about one's work as a teacher." - Staff engages in conversations about students, teaching and learning and identifying problems and issues; - Continual dialogue to examine practices and student performance and to develop and implement more effective instructional practices; - Thinking deeply about their work and others' practice and develop new understanding of individual or group goals, beliefs and practices; and - Have opportunities to express and reflect their own views/ideas on teaching/learning: challenging/questioning each other's practice; collectively solving problems and learning through applying new ideas, new strategies and information that meet students' needs; working together to analyse and observing each other's current practices in relation to student achievement; experimenting new practices; and assessing the relationship between current practices and new practices.	*teachers think together about your teaching practices*	your teaching? Why or why not? 2. How does thinking together help your teaching practices and learning? 3. What are some challenges faced when thinking together? 4. What are some ways that these challenges are addressed in order to improve teacher's teaching practices and learning? 5. What school structures encourage teachers to think together about their work as teachers?
4. FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING - Results orientation is promoted; - Assessment of student results shows the effectiveness of teaching and whether students have learned or have not learned the relevant curriculum; - Looking at student data to: monitor	*Tell me about how teachers work together to promote student results*	1. Do you have opportunities to develop common assessments together for your students and discuss their results together? Why or why not? 2. What are your collective views on the importance of student results?

student progress; evaluate where assessment converge and diverge; and judge the efficacy of local curriculum and instructional practices; - Looking at student work together or engaging in classroom talk to identify students' misconceptions and analyse these in relation to learning expectations; and - Visualize what is occurring and what they need to do together to impact positively on students learning.		3. What are some difficulties you face when trying to work together to promote students' learning? 4. Apart from result orientation, what are some other ways or practices that teachers do together to focus on your students' learning? 5. What structures in the school support and promote student learning?

Appendix C: Low Risk Notification Approval Letter

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

4 July 2012

Kerryn Galokale
12 Snelson Street
PALMERSTON NORTH 4410

Dear Kerryn

Re: Illuminating Teachers' Professional Learning Activities, Practices and Perceptions in Two Selected
        Community High Schools in the Solomon Islands to Establish the Potential of Developing Professional
        Learning Communities for Teacher Learning

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 22 June 2012.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University
Human Ethics Committees.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to
proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and
be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor
must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

> "This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been
> reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are
> responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.
>
> If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the
> researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-
> mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz".

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of
committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human
Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the
research.

Yours sincerely

John G O'Neill (Professor)
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)

cc   Mrs Gloria Slater   Dr Marg Gilling
        School of Educational Studies   School of Educational Studies
        PN900   **PN900**

        Prof Howard Lee, HoS   Mrs Roseanne MacGillivray
        School of Educational Studies   Graduate School of Education
        PN900   **PN900**

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council

Research Ethics Office, Massey University, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand
T +64 6 350 5573 +64 6 350 5575 F +64 6 350 5622
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz animalethics@massey.ac.nz gtc@massey.ac.nz
www.massey.ac.nz

Appendix D: Letter to Permanent Secretary MEHRD

Kerryn Sogha Galokale
12 Snelson Street
Palmerston North 4410
New Zealand

25th June 2012

Dr. Fred Isom Rohorua
Permanent Secretary
MEHRD
P.O Box G28
Honiara
Solomon Islands

Attention: Mr. Timothy Ngele
               Undersecretary (Administration)
               MEHRD

Dear Sir,

RE: **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY**

I wish to seek your permission to use selected schools located in Honiara and Guadalcanal, to conduct a research study, on teachers' professional learning, as a requirement towards my Masters' thesis. Please find attached a completed Solomon Islands' Research Application Form including the relevant attachments.

My research topic is on understanding teachers' professional learning activities, practices and perceptions to establish the potential of developing professional learning communities for teacher learning. The focus of my study is planned within the parameters of the expected outcomes, relation to 'quality', which is promoted in the ESF (2007-2015) document, in an effort to contribute towards the improvement of teacher quality in the Solomon Islands education system. The outcome of this study is intended to contribute invaluable information towards future efforts to utilise and enhance existing school 'cultures' and structures through the establishment of effective professional learning communities for teachers professional development in the Solomon Islands' secondary schools.

I will ensure that necessary ethical considerations are observed throughout the study as stipulated in the Solomon Islands Research Act (1984). Please refer to my attached research proposal for more details about my proposed research.

If you have any queries regarding the nature of this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me through the above address or email: qalokalekerrynsogha@gmail.com. Further questions about the project can be obtained from my supervisors, Gloria Slater and Dr. marg gilling on the following email addresses:

Gloria Slater - G.R.Slater@massey.ac.nz

Dr. marg gilling - M.Gilling@massey.ac.nz

May I thank you in advance for granting me the permission to conduct my research project. I intent to carry out my research beginning late July and would be grateful if you could respond back to me as soon as possible by email so that I can make the necessary arrangements.

Yours faithfully

Kerryn Sogha Galokale

(Masters Student)

Massey University, Palmerston North, NZ

Appendix E: Letter to Education Authorities

Kerryn Sogha Galokale
12 Snelson Street
Palmerston North 4410
New Zealand

25th June 2012

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

I seek your permission to involve a community high school, operating under your education authority, in a research study, that is a requirement of my Masters' thesis. Please find enclosed a copy of a letter from the MEHRD supporting my research.

My research topic is on understanding teachers' professional learning activities, practices and perceptions in community high schools to establish the potential of developing professional learning communities for teacher learning.

I will ensure that important ethical considerations will be observed throughout the study. Necessary measures will be taken to ensure that anonymity of participants and information gathered will be protected at all times. The school will not be identified by name in any publications.

Please refer to the research information sheet enclosed for more details about the research itself.

If you have any queries regarding the nature of this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me through the above address or email: qalokalekerrynsogha@gmail.com. Further questions about the project can be obtained from my supervisors, Gloria Slater and Dr. marg gilling on the following email addresses:

Gloria Slater - G.R.Slater@massey.ac.nz

Dr. marg gilling - M.Gilling@massey.ac.nz

May I thank you in advance for granting me the permission to conduct my research project. I would really appreciate your help. I intent to carry out my research beginning late July 2012 and would be grateful if you could please respond back to me by email as soon as possible so that I can make the necessary arrangements.

Yours faithfully

Kerryn Sogha Galokale

(Masters Student)

Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Appendix F: Letter to School Principals

Kerryn Sogha Galokale
12 Snelson Street, Palmerston North 4410
New Zealand

25th June 2012

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

I wish to seek your permission to involve your school, more specifically the teachers working in your school this year, in a research study, that is a requirement towards my Masters' thesis. The MEHRD has granted me permission to conduct this research in selected community high schools in Honiara and Guadalcanal. Please find enclosed is a copy of a letter from the MEHRD supporting my research.

My research topic is on understanding teachers' professional learning activities, practices and perceptions in community high schools to establish the potential of developing professional learning communities for teacher learning.

I will ensure that important ethical considerations will be observed throughout the study. Necessary measures will be taken to ensure that anonymity of participants and information gathered will be protected at all times. The school will not be identified by name, or distinguishing factors as far as possible, in any publications.

Please refer to the research information sheet enclosed for more details about the research itself.

If you have any queries regarding the nature of this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me through the above address or email: qalokalekerrynsogha@gmail.com. Further questions about the project can be obtained from my supervisors, Gloria Slater and Dr. marg gilling on the following email addresses:

Gloria Slater - G.R.Slater@massey.ac.nz

Dr. marg gilling - M.Gilling@massey.ac.nz

May I thank you in advance in granting me the permission to conduct my research project. I would really appreciate your help. I intent to carry out my research beginning late July 2012 and would be grateful if you could please respond back to me as soon as possible so that I can make the necessary arrangements.

Yours faithfully

Kerryn Sogha Galokale

(Masters Student)

Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Appendix G: Research Information Sheet A

(for the Permanent Secretary, MEHRD, Education Authorities and School Principals)

Research Project: Understanding teachers' professional learning activities, practices and perceptions in selected community high schools in the Solomon Islands to establish the potential of developing professional learning communities for teacher learning

Researcher: Kerryn Sogha Galokale, Masters of Education in Teaching and Learning, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

I am a Masters' student in the Graduate School of Education at Massey University. As part of this degree, I am undertaking a research project leading to a thesis. This research will explore the pre-existing 'cultures' of teachers in community high schools in order to understand their current learning experiences. Of particular interest will be their formal and non-formal learning activities, along with other significant contextual factors of the community high schools. It is hoped that the outcome of this study will lead to the establishment of professional learning communities geared towards improving the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in Solomon Islands' community high schools.

I am seeking four to six participants to take part in individual interviews and focus group discussions. Participants in the focus group discussions will share ideas together about school life as well as be invited to participate in semi-structured interviews on a one-to-one basis to add their individual views.

The time duration for focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews will be approximately one hour over a period of two-three weeks at times negotiated to fit with participants' timetables.

The University requires that ethical standards that protect participants be maintained. I have discussed the project with my supervisors and we have worked hard to ensure that the participants' rights are protected if they decide to take part. These include the right to:

- Decline to answer any particular question;
- Withdraw from the study at any time until focus group data is collected;
- Ask for data from individual interviews or personal conversations to be amended or deleted;
- Ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- Provide information on the understanding that their name will not be used unless they give permission to the researcher;
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Participants will also be required to maintain the confidentiality of others in the study. Tape-recorded data will be transcribed and written up in such a way that participants will not be able to be identified. The only person aside from myself who will have access to the data will be my supervisors, Gloria Slater and Dr. marg gilling. The material collected will be written up for a thesis to be submitted for examination and deposited in the University Library. Material may also be used in articles submitted for publication in academic or professional journals and for conference presentations.

If you have any queries regarding the nature of this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me through the above address or email: galokalekerrynsogha@gmail.com. Further questions about the project can be obtained from my supervisors, Gloria Slater and Dr. Marg Gilling on the following email addresses:

Gloria Slater - G.R.Slater@massey.ac.nz

Dr. Marg Gilling - M.Gilling@massey.ac.nz

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher and her supervisors are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact John O'Neil, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 0064 06 350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Kerryn Sogha Galokale

Appendix H: Letter to Participants

Kerryn Sogha Galokale
12 Snelson Street, Palmerston North 4410
New Zealand

25th June 2012

Dear …………………………

Kia ora! Greetings from Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

I am a student at Massey University. This year I am completing a Masters of Education in Teaching and Learning. I am writing to seek your cooperation to help me in my research study that is a requirement towards my Masters' thesis. The study is on identifying teachers' current professional learning activities, both formal and informal, in the Solomon Islands. I would like to invite you to participate in this research study.

The research will be based on a face-to-face interview/conversation and focus group discussions at a venue in your school, confirmed by your school principal. The individual interview and the focus group discussion will be conducted in English or Solomon Islands' pidgin and will be tape recorded and transcribed soon after. Each interview session and focus group discussion is expected to last approximately an hour. You will be given the opportunity to sight the transcribed transcript of your interview to check its accuracy and to make additional suggestions and clarifications. You are also welcome to make any other suggestions that would contribute to this research topic. That can be done during our focus group discussion or personally to me while I am in the school.

I will ensure that important ethical considerations will be observed and your identity kept confidential throughout the study. Necessary measures will be taken to ensure that your right to anonymity and information gathered will be protected at all times.

I know that you have a busy schedule. However, I do hope that you will consider being part of this research project and sharing your ideas. It is anticipated that the outcome of the study will guide future research into the development of professional learning communities for teacher learning in the country.

If you have queries regarding this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me through the above address or email: galokalekerrynsogha@gmail.com. If you need further queries about the nature of this research, you can always contact my supervisors, Gloria Slater and Dr. Marg Gilling on the following email addresses:

Gloria Slater - G.R.Slater@massey.ac.nz

Dr. Marg Gilling - M.Gilling@massey.ac.nz

May I thank you in advance for your cooperation and assistance in consenting to participate in this research project. Please sign the attached consent form and return it back to me as soon as possible or before 30th July 2012.

Yours faithfully

Kerryn Sogha Galokale

(Masters Student)

Massey University, Palmerston North, NZ

Appendix I: Research Information Sheet B
(for the Participants)

Research Project: Understanding teachers' professional learning activities, practices and perceptions in selected community high schools in the Solomon Islands to establish the potential of developing professional learning communities for teacher learning

Researcher: Kerryn Sogha Galokale, Masters of Education in Teaching and Learning, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

I am a Masters' student in the Graduate School of Education at Massey University. As part of this degree, I am undertaking a research project leading to a thesis. This research will explore the pre-existing 'cultures' of teachers in community high schools in order to understand their current learning experiences. Of particular interest will be their formal and non-formal learning activities, along with other significant contextual factors of the community high schools. It is hoped that the outcome of this study will lead to the establishment of professional learning communities geared towards improving the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in Solomon Islands' community high schools.

I am seeking four to six participants to take part in individual interviews and focus group discussions. Participants in the focus group discussions will share ideas together about school life. You will also be invited to participate in semi-structured interviews on a one-to-one basis to allow you a chance to add individual views.

The time duration for focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews will be approximately one hour over a period of two-three weeks at times negotiated to fit with participants' timetables.

The University requires that ethical standards that protect participants be maintained. I have discussed the project with my supervisors and we have worked hard to ensure your rights are protected. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Decline to answer any particular question;
- Withdraw from the study at any time until focus group data is collected;
- Ask for data from individual interviews or personal conversations to be amended or deleted;
- Ask the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless they give permission to the researcher;

- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded; and

Participants will also be required to maintain the confidentiality of others in the study. Tape-recorded data will be transcribed and written up in such a way that participants will not be able to be identified. The only person aside from myself who will have access to the data will be my supervisors, Gloria Slater and Dr. marg gilling. The material collected will be written up for a thesis to be submitted for examination and deposited in the University Library. Material may also be used in articles submitted for publication in academic or professional journals and for conference presentations.

If you have any queries regarding the nature of this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me through the above address or email: galokalekerrynsogha@gmail.com. Further questions about the project can be obtained from my supervisors, Gloria Slater and Dr. Marg Gilling on the following email addresses:

Gloria Slater - G.R.Slater@massey.ac.nz

Dr. Marg Gilling - M.Gilling@massey.ac.nz

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher and her supervisors are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact John O'Neil, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 0064 06 350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Kerryn Sogha Galokale

Appendix J: Question Sheet

NAME: _____

Please, read carefully and circle your most appropriate responses to the following questions. You can circle more than one answer where ever it is personally suitable for you.

1. How long have you been teaching in this school?
   a. 1-3 years   b. 4-6 years   c. 7-9 years   d. More than 10 years

2. Did you enter into teaching directly from secondary school?
   a. Yes (go to question 7)   b. No (go to question 3)

3. Do you have a teacher education qualification?
   a. Yes (go to question 4)   b. No (go to question 5)

4. Where did you do your teacher education program?
   a. Solomon Islands College of Higher Education   b. University of Goroka   c. University of the South Pacific   d. Others (please state)_____

5. What is your highest academic qualification?
   a. Certificate   b. Diploma   c. Degree   d. Post graduate diploma   e. Masters   f. Others (please state)_____

6. What is your previous field of employment before entering into teaching?
   a. None   b. Administration/Management   c. Clerical   d. Trades   e. Business   f. Agriculture/Fisheries   g. Education   h. Self-employment   i. Other(s) (please state)_____

7. What subjects are you teaching or which departments do you work under? (You can circle more than one answers)
   a. English   b. Maths   c. Science   d. Social Science   e. New Testatment Studies   f. Business   g. Agriculture   h. Industrial Art   i. Home economics   j. Physical education   k. Other(s) please state_____

8. What is your role(s) in your department(s) or in the school?
   a. Administrator   b. Head of department(s)   c. Senior teacher   d. Assistant teacher   e. Other(s) (please state)_____

Appendix K: Participant Consent Form

Research Project: Understanding teachers' professional learning activities, practices and perceptions in selected community high schools in the Solomon Islands to establish the potential of developing professional learning communities for teacher learning

Researcher: Kerryn Sogha Galokale

Participant's name: …………………………

- I have read the Information Sheet. I have been given an explanation of this research project and have understood the explanation.
- I have an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.
- I agree to take part in one or two interviews and focus group discussions.
- I agree to the interview(s) being audio taped. However, I understand that I am free to stop the interview and the tape at any time, to decide not to answer any question, and to withdraw from the interview at any time.
- I understand I will receive a transcript of the interview and will be able to change or delete anything in the transcript that I do not agree with and that when the tape of my interview is no longer needed, it will be erased.
- I agree to the focus group discussion(s) being audio taped and not to disclose elsewhere anything discussed in the focus group.
- I agree that the researcher may record insights from these and other conversations in her reflective journal for private reflection, but I understand that I may also ask for particular dialogue not to be recorded.
- I agree to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: …………………………………   Date: …………………………………

Full Name-printed: …………………………………………………………………..

Appendix L: Main Ideas from the Interviews, the Discussions and the Reflective Journals

Interviews	Discussions	Journal
Collaborative culture	Collaborative culture	Schools' physical factors
Time/workload/school program	Community Support/Stakeholders	Time/Workload/school program
Focus on student learning	Administration/Leadership	Commitment
Teachers' passion/goal/interest in teaching	Reflective practices	Christian Values and beliefs
Reflective practices	Christian Values and beliefs	Collaborative culture
Collegial relationships	School's physical factors	Community Support
Resources	Focus on student learning	
Professional development/workshops	Shared values and norms	
Administration/leadership	Motivation	
Community Support/Stakeholders	Collegial Relationships	
Motivation	Resources	
Christian Values	Time	
School's Physical Factors		

Appendix M: A Summary of Main Ideas from the Interviews

COLLABORATIVE CULTURE	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- Sharing of responsibilities in the school amongst teachers is important because it help teachers to come together. Like, sharing tasks in groups of teachers because it will bring teachers together to share their ideas in teaching and learning too. - Sub-committees formed in the school bring teachers together. - When a teacher share his/her teaching difficulties, like for example, share the problem s/he find in a general syllabus with other subject teachers, these other others share about their syllabus and how they approach their syllabus. - When a teacher is open to sharing to other teachers, it is easy for other teachers to feel comfortable to open themselves for sharing as well. - Sharing of ideas with other colleagues, may give confidence to what a teacher already know and what s/he should maintain in terms of his/her teaching and learning. -Have staff meetings in the schools. -Although some teachers are quiet and others are open up to everyone else, but generally, teachers still see themselves as a working team of teachers in this school. -Subject teachers feel comfortable to share and work with other teachers whose subjects go along with their subjects too.	- Seeing other subjects as of lesser importance or seeing other subjects as different altogether made sharing amongst different subject teachers difficult. - Culture or customs of particular society do not allow cousins or in-laws to sit together alone in a space or room to talk or share together. So mostly, after classes, teachers go back to their homes. - Being the only female teacher in a male dominated environment, sharing together can be also difficult for the female teacher. - Teachers work in isolation. -Teachers and administrators work in isolation. - Schools may not have meetings with all teachers to focus only on student learning.

For example, English teachers with Social Science teachers. -Experienced teachers engage in discussion and sharing of ideas with beginner teachers.	

TIME/WORKLOAD/SCHOOL PROGRAM	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
-Light teaching load provides time for a teacher to reflect and think deeply about his/her work.	**-** A teacher may see another teacher or teachers very heavily loaded with work and may not feel comfortable to share or ask for help. -Sub-committees failed to continue because of time factor. - A teacher may see that a lot of school programs in the school are taking too much time. For example, teachers having to discuss after staff worship usually takes time for classes. -A tight school program make students and teachers to be exhausted at the end of the day and students are the ones mostly affected. -A teacher who is used teaching a 60 minute period may find teaching 40 minute period not enough. -A teacher may be heavily loaded with class periods and extra-curricular activities and even administrative tasks. -Time is a barrier for reflection when a teacher has one period after another, followed by engaging in extra-curricular activities after formal teaching. - Time factor determines what type of activity to give to the students or what to teach the students, especially when a school finishes their academic semesters early or start their

	academic semesters late.

FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
-Sharing of students' results helps teachers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their students. -Teachers try their best to provide variety of student activities to their students as they see students have different levels of learning in the class. A variety of student activities gives information to a teacher about the strengths and weaknesses of their students and also, students learn a lot themselves when engaging in different tasks or activities. - By sharing to other teachers about a particular student result, it challenged the teacher on how s/he should go about helping this particular student. -Same subject teachers share their student work. - Assessing of student work usually point out areas that a teacher may need to improve on in his/her teaching approaches so that students may able to understand and learn. - A teacher tests different teaching approaches to find out which approaches would work well for the students to learn more effectively. - Shared decision-making with students help teacher to come across new understanding and new ideas to help teach their	- A teacher may assess a particular student activity, thinking that this student activity may give a clear picture about a particular student. - Teachers do not share their student results to other teachers or their student work to other teachers. -A teacher thinks alone on how to help a particular students.

students effectively.
-Teachers give opportunities for students to display their work in front of the class, thus, helping the teachers to know whether the students have learned or not.
-Teachers allow informal classes with their students.

TEACHERS' PASSION//GOAL/INTERTEST IN TEACHING	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- A teacher may use his/her learning experiences and struggles as a school leaver to help students who may also struggle getting to the next level of their education. - There is also the goal that if students cannot get through to the next level of education, at least, they can use the practical skills and knowledge learnt in school to do something for them back home or they can go and attend vocational schools for further training. -There is personal enjoyment and passion in teaching as well as about the subject itself. - Teachers' passion and interest in teaching leads to teachers having vision development for their school. - Teachers' have the passion to form good relationships with their students and getting to know and understand the different backgrounds of their students, thus, enabling them to identify the learning needs of their students. -Teachers see themselves as the ones re-	

sponsible to mold and shape the future of their students.	
-Teaching is fun.	

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- Teachers find time to reflect and think about their teaching that day when they go back home or in the night and question themselves whether they have achieved their objectives or not. - With problem or issues in teaching and learning, when teachers find it is beyond what they can about it, they seek help from other teachers or the school administrators. -When teachers have lesson plans, it helps them to reflect about their teaching and evaluate themselves whether they have achieved their lesson objectives. - Teachers engage in conversations about administration, discipline of students and student learning, identifying the problem and trying to work together to find ways to solve the problem. -Teachers find reflection about their work as a teacher helpful in their lesson preparation for the next day. -Teachers write down their thoughts and reflection about their teaching and later use their written thoughts as resources to teach their students. -Solving problems together encourages new ideas for teaching.	**-** Teachers engage in conversations to talk about the lack of administration support. -Teachers engage in conversations that criticize students' poor performance and not so much on how to help a student with learning difficulties.

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-Thinking deeply about ones' own work as a teacher enable a teacher to decide on how to present his/her lesson and what examples to use that will help students to understand better.	

COLLEGIAL RELATIONSHIPS	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- Establishing positive relationships with each other made sharing and working with other teachers easier. - Teachers who have established personal relationships between each other during their college training, and then coming to teach in the same school, find it more comfortable to share and work with each other and also learn from each other. -Sharing of "betel and smoke" or "noodles" enables teachers to form close relationships with each other which enable them to approach each other for help or just for sharing together without difficulties.	**-**No close relationships formed resulted in teachers not sharing common interest or understanding to share and talk openly about teaching and learning issues, or about their difficulties and problems.

RESOURCES	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- Lack of resources or having a syllabus that seem too general, enable teachers to adapt their teaching lessons to fit the needs of their students. -Lack of resources made teachers to be creative in their lessons to fit in the situation of the learning environment of their students.	**-** The content and syllabus of certain subjects does not fit in the context and learning environment of students. -A subject syllabus may seem too general and thus, causing confusion and lack of understanding to a teacher. - Resources needed to teach particular subjects are not available and teachers lack updated

-Lack of resources made teachers to seek help from other teachers or to even seek help from teachers in other schools.	information needed for their teaching and learning experiences. - A teacher who teaches a practical subject in remote school may face the challenge of not having a classroom to do the practical skills or experiments and may see his or her teaching ineffective. - Lack of funding or finances lead to teachers not able to produce students' reports or results.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/WORKSHOPS	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- Teachers have opportunities to attend workshops held in their school and find the workshops refreshing as well as learning new ideas to apply in their teaching. - Workshops that teachers attended also provide updated information to use as teaching resources. -Teachers who attended different workshops find opportunities to share with their other colleagues the new ideas or information they learnt in the workshops. -A workshop on *Effective Christian Teaching* helped teachers to understand and help their students through Christian perspective and to be committed in teaching the students and to see these students as images of God and teachers are ministers or pastors.	

ADMINISTRATION/LEADERSHIP	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
-Lack of support from the administration holds teachers to work together.	- Weak and unsupportive leadership in a school.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT/STAKEHOLDERS	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- Being in a boarding school where teachers live in the school area, enable the female teacher to share her teaching difficulties to the spouses of male teachers and in turn, these spouses provide their support as well as their interest to share their practical skills and knowledge (cooking and sewing skills) with the teacher to teach her students.	- There is little community support (communities surrounding the school) when it comes to school development. - Weak community support slows down the development of the school and puts extra load to teachers having to carry out the extra-responsibilities. -Attending to family commitment and responsibilities straight after classes does not allow time for teachers to remain back in school to work.

MOTIVATION	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- Teachers find motivation to teach when the learning environment or classrooms of students is not crowded. -The successes of students may motivate a teacher's passion and interest to teach them effectively as well as learning further on how best to help the students.	- When a particular subject is looked down on by other subject teachers, a teacher becomes discouraged and unmotivated to teach in the school. - When teachers face resource problems, it lowers their self-esteem and they become discouraged to teach because when they do not teach these practical skills subjects, they forget these skills themselves. -Teaching the same content year after year, makes teaching bored.

CHRISTINA VALUES	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- A teacher sees his work as *Shepherd* taking care of the students and the teachers in the school. Also to share the Word of God, to encourage and nurture the students. -See teaching as a ministry to work for the Lord and not to work for money. - The morning devotions for the staff bring teachers together to share from the Bible and encouraging teachers about their work in the school. - By teaching and serving in a community, a teacher is serving God. -Staff worships every morning may break down isolation and build relationships. -Staff worships every morning help to create a friendly environment for teachers to work in. -Fellowshipping together may enable teachers to help students, especially in terms of students' behaviour.	**-** When there is different religious beliefs, working together maybe challenging when it comes to sharing of religious duties and responsibilities.

SCHOOL'S PHYSICAL FACTORS	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- Having a staffroom shared by all teachers including the administrators, bring teachers together to talk and share. -One staffroom shared by all teachers help build positive relationships and en-	**-** A school with surrounding communities which are scattered farther out may face little community support to the school. -A school located in a remote area may not have immediate needs met when these needs

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couraging teamwork. -A small size school enables teachers to be concern about each other. If one teacher cannot make it to class, other teachers would be there to encourage him or her.	arise and need attention. -One staffroom shared by all teachers caused inconveniences to teachers who prefer working in their own spaces as most times, teachers talk about matters that do not concern teaching or learning. -A subject classroom used by other teachers, while the subject teacher is teaching, causes discomfort for the teacher who is teaching.

Appendix N: A Summary of Main Ideas from the Discussions

COLLABORATIVE CULTURE	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
-Teachers working together to achieve the schools' vision and mission. -Sharing of responsibilities and getting teachers to get involved in sub-committees help to engage teachers to work together groups or teams. -Teachers encouraging each other to share their problems in terms of spiritual, physical or classwork or challenges faced instead of keeping to him/herself. -Teachers see that in the area of student discipline they need to work together, especially when the surrounding communities sometimes interfere with the school's disciplinary actions on students. -Sub-committees have their goals to achieve and plans to do in their schools. Some of their goals and plans were achieved already this year. -Formal and informal sharing are both good for teachers. - Teachers see themselves as having potentials to work together as a team of teachers. They already see themselves as very much co-operative working together and only need the support of the administration. -Teachers see that they are open to share to each other the problems they face in their departments especially the resource problem and see that if they already share openly their problems, then it is not difficult to take an-	

other step to work as a team in the school. -Teachers see that most times when they sit together and talk, they mostly talk about the negatives of the administration and remind themselves that it is good when they sit together to talk about teaching and learning practices and how to improve in their practices.	

COMMUNITY SUPPORT/STAKEHOLDERS	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
-Conflicts with the outside community (surrounding communities) strengthen teachers to support each other, to stand as one team and remain strong to handle other school matters. -Teachers recognize the need to have parents to come to the school so that teachers may discuss with parents about their children's schoolwork and results and to inform parents of their role to help and support the learning of their children. -Stakeholders need to commit themselves to support the schools.	-Lack of support from churches within communities, village leaders and chiefs, members of the school board and the stakeholders. -Parents fail to do their part or lack the understanding of the importance of education for their children, and fail to support the development of the school as well as the whole learning of their children. -There is lack of support from parents because maybe most of the communities and villages are far from the school or parents may not see the importance of education for their children and may not be interested to come to the school to discuss with teachers about their children's performances or results.

ADMINISTRATION/LEADERSHIP	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
-Teachers see weak leadership as giving them opportunity to sit together and discuss why the leadership is weak and to identify	-Changes of administration within two-three years allow little time for development to take place and new administration always

ways that teachers can help to build and support leadership in the school or to discuss how to avoid situations that will weaken leadership in the school. -Teachers recognize the principal as head of the school and the principal to take active role in important teaching and learning matters. Also, the principal to actively instructing and guiding the teachers in their teaching and learning practices so that teachers have the shared values and mission to work together with their principal for the benefit of their students. -By having the principal to daily checking teachers, it will help the principal to know more about his/her teachers and what help the teachers need further. -Teachers recommends the need for their school to have a coach leader who works closely with teachers, providing guidance and help to teachers concerning teachers' learning and teaching practices and experiences. -A coach leader is needed to help teachers in their lesson preparation, presentation and evaluation. -A coach leader will also help to avoid teachers having confusions in their minds when having open discussions on school related-matters. - A careers masters in school may also lead out in professional development programs and activities for teacher learning in the school, or a careers master can also lead out in academic committee. -A good and strong leadership is needed in a	bring in new mission statement or vision statement.

school.
-A team leader in the sub-committees needs to motivate the members to work together in their committees.
-Teachers suggest that the Heads of Departments to take the active role of informing teachers of teaching practices.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICES	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- Teachers have different background, different experiences, skills and knowledge. So teachers see that if they share their practices together and engage in conversations about their teaching and learning experiences, they may be able to help each other and mostly to help their students. -Teachers see that they need to ask other teachers what they are doing in their classes so that everyone can share together and learn from each other's learning and teaching experiences. Also, by sharing, it will help teachers to avoid using the same teaching approaches or same teaching style over and over again. -Teachers believe that they should have departmental meetings and staff meetings that would provide an avenue for them to talk and thing together about their teaching practices and approaches and sharing of student results, etc. -Teachers believe they have the potential to engage in such meetings or conversations about their teaching.	

CHRISTIAN VALUES AND BELIEFS	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- A school's vision and mission statement that have Christian values influence the culture of the school. Staff devotions and student devotions each day is part of the school culture. -A Christ-centred mission statement encourages teachers to work together to educate students in Christian principles. - A Christ-centred mission statement develops the high-quality performances of teachers towards their students and to see that students' progress in their learning. -Teachers are Pastors as well, growing into maturity in life so that teachers can impact the students, the nation and the world.	

SCHOOLS' PHYSICAL FACTORS	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- Having staff houses built close to each other and teachers live in the school area, keeps teachers together. -The Primary teachers and the high school teachers live on the school area. -The school is located far from surrounding villages and communities, so teachers do not usually leave the school back to their villages during school times but remain in the school even during holiday breaks. -Teachers and administrators sit together in one staffroom makes communication easy.	

-A school needs to have clean and healthy environment to work in.	

FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
-Teachers see the importance of their student work with other teachers because it will help them to discuss together the solutions to problems they face or to identify the learning problem of particular students and suggest solutions to helping the students. -Teachers recommend the importance of having an academic committee in the school which should be responsible for students' results. The academic committee to assess students' results and then work closely with teachers to provide effective learning to the students. -Teachers view students result as important because when their students score good results, it shows that a teacher has achieved his/her objectives and goal or vision for the students. -Poor student results allow teachers to question their teaching approaches, their effectiveness or weaknesses. -Although lacking resources, teachers have already seen the achievements of some of their students.	-Lack of finances led to teachers not producing students' results. -Teachers blame students for poor results achievement.

SHARED VALUES AND NORMS	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- To have a mission and vision is important. Without a vision, teachers see that they may	-It is difficult to achieve the school's vision of providing quality education to the stu-

perish and would not be able to achieve working together in the school. -Teachers see the importance of commitment to sharing together and meeting the individual needs of their students in order to fulfil their mission and vision. -Teachers share the vision, interest and passion to provide quality education to students. -Teachers see vision as a kind of guidelines for schools to work towards. Also, vision statement gives guidelines to what they have achieved and what they have not achieved in their schools. -All stakeholders, including the principal and administrators of the school, school board and teachers need to work together towards achieving the goal of the schools' vision. -What is important to a teacher, although no resources available or poor administration support, a teacher will always try his/her best to teach and be motivated to work together.	dents because teachers' needs like good salaries and good houses are unmet. -Teachers unaware of the vision statement of their school.

MOTIVATION	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
-Teachers are encouraged to work together when there is good leadership. -Teachers are further motivated to work together for the benefit of their students' learning when they see their students been successful in their learning and achievements. -Teachers believe that if all their needs are being met, for example, good salaries, they would be motivated to dedicate their time and effort to work together because although	-When teachers' needs like salaries, houses and transport allowances are not provided, teachers lack the motivation to provide quality education to the students because cost of living is high.

they have little resources now, but they have already tried their best.

-Teachers see that inner motivation that comes from within them is important. Inner motivation to them is their thoughts, beliefs and values on what is important to them in their teaching and their responsibilities, when they lack motivation from the outside. This inner motivation depends on individual teacher.

COLLEGIAL RELATIONSHIPS	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
- Teachers coming from same family back-ground or are closely related, keeps the teachers together and to help each other with school duties and responsibilities.	

RESOURCES	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
-Lack of resources led teachers to look for other alternatives to help their students.	- Lack of resources in the school disable teachers to provide quality education to their students.

TIME	
POTENTIALS	BARRIERS
-Consider time when wanting to sit down to-gether to share.	

Appendix O: A Summary of Main Ideas from the Reflective Journals

ROADWAY COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL	SUNSHINE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL
SCHOOLS' PHYSICAL FACTORS	
- The school is located in a remote area. -Surrounding villages and communities are scattered far from the school. -Teachers live on the school campus along with the students (It is a boarding school). -All teachers (both primary and high school) along with the administrators share one staffroom. -The school is under the South Seas Evangelical Education Authority. -Their only medium of communication is a radio wireless. - There are seven high school teachers (six male teachers and one female teacher).	- The school is located in Honiara Town. - Some teachers live on school campus in permanent houses and in leaf thatched houses. Other teachers live outside school campus. - All high school teachers share a staffroom together. The administrators have their own rooms or offices. - The school is under the Honiara City Council Education Authority. - Inside the staffroom, they only have a computer for the 22 high school teachers to use. -It is a day school.
TIME/WORKLOAD/SCHOOL PROGRAM	
- The school's daily program begins at 5:30am and finishes at 9:30pm. - Apart from the formal classes, teachers are also responsible for the extra-curricular activities like work program for students after classes, punishment for students, student devotions, study periods and student meals. - 7:30am-8:00am is staff devotion each day. After staff devotion, announcements are made or words of encouragement from the principal or the deputy or any urgent agenda that needs to be discussed. Classes begin at 8am and ends at 2pm.	-The school's daily program begins at 8am and classes ends at 1:40pm. -Teachers have their extra-curricular activities to attend after their formal classes and the main one is work program for students that is normally done on Fridays. Other duties include, looking after the school gate when students arrive in the morning and when students leave the school after classes.

COMMITMENT	
- I observed that despite the remoteness of the school and challenges faced (cultural barriers, lack of resources and finances, lack of support from authority, administration and community), teachers are committed to attending their classes and duties. -Teachers are committed in using whatever resources they have available or they can make to use in their teaching.	- The main challenges faced by the teachers are lack of resources and lack of support from the administration. Also, living in town is quite expensive for the teachers in relation to their low paid salaries. However, it seems that despite these challenges, teachers are seemed committed in attending their classes. That is very obvious to notice.
CHRISTIAN VALUES AND BELIEFS	
- The school's vision statement and its mission statement is Christ-Centred, which means that the school culture is everything about the school or everything they do in the school is mostly based on Christian values, principles and practices. For example, both teachers and students always begin and end their day with devotions. In their classes, teachers are expected to put emphasis on Christian values and beliefs. -The school has a Chaplain (who also teaches Bible subject all the high school classes) to look after the spiritual needs of both the teachers and students in the school.	-Although, teachers do not have morning devotions before they begin their classes, some teachers informally expressed the need for them to include morning devotions to be part of their daily school program. -Some informal conversations I have with some teachers indicated that on a day each week, they normally have students and teachers fellowshipping together in their denomination. -The school has a Chaplain (who also teaches Bible in some of the forms) in the school who mainly looks after the spiritual needs of the students.
COLLABORATIVE CULTURE	
- Mostly, the male teachers seemed to be open to talk and share with each other. The female teacher seemed to be quiet and shy when the male teachers were around. - Generally, all teachers seemed to get along with each other despite their culture and customs. Like, they seemed to know each other personally well too and informally in-	- It was observed that most teachers interact with each other in their staffroom when they were not teaching a class or when they were having their breaks. -They seemed to interact well with each other informally. - A few teachers seemed to be working qui-

teract with each other well as well. - The school has about eight sub-committees comprising of all the primary and high school teachers and the list of the committees along with the members is on their notice board. -Participants participated voluntarily in this project. They themselves arranged suitable times for the interviews and venues they were comfortable in for the interviews. -During our discussion, the male participants seemed to throw in their ideas, one after another, making a flow of discussion, while the female participant seemed shy to talk (although I knew that she really wanted to share her ideas) and only once she spoke out and shared her thoughts.	etly at their corners or tables while some seemed to be open and moved around easily. - Some seemed to be discussing together schoolwork, perhaps? -The six participants participated voluntarily in this project and they themselves arranged suitable times for them to come in for the interviews and the group discussions. -During our discussion, there was a balance of ideas as well as a good flow of discussion from both the male and female participants, and there were instances of two or three participants would talk at the same time.
COMMUNITY SUPPORT	
- While I was in the school, the Education Secretary of their authority came to visit for the very first time in four years due to the remoteness of the school (as he mentioned in his introduction in his meeting with all the teachers). Along came the Chairman of the School board as well. - Later, two provincial officers came to visit the school too while I was there on two different days. The purpose of these two visits is mainly on addressing the wellbeing needs (economic needs) of the people in this school community.	