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**Heads of Faculty Leading Curriculum Reform:
A Case Study of Post Year 10 Mandated Curriculum Reform
in a Tasmanian Secondary School**

by

Julienne Marjorie Colman
B.Ed., M.Ed. (Leadership)

Submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

Faculty of Education
University of Tasmania
Launceston

June, 2010

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My study journey over many years has led me to many insights into my personal life and professional practice. It has been a long, yet rewarding journey, one accompanied by so many wonderful people. Although I feel as though I am at the end of one road, another pathway looms and I wonder where it will take me.

“Two roads diverged in a wood and I, I took the road less travelled by, and that has made all the difference” (The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost)

ABSTRACT

Curriculum reform internationally and within Australia has been undergoing dramatic change, and educational leaders are faced with the challenges which reform creates. Tasmania is no exception and it has experienced its own educational reform challenges in schools over the past decade. The curriculum reforms in post compulsory secondary education in Years 11 and 12, *Tasmania A State of Learning—A Strategy for Post Year 10 Education and Training* (Department of Education, 2003) created a platform for future mandated reform and was the reform instrument used for the purposes of this study.

Despite significant research having been conducted in other countries, contributing to an extensive body of literature about the implementation of mandated curriculum reform by Heads of Faculty and those in middle leadership roles in schools (Jones, 2006; Moore, 2007a), research in an Australian, and, more particularly, in a Tasmanian context, remains limited. The research literature on implementing curriculum reform in schools has focussed largely on the effect of the Principal and Deputy Leaders as leaders in schools (Fullan, 2001a; Hargreaves, 2003) with limited research about those in ‘middle’ leadership roles such as the Heads of Faculty and their role in implementing reform. Middle leaders are those largely responsible for leading teams of teachers in the implementation of these new reforms, and are the key personnel in all stages of the implementation of the reform process.

This study identified and sought to generate narratives that would provide key insights into the experiences of 12 Heads of Faculty, who were responsible for the implementation of mandated curriculum reform in Years 11 and 12 in the case study school, a Year 7–12 Tasmanian Secondary School. As one of these Heads of Faculty, working alongside the Heads of Faculty in the case study school, through observation, informal discussion and collegial unity, I was able to

develop an in-depth understanding of their perceptions, experiences and outcomes. This study investigated their leadership role in implementing mandated curriculum reform, the impact of change, and the understanding Heads of Faculty have about leadership and implementation of change in the curriculum reform process. Experience of leadership and the reform implementation process were explored from the personal perspective of Heads of Faculty, including my own. The issues pursued, including the strategies employed, the professional learning and the challenges the Heads of Faculty encountered in bringing about curriculum reform are discussed.

Each Head of Faculty, 12 in total, was invited to complete a questionnaire focussing on their teaching and leadership experiences in relation to leading teams of teachers through reform. Six experienced Heads of Faculty were then identified, and rich data were collected through semi-structured interviews and the writing of personal stories about middle leaders' experiences of leading curriculum reform. Despite initial concerns about leading mandated curriculum reform, the Heads of Faculty welcomed the opportunity to be involved in professional dialogue and reflection about the reform process. From the multiple data sources, I constructed six narrative accounts from my colleague Heads of Faculty, and one of my own experience of leading curriculum reform. The sources of data, both informal and formal, contributed to the narrative descriptions and outcomes of the participant questionnaire, interviews and personal stories.

The findings of this research may inform educational leaders and middle leaders—in particular, Heads of Faculty—about leadership approaches which are effective or enhance the reform process within given limitations, such as externally mandated curriculum reform. The stories, experiences and specific strategies shared by the participants may be used by Heads of Faculty to inform their professional development in implementing reform, and as a resource from which other middle leaders may benefit, in terms of leading curriculum reform with improved outcomes. The research may also provide key information for principals and education systems planning to embark on educational reform in which middle leaders are destined to have a key role to play.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY	ii
STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY OF ACCESS.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
TABLE OF TABLES	xiii
TABLE OF FIGURES	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH	1
Introduction	1
Middle Leaders Leading Curriculum Reform in Post Compulsory Education ...	2
Middle Leaders—Heads of Faculty and the Reform Process	2
A Tasmanian Post Year 10 Curriculum Initiative	3
Leading Reform—A Professional and Personal Challenge	4
Case Study: Researcher as Participant	6
The Case Study School.....	6
Research Design	8
My Research Questions.....	9
Challenges of the Research	9
Outline of the Thesis	10
Definitions of Key Terms.....	12
National Curriculum—Australia	12
Post Year 10 Compulsory Education	13
Government Senior Secondary College	13
Tasmanian Academy	13
Tasmanian Polytechnic	13
The Tasmanian Skills Institute	14
Australian Technical College	14

Head of Faculty	14
Tasmania: A State of Learning—A Strategy for Post-Year 10 Education and Training	14
Essential Learnings.....	15
CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH	16
Introduction	16
Curriculum Reform	16
Tasmanian Post Compulsory Secondary Education.....	17
The Case Study School.....	19
Middle Leaders—Heads of Faculty	20
Case Study School—Head of Faculty Role Description.....	20
Conclusion.....	21
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	23
Introduction	23
Conceptual Framework	24
Post Compulsory Secondary Education	25
A Global Perspective.....	27
An Australian Overview.....	29
The Tasmanian Scene.....	30
Leading curriculum reform	32
Middle Leadership—Heads of Faculty	34
Teacher Leaders of Reform.....	35
Ownership of Reform.....	37
A Culture for Reform	38
Models of Reform	41
Leadership Approaches	43
Leading Mandated Reform.....	45
The Personal Dimension of Leading Reform.....	47
Readiness for Reform.....	50
Resistance to Reform.....	50
Perceived Need for Reform.....	51
Change Fatigue—Initiative Overload	52
Challenges and Barriers.....	54
The Research Questions	56

Conclusion.....	56
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY	57
Introduction	57
Theoretical Framework	57
Research Process	60
Case Study	61
Research Participants	62
Narrative Inquiry	64
Data generation strategies	66
Stage 1—Review of Documents and Literature.....	67
Stage 2—The Questionnaire	68
Stage 3—The Interview.....	70
Stage 4—The Personal Story	71
Data Analysis	73
Validity and verification.....	77
Ethical issues	78
Limitations and delimitations.....	79
Conclusion.....	81
CHAPTER FIVE: EXPERIENCES OF LEADING THE REFORM OF POST- COMPULSORY EDUCATION	82
Introduction	82
Donald’s Story – Senior Education Faculty	83
Jennifer’s Story – Religious Education Faculty	90
Deidre’s Story – Study of Society and the Environment Faculty	96
Alan’s Story – Language Faculty	102
Charles’ Story – Science Faculty	110
Rupert’s Story – Technology Faculty	117
Jules’ [the researcher] Story – The Arts Faculty	121
Act One, Scene One—The Manager	121
Act One, Scene Two—The Leader	123
Conclusion.....	128
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION.....	129
Critical Reflection on the Research.....	129

Research Question One: In what ways do Heads of Faculty view themselves as leaders?	131
Vision, big picture of reform	133
Dialogue and observation	134
Support for Heads of Faculty implementing reform	134
Professional learning for middle leaders leading mandated curriculum reform	135
Creating a culture for curriculum reform	137
Research Question Two: What strategies do Heads of Faculty use in their leadership of curriculum reform, and how integral are these leadership strategies to the reform process?	139
Approaches to leading mandated curriculum reform	142
Clear lines of communication	143
Ownership of the reform	145
Research Question Three: What challenges do Heads of Faculty face in the implementation of curriculum reform, and how do they respond to them?	146
Resistance to reform	146
Perceived need for reform	147
Size of the faculty	148
Prior failed mandated curriculum reform	150
Time allocation and resources	151
Influence of the National Curriculum	152
Research Question Four: What forms of collaborative leadership, if any, emerged during the process of implementing reform?	153
Education systems	155
Leadership implications	156
Conclusion	157
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	158
Introduction	158
Strategies for middle leaders [Heads of Faculty] leading curriculum reform arising from the study	162
What makes a great Faculty?	165
Implications and recommendations	165
For the Case Study School and Leadership Team	166

For the Heads of Faculty	166
For Systems	167
For Policy Makers	167
Implications for future research	167
Summary	168
REFERENCE LIST	170
APPENDIXES	186
APPENDIX A	187
APPENDIX B	188
APPENDIX C	191
APPENDIX D	194
APPENDIX E	198
APPENDIX F	199
APPENDIX G	200
APPENDIX H	201
APPENDIX I	203
APPENDIX J	208
APPENDIX K	210

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1: Case Study School Leadership Structure	7
Table 2: Faculty Structures in the Case Study School	21
Table 3: Strategies employed by the Heads of Faculty	141

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Conceptual framework.....	25
Figure 2: Conceptual framework (repeated)	55
Figure 3: Overview of data collection.....	60