



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

by

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“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.

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