Invisible Teachers, Visible Problems:

Perspectives on Relief Teaching

by

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STATEMENT

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ABSTRACT

As a result of staff shortages, relief or substitute teachers are playing an increasing role in many schools, yet they are largely invisible in policies, practices and research. In contrast, the problems surrounding relief teaching are highly visible: senior administrators worry about costs and timetables; regular teachers complain that no work is done; students become noisier; and relief teachers adopt strategies for 'survival'. Paradoxically, while there is a recurring theme in the literature to improve relief teaching effectiveness, relief teaching remains a low priority within the education system.

This investigation evolved from a personal search to make sense of the recurring problems and paradoxes surrounding relief teaching. Its purpose was: to gather data on relief teaching which reflected the 'reality' of personal experience from a number of viewpoints; to determine the main issues from student, teaching and administrative perspectives, using a constant comparative method of analysis; and to find deeper links to illuminate the multidimensional relationships between relief teaching and its problems.

Research was conducted in a core of eight secondary schools where the researcher worked as a relief teacher. Over a period of three years, through a synthesis of interviews, observations, anecdotal evidence, and reflection based on a naturalistic paradigm, the researcher developed strategies which enabled her to remain closely attuned to the varying settings. Using an inductive approach, data were gathered from over 300 participants, mostly administrators, teachers and students. In all, 85 hours of interviews were transcribed in addition to her written observations and reflections as a practitioner.

The findings showed that the lack of consistent information, feedback and accountability caused many interview respondents to adopt a pragmatic, short-term approach to the management and practice of relief teaching. They based their decisions on divergent assumptions which were rarely challenged, causing problems to recur and intensify.

The investigation concluded that the problems surrounding relief teaching were linked by three underlying factors: the context of relief teaching is largely invisible; relief teaching is different from regular teaching; and that there is no official recognition that problems exist. The process of making relief teaching visible as a phenomenon illuminated many inconsistencies within varying contexts and perspectives. Evidence strongly suggests that the context of relief teaching is central to the teaching and learning settings in schools. It shows, also, that the present approach to relief teaching is highly ineffective and gives rise to serious problems with far-reaching professional, economical, and legal implications. The thesis provides recommendations for future initiatives. Extensive appendices and the thematic structures underpinning the thesis enable the selection of material for a variety of purposes.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The research approach
The aim of the research is to make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon, by showing 'slices of data' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) which provide the reader with 'different views or vantage points' for data analysis (p.65). When studying a spectrum of people, places and events within a limited time span the research focus, of necessity, is directed towards developing a deeper understanding of the relationships within each dynamic setting. At times, a reader may note inconsistencies, repetitions or find that the evidence in the thesis appears 'out of sequence'. It was, perhaps, a similar feeling which first motivated the researcher to suspend judgement of the inconsistencies and ambiguities of relief teaching and look past the superficial elements to search for conceptual links which would unify data and explain the relationship between relief teaching and its problems: each part of the same phenomenon. The focus of the thesis is to welcome diversity and complexity in order to record a variety of experiences which reflect the different realities of relief teaching; then, through an inductive process of analysis, build a base of knowledge, which is of 'theoretical purpose and relevance' (p. 48), and which can be used to generate shared discussion and further research.

The researcher: Through much of the investigation the researcher is 'balancing' between the, sometimes conflicting roles of researcher and practitioner, between theories and practice, and between intuition and logic, particularly within an inductive research process. For, in searching for 'connectedness' she also has to remain self-aware. For this reason, she uses terms such as 'the researcher', or 'researcher/ practitioner' in order to organise her thoughts from the differing paradigms, when one or other of the roles predominates, often in quick succession. The effectiveness of the research process depends on her ability to recognise, respond and interpret fleeting experiences, as or shortly after, events happen (Dewey, 1938; Eisner, 1991).

Relief teaching: In this investigation, *relief, substitute or supply* teaching are considered as synonymous terms. Although conditions and terms of employment might vary in each context, that is seen as part of the nature of casual teaching.

Issues are the feelings or events seen as important by people within the administrative, teacher, student or wider perspectives, within the various settings.

Problems: The term is used loosely to identify a doubtful or difficult question; a thing hard to understand; an indication of something that needs to be investigated more deeply.

Themes: Problems or issues could cluster to form deeper universal themes which link fragmented data. Themes are used as a means to gain deeper understanding and to give control and order to the research (van Manen, 1967, pp.78-80).

Hidden curriculum/ agenda is defined as 'the unintended messages transmitted by the physical and social structure of the school and by the teaching process itself' (Gordon, 1988, p.425).

Sensitive research: Sieber and Stanley (1988) define 'socially sensitive research' as studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research (p.49).

Permission was granted to conduct the investigation by the DEA, school principals, individual interview respondents, and the Ethics Committee of the University of Tasmania.

Context: The term indicates aspects of the immediate surroundings as well as the relevant aspects of the social system in which a person appears (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 102).

Settings: The term indicates aspects of the surroundings which might be generally recognised as belonging together, as essentially similar or as complementary to each other. For example, various contexts can be categorised as teaching or learning settings.

Effectiveness is the ability to choose the correct objectives and concentrate on them. In this investigation:

- Effective relief teachers: adapt to the culture and climate of the school; produce the best results possible within the constraints of the particular setting; and establish some measure of control over many unpredictable situations.

- Effective administrators are flexible and able to think laterally as well as vertically (de Bono, 1990, p.4) in order to balance competing tensions within the relief teaching context and resolve them into a solution (Kee, 1987, xii).

Strategies are seen in broad terms because of the nature of relief teaching. They are 'plans for successful action based on the rationality and interdependence of the moves of the opposing participants' (Simpson, 1989, p.852). They are used by the researcher in response to issues within the relief teaching context.

Levels of relief teaching

Relief teaching is viewed from a conceptual framework which subdivides the data in a number of areas:

Personal: The context of relief teaching which affects personal boundaries, for example, the telephone call offering work. Emotional responses often indicate an infringement of personal values such as professionalism and respect.

Class: The area relating to the teaching and learning setting where a relief teacher or regular teacher largely interacts with students. Many of the issues from the regular teaching perspective focus on the class context.

School: The administrative and 'political' area which includes the task of managing human, economic or school resources. Issues, such as preparing timetables or budgeting for the relief teacher, illustrate aspects of the relief teaching context at school level. Many of the school issues come from the administrative perspective.

System: The term has a number of meanings according to the context in which it is used. It indicates a complex whole; a set of connected things or parts; or an organised body of material or immaterial things. The term represents a systems thinking approach (Senge, 1992, p.67), or a 'holistic' view of relief teaching where relief teaching is seen in relationship to broader political, or professional contexts. Reference to an organisational 'system' for relief teaching, for example, could indicate that although procedures are in place, they may have evolved, rather than have developed according to planned procedures. At times, the term 'ad hoc system' indicates a system was developed piecemeal.

The term *education system* is used loosely as a conceptual tool to create a sense of the different responses [for example, procedures; attitudes] to relief teaching at personal, class, school or system level.

Varying Perspectives
Schatzman and Strauss (1973, p.55) refer to a perspective as 'an angle of observation' but note that it is a difficult concept to define, as several perspectives can be used simultaneously: an administrative perspective, for example, can not only represent a single view, but also an organisational approach. It was seen as wiser to look at the 'fruitfulness' or outcome of observation, than become overly concerned with the accuracy of definition. Accordingly the following perspectives are used as a means of focus, selection, coverage and 'representedness'.

- *Personal perspective*: illustrates the personal context of relief teaching and the way in which the dual role of relief teacher/ researcher operates in practice, for example, the record of a day in the life of a relief teacher (October 1994) taken from notes made at the time. The nature of the observations in this investigation are determined by the transitory relief teaching context and by the opportunities presented during the course of a day's teaching. Observations are driven by the researcher's interest. They mirror the unpredictable flow of events as the researcher negotiates the demands of working in a variety of classrooms with different subjects and student age groups. Her focus is to get a personal balance between what she saw, felt and understood as a researcher and as a teacher and then cross-check patterns of observations in different settings. At times, for example, when the researcher was on duty, in assembly, or when classes were actively engaged in their work, she could observe aspects of the broader school context. Such observations enabled her to gauge the balance of relationships within the school and judge the perception of the role of a relief teacher by staff or students. Observations, therefore, were rarely predetermined but flowed unobtrusively. This approach was developed from the researcher's previous study into relief teaching.

- *Students' perspective*: Students from grades 7-12 [ages from 12-18 years] provide a perspective on relief teaching. Information was gathered from fragmented data rather than interviews. Data were structured to represent patterns of behaviour and comments from particular age groups of students.

- *Relief teachers' [teaching] perspective*: Evidence was collected from new relief teachers on their first day as a relief teacher and those with many years' experience. The most experienced interview respondent had 30 years' experience as a relief teacher.

- *Regular teachers' [teaching] perspective*: Teachers and other people [including former relief teachers and teacher aides] provided data from this perspective. The perspective included several teachers with experience as regular and relief teachers and those with experience working in primary and secondary settings.

- *Administrators' [administrative] perspective*: Interviews with administrators [principals, assistant principals (AP's), bursars and other people] in a number of school settings [primary, high school, district, special school and senior secondary] provided data from this perspective. Experiences ranged from an administrator on her first day as a coordinator, a bursar with 27 years' experience and an administrator with 30 years' experience all within the schools under investigation.

- *Coordinators' perspective*: The experiences of the coordinators at the three Agencies [CES] illustrate aspects of the relief teaching context between the Department and schools. References to the *Agency* indicate the Relief Teacher Service [RTS], a section of the Commonwealth Employment Service [CES] run by the Australian government. In 1996, private service providers undertook the management of relief teaching although the same coordinators were re-employed.

- *Systems perspective*: The perspective had two main functions. First, to unite fragmented data on relief teaching from a systems level [the Department and Union] and second, to provide a wider context for relief teaching which could be used to provide insights and links. For example, the perspective included data from a variety of people who either had experience at systems level or whose contribution 'filled a gap' in the researcher's understanding. Interviews with parents, social workers, educational consultants or union officials provide opportunities for the researcher to build up her understanding, as well as providing a means to cross-check and triangulate data.

For the purposes of the investigation, the *Department* refers to *The Department of Education and the Arts* [DEA], since renamed *The Department of Education, Community and Cultural Development* [DECCD].

The *Union* refers to the *Australian Education Union* [AEU].

School settings are classified in general terms:

primary school settings cover classes from grades 1-6;
high school settings cover secondary school classes from grades 7-10;
district school settings cover schools in a rural area and classes to grade 10;
senior secondary school/ secondary college settings cover grades 11-12.

'Class Teacher' is the administrative period in some schools, where the on-going housekeeping events take place, such as, reading the daily news bulletin.

Subjects: The term includes practical and theoretical subjects, in classrooms, the school grounds or outside the school, for example, taking students to play hockey at another venue, all of which areas might be covered by a relief teacher. A list sent in August 1997 to applicants of temporary teaching positions named the subject areas taught in schools.[see appendix 23]. In the last few years, the curriculum has expanded with subjects such as Health Education, Peer Support or Information Technology.

File numbers: The comments or quotations used in the investigation come from a number of research files containing longer interviews, anecdotal evidence and conversations, or personal reflections. The reference numbers following many quotations are intended for purposes of easy file identification. They do not necessarily refer to a single person. A file might hold a number of anecdotes and, therefore, represent a number of people.

In interview settings: 'Q' represents the questioner [researcher]; and 'R' represents the interview respondent(s). Examples of interview data are in the appendices.

Referencing: In order to avoid any misconceptions, references to Webb (1992) refer to Jacqueline Louise Webb who although living in Tasmania, bears no relationship to Penelope Webb, the author of this study.

Literature Review: The purpose of the literature review is to unify the fragmented literature including 'the wide range of brief articles ... offering a kaleidoscope of events and momentary responses' on specific relief teaching issues (Galloway, 1993, p.159) by using a thematic approach based on the researcher's previous study (Webb, 1993). In this way, the investigation substantiates the themes of relief teaching from the literature, whilst providing a consolidated base of information which can be used to build a conceptual understanding of relief teaching as a phenomenon. By accepting all data as relevant, the literature makes relief teaching visible, and provides opportunities for linking issues and problems and for more specific research.

Page references: Where acknowledgement of other published material is made in the text, page references are included, too. They are used as a strategy to create additional specific links to background material which might be of use in further research. In this way, the researcher's aim, to 'open up' areas of research into relief teaching can be accomplished.

Unresolved issues: Throughout the investigation there are references to aspects of relief teaching which suggest the need for further analysis. At first glance, for example, the comments that 'relief teaching is a no man's land' could be viewed in terms of gender, power, professionalism and equity. However, analysis has shown that because each comment or event is embedded in a broader setting, either arising from personal experience or influenced by factors such as school leadership, or the age and ability of the relief teacher or students, it is not possible to explore these issues adequately within an already complex investigation. Paradoxically, by

keeping such issues unresolved, the investigation invites the reader's involvement to search for connections and to question further.

Appendices

The appendices in this investigation include a substantial collection of 'raw' interview data showing relief teaching from a number of perspectives. The decision to include whole interviews in the appendices rather than in the main body of the text is important. It serves to illustrate the synergistic effect of comparative analysis, as well as providing a resource which can be used in a number of ways. For example, in addition to providing insights into the range and diversity of relief teaching experiences, the appendices provide evidence of the multiple objectives of the investigation (p.15). There is evidence of themes such as power, conflict and change, each set within contexts of paradox and ambiguity. In this way, the appendices draw attention to an area of research which is, at present, largely unexplored.

To look is one thing
To see what you look at is another
To understand what you see is another
To learn from what you understand is something else
But to act on what you learn
is all that really matters.

Winston Churchill

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

An accurate, insightful view of current reality, is as important as a clear vision. (Senge, 1992, p. 155)

Background to the Investigation

Relief teaching is different from regular teaching

The researcher's initial interest in relief teaching came in 1983 when she moved to Tasmania. At that time relief teaching seemed to provide her with the means to 'sample' the school system before becoming a regular teacher in a particular school. Her previous teaching experience was wide-ranging. She had worked as a regular teacher in an inner city school in Brixton, London. She taught in a Technical Institute in Fiji and provided home education for her own children in Malaysia when no school was available. She understood the significance of contextual influences on teaching. Working in inner London was very different from working in the South Pacific. Nevertheless despite her enthusiasm for diversity, her first day's relief teaching in Tasmania had such a negative impact that she declined the subsequent offer of a full-time job at the high school.

On her arrival that first day she was escorted to a speech and drama room by one of the office staff. The large room was isolated from the rest of the other classrooms. She had come to teach English, and worked hard to improvise. Groups of different students entered the room every forty minutes and she was on duty at lunch and recess. She had no lists of student names, no resources and no idea of the layout of the school or what was outside the room. By the end of the day, the researcher was 'shell shocked' by the impact of isolation and the radical changes of the day. The impression that remained with her, was not related to the classes of students, but to the attitudes of regular staff who unintentionally, or not, ignored her as a new relief teacher. A few years later she returned and was pleasantly surprised. By this time she had learned strategies to cope and understood the constraints of relief teaching. She saw how her perspective had changed, too. She was no longer in the midst of uncertainty but distant from it. She puzzled, however, why the school staff had not welcomed her nor ensured that work was available and her responsibilities clarified. Information and support would have helped her fill the gap left by the absent teacher.

She recalled a relief teaching experience in another high school. She had agreed to supervise science classes for a day, if the school staff provided work. She felt that her own knowledge was out-dated. The laboratory was in an old building, isolated from other classes. She was unable to find the work intended for the students, and they did not appear to know what they should be doing. There was no direct form of communication from the laboratory to the office. Presumably, the telephone was in the teacher's locked room. She sent a student to see if the work had been left in the main staffroom, or in the school office. He did not return for twenty minutes. It took

that time for the other students to settle. There were two doors by which they could come and go. There were also gas taps and other potentially dangerous equipment which presented an additional dimension to the lesson, particularly for a relief teacher new to the school. Later the researcher talked to the assistant principal [AP]. He agreed to ensure that work was provided in future. On two subsequent occasions, however, despite confirmation from the Relief Agency coordinator that student work would be ready, it could not be found. Again the process was repeated: student messengers were sent to search for the work, leaving the researcher/ relief teacher to manage the class as best she could. Her degree of success depended on the attitudes of the students. Other relief teachers reported similar experiences at this school, and like the researcher eventually refused to return.

Relief teaching experiences in a third [district] school illustrated the open-ended nature of the relief teaching context. On the first day the researcher taught an infants' class, and whilst in school she was 'booked' for a junior class the next day, and subsequently a high school class for the third day. Within a short space of three days, she had to adjust to the needs of very different groups and ages of students, ascertain appropriate classroom management techniques and ensure that the students had learned something worthwhile. In the process she, too, learned from her experiences. She had a window into many excellent classrooms. Her conception of teaching deepened as she understood the approaches needed for different subjects. At times she found herself in settings she never would have visualised. On one occasion, for example, she agreed to supervise students for agricultural science. It entailed project-work in class. On the next occasion when she supervised agricultural science, the administrator asked if she had brought her gum boots. Her task was to supervise grade 8 students as they rounded up a herd of cows in order to weigh them for the annual agricultural show in Launceston. The administrator assured her that the students 'would know what to do', as many of them lived on farms. For this lesson the researcher took the role of safety officer and the students enjoyed demonstrating their combined expertise to an adult. Together, they were part of a united group, sharing responsibility. It was a memorable experience.

Illustrations of relief teaching experiences in the three different secondary schools showed that relief teaching was different from regular teaching, because a relief teacher operated within a different set of expectations. She was 'here today, gone tomorrow' and filled in for an absent teacher. The focus for other school staff, was not on relief teaching but on the regular teaching context and, therefore, what could be a problem for a relief teacher need not be a problem for the school. The ambiguity inherent in filling in for an often unknown, member of staff, with little time to prepare, and often with little acknowledgement from other staff represented an additional dimension to 'supervision', as did the hidden complexities arising from the attitude and organisational style of the assistant principal [usually the relief teaching coordinator]. It determined what a relief teacher was asked to do and how s/he was seen by students and staff.

What was the role of a relief teacher? The above contexts illustrated how different administrators saw the role of a relief teacher. In two schools she was seen as an 'outsider', and what happened in her class seemed of little concern to the school staff. Conversely, in the third school, the absence of the regular teacher provided additional

opportunities for the students to take responsibility for a group activity within the 'safe' environment of having an adult present should difficulties arise. The task had an additional dimension, in that students were expected to cooperate with each other and with a new relief teacher. They were able to practise interpersonal and group skills. It was a positive outcome. There was no real interruption to the school routine and the purpose of the agricultural science lesson, to herd the cows and prepare them for the Launceston Show, was accomplished successfully.

Although each example of relief teaching related to a specific experience within a specific context, during the course of a day's teaching, the researcher noticed many seemingly inconsequential, but often recurring, problems and delays. She knew that, whatever the cause of the problems, the results became increasingly evident: students wasted time. She saw patterns of events: any delays at the start of a lesson increased the potential for a less-productive work ethos. Over time, many problems spilled over from the classroom to the wider school community. Did the invisibility of relief teaching hide issues which should be a serious cause for concern? Anecdotal evidence suggested that when relief teachers refused to return to the school, it was an indication of potential longer-term problems (appendix 7).

A personal search

This investigation into relief teaching evolved from a personal search to make sense of the problems and paradoxes which occurred on a daily basis in the researcher's work as a relief teacher. Why was relief teaching known for its problems and yet relief teachers were largely invisible in policies, practice or research? Why had similar problems recurred for many years with little apparent attempt to alleviate them? Why was there no apparent recognition of the particular difficulties associated with coping in an emergency, such as limited time, information and resources? It seemed to the researcher that there were deep imbalances in the education system, because, in comparison with written information on regular teaching, relief teaching was invisible. Indeed, one relief teacher described relief teaching as 'a no man's land'. Not only was relief teaching invisible, but it was seen as marginal, and of little consequence, within the education system.

The researcher, as a relief teacher, felt differently. She enjoyed relief teaching, for its daily challenges and extreme variety of settings. She enjoyed the 'unexpectedness' and tactics of relief teaching, where little could be taken for granted. In each class she worked to create a balance or harmony: sometimes the result was exhilarating and at other times, a disaster, but it was always stimulating. Although she met other relief teachers who enjoyed relief teaching, it seemed to her, that the majority of relief teachers and onlookers were locked into a negative paradigm in which difficulties were accepted as 'inevitable'. She reasoned, that problems would remain inevitable until people understood relief teaching from perspectives other than their own. She knew from anecdotal evidence, that as problems increased, so relief teaching became more stressful for administrators and relief teachers in schools. Many people did not know where to start or what to do. Nor did they wish to be linked with additional complications which might reflect unfavourably on them.

The purpose of the thesis is to build up a conceptual understanding of relief teaching as a phenomenon which will indicate the relationship between the invisibility of

relief teaching and the visibility of the problems, and show why problems recur. The research will make relief teaching visible from a variety of perspectives. A selection of interview data will provide insights into the 'lived experiences' of students, teachers and administrators (van Manen, 1990, p.9) to show their differing links to the phenomenon (appendices). Using the base of interview data in conjunction with the researcher's own experience as a relief teacher, a process of constant comparative analysis will be used to extract the dominant issues and problems from each perspective and provide underlying links which connect and anchor the variety of experiences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In turn, further analysis will seek to make sense of the paradoxical nature of relief teaching and to link and position relief teaching within broader education and social contexts (Stoner et al., 1985; Waters & Crook, 1990; Bolman & Deal, 1991). The issues, problems and the path of research are all part of the same phenomenon.

The task of making relief teaching visible, is not an easy one. The investigation is about a subject of low priority, surrounded by negative or humorous connotations, where many people want simple answers, but instead find inexplicable complications and uncertainties (Frosch, 1984; Bransgrove & Jesson, 1993). In contrast, the researcher sees relief teaching as a key area for observation and research: for what happens in relief teaching settings may have a considerable bearing on school and system effectiveness (Webb, 1993). For example, although relief teaching may be largely overlooked, in realistic terms there is an increasing need in organisations for a flexible labour force which can work effectively in response to changing labour market conditions (Lindley, 1994). The task of making relief teaching visible, also involves a task of bridging gaps in perception. The researcher believes that by making aspects of relief teaching visible, and by using the voices of the participants it will be possible to visualise relief teaching as more than a process of basic supervision. Comments which reflect a person's experience provide a powerful means eliciting deeper insights (van Manen, 1990; Silverman, 1993; Goleman, 1996). A study of relief teaching, therefore, is not only about relief teaching. It positions relief teaching within the general educational community, and links relief teaching to questions which should be of general concern: such as what happens in the absence of regular teachers; or how does relief teaching affect student learning outcomes? (DECCD, 1997). Before examining outcomes, however, it is necessary to examine the 'realities' of relief teaching. The principal 'problem', 'issue', or 'challenge' is the relationship between the invisibility of relief teaching and the visibility of the problems surrounding relief teaching: the central theme of the research.

The purpose of this chapter is to set the scene. The first section introduces the paradoxical relationship between relief teaching and its problems, the contextual background of the researcher, the relief teaching context in northern Tasmania, and the need for research on relief teaching. The second section provides an explanation of the research approach and why it is used. The third section provides insights into the duality of the researcher/ relief teacher as she describes a day's relief teaching in a high school setting, and the fourth section provides an overview of the chapters, to show how each one contributes to a holistic view of relief teaching as a phenomenon.

Visible problems, invisible teachers

What is relief teaching? Why do problems occur? How are they linked? From personal observation, these apparently straightforward questions belie the complexity of the answers, for, unlike regular teaching, there are comparatively few written references to relief teaching. Moreover, the role of a relief/ substitute teacher, who covers for one or more regular teachers during the course of a day, is difficult to define. As a result, each person's 'understanding' of relief teaching is based either on personal experience or on opinions which are often simplistic but rarely challenged. For many years, relief teaching has been described by school staff in terms of 'supervision', 'active supervision' or 'babysitting' (Drake, 1981). Anecdotal evidence suggests that many people walk past a relief teacher's class and comment on the noise. They choose not to enter. A 'good' relief teacher is one 'who keeps the class quiet' and presents no problems. In this way, a culture has grown where relief teaching is hidden behind closed doors. It is assumed that a relief teacher will materialise, at short notice, to take over the role of the absent teacher in an emergency, and vanish just as abruptly when the regular teacher returns.

One of the intriguing, yet recurring problems which initiated and defined the investigation for the researcher, was the paradoxical relationship between the invisibility of relief teaching and the visibility of the problems. An invisible teacher, one who is ignored, taken for granted, or not seen as a professional teacher, approaches a day in school from a different vantage point. In one sense, s/he can observe the school unobtrusively, and gain access to the various settings without question. In another sense, the person who assumes the role of a relief teacher takes on the characteristics of a relief teacher, with no personal identity, rather like a chameleon, as s/he attempts to fulfil the expectations of other staff: to replace an absent teacher. From observation and from anecdotal evidence, the process is one of the unquestioned aspects of school life. As relief teachers rush into school, often at short notice, they are greeted with the rhetorical question, 'Who are you today?', handed a timetable and shown the direction of the first classroom. The same question occurs at intervals during the day from regular staff who, quite naturally, are more concerned about which of their colleagues is absent, than wanting to find out about a relief teacher who might be 'here today, gone tomorrow'. In turn, high school students may appraise the way a relief teacher walks into the classroom, but ask why their regular teacher is away. If the visiting relief teacher does not know, s/he is seen as a teacher who 'knows nothing' and, consequently, lacks credibility. Invisible barriers and boundaries, therefore, surround the relief teacher to shape the classroom settings in terms of cultural and social power structures (Brown & McIntyre, 1993; Lindley, 1994). As a result, new relief teachers who are not aware of the hidden aspects of relief teaching, find the unwelcoming attitudes and the unknown field forces, very unnerving. They assume that they have done something wrong, but do not know what it is, or how to 'correct' it.

In contrast to the hiddenness and non-reference to relief teaching through official channels of communication, the problems surrounding relief teaching in school are legendary. Many relief teachers are described by administrators as 'unmotivated' and 'unprofessional', students appear to be noisier, and equipment damaged (Webb, 1993). For many regular staff, relief teachers *are* the problem. They see them as an unwelcome necessity of the system (Drake, 1981). Indeed, anecdotal evidence

suggests that some regular teachers refuse to attend professional development seminars, for fear of what might happen in their classroom if they are absent from school. A paradoxical situation occurs: that while few people know about relief teaching, as it is rarely mentioned in courses for student teachers, or in books on classroom management, relief teachers are expected to assume the role of the absent teacher, whatever that might entail.

While the researcher sought to find answers in this ongoing puzzle, she found difficulty in defining the problem for research. Who was a relief teacher? What was relief teaching? The AEU Members' Diary and Handbook, (1997) stated that:

> A 'Relief employee' as defined in the *Teaching Service (Tasmanian Public Sector) Award 1995'* [TO546] means a person engaged to teach on an irregular basis by the employer as and when required but does not include any person employed on a part-time, full-time or permanent basis. This is typically for half or whole days to cover for teacher absence. Anything up to 20 continuous working days is regarded as 'relief.' After 20 days you become a 'temporary employee' and subject to different conditions of employment. (p.70)

It was an administrative definition which did not represent the 'reality' of relief teaching in high school settings where relief teachers 'typically' did *not* work for half or whole days, but might start after Recess, or at the beginning of a class period throughout the day. In general, relief teachers were seen in terms of numbers and costs, as one-dimensional figures, but the reality was very different. From personal research and observation, teachers varied widely in their outlook, experience and reason for working as a relief teacher. Nevertheless, each relief teacher, whether novice or experienced, could relate incidents in the classroom, which they described as 'extremely challenging'. Many relief teachers had coped by ignoring the problems, reducing their expectations, or doggedly persevering to 'do their best'. Their approach was determined by factors such as their own commitment, their experience, or their need for further work in the school.

A glance at the range and combination of subjects to be covered, the teaching styles, or variety of student groups illustrated the range of possibilities and permutations which might be classified as 'relief teaching' (appendix 23). Unlike regular teaching, there was no chance of replicating the particular combination of subject, time, students and setting, or of working through the curriculum. While a regular teacher's work included planning, marking and paperwork, the focus for relief teachers was different. The task for relief teachers, particularly in a high school context, was to teach or supervise work prepared by someone else and cope with unfamiliar students in an unfamiliar school. Personal observation had shown that a relief teacher had to gain the confidence and trust of the students before they were prepared to 'settle' and work. Both relief teacher and students had to manage the dynamic elements of relief teaching, such as, lack of time, the effects of an unexpected absence, a change of arrangements, or the disruption of the existing curriculum. Many relief teachers, particularly in high schools, worked out of their area of specialisation, and usually lacked knowledge of what happened before or after the lesson. Therefore, while a regular teacher saw a lesson in terms of a broader curriculum and could plan ahead, a relief teacher had to develop strategies to focus quickly on the task in hand, in order to develop and maintain the momentum of the lesson and gain the students'

cooperation. It was certainly a challenge, at times. In a high school, for example, a different combination of experience, ability, or subject specialisation, between a regular or a relief teacher, might lead to change-on-change when a practical class, such as home economics was changed to theory, an unpopular decision for students.

Writing about a relief teacher's class is very different from 'being' there (van Manen, 1990). So much information is visual. Personal research and observation showed that relief teaching relies on improvisation, non-verbal communication and body language (Webb, 1993). It relies on problem identification and lateral thinking, although it is not labelled in those terms (de Bono, 1990). Little is written about relief teaching and, therefore, knowledge is 'hidden' or 'tacit' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 196). The researcher therefore had a unique opportunity to monitor her own responses and gain immediate feedback. In this manner she could reflect on fleeting, but often subtle sequences of events which she felt would be difficult to capture by other means, such as the research observation of other relief teachers at work.

Most relief teachers learn what works for them in the classroom and what does not, through a process of trial and error. They rely on intuition, tacit knowledge, and a collection of emergency work which they hope will interest the students in their care. Few people would have analysed their experiences or even considered them in terms of classroom dynamics. The focus for them, would be to gain the cooperation of the students, by whatever means they could. Similarly, administrators and other school staff would organise timetables, events or activities for relief teachers, but would rarely discuss relief teaching, except in terms of humour or frustration.

The researcher puzzled to understand the paradoxical nature of relief teaching. Why did relief teaching remain a low priority at system level when, from her own observations and research, it was surrounded by problems in school? Why was relief teaching seen as inconsequential, when regular staff were away on a daily basis? Why were relief teachers ignored by regular staff? Why did a caring school not 'care' for its relief teachers? It seemed surprising, too, that despite the informal recognition of the problems surrounding relief teaching, that there was no consistent induction, training, or support to help relief teachers cope effectively. In policies and written documents, too, there were few, if any, references to relief teaching (DECCD, 1997).

Recurring problems

The invisibility of relief teaching posed problems for the researcher, for each person saw a limited view of relief teaching based on their experience, and relief teachers frequently worked in isolation. In effect, the invisibility of relief teaching provided further barriers of communication (Cornelius & Faire, 1990). For example, at a M.Ed. degree course, the participants were instructed to, 'Visualise your school or class ...'. The instructions assumed a regular relationship with the workforce, at a particular school (Morrison, 1994). The other members of the group had no difficulty with the task. They suggested possible links. The assumptions underlying the regular teaching context provided few useful starting points for relief teaching. Relief teaching was dependent on fleeting and transitory relationships; it was seen in terms of 'change' rather than in established school routines.

What was a relief teaching setting? What was relief teaching? For the researcher it was a recurring puzzle and she searched to find answers from other relief teachers. Evidence from a two-year investigation into relief teaching showed that relief teaching was seen in terms of 'stress' and 'survival'; many relief teachers were barely coping (Webb, 1993). They did not know who to turn to, or what they could do to reduce the problems that surrounded them. The low priority of relief teaching within the educational community, caused relief teachers to become isolated, and their knowledge of the curriculum outdated. They were often provided with inadequate information to perform their duty of care. There was no induction or professional development and the need to 'fit in' to new situations on a regular basis caused relief teachers to feel uncertain and insecure. This sense of instability reduced their confidence, and triggered student challenges. At times, relief teachers were tested to their limits, personally and professionally. One quotation taken from a longer interview with a young male relief teacher showed the effects of student behaviour,

> I broke down in the staffroom and cried ... I'd just had enough [teaching]. The kids were horrendous. There were riots. Straight over the top of me. I couldn't understand what I was doing wrong. (Webb, 1993, p. 73)

His experience was not isolated. Other relief teachers confirmed the necessity for 'survival', either from the desperation of not knowing what to do, or from the barrage of problems which confronted them.

> It's crisis management from the time you walk through the front door [of the school] till the time you leave. (female relief teacher, Webb, 1993, p. 72)

> I like problem-solving though the problem seems to be increasingly one of survival. (experienced relief teacher. Webb, 1993, p. 76)

The problems surrounding relief teaching were well known by other staff. Students, too, described the strategies they had used in the classroom to 'torment' relief teachers. Anecdotal evidence from regular teachers and administrators recognised that, at times, student behaviour was extreme and they had to 'bale out' the relief teacher. One senior teacher commented,

> The young relief teachers panic, they are like sacrificial lambs. The kids' eyes light up, 'Let's see what we can do'. (regular teacher. Webb, 1993, p. 72)

Evidence suggested that the need to 'survive' was well documented by relief teachers in other settings (Hartshorne, 1981; Bransgrove & Jesson, 1993). Clifton & Rambaran (1987), observed that, 'substitute teachers often experience anxiety and do not feel satisfied, competent, or recognized as belonging to the educational community' (p. 310). The problems and difficulties surrounding relief teaching were highly visible, even notorious. Indeed, even in 1981, problems affecting substitute teaching were seen to be so universal that '... substitutes of every type, including the most qualified and dedicated available, [were] seldom successful in their stand-in roles' (Drake, 1981, p. 74).

Lack of information

Research was needed by practitioners. It was needed by researchers, too. Despite the increasing amount of research on teaching effectiveness and classroom management

within the regular teaching context, there were few references to relief teaching (Shilling, 1991). In an introduction to a journal article, the associate editor of *Unicorn* commented, that there had been 'relatively little systematic study of the characteristics, both professional and personal, of these casual teachers, or of their perceptions of their role, status and acceptance in the teaching force' (Bourke, 1993). This comment is supported by evidence from three databases on education (ERIC; AUSTROM; BEI). In United States, in over thirty-two years, there had been 268 records in ERIC (1966-3/98) which mentioned substitute teachers. The current index, which gathered material from over 750 professional journals, showed that from 1992-3/98 there were 52 records on substitute teaching, out of 253 records on 'substitute' and 51 265 records of 'teacher'. The British Education Index had 19 records of substitute/ supply teaching listed. Of 31 records on substitute/ relief teaching from the Australian database, AUSTROM, 25 per cent were classified as 'meeting papers', and over 50 per cent were journal articles. There were few studies which appeared to examine relief teaching holistically.

In England, despite the claim that, '...0.4 million people work as teachers in our schools' (Galloway & Morrison, 1994, p. vii) and that there were 36,300 supply teachers (HMSO, 1991, p.45, para. 6.27), there was only one book published about supply teachers. It was edited by Galloway and Morrison (1994) who recognised the absence of other research and identified the book as an 'agenda-setting volume which uses diverse contributions to provoke discussion of rarely articulated issues which are central to the day-to-day teaching and learning experiences of both teaching staff and pupils' (back cover). Similarly, in the United States, St. Michel's (1995) book, 'Effective substitute teachers, Myth, Mayhem, or Magic?' was described as 'the first book of its kind'. Based on the results of a two-year study of substitute teaching, it concluded that 'the problems with substitute teacher programs were a result of *nonmanagement* rather than mismanagement' (back cover, italics in original).

Information on substitute, relief, or supply teaching is frequently ambiguous. As can be seen from St Michel's book, a lack of information represents only part of the problem. Why were there references to 'nonmanagement'? Surely, the employment of substitute teachers would seem costly in terms of time, finance and outcome, if no system were in place? Brenot (1985) claimed that the general lack of statistical information on relief teaching masked the significance of substitute teaching. In practice, considerable numbers of substitute teachers were employed to enable schools to function during periods of teacher absence. In England, for example, written evidence showed that '... the number of regular and occasional supply teachers employed amounted to some 36,300 teachers in 1990, an increase of 72% over 1988' (HMSO, 1991, p.45, para. 6.27). Nevertheless, Galloway (1993, p. 161) argued that the figures were 'limited in their usefulness' because the terms 'regular' and 'occasional' represented the nature of the teachers' contract and not the frequency of their employment. Her comments illustrate the difficulties of slippery or ambiguous data which, might make sense from one perspective but which seemed simplistic or misleading, from another (Frosch, 1984).

Ostapczuk (1994) found difficulty in establishing a base of evidence where there appeared to be 'few facts which have stood the rigors of statistical examination' (p.11), and searched for connections between 'fuzzy' categories, opinions, anecdotal

evidence, or secondary sources of information where 'few operational definitions are provided'. He puzzled about the endemic nature of the problems and cited Koelling's (1983) evidence from an analysis of the responses to a questionnaire received from 1728 school districts in United States that 'most school districts do not have, in place, a comprehensive, systematic and effective substitute teacher program' (p.171), and reported similar findings regarding the policies within his own locality ten years later.

Relief teaching was more complex than it seemed at first glance. On one hand substitute teachers fulfilled an essential role in enabling schools to remain open in the absence of the regular teacher, and yet they remained overlooked (Shilling, 1991). Evidence showed that, at times, schools in London had been forced to close because of the shortage of teachers. Many school principals did not wish to employ substitutes because of the resulting problems. There seemed few attempts by the employment authorities, however, to support or train substitute teachers to help them work more effectively (Mullett, 1994). For example, there were few sources of reference to help senior administrators cope in the absence of regular school staff. As Galloway (1993) commented, '... material on in-service education and training and professional development rarely recognizes the practical concerns facing school managers who have to arrange cover' (p.167). It seemed that the responsibility for the organisation and practice of relief teaching was left to individual administrators or teachers.

Who were substitute teachers? Here was another 'problem'. The nature of relief teaching and the work done by relief teachers were difficult to define. Unlike regular teachers, substitute teachers had no 'school-based identity'. As transient workers, they had no 'membership' or 'space' within the educational community (Huberman, 1993). The brief references to substitute teaching often masked any connections between substitute teaching and regular teacher absences. Their apparently ephemeral nature was deceptive. In the United States, teachers were absent from work between seven and ten per cent of the school year (Brace, 1990; Trotter & Wragg, 1990). Seen from the students' perspective, Drake (1981) states that 'published reports have shown that the statistically average student will have 10 out of their total classroom days each year supervised by a substitute teacher' (p.74) which, over the course of a student's school career could amount to 'nearly half a school year' (Webb, 1992, p. 7).

The 'hybrid' role of supervision created inherent ambiguity within the management context (Drucker, 1968, pp. 382-385). Shilling (1991, p.3), too, acknowledged that the marginal position of substitute teaching posed additional problems for practitioners. Examining substitute teaching from a sociological perspective, he indicated that the working day for substitute teachers could be fundamentally different from that of other staff employed to teach the same students on a regular basis. Many writers acknowledged, often incidentally, that the role of a substitute teacher was different, but failed to explore substitute teaching in any depth. Instead, writers provided suggestions or advice (Tracy, 1988). The voice of the substitute teacher was rarely included (Galloway & Morrison, 1994).

Strangely, much of the advice seemed inadequate. The difficulties were unexpected, too. Information on relief teaching emerged incidentally and slipped away just as

easily. Perhaps, the most dramatic indication of the invisibility of relief teaching and its elusive nature was evident in Huberman's five-year study of the lives of 160 teachers, which portrayed their 'total' career cycle. Despite Huberman's nominal acknowledgement that substitute [relief] teaching was one of the 'classic' ways of entry into secondary level teaching in Switzerland, references to substitute teaching in his book occupied less than half a page out of 264 pages (Huberman, 1993, p. 30). His findings showed, however, that 44 per cent of the younger group of teachers [with 5-10 years of teaching experience] had been substitute teachers, while 25 per cent of all respondents talked about supply or substitute teaching during their individual interviews. The substitute teaching context remained elusive and hidden.

Researchers had noted the problems. There were problems, also, for employers. Substitute teaching seemed interwoven with problems. Many were of a cyclical nature (Wolcott, 1993). For example, Shilling (1991) confirmed that in the late 1980's, in England and Wales, teacher absence rates had climbed to over 30 per cent in some schools, and substitutes formed an growing proportion of daily teaching staff employed in schools (p.5). The extensive use of supply teachers to cover teacher absences disrupted the continuity of student learning (HMSO, 1990c, p. xviii, para. 74). It appeared that substitute teachers failed to provide the continuity needed by students and schools (Galloway, 1993). Teacher absences were costly in financial terms. For example, Anderson and Gardner (1995) cited a study conducted in Chicago (1983) where, over a three-year period, costs associated with teacher absence and substitute coverage averaged $54 million a year.

In Tasmania, the costs and shortages of relief teachers were a subject for discussion. Records showed evidence of the Director-General of Education appealing to the Minister for Education in February. They needed extra funding for the employment of relief teachers. as only six weeks' funding was left to cover costs for the remainder of the financial year (Webb, 1992). Unexpected staff absences, also, put a strain on relief teaching reserves. In the influenza epidemic of 1995, for example, the Relief Agency in Tasmania, did not have enough relief teachers to replace absent teachers (Pattie, 1995). In England, too, Blackburne (1990, p.4) showed that teacher shortage was 'not just a London problem', many Local Education Authorities [LEAs] had difficulty in getting supply staff. Shilling (1991, p.5) confirmed the seriousness of the problems when 'children were being sent home regularly as a result of teacher absences and shortages'. There were concerns about the future supply of teachers, and their effect on school staffing (Preston, 1997; Carrigg, 1998; Jones, 1998). Anecdotal evidence, derived from personal notes (1992-1997), both in England and in Tasmania, indicated that some newly trained teachers preferred to remain unemployed, citing the problems associated with relief teaching and their [perceived or personally experienced] lack of school support for relief teachers, particularly in a high school context (appendix 5).

Galloway (1993) described substitute teaching as 'a largely invisible feature of educational provision' (p. 159). She noted that many aspects on substitute teaching were 'surprising'. Relief teaching was linked by problems and frustrations and a sense of puzzlement. There were problems which seemed insoluble and inexplicable. The search for effectiveness was a recurring theme in the literature. Ostapczuk's (1994) attempts to provide answers to seemingly straightforward

questions encapsulates the problems inherent in researching relief teaching and explains the need to make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon. He searched to find answers to the question, 'What makes effective secondary education substitute teachers?' through an examination of the literature from administrative, teaching and student perspectives. He found that the literature was 'filled with descriptions of problems that substitute (sic) face' and commented that, in general, the perceived effectiveness of substitute teachers was worse than that of first year or student teachers, particularly in classroom management skills (p.1). However, like other researchers (Stringer, 1994; Preston, 1997), he failed to find the answers he sought originally, but did identify the problems and offer guidelines with 'survival pointers' (p.17).

Simmons (1991) illustrated a typical selection of problems which had beset substitute teaching for many years, and yet, seemingly, were not recognised as 'problems' which merited serious attention or priority at systems level. She commented:

> Substitute teachers deserve far more respect than they get. They are often called at erratic hours to appear in a strange environment to do a job for which they are untrained and have no mentor. It is hard to imagine many other work places operating with such a lack of training for the job to be done. The average student will spend from 91-104 days—or more than one semester— with substitute teachers. An entire semester out of a student's academic career is not something to be taken lightly. Also, school districts establish annual budgets in which substitute pay is more than an inconsequential figure. Therefore, to ensure that the education of students remains consistently high and that substitutes are being paid to teach, not to baby-sit, school districts must re-examine their substitute program. (p. 98)

The comments above demonstrated the positioning of substitute teaching within broader educational frameworks. However, while demonstrating the far-reaching consequences for the system, in terms of cost and student learning outcomes, Simmons presupposed that education departments [school districts] had a 'substitute program'. In Tasmania, despite initiatives to raise the quality of education for its students, the Department has had no programs for relief teachers, nor available lists of the names, numbers or qualifications of relief teachers working in the State. Relief teaching has remained a low priority.

A need for research

There was a need for research into relief teaching. Ostapczuk (1994) commented that, from evidence in a literature review, 'it seems that the problems identified in substitute teaching, and their recommended solutions have not changed since the 1960's, but in fact, may be getting worse' (p.11). Faced with an impasse, he reflected:

> Given the apparent status of the identified problems associated with substitute teaching and recommended remedies to address these, it is difficult to reconcile the significance of the problems identified. One can only speculate that perhaps the problems are not that significant, or perhaps the solutions recommended are not the correct ones. If the solutions are correct, then it might be they are not cost-effective, or the problems associated with substitute teaching are not of a high priority nature compared to some of the other problems facing school districts today. Nonetheless, it seems clear that there is a gap in what research suggests be done regarding substitute teaching and what is practiced. Hence, one needs to question how applicable this information is to classroom and school practices. (pp. 10-11)

Ostapczuk identified a variety of problems which, whatever the causes, resulted in a gap between what was written and what worked in practice. As a result, it was highly likely that there were gaps in understanding, and certainly in effectiveness. The lack of relevant or adequate information generated further problems when it was only possible to speculate from 'fuzzy' information. Few people persevered to reconcile disparate events and experiences. The literature represented a spectrum of issues, from classroom management, to training programs, or to the financial costs of substitute teaching, often within a single, brief paper (Kraft, 1980; Warren, 1988).

There appeared to be no conceptual understanding of relief teaching. Even Galloway and Morrison (1994a) who worked on a two-year study, found increasing complexities and admitted that 'The Supply Story' was 'something of a misnomer', as there was no single story but 'a wide range of accounts' (p.1),

> Supply teachers appear to be as diverse as teachers in regular employment in terms of educational philosophy, training, teaching skills, and subject knowledge ... [and] this range is complicated by their various reasons for working on an occasional basis, wide variations in their levels of employment, and an absence of school-based identity and membership. (Galloway and Morrison, 1994, p.184)

Research was needed to show the significance of relief teaching within the educational community. Lindley (1994) argued that the information gained from a study of different categories of teacher supply was 'significant' at systems level. It enabled analysts to predict shifts in patterns of employment, on the demand side [schools and educational authorities], and the supply side [teachers] to provide evidence of future labour market trends. For in a broader sense, information from relief teachers who worked in a variety of settings could be used by education authorities to examine employment issues or to monitor policy/ practice outcomes, such as the changing areas of responsibility and accountability caused by decentralisation.

In the absence of verifiable facts, information from different settings was difficult to compare. Not only was there need for an investigation into the ways in which relief teaching impinged on 'almost every area of school life and beyond', but one which examined the less tangible aspects of relief teaching such as 'power' or 'professionalism',

> Teacher substitution has both educational and sociological elements, and research findings therefore interest different audiences in different ways. No theory promises to encompass enough of the field, but we would argue that central areas of interest are those of power and visibility, both in terms of systems and structures, and also as evidence in interactions between people and groups. However, other important concepts vie for attention: gender; time; work, employment, and unpaid work; professionalism and training; career patterns. Both private and public worlds are relevant: the personal and the professional often overlap. Supply teaching as a theme raises diverse educational issues and impinges on almost every area of school life and beyond. (Galloway & Morrison, 1994a, p.6)

As can be seen from the above passage there is need for research: to provide knowledge to help practitioners (Ostapczuk 1994); to understand key processes (Shreeve et al, 1987); to improve efficiency in terms of the provision of supply cover;

to reassess the way in which supply teachers are employed; and to examine the long-term recruitment and retention of teachers (Mullett, 1994; Preston, 1997). Yet, the in order to understand relief teaching the general lack of official reference to these issues reflected the manner in which substitute teaching operated in practice.

> 'Out of sight, out of mind' encapsulates not only the experience of some supply teachers. It also epitomizes pervasive attitudes in many areas of the education system. (Galloway, 1993, p.159)

There was also seen to be a need for a change of attitude. Relief teaching was surrounded by myths and paradoxes (Galloway, 1993; St. Michel, 1995). Underlying relief teaching were apparent inconsistencies between the theory and practice of relief teaching: relief teaching being considered a valuable emergency force, whilst remaining relatively inconsequential in terms of training and status (Drake, 1981; Warren, 1988). The titles of several papers reflected this ambiguity, for example, 'Substitute teachers: the professional contradiction' (Shreeve et al., 1987). Relief teachers were, indeed, a professional contradiction. In a Tasmanian context, for example, relief teachers did not need to be qualified teachers, yet they had no induction, training or support. They were expected to replace an absent teacher and maintain duty of care, yet they were not provided with vital information such as a class list. Many problems were considered attributable to the relief teacher or officer concerned, yet there was no monitoring of relief teachers. While there was seen to be an increasing need for teacher accountability, few people knew what happened in a relief teacher's class. As one interview respondent, a relief teacher, commented, 'You [researcher] are the first person in three years who has asked me about relief teaching (Webb, 1993, p. 67).

There was a need for research by a practitioner/ researcher who could integrate theory with practice, make sense of some of the paradoxes, and provide insights which would illuminate the links between the invisibility of relief teaching and the visibility of the problems. The researcher contends that until there is a base of knowledge which recognises relief teaching as different from regular teaching, with its own strengths and significance, substitute teachers will remain ineffective because they have no identity other than one associated with problems. The task, therefore, of this investigation is to use the literature and the methodology to make relief teaching visible from multiple perspectives, in order to understand deeper links which make sense of the paradoxical nature of relief teaching and its recurring problems.

The Investigation

The purpose of the investigation is to make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon: by collecting data which reflects the differing realities of lived experience; by identifying the issues seen as important from a number of perspectives; by searching for underlying links which make sense of the issues, problems and paradoxes; by framing or structuring relief teaching in order to provide transferable knowledge; and by developing a base of information which creates broader links between relief teaching and the educational system.

The questions for research provide a flexible pathway to deeper understanding. The questions are used to find a theoretical explanation which would link the paradoxical nature of relief teaching with the recurring problems, as part of the same phenomenon. They are used in conjunction with the multiple objectives. They are:

- What is relief teaching?
- What are the issues and problems of relief teaching?
- How are they linked?
- What are the consequences for the education system?

Multiple objectives:
The following objectives indicate the development of interrelated themes rather than the pursuit of linearly related objectives. The researcher sought to provide a research setting which reflected participative and reflective openness (Senge, 1992). She sought an approach where interview respondents felt secure enough to speak about the issues which concerned them. At the same time, she extended her ability to look inwards, to challenge her own thinking and develop skills of listening and reflection. In a complex setting there was seen to be 'no right answer' (Senge, 1992, p. 281). Instead, the researcher looked for relationships and balance between opposing tensions and underlying forces.

The investigation will:

- examine relief teaching from students', teachers', administrators', Agency and systems perspectives as a means to explore the underlying nature of relief teaching;
- identify some of the issues and problems as seen from each perspective;
- show evidence of the gaps, links, and mismatches between the perspectives at personal, class, school, and system level;
- create an understanding of the links between the researcher and the research context;
- gain insights into the complex of theories, assumptions and attitudes which surround relief teaching including the development of appropriate methodologies for understanding relief teaching and the relationship between relief teaching and its problems;
- create an understanding of the significance of relief teaching in teaching and learning settings;
- demonstrate the need for a shared vision to improve relief teaching effectiveness.

Viewed together, the items on the above list of multiple objectives look somewhat daunting. Each objective provides a practical means to enable the researcher to grasp fleeting evidence and build on it. The researcher developed this approach from her former investigation into relief teaching. Research data cluster around each of the objectives to provide structures within the largely amorphous mass of information (Webb, 1993). The objectives, therefore, provide a focus for the researcher to explore pathways of analysis, which, at the same time, create a pathway to independence for relief teaching, as a phenomenon in its own right. Consistency of purpose and credibility must be judged by factors, such as the ways in which the researcher negotiates access, or gains long-term cooperation from previous interview respondents. In essence, however, what might be viewed as 'inconsistent' is, paradoxically, consistent with relief teaching where unusual juxtapositions of activities are part of its day-to-day reality. As Shilling (1991a) indicated, the contexts of relief teaching had similarities with research conducted in hospital settings, where the frequent changes of people and cultures provided complex layers of differing priorities and balances of power.

Choice of methodology

The positioning of researcher and practitioner is considered an important means of providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of relief teaching, because each role presents opportunities for comparing and contrasting aspects of the same setting, through description, interpretation and appraisal (Spradley, 1980). Over time, such practices ensure greater awareness and sensitivity and enable the researcher to gain access to a new area of research which has been previously inaccessible. The researcher's aim was to develop a conceptual understanding of various methodologies and theories which could be 'shaped to fit practice' (Eisner, 1991, p. 97) and used as the occasion warranted. She developed an approach described by Dewey (1938) as 'flexible purposing' to ensure a fluid transition from the role of practitioner to the role of a researcher (Schön, 1983; Eisner, 1991). At times, aspects of the setting such as student behaviour or a school bell, demand that she adopt one role or the other. Each role provides a different relationship to the setting and, therefore, different priorities and interpretations.

The researcher's stance can best be described as one based on a human science research paradigm advocated by van Manen (1990, p.30). The six methodological themes [i.e. methodological features or research activities] enable the researcher 'to select or invent appropriate research methods, techniques, and procedures for a particular problem or question.' The purpose of each methodological theme is not intended to prescribe a mechanistic set of procedures, nor be performed in isolation, it is intended to provide a helpful, practical approach to 'animate inventiveness and stimulate insight' by:

1. turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. maintaining a strong and orientated pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;

6. balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (pp. 30-31)

The approach is based on a need to question, and to reflect. It is an interactive approach based on thoughtfulness and a sensitive concern to show things 'as they are'. In order to establish a strong orientation to a certain question or phenomenon, or idea, a researcher of necessity must remain committed to discover the deeper truths and not settle for superficial responses.

Throughout the research there is a need to balance the research by considering the whole and the parts. It aims at a certain effect. In order to make relief teaching visible from different perspectives and for different purposes, the thesis is written so that relief teaching can be 'framed' in a number of ways (see Bolman and Deal, 1990). For example, for readers interested in practical aspects of relief teaching, interview data from a single student, teacher, or administrator, provides a portrait of the relationship between a person and an aspect of relief teaching (appendices). Each interview shows the issues and problems in context, as part of a reality. In doing so, comments from interview data provide glimpses of the deeper attitudes, assumptions or feelings which represent common themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Silverman, 1993).

The analysis of different kinds of data from a variety of perspectives allows a multifaceted investigation. The main purpose of the research is to make relief teaching visible, by gathering data from as wide a range of research settings as is practicable, and then, through a process of discovery, generate theory from data systematically obtained from a constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher, therefore, determines the 'types of groups' to be studied, the 'scope of population' and the 'conceptual level' of the theory (p. 52). Selection is made from the opportunistic sampling of a wide range of interview respondents. The process of analysis continues until there is a clear relationship between relief teaching and its problems, showing how and why they occur. An examination of attitudes, assumptions and patterns of problems shows the consequences for the system. Although the aim of the research is to make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon, in doing so, it is important to understand relationships and find ways of structuring relief teaching conceptually. In this way the research provides 'universal' themes and transferable knowledge, which may be used in other settings (van Manen, 1990, p.79). It is seen as a 'trustworthy' approach (p.99) which can be used for helping to predict events or to decide a course of action. The research approach can provide the means to restructure relief teaching to suit varying needs.

A method of analysis was chosen which encompassed the diversity of the relief teaching contexts and which neutralised bias. Using a combination of a constant comparative approach, using participant observation, problem solving techniques and reflective listening, the researcher developed the understanding of a range of research methods which could be used as the situation warranted. Her choice of methodology was based on a grounded theory approach, used successfully in her previous investigation (Webb, 1993, pp. 20-37).

Limitations

In the absence of published material on relief teaching, it has been necessary to demonstrate how relief teaching is different from regular teaching, and use different lenses to translate and frame personal experience. There are methodological difficulties in explaining tacit knowledge to readers less familiar with the contexts (Polanyi, 1967). There are limitations when writing about relief teaching, because effective relief teaching relies on 'knowing-in-action' (Schön, 1987, p.22) and a visual assessment of unfamiliar settings (Eisner, 1991). Aspects of the research, therefore, will reflect a transitional stage, from invisibility to visibility, within the general context of the thesis (Glaser & Strauss, 1971).

A focus of the research is to create an 'understanding' of relief teaching from a mass of divergent and fragmented data. The writer has provided insights into the phenomenon by showing how experience is shaped by personal history, or the use of expressive language, to link people, places or events. In such a broad-based study, there are repetitions. There is also less focus on the 'proof' of the phases of grounded analysis. The writer makes no apologies. 'Proof' for her is in the development of concepts and relationships. She has selected material from her developing understanding, knowing that the investigation can open areas for more specific research. Each comment, incident or chapter can be seen as a 'slice of data' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 65) which may be interpreted in many ways: as holistic in its own right, or as illustrating part of a broader phenomenon. At times, detailed information has been included because, from observation, some of the small, taken-for-granted aspects of relief teaching, such as the use of abbreviations when providing instructions for relief teachers, may provide illuminating links to long-standing issues and problems (appendix 24). The limitations represent the researcher's realities:

> ... method—whether it pertains to research or to teaching— is ultimately a political undertaking. The forms we employ exclude as well as invite. By broadening the forms through which the educational world is described, interpreted, and appraised, and by diversifying the methods through which content is made available and teaching methods are used, the politics of practice become more generous. Whether the field will pursue the ideas developed in these pages or remain on familiar waters remains to be seen. For me, at least, it is much more interesting to find new seas upon which to sail, than old ports at which to dock. (Eisner, 1991, p.246)

Assumptions

The researcher holds a series of assumptions about the relief teaching context based on her experience as a practitioner. These affected her choice of methodology. As the main instrument for the selection of data, the researcher needed to make her own responses explicit, in order to show her changing relationship to the research context. She was not value-free (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.161) but needed to retain the local groundedness of her approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10) to monitor her own 'bias', particularly when there was already much ambiguity and uncertainty in the context.

- The relief teaching context is dynamic, fluid and interrelated, therefore a study of the holistic context is essential in understanding the phenomenon.

- It is necessary to collect wide ranging data which encompasses relief teaching at personal, class, school and system level in order to enable others to see how aspects of relief teaching effectiveness affected their own needs.

- Many problems occur [and recur] in relief teaching because the nature of relief teaching is not understood.

- An inquiry into relief teaching could not ignore the broader educational context in which a person lives and works. Relief teaching is dependent on the attitudes and values of the educational subcultures.

- It is necessary to show the researcher's personal context to explain any observations that underlie action. For example, as a relief teacher and 'outsider' to the educational system, the researcher recognised that she would need to build credibility and status as a researcher. This affected her choice of methodology.

- In an unpredictable setting, and in an original non-replicative research approach, methodology is seen as providing a measure of conceptual order and strategies to enable the researcher to maintain a consistent approach. The focus is on developing insights into relief teaching as a phenomenon. Findings from the investigation would provide evidence of the effectiveness of the methods used.

Central to the investigation is the relationship between the researcher and the research context, as through her knowledge and long-term experience as a practitioner she was able to gain a close access to the field of research (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). The following section shows aspects of the personal context, the Tasmanian and research contexts as a means of illustrating some of the diversity encompassed in this investigation. It provides glimpses of the differing 'realities' of relief teaching and also offers illustrations of some of the less-definable aspects of relief teaching [such as, the varying cultures and climates of classrooms; problems associated with the changing settings; and the importance of understanding feelings as well as events] as a means of linking fragmented experiences.

The participants

Evidence from the researcher's previous investigation into relief teaching provided an overview of the various teaching settings and different perspectives on relief teaching (Webb, 1993, pp. 4-6).

Relief teachers in Tasmania (appendices 4-8) are employed in schools by the Department of Education and the Arts [DEA], to provide the legal, educational and technical requirements that cannot be met because of staff shortages. They are employed on a casual basis through a central agency. The Relief Teacher Service [RTS] is based at one of three branches of the Commonwealth Employment Service [CES] in Tasmania. It offers temporary teaching employment in schools, for a few hours, a day, or longer. These teachers have previously applied to the Department of Education and the Arts [DEA] to be listed for relief teaching, stating their

qualifications and preferences for student age-group and subject. Relief teachers do not need to be qualified teachers but their pay is graduated and dependent on their qualifications. Payment is for a minimum of two hours and a maximum of five hours per day, although, in practice, a relief teacher could be required to stay in school for seven hours (appendix 22). The frequency of work is dependent on supply and demand. The Agency coordinator attempts to match the school's requirements but at short notice this may not be possible.

The school administrator (appendices 12-15), usually the assistant principal, [AP] contacts the Agency [CES] to obtain relief teachers for the day. In general, this is before the start of school when the acquisition of relief teachers is only one of a number of concerns. Although attitudes might be changing, the employment of a relief teacher is based primarily on the need to get a teacher to the school as quickly as possible, without much emphasis being placed on his/ her subject expertise or consideration of the effects of this 'random' selection. Thus, a teacher who is absent for the week, might be replaced by five different relief teachers, with little attempt to ensure continuity of work, or match his/ her teaching style or curriculum specialisations, with that of the absent teacher. The role of a relief teacher varied within different school settings. In primary schools, relief teachers were expected to bring their own work and teach a class of students for the day.

A relief teacher often had about thirty minutes' notice from a telephone call at home to arrival at the school of employment. There was little time for preparation, physically or mentally, although relief teachers had some choice: they were able to refuse to go to a school or might choose to work within their specialised area of knowledge or training [such as physical education or music]. They might be asked, however, to teach/ supervise other subjects. There was a shortage of maths and science teachers in northern Tasmania, so relief teachers might have a day of 'general teaching' which incorporated a couple of maths or science classes. There was an wide range of subjects offered in many high schools. Indeed, in 1997, the Department listed seventy-eight 'subject areas' which could be taught in schools (appendix 23). Consequently, by taking extreme examples, a relief teacher might need to adapt from Science to Japanese, Art to Driver Education and from Grades 7 to Grade 10 students in the course of the day. Such challenges, although dramatic were not unusual. A relief teacher working for every period in a high school might supervise up to two hundred unknown students in a day (appendices 16 & 24).

A regular teacher (appendices 9-11) , away on a seminar rather than for unexpected reasons, would be to provide work and hope that it would be completed. The relief teacher would be also expected to protect school equipment, like computers, furniture and books. The relief teacher hoped for a pleasant day's teaching. Many relief teachers were highly motivated and wished to contribute positively to the school. In high schools, work was usually provided. Some regular teachers took considerable trouble leaving instructions, others might leave 'busy work', puzzles or 'negotiated learning'. Work was of a varied nature and selected by the regular teacher for his/her class. The provision of work was one of the ambiguous areas of relief teaching. It was taken-for-granted that a senior teacher for a subject might locate appropriate work and help with any difficulties, but few schools had clearly defined policies and

practices for relief teachers, and supplied little information. A relief teacher was expected to cope and bring emergency work to interest the students.

In many schools, student behaviour changed when a relief teacher took their class. Students (appendices, 1-3) saw the change of teacher as a chance to 'be with their friends'. Less work was completed and evidence showed that many students took advantage of the relief teacher's unfamiliarity with the school rules or student names. They were seldom held accountable for their actions (Webb, 1993). In a senior secondary school [grades 11 and 12] a relief teacher worked with students for an hour or more. The timetable was spread over a longer day enabling students to have blocks of class time and 'free' time intermixed. The day's timetable could start at 8.00 am or finish at 4.00 pm. Although students were older, they represented wide-ranging abilities and attitudes. Some students were focused academically and knew their future goals, while other students stayed in school because there were no employment opportunities. Administrators, and relief teachers, therefore, had to provide supervision for groups of older students whose needs were different. At times, for example, an administrator or relief teacher's role might be seen as preparing students for the workforce, by enabling them to take an active role in their future (appendix 15)

No one in the Department of Education and the Arts [DEA] claimed to have much knowledge or responsibility for relief teaching; it was seen as 'part of everything else'. There was no information on the names or numbers of relief teachers. It fell outside the areas of Departmental priority, despite the increasing concern by the Department to improve school effectiveness and economic viability (DECCD, 1997). Policies for a holistic approach to school support, or behaviour management approaches, did not include relief teachers. Problems surrounding relief teaching had recurred over a number of years but were not acknowledged directly (systems perspective).

The research settings

The core of the investigation was conducted in six high schools [student grades 7-10] and two senior secondary colleges [student grades 11 and 12] where the researcher had worked as a relief teacher over a number of years. The high schools had provided the setting for part of her previous two-year investigation into relief teaching (Webb, 1993). Having gained permission for the investigation from the Ethics Committee and the Department, the researcher/ relief teacher, therefore, had access into the field of research in a number of ways. She could arrange for an interview with an administrator or teacher during the course of her work. She could observe events, such as school assemblies, which represented aspects of the organisational, interpersonal and cultural dynamics of the setting of which relief teaching was a part (appendix 20). There were opportunities, too, for informal communication, such as the brief snatches of conversations with teachers, administrators or students.

A school or classroom setting had an impact on the relief teaching context. An effective relief teacher, for example, supervising students in a laboratory, on a sports field, or with expensive music or computing equipment, had different organisational parameters, for example, with aspects regarding safety or the monitoring of equipment. In addition, other strategies were needed to cope with the interpersonal

relationships within the setting. Administrators or teachers working in a primary, secondary [high], or senior secondary school had a different angle, or viewpoint on relief teaching, as did students. Each setting, therefore, provided opportunities to examine the broader implications as well as the localised effects of relief teaching. The aim of the research was, therefore, to welcome diversity in order to examine the extremes and to find any underlying patterns and links between the different settings.

Tasmania provided a unique opportunity for research. While the relief teaching context was largely 'invisible', in contrast the networks between regular teachers, administrators and others were highly visible. Many people had attended the same schools or university. Professional development seminars were held in Launceston or Hobart, a distance of just over two hours' drive. Moderation meetings, held at for example the Teachers' Centre in Launceston, could involve regular teachers from the eight school districts. The researcher knew that any evidence she collected would generate 'synergy' or additional links when placed together with other research material (Stoner et al. 1985, p.404). For example, it would be possible to trace aspects of relief teaching over time (appendix 8), or compare evidence from different administrators or students as they moved from school to school (appendices 1 & 14). In this way, it might be possible to see how contextual factors such as social and economic influences, affected relief teaching.

A Day's Relief Teaching: a personal perspective

Few people have observed relief teachers in their classrooms, indeed, there is often little awareness of the changing balance of relationships between relief teachers and students, or between relief teachers and regular school staff. The following account of a day's relief teaching is a significant aspect of the research for it 'positions' the researcher, aspects of the methods and methodology, and the research settings. It illustrates how the absence of a clearly defined policy for relief teaching leads to individual interpretations of the role of a relief teacher: the administrator, saw her task as providing cover for absent teacher; while the researcher/ practitioner saw her role in terms adaptation, flexibility and capability. By making relief teaching visible as a phenomenon, it is possible to see the open-ended nature of a relief teaching assignment, when a single relief teacher, covers classes and duties for four teachers, in five different subjects, teaching or supervising up to two hundred unknown students in a day. She does so with little acknowledgement, feedback or obvious school support. Paradoxically, the invisibility of relief teaching gave her the freedom to explore the nature of relief teaching, from a personal perspective:

This account of a day's relief teaching in one of the high schools within the investigation (October, 1994) was written on the day the events occurred. No additional comments were added subsequently, except as explanation and reflection. It evolved largely as it was seen at the time. It described relief teaching from a participant's perspective where 'everything happens at once'. It forms part of a paper written on relief teaching (Webb, 1995, pp. 7-29).

From home to school

'Can you teach tomorrow?' It was the co-ordinator from the relief teaching agency [CES]. Experience had taught me to be wary. 'Which subjects?' I agreed to take maths and science if they were 'straight-forward'. Practical lessons outside one's subject area, and in an unfamiliar school were rarely successful.

The following day I reached the school at 8.30 am, before school started. My routine was different but my mind was clearer. Usually I cannot plan ahead. I have to leap into action: from home to classroom in thirty minutes. Even with the advanced warning I still wondered what the day would bring. I had visited the school several months' earlier but did not know the present co-ordinator. I went to the assistant principal's [AP's] office, was greeted by the AP/ co-ordinator and handed the timetable and a map of the school. The information made little sense to me. I asked for clarification of the staff members' names, as only initials had been given. Such apparently trivial details had far reaching consequences for a relief teacher, attempting to make sense of an unfamiliar environment. I knew I would be challenged. I was 'supervising' classes that day for three teachers, four grades [12-16 year olds], five subjects and for the full seven periods. A few minutes later, duty for the whole of recess and half lunch hour were added. This duty was apparently for a fourth teacher who was on school camp.

Period 1: Grade 9 Science

I found the work in a folder in the main staffroom and glanced through the day's teaching. The first lesson, Grade 9 Science, was in Room 4. I checked my map of the school and found the laboratory, then double-checked with nearby students as there was no room number on the door. Luckily it was not locked. I entered, wrote my name on the board and the instructions for the lesson. I glanced around the lab. It was clean, new and elegant. I went to the door and poked my head into the corridor. A bunch of students were casually grouped, 'Relief?' 'We haven't got you, have we?' 'Who are you?' 'Where's our teacher?' The group, mostly boys, walked in and took down all the stools from the benches. At least there was a pattern of expectations at the start of the lesson. How many students should there be? I had no list. I looked down the corridor. It was empty. I stepped back into the room and introduced myself. I told them I did not know why the teacher was away and handed them the photocopied worksheets headed, 'What happened when the boy monster met the girl monster?' It comprised a series of instructions which had to be followed in order to convert units of mass into a code which would reveal the answer. I expected some comment on the title and got it. The grade 9 boys, had some ready suggestions mostly of a sexual nature. A relief teacher has to determine which behaviour to ignore and which to challenge. I chose to ignore the comments at that time but later, by talking to the students discovered that the comments stemmed from a personal relationships course, especially for the boys, conducted by a visiting nurse. There were unresolved questions which had surfaced. One boy was angry. He did not see why he should be given instruction on 'private' matters. We talked for a few minutes, others joined in the discussions. I took his comments seriously and answered them as well as I could. Soon the boys settled and worked, their queries had been acknowledged. It may have been easier for them to talk to a stranger. Frequently student reactions from one school lesson, even days earlier, could surface in another lesson. I believe this was particularly apparent in a relief teacher's class when the

usual pattern of the day was changed. I remembered occasions when students recounted lessons I had taken, as much as three years' earlier.

So the lesson continued. I walked around the group checking and chatting. I had identified the owners of five daily report sheets which had to be signed and a mark given for 'attitude', 'work output', 'punctuality' and 'having correct equipment'. After fifteen minutes several students had not yet started writing. They claimed they 'could not' follow the instructions. They 'did not understand the problem ... any of it'. I smiled inwardly, this response was a familiar one. After a few probing questions, I was able to determine the extent of their involvement and if necessary provide additional clues or challenges. It was easy to resolve the difficulties for those students for example, who had only glanced at *one* side of the worksheet, so only had half the information. Others wanted me to solve it for them. One boy in particular was rude, intentionally or not. '*You* (sic) ... supposed to be a teacher ... won't give me help!' In fact he had challenged me a few times, then put up his hand and asked for help. When I had gone to his bench, however, he had studiously continued talking to his friend and ignored me. When I walked away, he wanted me back. Power seeking? Attention seeking?
'Please see me at the end of the lesson.' (I would talk to the student when his friends had left the class thereby reducing the opportunity for a potential classroom drama.)

I filled in the report sheets, signed them, wrote a few comments about the lesson to the absent teacher and warned the class that the lesson was finishing. As the students left, I made sure the [detained] student remained behind. He was still muttering. I tried to talk to him. He still felt disadvantaged and claimed, 'It wasn't *my* fault.' He felt he had not been 'helped'; he 'had not understood the class instructions'. 'If that was so,' I asked, 'Why had he written on the worksheet when there had been clear instructions, both written and verbal to do the work in his book?' Once again he claimed he 'didn't know'. Was it part of a larger pattern of behaviour? I had no time. I had no class list, but he gave me his name and that of his grade teacher. I would see her at recess, with a comment not a complaint. In this way she could use the comments or not, as she wished. (I saw my responsibility as providing feedback but leaving management options for the regular staff. I did not intend to load them with extra problems that *had* to be 'followed-up' after I had finished the day's teaching.)

Periods 2 and 3: Grade 8 Speech and Drama
The brief talk over, I rushed to the hall for speech and drama. I had been told that the regular teacher would start the double lesson. She was in school but needed the time for other commitments. I introduced myself. The teacher explained that the class groups had requested extra time for rehearsals. It was therefore their responsibility to use the time wisely. She talked to the groups and clarified which groups could work on the stage, and which could not. She warned me discretely about one boy who was not in a group and 'might need help'. I suggested that he team up with a capable girl who had finished rehearsals. The arrangement worked well. I reinforced the positive aspects of their work where I could and asked each group to write a note for their teacher to explain what its members had done. Initially I watched events from a distance: one group worked outside the hall, another on steps, a third on the stage, a couple of groups out of sight. I listened for giggles and thumps, and periodically went to check if they needed to discuss any aspect of their work. I was impressed.

The students worked intensely and with enjoyment. I was asked to view one rehearsal. I remembered how, as a child I too, had enjoyed performing for an adult audience. Only one group seemed to be wavering back and forth between a casually social and a more purposeful level. I showed my interest in their work and chatted. I felt that they would not remain involved for the full eighty-five minutes. I was right. After about an hour this group of three girls raced a couple of times round the hall, their feet banging and voices echoing. The other groups called out in annoyance. I beckoned to the girls and showed them a note that I had written about them.
'Do you think that this is a fair account of what you have been doing for the last few minutes?'
They looked rather surprised.
'You've done well so far. How about improvisations ... miming ... theatre sports?'
They went off and were quiet. Later I found the top of a table had been unscrewed. The screws lying nearby. I questioned them.
'It was like that.'
There was no way of knowing.

Just before eleven o'clock, I got the groups together in a circle and we had a brief talk. I was pleased with the way the lesson had gone. 'You can go now.' There was a flutter of surprise but they went out quietly. I puzzled about the reaction and then realised that this school had a bell at the end of lessons. Probably my watch was thirty seconds fast. It was only when the bell did not go that I double-checked my timetable to find *two* time schedules were detailed on it. I had selected the wrong one and had let the students out ten minutes early. Too late to retrieve them. I wrote the teacher's note, checked that every corner of the hall was tidy and went to the staffroom. I needed to see the grade leader, get a cup of coffee and be ready to find another teacher who would direct me to my area of duty. The bell sounded as I reached the staffroom. I found the visitors' cups, and used my own coffee.

I had just finished talking to a grade leader and was making my way out for duty when the principal came up to me. It was the first time we had spoken. Instead of a greeting, I was confronted with a direct observation,
'I don't know if you realise that you let your class out ten minutes early?'
'Yes, I misread the timetable.'
'I found some students wandering around and I blasted them. They had no business going early. They should have told you.'

Recess duty
Then to Recess duty. Clutching my bag and visitor's coffee cup, I elbowed the doors open. A relief teacher has no office nor place of safety to leave personal belongings, so in addition to my handbag, I carried a briefcase with chalk, board markers, scissors, paper, pens, emergency work and coffee as this was not always available.

Luckily I found the teacher on duty fairly easily. I asked about the rules. 'The kids are usually good. Just see that their games don't get out of hand.' He showed me where to go at lunch time for duty. It was a beautiful fresh spring day. The students were running and talking. There were no problems. I wished I had my sunglasses. There had not been time to get them from my car.

Period 4: Grade 8 Maths

After the break, I was listed to teach grade 8 maths. I needed to go back to the staffroom to return the cup, get my folder of work, check the classroom from the map of the school and head upstairs. The class was there before me, waiting quietly. We went through the introductions. 'Had I met them before?' They remembered a time six months earlier. I told them I did not know why the teacher was away, but he had set some maths and I would go over any difficulties they could not resolve. I tried to be positive, minimise ambiguities and 'settling in time.' The usual student 'test' occurred after a couple of minutes. Hands went up. 'We can't do it. We don't understand.' 'What don't you understand ...?'

I put the responsibility on back them and gave confidence to those who just needed a helping hand. It was algebra and I felt easy with it. Some students in the class sped through the work and gave the rest a sense of challenge. I enjoyed their pleasure. The lesson was soon over. The bell took me by surprise. I made sure the class left quietly, blackboard (with teacher's instructions) cleaned, chairs under desks, no paper on the floor. I checked the school map and strode on to the next class.

Period 5: Grade 7 Design and Technology

The corridor was tangled with moving trails of students but the scene was fairly orderly. The next class was at the end of the technical block. The twenty-seven students were waiting quietly. A good start. I had not taught them before. I had been given green graph paper and the name of a girl who would get scissors for the class. While she was gone I checked the work from their text books. The students had to cut out a square, triangle and kite shape on squared paper and fit them together, drawing round the outlines. They made patterns. It was a simple exercise but very creative. Some students realised they would have a more easily-managed template if they scaled up the textbook diagrams. Others matching square for square ended up with minuscule shapes that were tricky to cut out with the large scissors. It was one of those rare lessons where both I and the class were focused on the same goal. We learned from each other, played around with ideas and possibilities and there was not one moment of wasted time nor an unmotivated student. The bits of paper were cleared up and twelve scissors went back to the neighbouring classroom. I felt I could teach and relax, although this was the first time I had met this class. The corridor was almost empty by the time I had finished cleaning the board and writing notes for the teacher. Most students had eagerly made their way outside to the canteen, one or two trailed by the lockers. My feet echoed in the emptiness. I journeyed down corridors, each evoking powerful images. I passed the workshop area, with glimpses of machines, wooden cabinets, of photographs and overalls, into the next building, where the walls of the corridor were covered in paintings. I felt refreshed by the students' sense of commitment and energy, then a sense of amazement as the next corridor revealed a length of shimmering polished floor and dark blue paintwork. How many hours of polishing? I passed the sombre doorways of staffrooms, listed with teachers' names, each firmly closed. Alice in Wonderland? Narnia? Colditz? I was an outsider, what metaphors would I use? No one was in sight. The effect was subterranean, a symbolic sense of mystery, even surprise that so many people apparently, were hidden away behind closed doors. Perhaps each room was a necessary retreat? There was little visual sense of life, but in one area, a lingering smell of baking brought a reminder of the morning's activities. My shoes clicked onwards. I swung through wooden doors into a walkway, a brief explosion

of bright green bushes and sunlight, before returning to another enclosed administrative area.

Main staffroom

About ten teachers were inside the staffroom sitting in a row by the long window. I had returned to check the afternoon's work before my playground duty. I located the staff pigeon holes to return photocopied sheets and my comments from the lesson. This took a couple of minutes. The contents of some boxes were spilling over the name tags, and I needed to check through each row and eventually ask for help. The absent teacher's box was located; still marked with his predecessor's name. Another teacher asked if I would like to take her Special Education classes the following week. That day's work would be a radically different assignment, with classes of remedial and advanced groups of students to supervise. We discussed the range of students and work. I grabbed a coffee, no time for lunch, asked when the second duty started and was back in the fray outside. I had to patrol a playground and grassed area.

Lunch duty

There was another member of staff on duty. He answered my queries on school rules and duty requirements, pausing to call out to a boy who was running past, 'You okay, Jeff?' The boy, nodded, glanced over his shoulder at three or four boys who were pursuing him, and kept running. Half a minute later he wheeled back towards us, still pursued; the teacher beckoned, 'Here a second, Jeff.' The boy slowed down and the others realising they were being watched, soon scattered. 'You're feeling a bit hot?' ... mutual eye contact ... the boy laughed and walked off. I sensed the teacher's quiet control. He taught art. I wondered if familiarity with the students' backgrounds or his visual training had helped him assess the non-verbal group dynamics from the widespread groups of students. He turned to me, 'It's a thin line between being chased ... and being hounded.'

I walked back to my area. Girls were stretched out, sitting and sprawled on the tarmac. I noticed a flurry. One boy was carrying a girl and she was protesting. He had made some sort of statement and put her down again; no complaints, just chatting and laughter. Other students were on the grass by the classrooms ... Should they be in that section of the school grounds? I wandered over to a group who were kicking up dust and discouraged them. Their black shoes were transformed into moleskin suede, the ground like a dust bowl fringed with green grassy shoots. It was spring, blossom in the air and they had probably spent all morning in a drab school classroom. They kicked the ground a few more times then ambled off.

Period 6: Grade 10 Science

When the bell went, I raced back into the staffroom to collect my work. I had Grade 10 Science. I was not sure if the handouts on 'Electricity' were just for these students or if they were intended for other classes too. I glanced at the questions. There were only a few. I told the students to write in their books and not to mark the photocopies. I wrote the instructions on the board and confirmed I would collect the handouts at the end of the lesson. That requirement was not only more business-like, but it reduced their potential use for graffiti or as an ongoing source of paper missiles to aim at the waste paper basket or at other students.

Only eleven students were present. I had no class list. I asked them to sign their names on a list while I helped some students with the work. Two extra names were written so I had learned to double-check the names of those present by discretely looking at their books during the lesson. This was not easy, as some books were covered with pictures of pop stars or musicians rather than student names. Lack of information diminished the relief teacher's status and increased his/her vulnerability in a classroom situation.

Relief teaching also increased in complexity if the students were able to 'get away' with inappropriate behaviour. I had completed the register check when I noticed another student had entered and was talking to two of my students. As he had not contacted me, I challenged him. He explained that two grade 10 boys *must* leave the class to do a sports test. He was unable to give me a note from the teacher, 'because of the shortage of time'. I told him that I would take their names in order to explain their absence from the science lesson. There was a slight hesitation. I asked for the name of the other teacher, there was another hesitation, 'I don't know his name. He is a relief teacher'. I commented, 'That's a coincidence, two relief teachers! What shall I write on the note?' By this time the two students thought that they had 'better continue their science' and that they 'would have to do the test another day.' The visitor left. I was curious and later asked them directly if they thought they were being set-up, as they admitted that the 'test' was a surprise to them. They were not sure. I was pleased that my personal relief teaching management policy had stood the test. (I had 'read' group dynamics, questioned students without accusing them, had a written record for feedback if necessary, and maintained student accountability. Indirectly, I had possibly prevented future challenges to myself.)

Period 7: Grade 9 Social Science

The final period was Grade 9 social science. I checked the plan of the school and found it was in another building. The class was sitting down, waiting for me. Although no work had been left by the absent teacher, the co-ordinator had checked with a head of department who had been covering the previous day and had arranged for the group to continue with a negotiated study. The library had been booked; more changes: a change of teacher, and venue. I needed the class to go to the library without further delay, or their attention would be lost. I took the class register, the only one given to me that day, I explained what was required and asked the students to put up the chairs. A few were still left, so I asked three boys to complete the task while the rest went to the library. I hovered in the corridor watching the class go one way but waiting to praise or complain to the boys who were asked to put up the chairs. They had put up a couple and were about to slink out, but when they saw me, they continued.

As I reached the library, I realised that I should have given instructions for the class to sit together. It was very difficult for a relief teacher to organise classes if student groups are intermixed. Luckily the librarian had shepherded them into one area and also gave a short talk on which resources were available on the subject of 'Bush rangers.' Some students worked well, others flung themselves around, looking at other books. I kept them on task, nagging, coaxing, enthusing, or checked that they

would complete the work at home. There was no other class there, so I did not worry if the noise was slightly higher.

I was tired. A regular teacher supervising for another teacher might mark books and expect the students to work independently. A relief teacher, had to be seen to be active all the time or s/he was open to the comment, 'Look at that relief teacher, she's doing nothing!' 'She did not make the kids do their work'. In a high school situation, the day's timetable was diverse, a relief teacher had to cope with enormous changes and in addition might supervise an average of one hundred and fifty different students each day. There was minimal time to recover or plan ahead. At times this unsettled environment created a hidden tension both for the relief teacher and class, which could develop into confrontation and power struggles, particularly if a relief teacher adopted an authoritarian approach, without having the resources to back up any demands. In this class I talked to individuals rather than groups, listed the students' names and work they had completed, and also made a few notes for the regular teacher. The period was soon over ... the chairs put up, paper off the floor and student bags checked. I remembered that library procedure from a previous occasion a year ago. The library aide offered to photocopy my teaching comments. She asked how I felt, 'Wrung out', was the reply.

Staffroom

I collected my salary claim from the co-ordinator and went into the staffroom. At the time I just wanted to sit down quietly before driving home. There were three members of staff there, also unwinding. They asked me how the day had gone. 'I've had some good classes.' I had. I wish I could say more. A relief teacher was a visitor. There were unwritten expectations in the staffroom. Any comments or action considered out of turn and the hierarchical barriers would come down. I remembered one occasion when my seemingly 'helpful' suggestion to an AP about relief teaching had provoked a stinging response, 'I am not going to be told what to do by a relief teacher!' I was surprised and somewhat shocked. I had worked in that high school for over four years and saw myself as an experienced relief teacher who always provided written feedback for the class teacher.

'How much does a relief teacher get paid now?' As I answered the teacher, I thought of the complex and delicate balances between the interpersonal and professional roles of a relief teacher; of 'cost' and 'value'; of 'supervision' and 'teaching'; and of the growing disparity of what was expected and what happened in practice.

Comments on the day's relief teaching

Coping with change and ambiguity

The day's teaching provided an insight into the dynamic nature of relief teaching and the skills and stamina needed to manage extreme, and often unexpected change: the abrupt change from home to school; interdisciplinary changes often outside a teacher's area of subject expertise [science, speech and drama, maths, design and technology, science, social science]; changes in student ages and abilities [grades 7-10]; and changes of time and place. A lesson lasted 35-40 minutes. Each teaching space demanded procedural changes. During the day, the teacher went from the administrative area to the staffroom, to the laboratory, to the assembly hall; to the

staffroom, to the playground, to the staffroom, to the classroom, to the technology block, to the staffroom, to the playing field, to the staffroom, to the laboratory, to the classroom, to the library, and to the staffroom. There was no secure space to leave personal belongings. The six visits to the staffroom were needed to: collect work, locate the grade leader, make coffee, retrieve personal, relief teaching materials and to put teaching notes in the individual staff pigeon holes. How did all these changes affect the relief teacher? About ten minutes during the day was 'free'. The relief teacher, therefore, was allocated little time to integrate with the other members of staff, find out about school culture, eat lunch, or even to be seen as a 'colleague'.

In addition to coping with change, the relief teacher had to 'acquire' knowledge about school policies such as behaviour management procedures, routines for photocopying or library requirements. Such knowledge was fragmented. Regular teachers could identify staff initials, visualise school management structures and understand school policies. They had a personal framework from which to operate. They had 'internalised' their knowledge of the school and did not take account of the needs of a newcomer who, as at an airport, looks for different 'clues' on each visit; slowly building a comprehensive picture over a period of time (appendix 4). The relief teacher was also part of a changing context so there was ambiguity: while coping with change s/he was also creating change. In this context many of the classes were 'waiting' for the relief teacher. There was a sense of stability and routine. From personal observation and experience, it was evident that in schools and classes unable to cope with additional change within the school day, an unknown relief teacher was often 'the last straw' and behaviour problems escalated.

The day's relief teaching highlighted the paradoxical nature of relief teaching. Many schools who could not cope with the extra changes created by relief teachers had made little effort to help them succeed, by providing time for them to acclimatise to the various settings or meet the teachers they might replace. Paradoxically, a relief teacher who was not seen as a colleague but 'just' a relief teacher, fulfilled an essential role in enabling the school to function when regular members of staff were absent (Shilling, 1991). Similarly, the varying contexts of relief teaching, whilst seen as low priority within the educational system are in reality, areas which are affected by powerful social and economic forces, and which can provide information on significant patterns or future trends (Waters & Crook, 1990; Lindley, 1994; Preston, 1997). There is a need to look at the assumption underlying the day's teaching: that a relief teacher would 'cope'. Evidence from the investigation, suggested that this day's relief teaching, although extreme was not unusual, and similar assignments were reported by other relief teachers one, or even two years, later (180; 389). If relief teachers who are motivated and committed find that the tasks they are given become too overwhelming or tiring, what will be the longer term effects on the school or education system?

The description of a day's relief teaching demonstrates the focus of the research: to make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon. The day's relief teaching illustrates the personal perspective of the researcher. It provides insights into the dynamic nature of her research approach and the interplay between her roles of researcher and relief teacher. It positions her within various relief teaching settings, in the classroom, teaching different subjects, or taking duty. It shows aspects of the

organisational, pedagogical and decision-making processes within the management and practice of relief teaching. However, the descriptions go beyond the definable aspects of classroom management, they seek to convey the nature of the experiences as they are lived (van Manen, 1990). For example, the researcher describes how she visualises or interprets the settings, perhaps to explain aspects of the school culture, its climate or her own knowing-in-action (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Schön, 1983). In doing so, she provides insights into the field of research, which are only possible because of her dual role as a researcher and practitioner (Eisner, 1991). These, less tangible aspects of relief teaching, are seen as vital in understanding the nature of the phenomenon and showing how it is different from regular teaching. The following section provides an overview of the chapters in the thesis.

Overview of the chapters

Chapter 1: The chapter describes the purpose of the investigation: to make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon, and shows how the research evolved from a personal study, to a broader study of relief teachers and relief teaching and finally to this investigation. It shows how relief teaching is different from regular teaching and alerts readers to the complex and paradoxical nature of relief teaching and the difficulties in finding deeper links between its issues and problems. The chapter introduces the central theme of the research. It contrasts the paradoxical relationship between the invisibility and ambiguity surrounding relief teaching with dramatic intensity and notoriety of the problems in the classroom. The researcher contends that problems will continue to recur and intensify until there is a shared picture of relief teaching which can be linked to the needs of administrators, teachers and students. By making relief teaching visible from a number of perspectives it will be possible to trace some of the issues or problems in context, and so provide the means of reducing many of the frustrations and difficulties experienced by practitioners and others.

The description of a day's relief teaching assignment in a Tasmanian high school (October, 1994) sets the scene. The researcher supervises classes and duties for four teachers, five subjects and four student grades. Interpretative comments illustrates how she negotiates the hidden curriculum to minimise the escalation of unwanted problems. Issues, evident in the literature, such as the isolation, powerlessness, or role ambiguity of relief teachers can be shown to affect critical aspects of school and system management. The chapter also illustrates the dynamic interplay between the roles of researcher and relief teacher within this investigation.

Chapter 2: Using the conceptual framework developed in the previous investigation (Webb, 1993) the literature is gathered and consolidated as a means to organise the extreme range of papers on relief teaching, into a thematic base of information which may be used for further research. Evidence from the literature on relief/ substitute/ supply teaching in Australian, North American, and British settings, shows that there is little research on this form of teaching, or, indeed, awareness of how relief teaching is different from regular teaching. Underlying the diversity of perspectives

are two main themes: firstly, the need for greater relief teaching effectiveness to counteract the recurring problems; and, secondly, the paradoxical nature of relief teaching where complexities are not readily understood. Although many papers identify the increasing gap between what is wanted and what happens in practice, in general, relief teaching continues to remain largely overlooked. Some writers suggest its long-term 'invisibility' is an indication of deep-rooted problems.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the research methodology and describes the collection of data through observation and interview. It examines the duality of researcher and practitioner and provides insights as to why decisions are made. It shows how the researcher develops strategies which enable her to remain close in time and place to the varying relief teaching settings and sensitive to the hidden forces, such as the changing social relationships or the balance of power, between individuals and groups. Analysis, using a grounded approach, enables the researcher to cross-check evidence from multiple sources and eliminate bias. In time, the constant comparative approach reduces the wide-ranging material to a number of universal themes. These themes form the framework for the following chapter, which examines relief teaching from varying perspectives.

Chapter 4: The findings show that the role of a relief teacher is viewed very differently from administrative, teaching and student perspectives. Each person has a 'localised' view of relief teaching based on his/ her assumptions, priorities and needs. Using the voices of the interview respondents, patterns or clusters of comments are used within each perspective to illustrate the universal issues/ themes derived from grounded analysis. In this way, it is possible to untangle some of the complexities and ambiguities surrounding individual issues and problems. An analysis of interview data concludes that the majority of the problems surrounding relief teaching recur because of three underlying factors: first, that relief teaching is invisible; second, there is no general recognition that relief teaching is different from regular teaching; and, third, there is no official recognition or acknowledgement of the problems. A summary of the findings draws together evidence from the varying perspectives.

Chapter 5 reconstructs and reframes aspects of the data in order to illuminate some of the deeper relationships which form the often hidden, yet powerful influences on relief teaching. This chapter examines the links, gaps and paradoxes which create varying field forces between relief teaching and its problems. Central to the discussion, is the gap between the assumed and the actual role of a relief teacher, and the hidden costs of relief teaching for the system. Evidence shows how the low priority of relief teaching at system level, results in policies and practices which are not clearly defined, often questionable, and certainly ineffective and costly in terms of wasted time and resources. The chapter discusses some of the attitudes and assumptions arising from data analysis, such as, the belief that a relief teacher is paid to cope with problems. It demonstrates how unchallenged assumptions can adversely affect the relief teaching context, by creating and perpetuating patterns of behaviour which have broader implications in terms of professional responsibility and accountability.

Chapter 6: The chapter examines the consequences of the present approach to relief teaching and argues that a new approach is needed. It shows how, for the first time it is possible to examine relief teaching as a phenomenon, as different from regular teaching. It shows that relief teachers are key figures and the context of relief teaching provides a significant new perspective in the various teaching and learning settings. In order to demonstrate how relief teaching can become a valued link to other aspects of polices, practices or research, the chapter concludes with an outline of the significance of the investigation and presents recommendations for areas of future action and research.

The aim of the research is to make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon and to find links between issues and the problems which are part of dynamic and paradoxical nature of relief teaching. Possibly, for the first time, varying contexts of relief teaching have been studied by a practitioner over a period of years. This chapter has introduced some of the issues which will be explored throughout the thesis, such as, the contextual background of the researcher, the relief teaching context in northern Tasmania, the need for research on relief teaching, and the purpose of the investigation. It has provided an explanation of the research approach and why it is used. It has shown the way in which the researcher integrated her roles as a practitioner and as a researcher to gain rich data of a day's relief teaching in a high school setting. It illustrates how issues evident in following chapter, such as, the isolation, powerlessness, or role ambiguity of relief teachers can be shown to affect critical aspects of school and system management. Finally, the overview of chapters shows how further chapters contribute to a holistic view of relief teaching in order to make it visible as a phenomenon.

Chapter 2

EXAMINING THE LITERATURE

It will be evident that published research on supply teaching is to date still sparse ... [It includes] a wide range of brief articles in the educational and popular press offering a kaleidoscope of events and momentary responses on specific supply issues. (Galloway, 1993, p. 159)

Making sense and finding meaning

This chapter is divided into three sections: first, to provide insights into the reasons for the approach used in the literature review; second, to introduce the underlying themes of relief teaching, developed from prior research; and third, to use the themes in conjunction with the literature, as a means of providing a solid source of reference and a source of transferable knowledge.

The purpose of the investigation is to make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon. It seeks, also, to provide links between the problems and issues of relief teaching. Such a research aim depends on an understanding of the context of relief teaching which, in itself, is often ambiguous and changeable. An examination of the literature poses an immediate dilemma. How is it possible to link the literature on relief teaching when there is no common base of information? How is it possible to synthesise and analyse papers which reflect a variety of relief teaching settings and perspectives? For example, administrators might focus on 'effectiveness', regular teachers were concerned about additional problems with their students, and relief teachers experienced problems of isolation or 'survival', yet, these problems and proposed solutions were woven into articles of a few pages long. Without further information they provide a meagre basis for analysis, particularly when, as other researchers discovered, there were unclear expectations and ambiguous roles for substitutes (Rawson 1981; Warren, 1988; Ostapczuk, 1994.). Similarly, research approaches and questionnaires reflected divergent views on relief teaching, with few clear definitions to link categories or to offer comparison (Gill & Hand, 1992; Webb, 1992).

Galloway (1993, p. 159) acknowledges the difficulties but bypassed many of the 'kaleidoscope of brief articles and momentary responses', in her 'response to the literature on supply teaching'. She noted, but failed to explain, the invisibility and paradoxical nature of relief teaching, each part of the phenomenon. Bourke (1993, p.71) observed that 'there are many improvements which could be made by the Department and by schools for the benefit of casual teachers' but commented that although some of the problems were 'formidable', 'this is not something which the Department or schools can affect to any great extent.' It seemed that while aspects of relief teaching were invisible or had evaded researchers, there were recurring patterns of problems which dominated each perspective. The dilemma for the researcher was if she adopted a traditional approach to a literature review, the material would reflect

the present view of relief teaching which was dominated by negativity, 'advice' and recurring problems.

Instead, driven by her commitment for 'balancing the research context by considering parts and whole' (van Manen, 1990, p.31), the researcher adopted a lateral solution (de Bono, 1990). By viewing the 'whole' [i.e. to make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon] as her focus, the conceptual framework developed from her previous investigation was seen as a way of providing the 'missing' link. It enabled relief teaching to be viewed from multiple perspectives (Webb, 1993). In this way, by gathering and uniting data within a common framework, the approach would 'position' the diverse and fragmented literature on relief teaching within broader themes. The approach has an additional advantage, in that the themes serve to anchor the literature and ensure that aspects of relief teaching could be made visible by linking an event, an idea or even a phrase, through a page reference, thus providing better opportunities for a quick, flexible response, either for further research or as a way of utilising the literature effectively. The analysis and synthesis are perhaps less obvious, without reference to the whole thesis, as with all inductive research, but the approach enables the literature to be used as a resource to show the significance of relief teaching in a variety of teaching and learning settings: one of the research objectives.

Lack of research

During the last decade there has been a 'modest' amount of research available on supply teaching. Comments from researchers from Britain, United States of America and Australia (Brenot, 1985; Galloway, 1993; Crittenden, 1994) confirmed that information on relief teaching had remained hidden, despite the increasing research into other aspects of teaching (Shilling, 1991, p.3). Studies have only recently focused on an examination of teaching strategies to include the relief teacher's point of view (Webb, 1993, p. 9). There were comparatively few articles written by relief teachers. These were usually seen as a personal response to becoming a more effective teacher and written to communicate any shortcomings in the system. The initial exploration of the 'issues', or main concerns, of relief teaching revealed that little had been published in an Australian context. Therefore, in order to retain the authenticity of the literature review the researcher has used terms appropriate to the particular reference in the country of origin: 'substitute teacher' in North America, 'supply teacher' in a British context and 'relief teacher' or 'emergency teacher' in an Australian context. On occasion, the term 'substitute teacher' has been used in the literature review, as a means of linking research from different countries.

What is substitute teaching? The following quotation came from the 'The Supply Story' (Galloway & Morrison, 1994), which claimed to be the first book published on supply teaching in English schools [back cover]. The book was linked to a two-year research project on supply teachers.

> Our definition of a supply situation is any occasion when the regular (timetabled) teacher is not able to teach a scheduled class, and another adult is called on to teach or supervise these pupils. ... 'Supply teachers' ... are those who are employed on an occasional or temporary, short-term basis. They may work in one school or many. Some are able to work almost full-time in this way, yet do not have a regular contract with any employer or institution. Others work only infrequently. Teachers who hold

> part-time contracts may also do some supply work from time to time. (Galloway & Morrison, 1994a, p.1)

The editors brought together a range of contributors who could provide 'a variety of stories' (p.vii) about supply teaching which reflected the multiple perspectives on supply teaching from economic, sociological and pedagogic perspectives.

> A two-year research project on supply teaching confirmed that. matters relating to teacher substitution were central to teaching and learning processes, but that the concerns of those involved varied widely ... Researching teacher substitution has made it increasingly clear that views of supply teachers are contradictory, paradoxical and expressed from a multitude of different positions. Despite this, there has been a publications void. In this intriguing field, educational issues of professionalism and quality combine with those of social equality, but few attempts have been made to articulate the themes. Little research has been done but to anyone working in schools, it is apparent that the scarcity of written discussion has not been matched by silence from interested parties. On the contrary: opinions proliferate. Doing justice to such variety requires not just a 'mapping the territory' exercise. It also has to represent a kaleidoscope of ideological standpoints, professional expertise and personal opinion. (Galloway & Morrison, 1994, p. ix)

Galloway (1993) provided evidence of the 'intriguing' elements of supply teaching by examining some of the academic material and other forms of documentation, to demonstrate the 'non-reference to supply issues' (p.159). She described supply teachers as 'often anonymous figures' (p. 166) who lacked the advantage of institutional involvement or support. She found it 'surprising' that the invisibility of relief teaching extended to the practical concerns facing school managers who had to arrange cover for absent teachers (p.167). She warned that what might look superficially very straightforward in relief teaching, merited further attention '... in the Alice-in-Wonderland context of supply where the ironies are inescapable: authorities are enjoined to recruit more supply teachers yet many do not know how many they currently have' (Galloway, 1993, pp. 161-162).

A review of the literature demanded special awareness. As has been seen, a 'mapping the territory exercise' where relief teaching was seen as an easily-defined paradigm of supervision (see Stanley, 1991, pp. 84-88), where students were happy to be supervised, did not acknowledge or confront the ambiguities and paradoxes identified by Galloway (1993, p.167). Yet, how was it possible to write coherently about relief teaching, when there were many perspectives, each representing an individual and localised view about a variety of experiences? The problem was compounded when there were few recognised 'facts' about relief teaching. Essentially, there was little shared understanding of what it really meant to be a relief teacher, and few common structures for comparison. Opinions proliferated; some were extreme. Galloway & Morrison (1994, p.x) noted that the voice that was 'under-represented' was the direct voice of the supply teacher herself or himself. Underlying the lack of research was the lack of a conceptual framework to encompass relief teaching and its problems.

Creating a holistic approach

The researcher had a special awareness of relief teaching developed over a period of several years and culminating in a two-year investigation (Webb, 1993). Analysis of interview data from thirty relief teachers, using a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), showed that relief teaching was characterised by five interrelated

themes: *low status; different expectations; lack of information/ training; isolation; and stress*. These 'universal' themes, provided powerful, but often unrecognised field forces, which affected relief teachers, and by implication, those who managed relief teaching. Together, the themes were chosen to provide both an organiser and a theoretical framework, to cluster and anchor the literature. It was a strategy adopted to create links between fragmented data, particularly when many aspects of relief teaching could not be taken at face value.

> The comparison brings out the nature or distinctive elements of the data to form a meaningful picture ... In doing so, the data does not need to be proved accurate but is used as evidence to illustrate a concept ... Even if the information changes as the group changes, the concept itself will not change. (Webb, 1993, p. 30)

The first theme, *low status* was the most common element underlying conversations, discussions and interviews with relief teachers and others. Most people either stated directly or their comments implied that relief teachers were seen as 'babysitters' or 'just a relief teacher'. Their low status was inferred by the lack of respect shown by students, the manner in which management expected them to 'fit in' to a situation without consultation, and the lack of research or interest shown in relief teachers by the educational community.

The second theme, *different expectations* was highlighted by the familiar greeting to relief teachers, 'Who are you today?' There was often more interest in who was absent than in the identity of the visiting relief teacher. Evidence showed that it was tacitly acknowledged that the relief teacher had assumed someone else's role both personally and professionally. Although this was valid expectation when seen from a single point of view: that a relief teacher had been called to the school to 'take over' the class' in an emergency situation, when viewed from a number of perspectives the role of the relief teacher was ill-defined and ambiguous. The most commonly held assumption was that of the stereotyped supervisory role, where a relief teacher was seen as a bureaucratic rather than a supervisory resource. A letter written in August 1991 to relief teachers by the Agency, provided clear expectations,

> While we [CES Agency] don't expect relief teachers to leave for school immediately, we suggest you plan your mornings so that you can be ready to leave within 10-15 minutes of a phone call - schools do not like late arrivers. (cited in Webb, 1993, p.51)

Analysis of interview data showed that a relief teacher's expectations were often very different, particularly for people who were offered work spasmodically, perhaps only three times a month, and yet were expected to be ready, waiting and hoping for work every morning.

The third theme which influenced the nature of relief teaching was *lack of information/ training*. Analysis of data showed the paradoxical nature of relief teaching. While it was accepted that relief teaching was at the 'front line' and, therefore, much of its effectiveness was dependent on practical classroom and management strategies, interview data showed that relief teachers were 'left to their own devices', 'desperate to know how to cope in subjects they were not trained for'. For example, when several relief teachers expressed a need to attend seminars presented by Mr Bill Rogers, a visiting discipline and behaviour management

consultant, they were directed [by the Department] to apply 'through the schools' but 'school staff and parents took priority' (Webb, 1993, p.61).

The fourth theme of *isolation* was an underlying factor in all the themes of relief teaching. It reduced personal motivation, caused communication breakdown and contributed to a relief teacher's stress and ineffectiveness. It was seen to be the primary cause of many further problems associated with relief teaching. Evidence showed that many relief teachers became frustrated when their expectations and personal skills were not acknowledged or used in their relief teaching role,

> I'd like to be part of a team. You put a lot of thought into relief teaching but no one asks you about it. They don't seem to expect skills. I feel there are many unused skills among relief teachers. (p.62)

> The AP's [assistant principals] in school just don't want to know about any problems. If you tell them you are having difficulty, they say they will get to the bottom of it but never do. They are happy when you say everything is all right and as long as they are covered legally they do not worry about anything. Sometimes they deliberately neglect to tell you the whole story. (p.68)

Interview data showed that relief teachers considered staffrooms to be 'isolating' and 'anti-social, if you don't take steps' (p.67). A regular teacher also observed that 'relief teachers come in for lunch, sit on their own and no-one will approach them' (p.67). Data from several interviews suggested that many responses to relief teachers were influenced by the leadership in the school.

The fifth theme was *stress*. Evidence from interview data showed the accumulative effect of negative experiences, such as: job security; a difficulty in adapting to change; and adjusting to the varying needs of different school cultures. Lack of information and the lack of opportunities to communicate or debrief often resulted in evidence of increased stress and declining self esteem. While effective relief teachers developed strategies to cope and used the stressors to create positive results, others did not. Analysis showed that many relief teachers were isolated, worked in unfamiliar surroundings, often teaching work prepared by someone else, to students who were seen as unmotivated. Former regular teachers indicated that it was particularly difficult to face a situation where they were not known. One former teacher, who had retired from a senior [regular] teaching position, described the very real challenges of supervising an adolescent boy, '... who was revolting ... he was uncooperative, disruptive made paper balls and threw them at me' (p.73). She felt frustration because she was no longer in a position to respond effectively. There was also a hidden tension of not knowing what to do when any problems occurred, particularly if they were 'unexpected'. Interview data showed that as relief teachers became increasingly anxious, so students taunted them more readily (p.73).

Linking the five themes of relief teaching was the dynamic context of relief teaching which was, affected by sudden and dramatic changes. As a result, the research showed that relief teachers and others who could not cope with change, became overwhelmed, or withdrew and distanced themselves from the action, if it were possible. Other relief teachers found that the changes were stimulating: problems were seen as opportunities and challenges. Over time, as similar problems recurred,

many relief teachers developed strategies to cope effectively. Comments from relief teachers showed, however, that the 'rewards' of relief teaching were seen to occur less and less frequently,

> In schools the problems are getting bigger, there seem to be no future goals, no involvement. There are more barriers. Teachers are getting more and more fed up. They can't teach and they're not sure how to. The kids pick that up. A relief teacher's job is getting much harder. (relief teacher. Webb, 1993, p. 78)

Comments from the interview data, showed that relief teachers felt increasingly inadequate in the classroom. A failure to address the needs of relief teachers and students was seen as making a hard job almost impossible.

Webb had developed a grounded theory that fitted, worked in practice, was relevant and easily modified. She saw the development of a separate, and positive, 'identity' for relief teaching as vital: it enabled practitioners to explore aspects of relief teaching which were unstated, such as the attitudes, assumptions and judgements that formed part of the hidden elements in each setting. Knowledge, developed from a range of practitioner experiences, would enabled relief teachers, and others, to see wider patterns of events. An understanding of relief teaching would provide the opportunities to identify and predict influences and, therefore, minimise further changes in an unsettled classroom, enabling them to become more effective as relief teachers. It was also considered important to show that relief teaching was different from regular teaching and thus enable administrators and others to understand how they could minimise ambiguity. School staff, for example, frequently asked questions based on an 'insider's' knowledge, such as the names of students when relief teachers were more likely to 'read' faces and group dynamics as a means of gaining information (Eisner, 1979, p. 154).

A further paper, 'Focus on relief teaching' (Webb, 1996) written three years later, was designed to show the relationships between administrative, teaching and student perspectives and provide relief teaching with a holistic identity and one which was different from regular teaching. It illustrated how the non-reference to relief teaching in policies and practices had created gaps in knowledge, information and a less definable gap in the educational culture, climate and expectations in schools. Examples showed how the use of one relief teacher to replace several absent teachers often resulted in a relief teacher's inability to 'fill the gap' which in turn provided opportunities for students to manipulate the situation. Their strategies, such as 'bargaining' with the relief teacher or 'testing' personal, professional and organisational boundaries within the school context, if unchallenged, led to wider and potentially serious repercussions. She identified some of the serious 'gaps' in knowledge and in understanding within the relief teaching context and showed how they could create potentially serious repercussions legally, professionally and economically. She urged the Department and others to examine some of the inconsistencies within the education system and create links between the relief teaching context and the wider educational community.

An acknowledgement of the generally recognised difficulties surrounding relief teaching, was provided by the illustration which had been chosen to accompany the paper [unknown to the author]. It depicted a soldier ready for action complete with

helmet, weapon and combat gear. He was watched by two small children. One was pointing and saying, 'Look, that man's going to war!' The other child replied, 'No! That's Mr Smith our relief teacher.' . Officially, however, relief teaching remained a low priority. For example, there was no mention of relief teaching in the 1995 Tasmanian Union handbook, at a time when evidence suggested that relief teaching cost the Department over $4.5 million (see systems perspective, chapter 4).

The Universal Themes of Relief Teaching

Theme one: Low Status

Lack of priority, lack of respect

The low status of relief teaching was a major issue underlying the relief teaching context. It was shown by the low priority given to relief teaching at system level (Galloway, 1993, p.160), the manner in which relief teachers had to 'fit in' to a school setting, often with no time to prepare, no place to leave possessions and little welcome from school staff (Webb, 1995, p.17). Comments, either implicitly or explicitly, recognised the widespread perception of the marginal status of relief teachers. Webb (1995, p. 7) from observations in Tasmania, drew attention to the phrase, '*Just* a relief teacher' used frequently by relief teachers when introducing themselves. It was seen also to be a dismissive phrase echoed by students, teachers and the educationally community, who thought of relief teachers as 'little more than fill-ins' (Webb, 1993, p.39). Koelling (1983), cited in Warren (1988, p.96), conducted a comprehensive survey of 1,728 school districts in the north central region of America, and noted the unanimous perception of the substitutes' low status. Drake (1981, p.74), too, saw the substitute as an education district's 'low man on the totem pole'. In England and Wales, supply teachers were considered to be 'an especially disadvantaged section of the profession' (Shilling, 1991, p.3).

Many relief or substitute teachers were seen as ineffective and surrounded by problems. Some problems were not easy to define or eradicate, but, nevertheless, they had an impact on relief teachers because they represented aspects of a school culture, such as, hostility from other staff (Elliot, 1996, p.3); or the challenging behaviour of students (Jansen, 1997, p. 10), which often occurred at times when the relief teacher needed support rather than further difficulties. Even the term 'sub' which was used as an abbreviation, was seen by some people to have negative connotations (Freedman, 1975, p. 98; Hemmings, 1985). Rosecrans (1983, pp. 38-41) was one among many writers who thought that it would be easier to change attitudes in school if the term 'substitute' were replaced to 'one of more professional flavor'. 'Assistants', 'temporary teachers', 'teachers pro-tempera' and 'relief teachers' were suggested as alternatives (Rawson, 1981, p.83). On the use of the term 'sub' Rosecrans (1983) wrote:

> Maybe we're called subs because we feel less than human by the end of some of our working days. Maybe it is because some students feel licensed to treat us subnormally ... (p.41)

Warren (1988, p.96) disagreed that a change of name might bring a change of attitude, and commented that 'changing names will not alleviate the apathy, stress, frustration and low self-esteem felt by many subs'. He, along with others, saw that

factors such as the lack of time to develop and maintain student rapport, the marginal nature of substitute teaching, and an inability to remain in control of the unsettled relief teaching context, affected the confidence and effectiveness of substitute teachers and hence their ability and motivation to cope as professionals (Friedman, 1983, p.83; Clifton and Rambaran, 1987, p.67). Regular staff, too, were seen to reinforce the perception of low status by treating substitutes with 'coolness' (Rawson, 1981, p.82), and 'apathy and often hostility' (Drake, 1981, p.75). It was admitted that substitutes who worked at erratic hours in an unfamiliar environment deserved better support and training (Brace, 1990, p.73).

Theme two: Different Expectations

Policy statements from departments of education and other documentation on relief teaching were seen as 'next to impossible to track down' (Crittenden, 1994, p. 82). Galloway (1993, p. 159) recognised that the 'sparse' information on supply teaching in England, showed little recognition of the practical aspects of providing cover for teachers absent from classes. It seemed, from general comments in the literature, that education departments expected relief teachers to take over all the teaching commitments and duties of the absent teacher, but provided little specific information for them to do so. As Webb (1992, pp. 53-54) commented,' ... in practice, this may not always be feasible because it fails to make allowances for the occasions when the only relief teachers available do not replicate the expertise of the absent teacher.'

As a result of factors such as policies intended for regular teachers, the fragmented literature on relief teaching in Australia, Britain and the United States, the complexity and changeable nature of the relief teaching context, and the marginal status of a transitory work force, there was no clear perception of what relief teaching entailed, either in theory or in practice. Gill and Hand (1992), illustrated the difficulties of linking literature of an ill-defined or 'parochial' nature:

> A review of current literature revealed that there was no information available in Australia which presented a clear profile of RTs [relief teachers]. There appeared to be no studies done to examine the expectations of RTs as held by school principals, peer teachers, parents and students. The literature indicates that some studies of RTs had been carried out in the U.S.A. (Bontempo and Deay, 1986). However, these studies were focussed on local issues relevant to particular school districts and did not address the wider issues involved with this study. (Gill & Hand, 1992, pp. 37-38)

Comments from a number of writers indicated, that 'administrators, classroom teachers, and the substitutes all have different and often conflicting role expectations regarding the substituting environment' (Rawson, 1981, p. 82). The lack of a clear role for substitute teachers was seen to lead to many gaps in communication and understanding, which, in turn, led to individual interpretations which were rarely clarified (Webb, 1996, p.7). What might be seen as an appropriate role for relief teachers, when viewed by an administrator might not take into account the constraints of relief teaching, such as his/ her status in the school. Similarly, relief teachers rarely appreciated the different administrative priorities in running a school (Wolcott, 1973), as their focus, in general, was confined to the classroom. The context of relief teaching was, therefore, seen as inherently paradoxical and ambiguous.

The changing role of a relief teacher

Shilling's paper (1991, pp. 3-5) examined supply teachers as a group of employees whose working day could be fundamentally different from that of other staff who were employed to teach the same students on a regular basis. It argued that as casual occasional staff, supply staff were not seen as full members of a school organisation and therefore could not 'realistically expect' to be treated as equals. Indeed aspects such as their lack of employment protection or their immediate 'dismissal' from school on the return of the regular teacher for whom they were covering, provided instances of how '... the taken-for-granted characteristics of cover work serve to underline its "second class status" ' (p.4). Shilling noted that it was worth tracing the implications which resulted from some of the most obvious characteristics of supply work, such as its focus on short-term cover, as a means of obtaining insights into the role of a supply teacher. He found, for example, that by examining regular teacher absences, how the changing patterns of providing cover affected the relief teaching context. Not only was there a growth in inservice training, which contributed to the number of times that students were without their regular teacher, but there was a growing shortage of specialist supply teachers in parts of England and Wales. Supply teachers were in unprecedented demand and constituted an increasing proportion of the daily teaching staff in many schools' (p.5).

Viewed from this aspect he concluded that supply teachers played a central role in the education system by enabling schools to continue functioning during a period of wide-ranging changes in organisational and curriculum restructuring.

> Without any guarantees of continued employment, supply teachers have provided LEAs [local education authorities] and schools with *functional* flexibility by teaching/ covering for different subjects in different institutions, and *numerical* flexibility as workers who can be used on a day-to-day and even period-to-period basis according to demand. Supply teachers have also provided LEAs with *financial* flexibility as individuals who can be employed without the security or levels of remuneration received by their full-time colleagues (Atkinson, 1984; Dale and Bamford, 1988). As a result, they have facilitated the introduction of new technologies into schools (e.g. by covering for staff learning to use computers), allowed curriculum initiatives to be implemented in full, ... protected LEAs from legal threats made by parents against authorities who would not otherwise have been able to fulfil their statutory obligation to educate children (cf. Hackett and Bayliss, 1986) and enabled the government to prepare teachers for changes introduced by the Education Reform Act 1988. (Shilling, 1991, p. 5. writer's italics.)

Paradoxically, while the practical role of a relief teacher was seen as largely overlooked at system level, and relief teachers were seen to be 'marginal', they were expected to fill a significant role within the education system.

It was not only the 'positioning' of relief teachers within the system which differed in several important respects from that of regular teachers, the relief teaching context also made its own demands. In order to cope with the ambiguities of the conflicting expectations and roles, Earley (1986, p. 18) concluded that substitute teachers had to be first-rate teachers to cope with the job, and to come to terms with the differing routines followed by various schools. They needed to possess a high level of adaptability and flexibility, particularly when there was little training or support offered. Women supply teachers were seen to be 'confined' to this form of teaching more than their male counterparts because of the limited alternative teaching options

which could combine family responsibilities with paid work (Shilling, 1991a, p.78). As there appeared little intrinsic job satisfaction, control or support, researchers questioned why relief teachers would wish to work in conditions which seemed so unrewarding. Trotter and Wragg (1990, p.273) found that people either chose relief teaching because of the flexibility, remuneration and the ability to combine relief teaching with other jobs. Alternatively, as in the case of recently graduated teachers, they were unable to gain regular employment (Bransgrove & Jesson, 1993, p.1).

Evidence throughout the literature, showed that there was a general perception that relief teaching was a 'fill-in' job of a temporary nature and defined by the various contexts of relief teaching rather than by effective policies which worked in practice (Webb, 1992, p.51). The resultant role ambiguity was seen as an additional source of stress for substitute teachers (Hartshorne, 1981, p.16). It also was seen as contributing to many of the inconsistencies which occurred between theory and practice.

> Theoretically, a substitute teacher would be defined as a certified and qualified professional who replaces the regular classroom teacher for the purpose of continuing the instructional program, maintaining discipline and generally promoting the educational welfare of the students. (Drake, 1981, p.75)

In practice, the literature from practitioners suggested that substitute teaching was seen in terms of 'survival' or 'babysitting' rather than 'promoting the educational welfare of students'. Drake (1981, p.75) indicated that there were three main approaches adopted by substitute teachers in their supervisory/ teaching role: the 'babysitter', who focused on discipline; the 'bare-minimum teacher', who took the easiest approach; and the 'improvisers', who brought their own work which was unrelated to the school curriculum. The metaphor of a relief teacher as babysitter occurred in the literature but was rarely qualified. It implied that relief teachers were employed as a stop-gap measure, and that they held a temporary position to ensure that students came to no harm while the regular teacher was away (Freedman, 1975, p. 95).

The 'bare-minimum teacher' was recognised by other writers as a category of substitute teacher who was unmotivated. The literature showed that regular teachers and others were angered by the apparent lack of involvement or lack of enthusiasm exhibited by some substitute teachers. In contrast, the 'improviser' represented a group of practitioners who could be seen as creating their own professional identity and seeing any problems as challenges to be met. Brenot (1983), represented a group of substitute teachers who saw themselves as more than babysitters; they responded by studying the 'challenges' that confronted them on a daily basis, and provided thumb-nail sketches of their experiences and how they coped with their varying classes and subjects (Aceto, 1995). Although some papers were written to entertain, other writers showed a desire to pass on experiential knowledge (Hayes, 1975; French, 1993).

Attitudes to relief teaching from school staff and students

Warren represented many writers who considered that the substitute teacher's options were due less to his/ her teaching skill but were determined by the expectations of the school staff and students (Rawson, 1981, p.81; Frosch, 1984, pp. 90-91; Warren,

1988, p.99). Opportunities for employment were often seen to be based on a 'hasty evaluation' of a substitute's ability as a babysitter rather than on his/ her qualifications (Clark, 1983, p.44). Kraft (1980, p.79) commented that in many schools, the substitute teacher was '... still looked upon as a babysitter or a policeman, as an outsider who could hardly be considered a professional educator.' Freedman (1975, pp. 95-96) saw the need for changes to be made by the system in order to create a setting whereby substitute teachers could make a more effective contribution. She urged others to adopt a new approach to substitute teaching. She compared the millions of dollars spent on substitute teaching, with the general perception that in practice relief teachers were seldom seen as able to '... teach at all: they babysit, police or simply mark time.' Her paper described substitute teachers who were not viewed as teachers at all but as 'the subjects of jokes and stories'. She claimed that 'a major study by the Metropolitan School Study Council has shown substitutes to be the most ineffective teachers of all, even when compared with student teachers and teacher aides' (p.95), but did not cite what criteria were used. She identified many of the practical problems as being caused by the conflicting expectations of various segments of the educational community,

> From the school administrator's point of view, the substitute replaces the regular teacher with as little break in routine as possible. He carries on. Students on the other hand, view a substitute as a prime opportunity for disruption. The break in routine has been made, and it is their mission to widen that breach. Even the procedure of attendance checking often becomes a full-fledged adventure with 'Mickey Mouse' ...replying to the roll call. The class is filled with phrases like, 'Oh, the teacher always lets us ... ,' or 'She didn't tell us to ... ,' or 'That was the bell!' And this is but a beginning ... (Freedman, 1975, p.96)

The literature showed that administrators and others expected problems in a relief teacher's class. For example, Webb (1992, p.12) cited the evidence of two principals before the Tasmanian Industrial Commission who suggested that some students were likely to take advantage of the relief teacher's lack of knowledge. Jansen (1997, pp. 10-11), who had experience as a Tasmanian relief teacher in 1996, shared the view that relief teachers were 'popular targets for misbehaving learners'. In a paper on teacher status he identified some of the underlying factors which shaped student attitudes in school and saw that the challenging behaviour towards relief teachers, with their tenuous links to the education system, was due to wider structural and societal influences.

> Unfortunately the organisation of teaching in schools is such that even small minorities of disruptive students can effectively prevent the teaching/ learning process from continuing. In those situations the low status of the teacher is evident in a situation where s/he cannot maintain order in the classroom and s/he does not enjoy effective support from school management (p.2)

Like Webb (1993), Jansen saw a need to reexamine the underlying factors and assumptions surrounding any problems:

> External challenges to teacher authority are mediated through mass media portrayals of rebelliousness as an attractive signifier of rugged individualism. Moreover, the largely sedentary, studious, non-violent, quiet, rational and anti-heroic lifestyle of the conventional teacher and learner contrasts starkly with market-driven, popular media images of a punative interesting and meaningful life. (Jansen, 1997, p.5)

The classroom was, from Jansen's (p.2) observations, the place where students and teachers continually renegotiated and redefined their relationships. He noted that 'the socially unacceptable behaviour of some students [was] often institutionally redefined as incompetence on the part of the teachers, or ignored by senior staff. In one of the rare papers which examined student attitudes towards relief teachers, Wood and Knight (1988, p.39) identified the ways in which students observed, 'labelled' and challenged substitute teachers in order to discover what strategies and tactics the substitute teacher would use in response. In this way, students could determine a relief teacher's parameters of control. They noted how students behaved differently for substitute teachers especially in the establishment phase of the lesson and argued that the initial encounter between a relief teacher and a new class as a significant factor for determining students' expectations. Nelson, (1983, p.98) supported this view and commented that the first few months [of relief teaching] were rough but he 'accepted the challenge'.

Teaching ability and experience, therefore, also was seen to contribute to the means by which a relief teacher could analyse and assess the needs of the students and predict any potential unrest. Wood and Knight (1988, p. 40) linked Rosenthal & Jacobson's (1968) work on teacher expectations and positive self-fulfilling prophecies, with Hargreaves' (1976) labelling theory, in which the interaction of two parties, 'labeller' and 'labelled', affected social control or deviance. They showed how the reputations of substitute teachers were affected by 'pupil labelling' and by the expectations of regular staff. Regular staff could 'warn' a relief teacher about particular students, therefore, '... if teacher and pupil expectations are negative, deviant behaviour (negative self-fulfilling prophecies) results from the labelling' (Wood and Knight, 1988, p. 41).

> For a supply teacher who has lost control of his or her class it is obvious that the subsequent relationship is one dictated by the pupils, not the teacher. This situation results in little or no appropriate learning taking place. (Wood and Knight, 1988, p. 39)

Student behaviour was noted in a substitute's class which reflected the attitudes of the regular teacher (Rosecrans, 1983, pp. 38-41). As a substitute teacher, she believed from her own observation and experience that schools got the substitute teachers they deserved. Her comments indicated that many schools neglected to provide organisational structures and information which would enable a newcomer to the school to operate effectively. She argued the need for seating charts, lesson plans which related to a goal, and specific information on the location of teaching material. She referred also, to the way in which students were 'prepared' for a change of teacher. She claimed that if they understood and accepted the potential benefits from learning from more than one teacher, they would not feel disloyal and threatened when their routine was changed. Evidence from practising or former substitute teachers endorsed her claim that the attitudes and expectations of students and staff greatly affected the outcome of a relief teacher's assignment.

> Too often the substitute's presence was seen to evoke a feeling of contempt or suspicion on the part of regular teachers and brings about a holiday atmosphere in which many pupils feel no work needs to be accomplished. (Hicks, 1987, p.79-80)

Although many of the journal articles are short, they create powerful images for the reader. In the comment above, for example, the substitute's presence was described as evoking a 'feeling of contempt or suspicion on the part of regular teachers', while changing student expectations, regarding their work commitments. Elliot (1996, p.3) found difficulty in believing how it was possible for a single group of people to be described so differently: either as 'angels, worth their weight in gold' or as 'parasites feeding off our misfortune', particularly when she heard these comments used by regular teachers to describe the relief teachers who visited their school.

Seen against a backdrop of frustration or conflict, the role of a relief teacher becomes even harder to define because it changed, not only within varying school contexts but it depended on factors, such as, the time that a relief teacher stayed at a school (Kraft, 1980; Frosch 1984). Indeed, a study of the literature shows that similar observations and problems recurred over a period of many years. For example, both Rawson (1981, p.81) and Jansen (1997) sixteen years later, warned that it was important to understand the role of a relief teacher within a wider context, such as the 'low priority given to substitute teachers in the school system' and 'role expectations that are not clearly defined'. In Rawson's introduction to a paper, suggesting ways of increasing the effectiveness of substitute teachers, he showed that there had to be a desire on the part of the school staff to counteract the 'different and often conflicting role expectations regarding the substituting environment'. The role of a substitute teacher was seen to change when there were few structures in place to guide the participants.

> Do you enjoy having substitute teachers in your building? Are you frequently confronted with an abnormal number of problems and an apparent lack of learning from a substitute's classroom? If so, perhaps you need to take another look at your substitute teacher program; that is, if you have one. (Rawson, 1981, p.81)

Rawson argued that some of the frustrations and problems occurred because people considered a relief teacher 'an extension of the absented teacher' and assumed s/he knew the environment. In addition there was little information, evaluation or feedback and so problems were seen as 'elusive'. Whereas, from his experience, often some basic changes in substitute teacher program policies were all that was needed in conjunction to a system of communication, evaluation and feedback to consider the 'best course of action' needed to resolve difficulties.

Clarifying roles and expectations

A search of the literature revealed some instances of effective systematic and practical support offered to administrators and substitute teachers (Rogers, 1992; St. Michel, 1995). There were examples, too, where individual teachers or administrators attempted to create a manageable setting for substitute teachers and students where both could succeed (Brace, 1990; Mullett, 1994; Walkley, 1996). Often, their 'success' depended on a change of emphasis, which caused a change in attitude to an existing problem. For illustration, an administrator [in a private school] provided a definition which clarified the role of an emergency teacher within his school. In addition to personal interviews and induction, he also provided, and paid for, professional development, to enable relief teachers to work alongside his regular staff.

> An emergency teacher is one called in when the school is already facing an emergency; the need at that time is for someone who will perform the appropriate tasks with a minimum of fuss, someone who will not make any extra demands when the school is already under some strain. The ideal emergency teacher is cheerful and unobtrusive and helps the children learn. (Walkley, 1996)

In contrast to much of the literature on substitute teaching, the above definition recognised the inherent tensions and difficulties of coping in an emergency situation and accepted them as the base on which to build a positive outcome. It also identified and integrated the emotional, practical and pedagogical aspects of relief teaching, where much of the literature focused on the 'rational' aspects of relief teaching (Stanley, 1991) or presented advice on outcomes which ignored the influence of factors such as change, noted by Webb (1993, p.52). A review of the literature, therefore, which illustrated the different expectations surrounding relief teaching, also included papers written by people who assumed that a relief teacher had the role authority and information to be effective.

Communication on the internet provided a missing link. Depicting a variety of contexts, the writers communicated through the network, either in response to other queries, or driven by a personal need to find answers. In many of the interactions, problems were identified rather than hidden, and there was a sense of open discussion and communication, which gave a sense of deeper inquiry based on observation, experience and understanding. For example, a range of evidence included: the urgent questioning from a substitute teacher preparing to work in an unknown setting; queries from an administrator in Tasmania (Kilpatrick, 1996), who sought comparison on the varying conditions of employment for substitute teachers in different districts in the United States; or comments from a regular teacher about the way in which his class behaved unexpectedly badly for a substitute teacher ['ugliness to substitutes']. Each query led to a variety of responses from other people. By this means, the ability to communicate quickly and specifically, often transformed what was a stressful negative element of the relief teaching context into a positive sense of 'de-briefing', better understanding or empowerment. In the process, varying expectations were often challenged or modified.

Whereas a study of internet communication could be analysed using one or more of the themes of relief teaching (Webb, 1993), an example (appendix 19) showed how, Mrs K., a regular teacher in the United States, structured the classroom organisation, to minimise potential ambiguities or problems which might occur in her absence. Her advice was to be prepared and confident:

> Best defense, next time is a good offense. Head them off at the pass. Your best class can, and will, be a sub's worst nightmare unless you foresee the problems and stop them before they happen. (appendix 19)

Her comments were written in response to anxieties expressed by a new substitute teacher who was uncertain about her own ability to maintain control in the classroom. It was evident that her experience as a substitute and as a regular teacher enabled her to adopt an approach which encompassed both perspectives. Mrs K. expected a positive outcome and students were held accountable for their behaviour. She also recognised the anxiety engendered by 'not knowing' and provided a sketch of what

might happen. She saw the classroom within a broader context and reassured students that if there were problems she would deal with them on her return. The tone of her reply was also reassuring. Far from being intimidated by problems which 'might occur' she saw any challenging behaviour in terms of in terms of humour or strategy rather than as a source of stress. Her comments provided insights into the complexity of providing effective substitute cover within the classroom and the importance of determining the differing boundaries for professional and personal responsibilities, before a substitute arrived in school.

Anecdotal evidence printed from the internet showed that, despite the problem of isolation and lack of knowledge available to resolve many problems of substitute teaching, technology had also created opportunities to provide positive reinforcement, encouragement and thanks, factors which were rarely evident in the literature. Informally, relief teaching was given validity as a demanding but intriguing form of teaching. Practitioners showed that they were able to use humour as a device for reducing stress, and that they also recognised patterns of behaviour and could anticipate them.

> Those who enter casual relief teaching with a clear understanding of what to expect and how to approach difficulties, and are confident and willing to give of themselves, provide a necessary service in a changing teaching system. With the right strategies the rewards are many. (Hemmings, 1985, p.11)

Underlying the different expectations surrounding relief teaching was evidence which showed that patterns of problems were created by: the lack of positive recognition for relief teachers at system level; lack of appropriate policies which matched the relief teaching context; and role ambiguity. Evidence from the literature showed that the combination of many inconsistencies between the conceptual and actual reality of relief teaching, resulted in the lack of a clear and manageable role for relief teachers.

Theme three: Lack of Information/ Training

Different perceptions on training for relief teaching

For many years advice had been given on how to raise the standard and effectiveness of substitute teachers (Kraft, 1980; Rosecrans, 1983; Hicks, 1987). However, whereas increasing time, energy and money had been spent on ensuring that regular teachers were trained (Galloway & Morrison, 1994), a review of the literature showed that, in general, support had not extended to substitute teachers (Brace, 1990). Platt (1987, p.29) cited evidence from other studies, confirmed that substitute programs of training had continued to be 'loosely organized, inadequate and ineffective'. In 1981, Drake (1981, p.74) described the average substitute program as 'antiquated stop-gap measures' which were of no value to the school. Suggestions for the 'best way' of training varied according to the perspective of the writer and his/ her perception of the role and status of a relief teacher within a particular educational community. A conference paper for example, responding to the mandates of proposed educational legislation in Texas, described the two-day compulsory seminar for substitute teachers. It placed a 'new emphasis' on the role and responsibilities of substitute teachers. Instructions were outlined in a 'Substitute Teacher Handbook'. The paper described the use of presentations at the seminar, by regular primary and secondary teachers, to show the practical problems faced in a 'real-life' classroom (Lokey, 1989).

Stanley (1991, pp. 84-88), a senior training associate, presented a series of four 'research-supported' guidelines for substitute teachers which were intended as a form of inservice training, 'as principals rarely have the opportunity to provide inservice support for substitute teachers.'

1. Be prepared by arriving early; look to see what 'instructional objectives' are to be taught and how the material is to be presented.
2. Take charge of the classroom; 'a class lost at the outset is apt to be a class lost for ever'.
3. Clarify expectations about student conduct; avoid ambiguity.
4. Communicate the significance of learning; 'require student attention and participation ... students should be held accountable'.

Wilson's (1985) 'Guidelines for Substitute Teachers in Secondary Schools' advised substitutes to rely on their own inventiveness to provide a good lesson plan which is 'the key to class control'. She advocated an assertive and 'resourceful' approach including using a tape recorder to record everything that was said in the room. This method was suggested in order to help with student control, and as a means of offering feedback for the regular teacher.

Former substitute teachers, such as Frosch (1984) drew attention to the conflicting attitudes and assumptions surrounding the substitute teacher's role in the classroom. She compared the proposed methods of training substitute teachers to those promises of 'slick patent medicine salesmen of the nineteenth century ... who had a simplistic attitude to a very complex situation' (p.89). Her paper outlined the two main approaches. One view proposed that only the substitute teacher needed to be trained, whilst other school staff were not affected. The second rationale gave total responsibility to the classroom teacher to leave comprehensive lesson plans and material for the substitute. Frosch indicated that it was unrealistic to expect that training in 'classroom management, survival and teaching techniques' would be all that was required for an inexperienced teacher to develop effective classroom strategies. Frosch also indicated that the differing expectations of the school for its substitute teachers, was a critical factor and completely overlooked by the two methods of training. These views were supported by others (Kraft, 1980).

Hicks, a substitute teacher and a free-lance writer, indicated that staff attitudes, 'in this era of collegiality' were important: She had found from experience that regular teachers often wanted to help but did not know how or when to intervene, if a substitute teacher had problems. She emphasised that substitutes who were welcomed by staff would become more effective and therefore created benefits instead of problems for the school (Rosecrans, 1983, p.41; Hicks, 1987, p.79). Hick's focus was not only on information but on understanding the best ways to offer support to a relief teacher. For example,

> *Except in extreme cases, do not discipline a substitute's students without talking to the substitute first.* Reprimanding the class ... also reprimands the substitute - and all the other subs who will work with those students in the future. (Hicks, 1987, p. 80; author's italics.)

Tracy (1988) welcomed an emphasis on interpersonal skills, believing that personal assistance and support, rather than information alone would reduce problems and

achieve substitute teacher effectiveness. Platt (1987, pp. 28-31) adopted a similar approach by providing basic guidelines, whereby administrators and special education teachers could develop individual programs for the substitute teachers in their schools. She wrote specific guidelines and procedures developed for substitute teachers in a learning disabilities resource room. The program had been in operation for four years and 'met with approval and enthusiasm from substitutes'.

Although substitute teachers were often isolated, there was evidence of self-help groups which met to provide opportunities for training and support. In 1988, a group of supply teachers overcame the lack of professional support by forming their own self-help group in Milton Keynes, England. A member reported that the group helped her transition from home duties to teaching. The group planned its program, wrote a newsletter, communicated its needs to the local schools and shared teaching experiences. Informal in-service training was later provided by the education department in response to the supply teachers' needs. This factor was reported as giving them additional confidence and motivation (Bayliss, 1988, p.10). Brace, (1990, pp. 73-77) recognised the advantages of group support and discussion to improve relief teacher effectiveness. The paper combined practical and theoretical considerations. The 'integral component' of the substitute program was to have a staff member responsible for providing social and efficient administrative support to make the substitute feel valued and to monitor any difficulties. The substitute teacher support program had seven key elements. Administrators should: build up a strong substitute pool; compile a school handbook; treat substitutes as professionals (paying for them to attend inservice programs); oversee teacher preparation for substitutes to ensure that the classroom was organised `to integrate substitutes quickly into the usual routine'; co-ordinate substitutes; supervise substitutes and provide for systematic feedback' (p.73).

Throughout the literature many references to relief teaching indicated, either directly or indirectly, that relief teaching was different from regular teaching, yet many papers showed that the inherent differences in the relief teaching context, such as short-term teaching assignments, were not recognised as important. The literature showed evidence of the 'simplistic' approaches described by Frosch (1984). Much advice was task-orientated and written in general terms without regard for the practical implications or the personal needs of the substitute teacher (Webb, 1993). Stanley (1991, pp. 84-88), for example, recommended that substitute teachers 'start the class decisively' and have materials and supplies ready, so that 'students can become actively involved in lessons as quickly as possible'. She assumed that there was time and equipment available and that substitute teachers were given instructions and a class register. The reality in practice, might be very different (Nelson, 1983, pp. 98-100; Rosecrans, 1983, pp. 38-41). They were considered effective if they could ensure that ' ... as little damage as possible [was] done to the room, the students and the school's image' in the absence of the regular teacher (Clark, 1983, p.44). Each group of students varied. Adults in a business setting and students in a classroom might present quite different responses, for example with their motivation (Kohn, 1990) or expectations (Berkeley, 1991). There was a contrast too, in what it was openly intended that students learned and what, although not openly intended, they actually did learn (Martin, 1976, p.136; Giroux, 1981, p.83).

Augustin (1987, p.393) was one writer who recognised that relief teaching required a different approach from regular teaching. She argued that in many contexts, the professional aspects of relief teaching rested on the personal responsibility of the relief teacher to provide students with meaningful learning activities or assignments, and ensure that the classroom was orderly. These tasks were accomplished often by lack of time to prepare and with little or no information about the curriculum, students' abilities or programs of work. She suggested that training programs ' ... should include topics such as methods of presentation, responsibilities of substitute teachers, approaches to discipline problems and procedures for using plans left by a regular teacher' (Augustin, 1987, p. 393). Webb (1992) thought it was 'questionable' whether training courses for relief teaching were appropriate except for issues relating to the responsibilities of relief teaching, as in her opinion, preservice training would generally include most of the topics suggested by Augustin.

> Some of the qualities cited by researchers (Drake, 1981; Shreeve et al, 1987) as being necessary for relief teaching, such as strong self esteem, flexibility, ingenuity and resilience, are often attributes a person may bring to an enterprise or develop while so engaged. It is unlikely that these qualities can be taught. (Webb, 1992, p. 18)

As was evident from the illustrations given above, each highlighted an aspect of training which might lead to improved effectiveness among substitute teachers. A review of the literature, however, showed that there were few government initiatives which had provided policies, finance or incentives for training substitute teachers. Buzzing (1994, pp. 124-128) 'surprised' by the lack of information and support given to supply teachers, searched for possible reasons. She found on closer examination, that money allocated for inservice training was for employed [i.e. not casual] teachers, thereby creating a gap in training. This had been less apparent in Britain during the recession of the early 1980's when schools had plenty of choice of staff. Reports at the time noted that there was fierce competition for regular teaching jobs, with as many as over 100 applicants for one teaching position (p. 123). People were pleased to become substitute teachers as a way back to the teaching profession. As a result of the training 'gap', a scheme 'Keeping in Touch with Teaching (KIT), was initiated to provide support, particularly in the secondary sector, in order to encourage newcomers or returners to teaching (see Mullett, 1994, p.40). To counteract the daunting aspects of the secondary school environment, seen as 'bewildering' for outsiders, school staff provided opportunities for work-shadowing and informal talks, so potential supply teachers felt they would be working among other teachers where they were known and valued. The results of the scheme were so effective 'in a very dramatic way', that it became the model for other courses. It was effective in its simplicity '... and it had a considerable impact on the numbers and the quality of the supply teaching force in the country. The regulations were changed too, enabling the use of funding for any teacher who had qualified teacher status' (p.124).

Inadequate information

An examination of the literature showed that many researchers and others commented on the lack of information about the relief teaching context (Webb, 1992, p.2). A need for information was noted, not only in practical terms (Galloway, 1993, p. 159), but as a means to examine the taken-for-granted aspects of relief teaching in order to study deeper links which arose, say, from the present management structure

and how it affected relief teaching outcomes, such as the attitudes of other staff or students to relief teachers (Shilling, 1991, pp. 3-4). Webb (1992, p.21) commented '... there is little evidence within the literature to suggest that researchers have formulated strategies to assist teachers cope specifically with relief teaching'. Books on classroom management or teaching effectiveness for example, rarely mentioned the relief teaching context. One exception, a book written by Rogers (1992) included ways to provide whole school support, noting practical ways in which to develop positive working relationships between school staff and relief teachers. He provided examples of, 'What the school can do' [such as, welcome; timetable; medical information; behaviour management procedures] and, 'What the relief teacher can do,' [such as, ask 'dumb' questions]. He concluded, ' ... While this sounds obvious, I've been to a number of schools where little or none of these issues are observed' (p.85). Webb found similar comments in her research,

> Some regular teachers feel relief teachers are babysitters who are paid a lot of money. ... They expect the relief teacher to replace them but they leave no information on what the class is currently working on. (Webb, 1992, p. 90)

The lack of information extended beyond the classroom. In general, fragmented information on substitute teaching, when combined, showed that relief teaching though almost invisible, seen as marginal and taken for granted in practice, represented an increasingly significant aspect of the labour market. In England and Wales, for example, ' ... the number of regular and occasional supply teachers employed amounted to some 36,300 teachers in 1990, an increase of 72% over 1988' (HMSO, 1991, p. 45, para. 6.27 in Galloway, 1993, p.161). Galloway observed that, 'Statements on supply cover in DES and parliamentary reports appear to identify the supply teaching context as an important one' (p. 160) especially, when linked to other aspects of education, such as the importance of maintaining standards in education, and ensuring that substitute teachers 'of acceptable quality' were available to cover classes. In Britain, in 1990 the Chilver Committee on School Teacher Pay and Conditions noted there were some worrying gaps arising from the statistical data available on the teaching force,

> For some important aspects of teaching there is virtually no reliable evidence at all. For example, there is little information on supply teachers and their deployment. (HMSO, 1990a, p. 16, para. 3.8.)

Problems concerned with the employment of supply teachers were seen to be 'adversely affecting continuity and progression in teaching and learning during the teacher's absence' (HMSO, 1990b, p.46, para. 5.41). There were gaps in the dissemination of information on supply teaching and in attitudes which enabled those in schools to cope with 'the day-to-day realities'.

The cost of relief teaching

A recurring issue in a number of papers was the cost of relief teaching. Further examination of the literature showed how the lack of information on substitute teaching and its 'invisibility' at system level, noted by Galloway (1993), created inconsistencies and difficulties for researchers and others. The cost of substitute teaching was difficult to define. Evidence showed that researchers who requested information from employment authorities were seldom successful. Webb (1992,

p.41) in a Tasmanian context, reported the difficulty in gaining an overview of relief teaching because of factors such as the lack of coherence in the estimates given to her and the lack of available documentation. For example, the costs of relief teaching given for one year, was 'not available' for any previous or successive years. Another researcher, gathering information on the future trends of supply and demand in Australia, Preston (1996), failed to gain information from the Tasmanian Education Department, to such questions as 'The numbers of relief teachers actively working (available) in any system'. Evidence showed that there were few records of relief teaching available and hence inadequate statistics. Information was inconsistent or too general. Stringer (1994), a researcher in New South Wales, reported that statistics from the Teachers' Federation and Education Department showed '... gross discrepancies in the estimates [of the numbers of substitutes] from 14 500 to 26-27 000 with another 33 000 "inactive" teachers possible' (p.12). Crittenden (1994) also had difficulty obtaining figures on relief teaching in Western Australia. She points out the inherent difficulties of gaining 'facts' on relief teaching,

> It is quite common for a teacher [possible relief teacher] to register with as many as 40 to 50 schools at the beginning of the school year, despite the inevitability of obtaining work from only a handful of these. It is also possible for a school to be *unable* to secure a relief teacher on a given day, despite having a substantial pool of RTs. (Crittenden, 1994, p.81, writer's italics)

There was seen to be an equally wide-ranging gap, too, in the perception of what factors constituted 'costs' for relief teaching. While practitioners understood many of the hidden costs, such as survival in the classroom, others saw the cost of relief teaching was purely related to the salary costs of employing substitute cover. Anderson and Gardner (1995) grouped the costs of relief teaching as being financial and instructional. They reasoned that the financial costs were easier to estimate because specific amounts of money could be traced to the cost of teacher absenteeism and hiring substitute teachers. Figures about the costs of relief teaching given in the literature were specific to a setting, nevertheless when viewed together they did provide a conceptual picture of the magnitude of the cost spent on relief teaching, in relation to the lack of accountability as to where, or how the money was spent.

In North America, Brenot (1985) showed that the cost of relief teaching could not be viewed in isolation. Responding to the lack of specific information on substitute teaching, he attempted to demonstrate the major amount of money spent by school authorities to provide cover when regular teachers were absent. Taking figures from the 1983 'Statistical Abstract' [the most recent available at that time and based on 1980 figures], he found 'nationwide' that in the Autumn Term there were 15 601 local school districts which employed 2 183 538 teachers and paid an average of $16 780 salary per teacher per year. He reasoned, that if each teacher took an average of 5 substitute days a year '... and if a sub on the nationwide average [was] paid $25 per day: 2 183 538 x 5 x $25 = $ 272 942 250 per year (and that's *every year*) paid for substitute salaries nationwide' (author's italics. Brenot, 1985, p.1).

In the task of problem identification it was often necessary to introduce new ways of thinking (de Bono, 1990, p.1). Brenot demonstrated that by combining and

understanding the elements of a problem it was possible to see a pattern of relationships. Further inquiries into the number of days of teacher absence produced no statistics in a Tasmanian context, however in other settings absences of regular staff were variously determined. Warren (1988) claimed that on any given day as many as 8 per cent of regular teachers were absent necessitating the employment of substitute teachers; Brace (1990, p. 73) claimed that students spent as much as 5-10 per cent of their actual class time with substitute teachers while Drake (1981, p. 74) wrote, 'Published reports have shown that the statistically average students will have 10 of their total classroom days each year supervised by a substitute teacher.' In 1975, Freedman questioned the relationship between the high cost and lack of effectiveness:

> Some basic statistics show [that] ... substitutes teach approximately 5-6 per cent of total teacher days. The average student will have substitutes for 10 full days per year. As for costs, a recent New York State study sets salaries for substitutes at between 2.5 per cent of total teacher salaries in New York State (outside New York City), and 9 per cent in New York City. Millions of dollars are being spent in a program whose cost effectiveness is unsatisfactory, if not dismal. (pp. 95-98)

A study conducted in Chicago, Illinois, over a three-year period found that approximately $54 000 000 a year was spent on the overall costs, such as substitute pay and sick leave, associated with teacher absences and hiring of substitute teachers, a figure which represented about 8.4 per cent of the total annual budget for teacher salaries. (Meara, 1983). Similarly the results of a study conducted in New York City by Willerman & McGuire, (1986) found that 9 per cent of the total teacher salary expenditure, approximately $71 500 000 was spent on substitute teacher costs. Information from the literature confirmed that administrators in general were increasingly concerned about the escalating costs of managing education budgets (Galloway, 1993). The educational and financial costs were seen to linked not only to teacher ineffectiveness but teacher absence. Webb (1992) gathered figures which denote 'a substantial incidence of teacher absenteeism', (see pp. 7-9) She quoted Willerman and McGuire. (1986) who suggest that, 'It seems reasonable ... that if the teacher is absent and the substitute teacher is ineffective, then time-on-task is likely to decrease and result in a decrease in achievement' (p.233).

It was evident that despite the lack of quantitative information on relief teaching, there were many costs surrounding regular teacher absence. In the United States, a two-year study which examined the role of the substitute teacher (St. Michel, 1995), concluded that many of the problems which reduced substitute teaching effectiveness were the result of non-management rather than mismanagement. Her guide, 'Effective substitute teachers: myth, mayhem or magic?' written mainly for administrators, offered recommendations for planning, establishing and implementing quality substitute teacher programs. She suggested: defining the roles of the key players; identifying and assessing their needs; and providing professional development workshops [for substitute teachers, regular teachers, administrators and principals], to ensure a holistic and integrated approach to substitute teaching. Recommendations also included the development of better communication procedures. St. Michel, like Webb (1993; 1996) in Australia, and Galloway (1993)

in Britain, concluded that many of the problems surrounding substitute/ relief teaching in schools, were largely overlooked by the various education authorities.

Theme four: Isolation

Evidence from the literature showed that there were few official channels of information or support available to relief teachers (Mullett, 1994, p. 31). The regulations in place did not cover the relief teaching context, nor in general, was anyone seen as responsible for relief teachers in schools. Suggestions, however, were made that a regular teacher ought to be made responsible for welcoming visiting [relief] teachers into school (Hicks, 1987, p. 79). In general, however, there was little evidence of communication between practising relief teachers in schools and officers in the education department and the two ends of the spectrum of perspectives on relief teaching, in classroom and at system level, were usually seen as separate. There were few official channels of communication open to relief teachers, nor information or statistics which gave a picture of what they did, or how much they cost. Relief teachers were isolated because of their invisibility (Webb, 1996). Authorities were often seen to 'ignore' substitute teachers (Galloway, 1993). Webb (1992) thought that this might be, in part, due to the transient nature of relief teaching. As marginal workers, '... there was no permanent contract, and no job security' (Galloway, 1994, p.105). There were few references to relief teaching/ relief teachers in research, in books on professional development, in books on classroom management skills, on teaching effectiveness, or even in a study of the lives of teachers (Huberman, 1993, p.30). In this way, an educational climate existed where relief teachers and relief teaching were easily bypassed.

Theme five: Stress

The literature showed that much of the relief teaching context was stressful, not only for relief teachers but for those who managed relief teaching. (Drake, 1981, p.76; Frosch, 1984, p. 90; Galloway, 1993, p.163). Finnis and Williams (1992, p.13) described 'the sense of alienation, powerlessness and professional dislocation' reported by emergency teachers. Individual relief teachers, too, wrote of the ways they coped with the unpredictability of relief teaching, where they needed to create their own routines. Papers written by relief teachers were often reflective or showed how individual relief teachers interpreted their tasks. Titles such as 'The Guerilla Guide to Effective Substitute Teaching' (Pronin, 1983) or 'The Substitutes' Handbook: a survivor's guide' (Brenot, 1985) indicated the need for improvisation and strategies, while brief articles, only half a page long, on 'Facing the reality' (Guzzardo, 1993, p.6) or 'Successful Substituting' (French, 1993, p.6) presented some of the advantages of viewing relief teaching as a 'promising path to a school district contract', or useful in providing opportunities to 'hone classroom management techniques and develop that graceful flexibility so important to success in the classroom'.

As can be seen, attitudes expressed in the literature varied considerably. Papers from practitioners who wrote from knowledge gained in the classroom, reflected the influence of the varying school cultures and climates, as much as their own approach to problem solving. They described relief teaching as a process dependent on relationships.

> I can see the realization dawning on them [students] that what they have here is a rare bird, indeed: a substitute teacher - and a man, to boot. This guy is fresh meat. The class quickly reaches a silent consensus: today is a good day for raising some hell. (Aceto, 1995, p. 490)

Aceto contrasted the assurance he was given from the assistant principal, 'Just follow your instructions and everything will be fine' (p.491), with the 'confusing circus' he experienced in the classroom. Nevertheless, despite his own exhaustion by the end of the day, 'I'm so tired that I have trouble finding my car after just one brief seven-hour day' (p.492), he left school with a deeper understanding of what it meant to be a teacher. The intense challenges brought him 'a few special moments' of deep and poignant reflection, in which he felt that his role of 'encouraging youngsters ...[was] a truly important, even noble, cause' (p.492). The paper showed how his own perception of relief teaching, as a 'piece of cake', changed radically as he 'frantically' scanned the instructions 'every five minutes or so', worried that 'other teachers might be shaking their heads in disgust' at his noisy class, but by the end of the day he had come to see his role as 'more than babysitting' (p.492). He had 'earned' the piece of cake; the challenges became the reward:

> Would I do it again? Absolutely. Piece of cake. Would I consider doing this for a living? Not a chance! (Aceto, 1995, p.492)

Whether directly or indirectly acknowledged, the above paper, like many others contained references to 'time' and themes of sudden changes in events or in attitudes. Experienced practitioners, whether teachers or administrators, saw patterns of events and had learned how to respond to them. Monahan, a relief teacher, was one who described his start to the week, not knowing whether work would be available,

> Here it is 8. 30 am and I'm all ready to go. This is what it must feel like to be on standby flight - bags packed, sitting in the airport; sitting on the edge of your chair. There's never much chance to build rapport with the students; build some trust and get to know them. Often they take a casual teacher like some sort of sporting fixture - a day of fun to score points against the Establishment. (Monahan, 1989, p.28)

While papers written by relief teachers recounted their struggles for survival, they also expressed their need for understanding or support. Some like Brenot (1985, p.2) wrote to draw attention to some of the inconsistencies of relief teaching and its lack of accountability, as well as identifying the insights he had developed over time. It was apparent however, from the literature that many people within the relief teaching context, experienced symptoms of stress such as anxiety, or loss of control. Indeed, many relief teachers were seen to be 'preoccupied with survival' (Wood and Knight, 1988, p. 41), overwhelmed by the extreme demands on them and by the attitudes from administrators, teachers and students and by their own inability to understand how they fitted in to the educational community (Webb, 1993).

Webb (1992, p. 97) was one of several writers (see also, Frosch, 1984; Clifton and Rambaran, 1987) who noted that the lack of a clear role for a relief teacher produced ambiguity and conflict. From evidence Webb obtained from a survey into relief teaching, there was general agreement (87.5 per cent or 35 subjects) that relief teaching required a different approach from regular teaching. Webb (1992, p. 97) noted that in her questionnaire for practising relief teachers, that there was a 'wide

spread' of responses as to what constituted a 'different approach'. Over 37 per cent of answers came in the 'other' category intended for miscellaneous items, which did not fit any one category in the survey. Examples included: personal skills such as adaptability, flexibility and resourcefulness; having to assess the class and decide whether s/he will be able to get work done or will babysit; or, having to prepare a greater number of activities for the day than the regular teacher in order to initiate and retain a positive response from the students. Webb commented that the results from the survey showed that factors, such as, lack of time, and being called at short notice were seen to create, or exacerbate problems. There was an extra dimension of awareness needed by relief teachers in order to recognise potential difficulties, act quickly and minimise the escalation of problems. Webb (1993, p.58) used Eisner's (1979) phrase ' ..."fluid intelligence" in which the process of exploring problems that cannot be predicted or defined is seen as a challenge.' Other practitioners provided instances of the need to anticipate possible stressors,

> Because you are only there for a short space of time you cannot leave things, like behaviour problems, to be dealt with by other people. You have to react more quickly to discipline problems and be more sensitive to learning problems and personality clashes between students. It's like being with a class on the first day of school every time you have a relief day. (relief teacher. Webb, 1992, pp. 97-98)

Indeed, Trotter and Wragg, (1990) in a study of twenty supply teachers found that when the supply teachers were shown photographs with accompanying story lines of five disruptive incidents in the classroom, they were able to say 'swiftly and clearly what they would do in each instance and there was a high level of agreement about the kind of action necessary' (p.251). The supply teachers had learned how to anticipate patterns of behaviour from pairs or groups of students, although they were reluctant to apply their broad knowledge to situations of conflict depicted with individual students. The authors concluded from the study, that without specific knowledge of the school, other staff and the students, that the task of teaching becomes even more complicated.

> The ability of the relief teacher to fulfil the expectations of the school in continuing the educational program currently being implemented in a particular classroom is likely to be dependent upon the availability of such relevant information such as timetables, programs of work, classroom and school policies and procedures, and lesson plans. In practice, relief teachers are likely to find that this information is often inadequate or unavailable ... not only when the absence is caused by illness but when the regular teacher has planned to attend seminars and inservice training courses. (Webb, 1992, p. 55)

A review of the literature showed that relief teaching was surrounded by problems. A survey conducted by Webb (1992, p.97), gave examples of factors which negated the effectiveness of the relief teacher. The factors included: 'inadequate lesson plans, negative attitudes and bad behaviour of students, lack of support and assistance from staff, lack of information about school rules and routine, time spent dealing with disruptive students, students who are unexpectedly faced with a relief teacher, inability to locate materials for the day, no time to develop rapport, teaching unfamiliar students, inability to follow up work and lack of information on students' abilities'. Such evidence would infer that some of the concerns expressed by relief teachers might have ramifications which affected regular teaching staff,

administrators and students. Webb (1992, p.90) noted that there were a lot of negative feelings surrounding relief teaching. It was seen as a 'nowhere job'. Several examples taken from her investigation of the polices and practices of relief teaching in Tasmania, illustrated some difficulties associated with the maintenance and provision of education in schools when there were inadequate resources available.

Administrators were also attempting to 'hold the fort' when the regular teacher was absent. They often had little choice about the relief teacher they were able to employ. At short notice they, too, had to cope with extreme fluctuations of teacher absences, unknown relief teachers and a hidden curriculum of attitudes and feelings. Webb (1992, p. 64) commented, ' ... it seems likely that there are relief teachers with a wide variety of qualifications and years of experience. It is equally likely that the quality and effectiveness of these teachers is just as varied'. At times, administrators and principals took classes themselves. She noted complaints from administrators about the shortage of relief teachers and lack of finance to employ them (p. 69). Concern was expressed by parents and by the Union, that insufficient teachers were available to fully maintain teaching programs.

> We parents ... are most perturbed about our principals not being able to do all the things they are appointed to do because they spend so much of their time acting as relief teachers. (Mercury. 18 April, 1972, File 32/3/18. Webb, 1992, p.36)

On one occasion, children were rostered off from school because of teacher shortage (Mercury. 27 March 1971, File 32/3/18. Webb, 1992, p. 35). There were instances of frustration from parents when relief teachers were seen to perform ineffectively (Webb, 1992, p.43). The whole approach to substitute teaching was seen as ineffective in many settings, leading to general frustration, stress and low expectations (Rawson 1981, p. 83), which in turn led to labelling and negative self-fulfilling prophecies (Wood and Knight, 1988, p. 40). There seemed no official recognition to help school administrators cope with the relief teaching context. Their school's effectiveness depended therefore on the individual efforts of staff, who were often working with few written policies or instructions. Stress, therefore, was caused by ambiguity and change. Evidence showed that stress was also caused by 'real' emergencies:

> Tasmania's winter flu epidemic has strained the teacher relief allocation for several schools. At least one Launceston school has completely run out of teacher relief, which means that it is unable to employ relief teachers when staff are absent for sickness or other reasons ... Some principals have expressed concern that an ageing teaching service and greater work stress could amount to even more illness and greater reliance on the relief teacher allocation. (Pattie, 1995, p. 18)

The stressors surrounding the relief teaching context were even more daunting when, evidence suggested that some schools had difficulty in obtaining relief teachers, and there was little provision made for recruiting or encouraging relief teachers to stay in schools (Shilling, 1991; Preston, 1997). It was difficult for individual teachers, adminstrators in schools or even senior officers in the education system to strive for effectiveness, when relief teaching remained an 'essential, though often neglected aspect of the school program' (Simmons, 1991, p.91).

Effective substitute teaching

Much of the literature focused on obtaining and maintaining substitute teaching effectiveness (see for example, Frosch, 1984; Simmons, 1991; Stanley, 1991). Many administrators, regular teachers and relief teachers gave advice on getting the best out of the relief teaching setting. At times, it was written from a authoritative stance which took little account of the relief teaching context which was dynamic and dominated by ambiguity and change. Relief teachers were given advice from other people which failed to account for the hidden factors of classroom management: when they attempted to follow instructions, they were unprepared for the 'reality' within the classroom and any lack of success was often seen as attributable to them. Researchers, who were former relief teachers, expressed their concern that efforts designed to make relief teaching more effective, rarely included comments from relief teachers. Within the literature there were papers, however, which presented a different concept of the need for relief teaching effectiveness. The labour market trend towards more flexible employment, changes within Award structures, and factors such as inservice training, indicated that substitute teachers would be increasingly needed, and, therefore, the need to integrate substitute teachers into the educational community was seen as becoming a more important issue (Anderson & Gardner, 1995; Preston, 1997). Mullett (1994) was one writer who described how she, and four other supply teachers, initiated a support group for supply teachers which attracted national interest. Her later position as a coordinator, to encourage career-break teachers, including supply teachers, to keep in touch with teaching, was discontinued due to insufficient funding.

Despite the need to address problems which had caused concern among administrators over a period of time, such as, the considerable and escalating costs of relief teaching; the effects of the high rates of teacher absence; the quality of relief teachers; and the disruption to student learning (Drake, 1981, p.74; Galloway, 1993, p. 160), relief teaching remained invisible and of low priority at system level. Evidence from the literature, therefore, showed the paradoxical nature of relief teaching: while problems escalated, information on the relief teaching context, such as policy statements from the education department were difficult to locate and verify.

The conceptual framework developed from grounded theory (Webb, 1993), provided the means to unify the fragmented information on relief teaching and explore some of the underlying influences which shape relief teaching as a phenomenon. An objective of the investigation is to accept and present the 'realities' of relief teaching in order to gain insights which might link to further understanding or research. It may be helpful to visualise the literature, in its present form as somewhat like the turning tide—in a process of change. Like other aspects of relief teaching it is necessary to look below the surface. The page references provide opportunities for later, more focused research, for example on a single theme. Likewise, the following chapter is intended to provide insights into the nature of relief teaching. It shows how the researcher maintained a consistent focus within the dynamic relief teaching settings.

Chapter 3

DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH APPROACH

> *Once the decision has been made to inquire into some social process in its own natural context, the researcher creates much of both his [sic] method and the substance of his field of inquiry ... Method is seen by the field researcher as emerging from operations—from strategic decisions, instrumental actions, and analytic processes—which go on throughout the entire research enterprise. (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p.7)*

The comments above indicate the nature of the research approach in this investigation. The method emerged from the context of relief teaching: from observations, from interview data from relief teachers and others and from a grounded approach to analysis which would reduce the complexity and diversity of the interview data to form a stable, theoretical base for further investigation and research. An inductive approach was chosen to ensure that any analysis was based on multiple realities. As has been shown, relief teaching was elusive and different from regular teaching. Relief teachers needed to adapt to workplace settings and expectations and often worked in unfamiliar surroundings with little support. As little was written about relief teaching, there were many opinions, based largely on observations of what a relief teacher 'should' or 'should not' do. What was visible depended on numerous field forces, such as, a hierarchical system of management (Gordon, 1988; Glatthorn, 1990).

This chapter seeks to create an understanding of the links between the researcher and the research context, as a way of gaining insights into the complex of theories, assumptions and attitudes which surround relief teaching; and to develop appropriate methodologies for understanding the relationship between relief teaching and its problems. The chapter is linked by themes. The first section identifies the research background, the reasons for adopting a naturalistic approach, the positioning of the researcher and the selection of methodology. The second section outlines the collection and initial categorisation of written and verbal data. The third section represents an overview of the research analysis. The process of research is woven into the chapter to provide illustrations of how evidence from varying perspectives integrated. In practice the collection, coding and analysis of data are processes which go on simultaneously [but at different stages]. The researcher moves back and forth into the different thematic areas. By integrating theory and practice sequentially, the organisation of the chapter is seen to provide a similar pattern. It links the technical, practical and personal aspects of the research process in order to enable an understanding of the constant dynamic involvement required when balancing the roles of researcher and practitioner, with a changing and unsettled relief teaching context. Gaining insights into the process of research is seen to be an intrinsic part of understanding relief teaching.

Developing personal awareness

In the course of relief teaching, the researcher was still intrigued by some of the seemingly inexplicable events and paradoxes that occurred on a daily basis. Why, for example was relief teaching notorious for its problems and yet continued to be regarded of low priority within the education and research settings? Why was relief teaching often equated with 'babysitting', yet analysis from her investigation had shown that relief teachers were managers of change? (Webb, 1993). Why were relief teachers paid as professionals and yet seen as babysitters?

Such questions, on potentially sensitive, 'political' or complex issues, could not be answered by survey or questionnaire (Lee, 1993, p. 101). Understanding would evolve through field research (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973) and the use of methodologies such as participant observation (Spradley, 1980), reflection (Schön, 1983), analysis grounded in practice (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987), and a naturalistic approach where the researcher blended unobtrusively into the various settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; van Manen, 1990). Although the researcher had studied the relief teaching context, much of her knowledge was tacit.

> Such a contextual inquiry *demands* a human instrument, one fully adaptive to the indeterminate situation that will be encountered. The human instrument builds on his or her *tacit* knowledge as much as if not more than upon prepositional knowledge, and uses methods that are appropriate to humanly implemented inquiry: interviews, observations, document analysis, unobtrusive clues, and the like. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.187. italics in original)

Lincoln and Guba saw tacit knowledge as one of the fundamental characteristics of a naturalistic inquiry, '... because often the nuances of the multiple realities can be appreciated only in this way; because much of interaction between investigator and respondent or object occurs at this level; and because tacit knowledge mirrors more fairly and accurately the value patterns of the investigator' (p. 40). Tacit knowledge provided the researcher with awareness of how other people's realities differed from her own and, therefore, generated opportunities for insights.

As a practitioner, she was intrinsically linked to the field of research, but needed to gain extrinsic links and see the relief teaching context in relation to other relevant areas, such as 'management' (Stoner et al., 1985; Owens, 1987; Kee, 1987) 'supervision' (Glatthorn, 1990); and 'change' (Fullan, 1991). Part of the search to find appropriate methodology, was seen as a way of grounding, illuminating, identifying or extending what she knew, or had, perhaps, taken for granted.

She needed feedback from other sources to provide opportunities for lateral thinking (de Bono, 1990), to develop an open attitude to new ways of 'seeing' (Eisner, 1979); and to develop the tools and techniques for exploring and clarifying some of the underlying patterns of thoughts, for synthesis or analysis, so that it was possible to switch quickly from one aspect of the research to another (Buzan, 1989). For example, by studying structural relationships and creating a 'metasystem' or a single concept, many things which were previously considered apart, fragmented and separated by differences, could be linked by the points of similarity (de Bono, 1979, p. 18). The 'invisibility' of relief teaching provided an invitation to examine hidden boundaries, or the degree of 'boundary strengths', for example, between the relief

teacher and school staff in the day's relief teaching (Bernstein, 1971) and ask such questions as, 'Who frames the activities in the classroom?' (Waters & Crook, 1990).

In this way, an approach was devised which interrelated well with the natural contexts of relief teaching and which could gain insights into underlying relationships between words and actions, or feelings and opinions, to see why differences occurred. An emphasis on developing self-awareness, of finding ways to integrate the roles of researcher and relief teacher, as well as understanding the field of research from multiple perspectives, became major focuses of concern. Eisner's (1991) concept of 'connoisseurship' (pp. 6-7) indicates aspects of the processes involved in describing, interpreting and evaluating experiences. Lincoln and Guba (1985) commented:

> When knowledge is recognized as 'interested', that is, value orientated, a new imperative emerges for the inquirer's guidance. Once aware of the value implications that adhere in his or her work, the inquirer is under *moral compulsion* to take account of those values. Objectivity cannot be permitted to become a veil that obscures the need for balance. (p.173, italics in original)

Using her position as a relief teacher, provided a basis for entry into the field of research and for the opportunistic selection of material. She searched for ways to get as close to the 'reality' of each perspective and she studied her changing relationship to the field of research. A consistent approach did not mean an unchanging one. Its purpose was directed towards these long-term goals whatever the obstacles, distractions or barriers.

The constant process of searching and discovery, or reflection and triangulation led to natural phases of research. They were always determined by governing factors, such as, the balancing of roles between relief teacher or researcher; or the opportunities to follow new questions. For example, she 'balanced' the extreme range of interview participants, with a grounded approach to data analysis which was 'fair' to different points of view (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This approach enabled the collection of data from over three hundred people who were concerned with relief teaching, either closely or distantly. In contrast to the diversity of respondents, the investigation was conducted mainly in eight secondary schools in northern Tasmania, where the researcher worked as a relief teacher and where she had conducted previous research on relief teaching in 1991-1992. The number of schools ensured that although they could not be easily identified separately, together, they represented an identifiable cluster of schools within a defined area. Therefore, the diversity of respondents was 'balanced' by the community-based Tasmanian school settings in which two of the interview respondents had worked for a period of thirty years.

In addition, the researcher had gained access to these relief teaching settings over a period of five years. This enabled the investigation to search for layers of meanings which crossed existing or 'conventional' organisational structures. For example, on each visit, the researcher could tap into the avenues of formal, informal, or non-verbal communication, to find deeper structural links and relationships, amongst staff or student cultures. Eisner (1991), notes that 'flexibility, adjustment and iterativity are three hallmarks of "qualitative method"' (p.170). They are also qualities needed

in relief teaching. In this way the research path and the practitioner's path emerged from the field of research, and refocused on it:

> Learning to see what we have learned not to notice remains one of the most critical and difficult tasks of educational connoisseurs. Everything else rests on it. (Eisner, 1991, p.77)

The researcher's approach was to look at issues and events which were selected by herself or the interview respondents and use them to provide illustrations from an analysis of research data which would show that relief teaching was more than a matter of 'straightforward supervision'.

Methodological influences

The reasons for adopting a naturalistic approach

The choice of methodology fell into several areas of focus. Methodology was chosen to: enable the researcher to develop effective techniques and strategies; to develop a sensitivity to her own motivation and bias and to understand the constraints of the research settings. A later focus was added during the investigation: to search for links which would encapsulate the diversity of the research process into an integrated concept. Many of the 'core features' outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994, pp. 5-12) seemed to indicate features which could be used within the various settings:

- The investigation involved an intense and/ or prolonged contact with a 'field' or life situation.
- The researcher's role was to gain a 'holistic' overview of the context, including its implicit and explicit rules.
- The researcher attempted to capture data 'from the inside'.
- The researcher could isolate certain themes and show how people came to understand or develop strategies to manage their everyday situations.
- The researcher had to understand many interpretations of events, but develop an ability to adopt a consistent approach.
- Written data was the main source of communication and analysis.
- The researcher was the main form of instrumentation and interpretation.

A naturalistic inquiry paradigm was chosen. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that the characteristics of naturalistic inquiry were dependent on the belief that the context was crucial in understanding and interpreting meaning, and that the research was carried out in the natural setting:

> [A naturalistic] inquiry takes the form of successive iterations of four elements: purposive sampling, inductive analysis of the data obtained from the sample, development of grounded theory based on the inductive analysis, and projection of next steps in a constantly emergent design. The iterations are repeated as often as necessary until redundancy is achieved, the theory is stabilized, and the emergent design fulfilled to the extent possible in view of time and resource constraints. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 187-188)

The researcher was part of the context in the investigation. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) provided a way of linking both. They focused on the researcher as sole

instrument and described the research process through the use of strategies as 'much of the research process consists of dealing with a flow of substantive discoveries and with field contingencies that variously modify the research' (p. vii). Relief teaching depended on being flexible and adaptive.

Positioning herself within the relief teaching setting at personal, class, school, and system level, demanded a conceptual understanding of organisations. Ethnographic studies such as 'The Man in the Principal's Office' (Wolcott, 1973), which provided detailed observations of a school setting made from daily observations over a period of time, emphasised aspects of management, such as the cyclical nature of the school year, and showed that many pressures faced by administrators and regular school staff were different from those faced by relief teachers. In this way, studies from other perspectives served to illuminate and contrast the researcher's understanding of experience, and enabled her to extend or modify her approach in the investigation.

Relief teaching was surrounded by problems and, therefore, methodology which explored approaches to problem solving and lateral thinking, provided guidance (de Bono, 1979; de Bono, 1990). Techniques, for example, for looking at 'established ideas', included a list of factors to examine such as: 'dominant ideas'; 'tethering factors'; 'polarising tendencies'; 'boundaries'; and 'assumptions' (de Bono, 1990, p.52-59). The clarification of concepts including definitions, or a discussion of boundaries or assumptions, provided the researcher with increased awareness and confidence to look at alternative ways of structuring or assessing data, particularly in a relief teaching setting where there were few guidelines.

In this way, through an approach which started from close observation and a personal interpretation of experience, and linked the experiences of relief teaching with data from other sources, the researcher consolidated her own position, not only philosophically and methodologically but also conceptually. It enabled her to remain orientated to the changing relief teaching contexts. Reflection, also provided potential areas of study. She was aware that, from a position of low status, the duality of relief teacher/ researcher might cause ambiguity. Administrators, for example, might find the prospect of her interview a threatening one, particularly if the relief teaching context within their school was fraught with problems. Accordingly, she studied methodology used by others, such as counselling or conflict resolution (Gordon, 1974; Cornelius & Faire, 1990). Again, knowledge about the difficulties which might occur, enabled her to predict them and view events objectively (Burgess, 1985).

The positioning of the researcher

The research process varied from day-to-day. Inevitably there were occasions when the role of relief teacher predominated over the role of researcher. It was usually determined by a last-minute telephone call from a school administrator or the Agency coordinator with an offer of work. Even then, the researcher faced the day's relief teaching assignment not knowing where it would lead. Hemmings (1985, p.11) described the experience as being 'like a blind date. You open the door, hope for the best, and from then on your approach may or may not succeed.' The researcher approached relief teaching as a traveller. It was important to have a number of objectives which would capitalise on the opportunities around her. She felt secure in

the knowledge that any new data would cluster around one of the underlying themes of relief teaching, such as, 'low status', 'lack of information' or 'stress'. If a class of students were unsettled, she was likely to record fragmented words which would trigger memories later in the day when there was time to record more fully; if students worked independently, she could observe the setting 'holistically' and note the ways in which the students related to each other and to their work. Additional aspects of the setting such as the particular physical features of the room or whether student work was prized or tattered, provided 'clues' of the school culture. The description of a day's relief teaching showed the researcher in a number of classroom settings, where each was different.

> Situations are, in fact, of such critical importance that the researcher might not even sample; he might take the entire universe - so that he is assured of having observed at least once every routine event which occurs in the organization. Later, he can establish the importance of any of these events ... To the extent, that either [he] is at any given location within the organization or moving about, he is in a position to witness untoward events ... he will have people at hand to with whom he can speak about what had actually occurred — usually picking up a variety of perspectives on any given occurrence. He can maximise this variety by seeking out persons whom he anticipates might have different perspectives, including those that represent people low in hierarchy or tending to hold marginal or 'peculiar' views. (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 43)

In an approach where all data were considered relevant, it might be questioned how the researcher found time to interview, when she was often working every period and on duty at recess and in the lunch break. At times, she worked for part of a day and was able to extend her visit to the school to incorporate interviews with administrators or regular school staff. For instance, a casual conversation with one administrator, led to the promise of an interview 'after school on Friday', which turned out to be his time for 'just sitting' after a hectic week's activities (12,6). Brief conversations were seldom 'unproductive', particularly close in time to teaching activities. They provided opportunities to gain valuable insights and 'one-liners'. Often a phrase or comment encapsulated an idea, and led the researcher to further reflection.

> They have relief in Tasmania, because a group of casual workers who have no allowances are an easily managed workforce. (4,5)

> They have so many meetings. Senior staff seem to think that being in school is a thing on the side. (60,1)

The whole 'unexpectedness' of data collection was motivational. Notes written quickly, not only captured the events and feelings of the day but completed a sequence of events. She could picture the day as an entity in itself; the interrelationships between the varying settings, people and incidents were 'alive' and, therefore, easy to recall, even three years later. The process of selecting, gathering, recording and analysing data, meant that the slices of data became increasingly familiar, too. Each time the researcher thought of one of the objectives in the investigation, she had no difficulty in establishing a 'pathway' of incidents, or examples, which led towards it. For example, she could show how the failure of school staff to supply a relief teacher with a vital key led to a cycle of problems and frustrations, or, alternatively, brought the help of other staff, thus initiating an ethos of staff collegiality and support.

As the offer of work depended on supply and demand, the amount of new material recorded, depended on the availability of work and the researcher's stamina. She enjoyed collecting data and seemed to gain additional energy to record and transcribe it each day. A 'spontaneous' approach, however, did not mean a haphazard one. On the contrary, at times, the approach required initiative and involved many decisions. She needed flexibility, to switch from relief teaching to research and vice versa, and the ability to cope with ambiguity and opposing tensions. In the course of a day's work the researcher/ relief teacher might be given a timetable, but little other information. Her 'success' or 'failure' depended on her own strategies to remain effective. It is for this reason that more attention has been given to the rationale and strategies adopted by the researcher than in detailing the process of interviewing or analysis. Her approach can be judged effective: by the quality and richness of interview data shown in the varying perspectives; by evidence that she used her position of researcher/ practitioner to gain close access to the various settings; and by identification of the underlying links between the phenomenon of relief teaching and its recurring problems.

> ... a method of inquiry is adequate when its operations are logically consistent with the questions being asked; when it adapts to the special characteristic of the thing or event being examined; and when its operations provide information, evidence, and even simply perspective that bear upon the questions being posed. (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p.8)

In such a wide-ranging investigation, it is inevitable that what can be written is a minor part of what went on. What can be certain is that the researcher/ practitioner is the only constant in the middle of so much change. The following strategies were used in the course of the investigation and help to create an understanding of the links between the researcher and the research context, thus fulfilling one of the research objectives and providing further knowledge about relief teaching as a phenomenon. Adherence to one or more of these core strategies within a variety of settings could be seen as representing a logical and consistent orientation throughout the investigation.

Research strategies

Strategies for entering the research settings

The researcher was in a unique position. Although she had gained permission for accessing the varying fields of research, as a relief teacher she was easily an 'invisible' and forgotten member of the educational community and as such could move from setting to setting comparatively unobtrusively. Yet, in order to step out of her role as researcher she had to discard the negative images surrounding relief teaching and 'work' to gain the respondent's interest. She supplemented lack of personal experience within the educational hierarchy by background reading, which enabled her to 'tune in' and gain rapport. Her approach was deliberately unjudgmental, she used active listening skills and showed that she valued any contribution from interview respondents. In settings where she was an outsider and unable to gain access, she attempted a slower entry to the research field by developing research credibility and establishing networks over a period of time.

Strategies for getting organised
The researcher ensured that she had integrated the roles of researcher/ relief teacher and had 'internalised' a variety of methods and methodology to use in a variety of settings. The time allocated to research depended on time available after performing her duty of care as a relief teacher. It often depended on the nature of the lesson and the ways in which students responded. The researcher spent time studying the varying relief teaching contexts and methods of research which would enable close access. For example, she used an opportunistic approach to collect data from people who were familiar with the settings where she worked as a relief teacher, or had some connection to these settings, such as, a social worker or guidance officer who understood the local context (appendix 17).

Strategies for observing
The presence of a stranger introduces some measure of disturbance, therefore, the researcher tried to prevent changes that resulted from her presence (Spradley, 1980; Lee, 1993). She took care to record as much as was possible within a new setting, before aspects of the environment became familiar and were taken for granted. In this way, she was able to see how her relationship to the environment changed. It was a strategy, too, to help her to compare the differing needs of, say, new relief teachers and those who were familiar with the varying settings.

Strategies for coping with unknown settings and for managing changes were seen as particularly important and hence time was taken in developing techniques to cope confidently. Visiting various schools sharpened her sense of inquiry and enabled her to see patterns of events. There were often few forms of external reference, therefore, she relied on her own awareness and ability to see change as an interesting event and not as a trauma. Within the constraints of the limited time available, it was important to utilise what knowledge she had obtained from previous visits, and to develop a focus quickly (Fullan, 1991, p.5). Observation generated reflection, and indirectly led to a deeper sense of positive personal awareness which counteracted many of the negative impacts of relief teaching reported elsewhere (Bourke, 1993). Rogers (1969) noted the benefits of self-initiated personal involvement:

> ... such openness to experience leads to emerging value directions which appear to be common across individuals and perhaps even across cultures. Stated in older terms, individuals who are thus in touch with their experiencing come to value such directions as sincerity, independence, self-direction, self-knowledge, social responsivity, social responsibility, and [positive] interpersonal relationships. (p. 256)

Strategies for listening
In his book on effective communication, Bolton (1987) discusses the difference between 'hearing', 'listening', 'attending' and the 'posture of involvement' (pp. 32-34). He introduces the chapter on reflective listening with a quotation from a theologian, John Powell. It conveys the powerful rewards for those people who have mastered strategies for active listening:

> Listening in dialogue is listening more to meanings than to words ... In true listening, we reach behind the words, see through them, to find the person who is being revealed. Listening is a search to find the treasure of the true person as revealed verbally and nonverbally. There is a semantic problem, of course. The words bear a different

> connotation for you than they do for me. Consequently, I can never tell you *what you said,* but only *what I heard.* (p.49)

Strategies for listening enabled the researcher to unravel some of the deeper issues, particularly as she was familiar with the contexts but saw them from her own perspective. For example, she could visualise the preparation that administrators made in a regular teacher's absence. The challenge for the researcher was to identify and capture the more subtle aspects of the interviews, when a respondent said something which appeared to conflict with the researcher's experience as a relief teacher in the school. Comments from interview respondents suggested that what they would like to happen, and what happened were often very different (see appendices 13 & 14). The researcher's changing status and area of knowledge (Glaser & Strauss, 1971) affected the ways in which she listened to the comments. For she listened for unspoken language, such as the attitudes and assumptions which gave each interview an identity of its own: students, for example, enjoyed being part of a group, where an adult listened and valued their comments (appendix 1); an educational consultant had his own agenda and saw relief teaching as part of a broader concept of cooperative learning (appendix 18). In each case, the researcher used strategies for listening to gain rapport, and rich interview data. She used her tone of voice and a posture of involvement, to encourage the respondents to talk. Many of her questions, indicate a linking or focusing strategy. At times, she used questions to clarify the responses (appendix 5). Not only did they encourage an active response from interview respondents but led to the detection of deeper issues, when what was said did not correlate with what was felt, or what happened (Bolton, 1987; Goleman, 1995). Later, she listened to the audiotapes and transcribed them. In all, the data was very familiar and patterns of ideas, or thoughts clustered quite naturally because of her sustained listening over a period of time. The development of active listening skills represented an important strategy throughout the investigation.

Strategies for interviewing

The researcher used incidental conversations which might occur while on playground duty or in a sub-staffroom after school, as a means to create opportunities for interview. 'Incidental' questioning was an important tactic, which enabled the researcher to gain knowledge quickly, often in response to a specific aspect of the research which puzzled her. From previous experience, the researcher knew that each interview [i.e. one lasting twenty minutes or longer] would be very different. She welcomed the differences and enjoyed the challenge of adapting to different styles. It was a tactic which helped her see each interview as unique and visualise each one later in analysis. The interviews were viewed structurally as part of a wider field. She used strategies to develop trust with the respondents. The settings, gestures and styles of speech all provided clues. Did the respondent see himself or herself as a leader? Did s/he welcome the interview or grant it? Did s/he want to field questions or take the interview seriously (Lee and Renzetti, 1993)?

Strategies over time

The strategies employed by the researcher formed part of a long-term process: each interview was seen as a step towards a wider understanding of relief teaching and an opportunity to look beyond the 'superficial' answers to deeper questions. At times,

she needed to confront long-held opinions in order to break the cycle of platitudes, especially with people at system level. She knew, that as her 'credibility' increased, through persistent searching, that she had knowledge and knew how to use it as a lever to effect policy changes. For most occasions, however, her strategies led to maintaining a 'balanced' approach, in order to strengthen her own understanding of the ways in which the varying aspects of relief teaching interrelated.

Strategies for recording
At times, there could be an overwhelming amount of data, particularly when there was little time for selection and processing. The researcher's first concern was to record a fleeting word or phrase which could trigger more extensive reflections later. Note taking was used to record accurately and also to 'unload'. Records included observational notes, such as, basic notes, contextual observations, reflections, quotes, anecdotal evidence, and memos. Methodological notes provided the basis for developing a position, theoretically, pedagogical and philosophically which enabled the researcher to attempt to understand the deeper implications within the research context as well her own needs and boundaries.

Strategies for analysing
Strategies employed by the researcher were built in to the daily collection of data. As Schatzman & Strauss (1973, p. 57) commented, 'In a most general sense, every after thought and second glance is an act of verification ...'. Perhaps, the most dominant strategy used in the investigation was one of careful analysis to ensure that each aspect of the complex and often abstract data was 'grounded'. The researcher sought verification of facts which were not easily verifiable, by gathering material in different ways, seeing relief teaching from the perspective of an 'insider' and an 'outsider' and visiting various settings. As she worked through different processes she was able first to analyse classes of people, things, and events and later analyse the properties which characterised them, linking them to different sets within a phenomenon of relief teaching. Links, such as guiding metaphors, helped to illustrate some of the underlying themes and patterns (van Manen, 1990).

Strategies for reconceptualising relief teaching
One of the main issues of relief teaching was its low status and low priority within the educational community (Webb, 1993). As a result, relief teaching was stuck, 'out of sight out of mind' (Galloway, 1993), based on an ad hoc, hierarchical system of management. Some of the strategies for effectiveness outlined by Adams (1979), illustrate the ways with which the researcher chose to develop a research approach which would make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon and also provide links and data which would enable administrators, teachers, or researchers to structure and reconceptualise relief teaching more readily, and more effectively.

The researcher's fundamental strategy was to understand relief teaching through direct, on site, face-to-face contact with the people and events in question. Using the knowledge gained from the way in which interview participants saw the various settings, the researcher worked from a personal perspective and from detailed knowledge, to develop broader concepts which worked and fitted (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Her goal throughout the research was to gain the richest, most comprehensive description of experience, which would convey the authenticity of the research. In

many ways, the researcher's strategy was to let the material speak for itself, and allow the readers to make judgements or decisions based on their ability to relate to the data. The researcher's task was to provide links and position relief teaching so people could visualise it. The strategy was not to provide easy answers.

Throughout the investigation the researcher developed strategies to balance competing elements within the research. For example, people wanted relief teaching effectiveness and simple solutions, yet she realised that unless they understood the social context of relief teaching, such solutions would provide recurring problems. The common elements of the research were often more subtle, or taken for granted and, therefore, 'invisible' because they were overlooked. In order to find the difference that made the difference, she focused on the attitudes, beliefs, values and assumptions of interview participants, and searched for ways of reconceptualising relief teaching until it made sense from her perspective, both as a researcher and as a practitioner. She chose methodology which could encompass change. For example, Schwartz & Ogilvy (1979) used the term 'morphogenesis' to incorporate the concept of an organic system, where diversity, ambiguity and interactivity were integral components, and where 'variation is the order of all contexts' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 51).

The concept of multiple perspectives served to fulfil the research aims as well as providing a means to demonstrate the divergent needs and multiple realities of the people within each perspective at all levels of the education system. Through this strategy, it was possible to show, for example, how problems could be resolved through changing from 'hierarchic' to 'heterarchic' concepts of order (p.51):

> Perspective connotes a view at a distance from a particular focus. Where we look from affects what we see. This means that any one focus of observation gives only a partial result: no single discipline ever gives us a complete picture. A whole picture is an image created morphogenetically from multiple perspectives. (Schwartz & Ogilvy, 1979, p.15).

Rearranging: By deliberately placing the context of relief teaching as central to the investigation, instead of in its traditional position in the margins, the researcher provided a different balance or emphasis of relationships between relief teaching and other facets of the education system (de Bono, 1990).

Enriching: Little was known about relief teaching, therefore, any research from a personal perspective would seem to 'enrich' understanding for those who were interested. The previous investigation showed that relatively few people in the education system were interested, therefore the research approach was deliberately chosen to reflect the needs and issues of varying perspectives and to show that what happened to relief teachers affected them too. It was a strategy used to resolve conflict (Cornelius & Faire, 1990).

Enlarging: Using an inductive approach the research setting was as broad as possible. It was driven by the researcher's need of self-actualisation, to balance and match her understanding of the relief teaching context with that of developing a research approach which would elicit rich data from a number of different settings (Maslow 1970). The researcher developed strategies for gaining data, understanding

the relief teaching and research context, and identified ways structuring and analysis (de Bono, 1990). Paradoxically, although the strategy of being 'open' brings with it feelings of motivation and creativity, it brings also, what Rogers (1969) described as the appearance of 'falling apart' (p. 289). He argued that any personal growth is marked by a certain degree of disorganization followed by reorganization, and describes the 'pain of new understandings ... the feeling of uncertainty, vacillation, and even turmoil ...' as integral to the experience. The grounded approach to data analysis, resolved the uncertainties, and anchored the research (Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

Restricting: Areas of research were 'restricted', perhaps for study at a later stage, such as the role of the Agency coordinators; or further analysis of administrative strategies. The focus was in drawing material from the research setting and looking inward to build up a comprehensive understanding of the relief teaching setting in Tasmania and if possible, finding links between the paradoxes and problems and the relief teaching context. The researcher saw these as the key for linking issues and problems. In doing so, the researcher recognised that she was 'defining' the context in one way but paradoxically opening it in another for further research. She knew more than she could say, so the research process was seen to present its own restrictions too.

Impoverishing: A decision was made to use short comments from the interviews in order to emphasise some of the issues and conflicts which recurred on many occasions. While this reduced the richness and narrative aspects of much of the data, it safeguarded the need for retaining confidentiality. The researcher knew that if she gained access to sensitive issues, small textual details could easily provide 'clues' which might provide others with the means of identification of interview respondents (Lee, 1993, p. 176). Focusing on the patterns of issues, rather than the people concerned, would provide a more powerful lever for change.

Anticipating: The research aimed to provide insights into relief teaching, and show how many present short-term solutions might lead to longer term problems (Senge, 1992, p.62) However there was an additional dimension to the research, for her information led to problems which, in some cases, were deliberately hidden.

> Researching sensitive topics makes substantial demands on researchers. They require skill, tenacity and imagination if they successfully to confront the problems and issues which arise when research in various ways poses a threat to those who are studied. While this can seem like a daunting exercise (Lee and Renzetti, 1990), it is also a challenging one. (Lee & Renzetti, 1993, p. 210)

There was a political element in researching marginalised groups (Lee, 1993), and of providing information which could change the status quo within organisations (Senge, 1992, p.276) particularly when people do not share similar mental models of team learning. The researcher searched for ways which would reduce the polarisation of attitudes by developing a set of governing ideas which would 'anchor' relief teaching. She also identified problems which were based on different underlying values, a potential source of conflict (Senge, 1992, p.223).

As the research progressed, it became increasingly clear that it was necessary, not only to present accurate information, but build a shared vision of relief teaching which represented more than '... the less desirable strategies of "containment", "babysitting", "childminding" and the "holding operation"' (Galloway and Morrison, 1994a, p. 10). [Although the process of building shared vision was extensive, it is only accorded a brief reference in this chapter, because of limited space.]

The hermeneutic circle

The systems holistic approach to learning in organisations (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Senge, 1992) illustrated the changing relationship between the researcher and the focus of the investigation. In the initial stages of the research process, Senge's comments were viewed distantly as representing concepts of management, later, they contributed to understanding lived experience 'from the inside' (van Manen, 1990, pp. 6-13) by reflecting the connectedness of the whole investigation, in a hermeneutic circle. At a personal level, her approach might be seen, conceptually, as a process from 'survival learning' [as a new relief teacher] to 'adaptive learning' to 'generative learning' (Senge, 1992, p.14). In what might be seen as transitional and often tentative process, the researcher travelled from an 'insider's' personal perception of relief teaching, to one which examined relief teaching as an 'outsider' at systems level until she came to integrate and consolidate her grounded approach. Methodologically, this inductive process could be seen as a status passage (Glaser & Strauss, 1971) as she gained access and increased credibility, in a range of research settings. The researcher became aware, also, of her own changing perceptions towards relief teaching as she clarified the ambiguities which had previously proved puzzling. For example, while administrators directed relief teachers, and covered problems, she saw that in essence, they were losing control with no clear guidelines or standards to provide security and no simple way of understanding what should be done (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Waters & Crook, 1990). In the classroom, however, students were gaining power, not through administration, but through rituals and storytelling. Through many detailed observations in wide-ranging settings, through the unusual juxtaposition of events and anecdotal evidence, the extremes of evidence linked. For example, the researcher saw how styles of leadership (Owens, 1987) impacted on the 'dynamic complexity' of various relief teaching settings (Senge, 1992, p.71).

In doing so, she became increasingly aware of the symbiotic relationship between her roles as researcher and practitioner and the development over time, of her ability to link aspects of relief teaching through the art of questioning and reflecting and maintaining an open orientation to the subject. As she grew more able to cope with the complexities of linking aspects of relief teaching she became better able to explore the nature of the phenomenon (Gadamer, 1975, p.266). Van Manen (1990) observed that when a topic of mutual interest emerged from a conversation, the conversation became structured as a triad, with both speakers orientated to new ways of attempting to understand the notion or phenomenon. A 'lived experience' (p.35) was seen by van Manen to convey 'a certain essence, a "quality" that we recognize in retrospect' (p. 36). Either through her own process of observation or reflection, or through interviews, or writing, the researcher sought to gain this 'essence' of experience. For example, when she reflects on the day's relief teaching (chapter 1), she visualises the contrast between the polished corridors, closed doors and dark blue

paintwork of the school corridor, with the 'explosion' of green bushes and sunlight outside. An aspect of her day condensed and intensified to represent more than a particular action. It could be used to examine deeper layers of meaning. As Gadamer (1975) noted, 'If something is called or considered an experience its meaning rounds it into the unity of a significant whole' (p.60).

Comments from interview respondents often produced, what the researcher regarded as the essential nature of an experience, which led her to a deeper understanding of the balance of relationships in the classroom between relief teachers and students. The following passage, for example, links with the description of a class which 'almost allows itself to be supervised ... almost becomes a creature that has a mind of its own. You have to get it and lassoo it. You have to take control' (21,1):

> If a system is complex—composed of diverse elements that interact by mutually causal and indeterminate processes—and the system is open to external inputs, then it can change morphogenetically. A new form, unpredicted by any of its parts, can arise in such a system ... The requirements for morphogenesis are diversity, openness, complexity, mutual causality, and indeterminacy. When these conditions exist, we have the ingredients for qualitative change (Schwartz & Ogilvy, 1979, p.14).

In making relief teaching visible, therefore, aspects of the data became symbolic of universal issues (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). In order to build shared vision the researcher had to 'repackage' relief teaching, so others saw its significance in the teaching and learning settings. She needed, therefore, to link relief teaching with the needs of people from varying perspectives and use some aspects of relief teaching as a 'lever' (Senge, 1992, pp. 64-67) so that relief teaching was viewed in a different, and more positive, paradigm. A research focus, for example, which linked aspects of economic management, a high priority, with relief teaching, a low priority, might present opportunities for communication, and innovative thinking, where all parties could benefit. The research was driven, therefore, not only by her sense of inquiry but by her belief that relief teachers could become a significant resource. She knew that unless basic assumptions were challenged, problems would reoccur.

The collection of data by interview

The researcher reviewed the theoretical aspects of the interview technique she had used in her previous research on relief teaching within a similar Tasmanian relief teaching context (Evans, 1986; Hook, 1987). She developed active listening skills (Gordon, 1974; Pease & Garner, 1985) in order to maximise the opportunity of obtaining wide-ranging data and to provide opportunities for cross checking data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.283). She was particularly concerned with understanding the hidden messages that would provide clues from the participants (Martin, 1976; Pease, 1981; Lofland & Lofland, 1984). An awareness of the causes of communication breakdown, or the techniques of counselling or conflict resolution would provide a basis for better spontaneous questions (Gordon, 1974). The approach needed to be highly flexible and at the same time one that could elicit evocative descriptions of a range of experiences. The researcher also developed strategies for researching a sensitive topic (Lee, 1993, pp. 99-108; Renzetti & Lee, 1993) and for developing and maintaining trust (Lee, 1993, pp. 208-209). In single interviews, it was seen as particularly important that the interviewer attuned to the individual interpersonal styles of the respondents, and she was well prepared

(Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p.86). The thematic concept of relief teaching gave the researcher a conceptual framework which she used to identify the areas under discussion as the interview progressed (Webb, 1993).

The unstructured interview, frequently used in counselling and in sociological field work, (Hook, 1987) was chosen as the principal method to obtain data for comparative analysis. It employed a variety of questioning techniques and there was greater freedom to vary the questions and to probe and explore the answers, in order to reveal what constituted a personal 'reality' for each participant, and to gain insights which explained his/ her perspective. Educational issues, and relief teaching were affected by the culture of the school, and by factors, such as, its leadership and language. The researcher, as a relief teacher, was sensitive to the nature of a school's ethos and procedures, which changed radically from school to school, and over a period of time. Her knowledge provided an opportunity to 'read' and assess the less obvious aspects of the interviews, such as, non verbal communication (Pease, 1981; Eisner, 1991), and through listening, reflecting or questioning (Bolton, 1987; Goleman, 1996) '... *create* the data of the research' with the interview respondent (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p.100, italics in original). The purpose of the interviews, therefore, was to construct an approach to interviewing which would draw out the personal responses of 'knowing-in-action',

> Whatever language we may employ, however, our descriptions of knowing-in-action are always *constructions*. They are always attempts to put into explicit, symbolic form a kind of intelligence that begins by being tacit and spontaneous ... For knowing-in-action is dynamic, and 'facts', 'procedures', 'rules', and 'theories' are static. (Schön, 1987, p.25, italics in original)

At times, the questioning could be non-directive and at times focused. Questions could also test an interpretative response or set the data in a context. The focus of the interview would be to involve the respondent as deeply as possible, by encouraging him/ her to describe, or comment on an aspect of relief teaching which was of personal significance. Any comments would indirectly reveal other issues arising from a particular context. In this way, interview data from the varying administrative, teaching and student perspectives would provide a range of information for later analysis.

Conditions for interview

Having gained overall permission from the University Ethics Committee and the Department, the researcher sought permission from six high and two senior secondary school principals for permission to interview within his/ her school setting. In turn, she approached individual teachers or administrators for their assistance. All interview subjects were volunteers and either selected because of their availability in the school where the researcher was a relief teacher that day, or, as in the case of the majority of administrators, because they organised relief teaching in schools where she taught. The researcher selected conditions for interview that would be flexible enough to involve participants who were working in different teaching and learning settings and, therefore, might have varied experiences. Where possible, interviews were arranged as close in time and place to the relief teaching context as was feasible, they were audiotaped with the permission of the respondent, and any notes made during the interview had his/ her approval. Observations made by the

interviewer were noted at the end of the transcript. Time was allocated for the interview respondent to debrief or to ask questions of the interviewer. S/he was assured that, as far as possible, confidentiality would be maintained. The recorded material was transcribed by the researcher as soon as possible after the interview, coded, and locked in a personal cabinet to preserve confidentiality.

Selection of interview subjects

Based on her knowledge of the relief teaching context, the researcher saw the opportunistic selection of participants as the most effective way to provide the diversity needed to illuminate varying aspects of relief teaching. The researcher transcribed over eighty hours of audiotaped interview data.

- Twenty-five interviews with people from a wider context [covering issues of management; teaching; research in Tasmania and overseas].

- Thirty interviews with administrators at primary, secondary, and senior secondary levels. [including six school bursars and three Agency co-ordinators].

- Forty-five interviews with teachers: both relief (28) and regular (17).

- Interview data from students covering six student grades: grades 7-12.

- Telephone conversations [i.e shorter than 20 minutes] were held with twenty-eight officers from the education department. In general, the information was limited.

- The researcher could identify over one hundred additional people who contributed to the investigation, many on a number of occasions.

Additional data was obtained from other sources. They included anecdotal evidence and data supplied by the researcher's reflections and observations as a researcher/ relief teacher from 1993-1997. They were transcribed from notes made at the time, and provided opportunities for triangulation. Interviews with administrators, teachers and students mainly centred around six high schools and two senior secondary schools within two school districts in northern Tasmania. Interviews were also conducted with administrators and teachers in primary, district, and special schools to offer comparison. Interviews with Agency coordinators and others occurred in a variety of settings.

Contextual information

Interviews with administrators, teachers, and students were seen as having three functions:

- to gain the interest and support of the interview respondent;
- to find out about relief teaching from his/ her perspective;
- to search for the non-spoken messages, such as attitudes, or body language.

Open-ended questions enabled the respondents to identify aspects of the relief teaching context that were meaningful to them. It also gave them control over the subject under discussion. The majority of the interview data was collected at the schools. From the researcher's previous experience, this was an effective use of time, and environmental and human resources. The researcher wanted the interviews to reflect the particular school context, and enable respondents to feel 'at home' [i.e. as close as possible to their respective relief teaching settings]. This was a deliberate strategy to 'balance' the unstructured interviews within a context which might trigger memories of their transitory relief teaching experiences. Detailed interview transcripts in the appendices illustrate the way in which interviews evolved. Interview transcripts verified how quickly rapport was gained by the researcher. The words and descriptive data indicated their involvement. Body language, their choice of metaphors or phrases presented incidental clues to the researcher (Pease, 1981; Pease & Garner, 1985).

Interviews ranged from a twenty-minute period to a length of two-and-a-half hours. The focus was to gain spontaneous description of lived experience rather than, in the often limited time, gain a personal history of each participant. If areas of ambiguity were noted or particular issues seemed dominant, the researcher used the framework developed by her previous research as a mind map (Buzan, 1989) to cross-check the information received, or needed, from other interview respondents. Each interview was very different yet as the interviews progressed so aspects of relief teaching became more 'visible' and she could visualise clusters of information which identified gaps, links and mismatches. For example, information from school bursars with specialist knowledge of the economic aspects of school management, complemented observations from the 'hidden observers' such as office staff and caretakers or parents. By viewing the school from a number of perspectives, it was possible to see patterns of changes in school routines over a period of time. More importantly, the concept of 'mutual shaping' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), based on the notion of 'enablers' and 'constraints' (p.154) contributes to an understanding of relief teaching. It provides opportunities to explain, or make sense of, the complex and unpredictable relationships within the various relief teaching settings, and provided opportunities for the researcher to gain rich material from the interview data. For example, by using 'enablers', such as enabling the interview respondents to select aspects of relief teaching which were familiar to them, at a time which was convenient and close to the relief teaching settings, many potentially negative side effects or barriers to communication, such as 'distancing', were blocked. If 'distancing' still occurred, as with senior officers from the Department (systems perspective), it provided an important and enabling link to deeper issues. Paradoxically, efforts to block out information by the interview respondent often alerted the researcher to focus on that aspect of the interview, and produced a reversal of what was intended. An examination of the interview transcripts (appendices) will show evidence of the concept of mutual shaping, through points, such as:

- The peculiar web or pattern of circumstances that characterizes a given situation may never occur in just that way again, so that explanations and management actions are in a real sense unique and cannot be understood as implying either predictability or control in any given way.

- Explanations are at best 'here-and-now' accounts that represent a 'photographic slice of life' of a dynamic process that, in the next instant, might present a very different aspect. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.155)

The researcher sought verification through triangulation and patterns of responses. As the investigation progressed, previous interview respondents telephoned with additional information. Unsolicited information was appreciated, either because it extended or consolidated the researcher's approach, such as, information from the internet (Kilpatrick, 1996), or provided evidence that the interviews had resulted in positive action.

Occasionally, interviews were influenced by external factors such as the telephone or an interruption from a student. Although the researcher might have to 'rebuild' the focus or rapport of the interview, she gained additional insights into the context surrounding the participant. For example, it might demonstrate an administrator's style of management (Glatthorn, 1990), or what importance s/he placed on the interview process in comparison with the 'distraction'. The researcher selected all data as 'useful' and was not selective. Her background in relief teaching helped her relate easily to the subject under discussion. In addition, any new material was assimilated using the theoretical framework developed in her previous study.

An overview of interview perspectives

The following section follows the theme: the collection of data by interview. It illustrates the changing relationship between the researcher and the research context, one of the objectives of the study, by examining the interviews with students, relief teachers, regular teachers, Agency coordinators, and with respondents at systems level. In doing so, it presents the general nature of the interviews from each perspective, and the way in which the researcher modified her approach, for example, to retain confidentiality or to gain rich data. The focus of the research is on understanding the holistic nature of the interviews from each perspective as a part of making relief teaching visible as a phenomenon. For example, Galloway and Morrison (1994a) noted the differences in 'style':

> The various [interviews] differ in style because practitioners, researchers, trainers, teachers and educational consultants have their own discourses ... We can learn from tone of these voices just as we learn from the substance. (p. 10)

At this phase of inductive research, the researcher needed to understand the interviews as representing unique and personal situations (van Manen, 1990). She searched for patterns of reactions or behaviour which might provide insights. Her questioning and reflection could be seen as an exploration, of remaining open to the turmoil of ideas and experiences which she sought to identify and record. Her focus was on gaining rich data, and a composite picture of the boundaries of where the experiences overlapped or aligned. The general overview of perspectives, therefore, provides a context for understanding the issues which will emerge from grounded analysis. They contribute to an understanding of relief teaching, by exploring some of the hidden and subtle aspects of relief teaching which are rarely discussed (Gordon, 1988). More specific insights may be gained from individual interviews from each perspective (Appendices 1-18).

The students' perspective
An initial interview with a group of grade 7 students caused the researcher to modify her approach (appendix 1). The interview had arisen incidentally. As the researcher walked down the corridor after a particularly noisy administrative period at the start of the school day, one of the boys from the class, walking beside her, commented that the class was noisy because she was a relief teacher. He agreed to be interviewed with three others, selected by his teacher. Having gained specific permission from the assistant principal, the researcher arranged an interview in the lunch break. She chose a quiet room where the group of four students would not be distracted by other people. The students took their role seriously and were reluctant to return to class for afternoon lessons, as they had become involved in the discussion. The interview, however, pinpointed a number of concerns. What was the researcher's role when students described what went on in other relief teachers' classes?

As the students detailed the games that were played in their primary school classes, their isolated memories triggered further discussion. They agreed that in their high school class, some challenges to relief teachers were not fun but of a more serious nature and 'worrying'. They wondered why nothing was done about it. Even within a thirty-minute period, their tacit understanding of the relationships (Galloway and Morrison, 1994a) which existed between students and relief teachers had been substantiated. Isolated memories had clustered into a pattern of events. They were able to differentiate between behaviour in primary school settings and in their [high school] grade 7 class although, they ' ... did not know what went on in other high school classes.' A focus on relief teaching classes, therefore, had changed the balance of information for the students as well as for the researcher.

The discussion had externalised tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1967) and 'validated' aspects of the relationships between students and relief teachers. The students now considered the challenges as a 'natural' [i.e. valid] element of the relief teaching context and of the student culture. The researcher recognised that, for her, there were questions of ethics. As an adult, and as a relief teacher, she did not wish to provide additional 'validity' by her silence, and appear to condone the traditional student challenges within relief teaching classes. If she commented, not only would she draw further attention to the conflicts, but students might question why school staff did so little and ignored problems. For these reasons, the researcher approached relief teaching as a politically, as well as a personally, sensitive area (Sieber, 1993, pp. 14-26).

After reflection, any further evidence collected from students was done informally. At times, it arose from an incident in class, or from a comment made by one of the students. For instance, the researcher might question why some grade 7 students wrote pseudonyms when they were asked to write their names on a class list. She explained that she 'wanted their help to find out ...' or she was 'curious ...' Often they were, too. Comments showed that they enjoyed providing information and the 'respect' their answers were given. At times, however, gaining data from students was like walking a tightrope. A student's age did not indicate the 'quality' of his response. The researcher could not assume, for example, that a grade 10 student's comments on relief teaching would be more thoughtful than those of a grade 7 student. Nor could the researcher assume that the promise of confidentiality would

elicit a 'better' response. In practice, some students took advantage of their unknown status to write comments, like, 'We treat relief teachers differently because they are gay.' The statement indicated little about relief teaching but confirmed the researcher's own observations, that seemingly unrelated incidents triggered sexual references or jokes, particularly among adolescent boys. She assumed it was a form of group bonding, for such comments invariably raised a smile or comment from their peers. For instance, on one occasion when she had talked to a student about his discriminatory remarks, he looked uncomfortable and said it was a joke. Evidence from student interviews, therefore, showed that what might seem an inappropriate response, very often had meaning when viewed from a cultural perspective. In a high school context, student culture was an important factor in understanding the hidden aspects of relief teaching (appendices, 2 & 3).

The relief teachers' perspective

It was apparent, from interviews with relief teachers that some people chose relief teaching in preference to regular teaching and had developed an array of skills and strategies to cope. These people were motivated and enthusiastic and could recount some of their more graphic experiences in great detail, showing as they did so that they had a sophisticated understanding of the varying needs and relationships within varying school settings. The issue of student behaviour was a predominant one. In the course of the majority of interviews there was a reference to an occasion where they felt anger, frustration or stress by the behaviour or language of students. At times, some relief teachers were threatened and intimidated by groups of students (e.g. appendix 7). Several new relief teachers expressed their shock at their lack of control in the classroom, but saw that it was a stage that they needed to 'get through' (e.g. appendix 4). One relief teacher, returning after an absence of several years, was shocked, not only in student behaviour but by the indifference of many school staff. Relief teachers felt they were seen in terms of money but also felt that they could not give 'value' unless the teaching setting was made more manageable. They felt less responsible personally, if any work was not completed. There were also relief teachers interviewed who worried that they could not cope as they wished (e.g. appendix 8). Some, particularly older relief teachers, wanted to make a difference.

The regular teachers' perspective

Interviews with regular teachers depended on the researcher's familiarity with the school context. In schools where the researcher worked most of the time as a relief teacher and was on duty at lunch time, her interviews with regular staff were fragmented. They were woven into the day, perhaps following an incident with a student, or after school had finished (e.g. appendices 10 &11). In schools, however, where there were subject staffrooms, and the researcher was covering a class for a number of days, her routine was aligned with the routine of other teachers school and she had a desk or centre from which to use as a base. Her access into the network of regular teachers became easier (e.g. appendix 9).

Interview data illustrated how relief teaching came as 'yet another thing to cope with.' As the researcher glanced around the staffroom crammed piles of papers, notes, notice boards with cynical cartoons, coffee mugs, a dusty cactus, and a pile of confiscated and 'lost' objects, she had no doubts about the groundedness and validity of her approach: she was certainly close to the everyday, behind-the-scenes reality.

Although interviews with regular teachers covered a range of settings and teaching disciplines, often with a divergent focus, few people had time to stand back and reflect on their practice. The researcher found that her interviews often contained more about regular teaching than about relief teaching and provided insights into the school climate and culture.

The administrators' perspective

The perception by the researcher that some administrators would find her role as a researcher and relief teacher somewhat unsettling, appeared justified. As a relief teacher she had worked behind the scenes, and as a researcher she had opportunities to broadcast some of the difficulties surrounding relief teaching. Traditionally too, relief teachers were expected to 'fit in' unquestioningly within a largely hierarchical approach to management (Owens, 1987, p. 10), whereas in the role of researcher she could focus on problems which, from her observation, they would rather forget. She took time, therefore, to 'position' her approach as confidential, nonjudgmental and driven by a sense of inquiry to find out more about aspects of relief teaching from their perspective. Participants could select the issues under discussion.

In general, most experienced administrators had built up a detailed knowledge of the organisation of relief teaching within the school(s) where they had worked to coordinate relief teaching. Few schools had developed policies and there appeared to be little written information or evidence that relief teaching was a topic of positive discussion among senior staff either within the school or between schools (12,7; appendix 14). For new administrators or those who found difficulty in coping, the opportunity to express some of the deeper feelings of frustration about their lack of control or the quality of relief teachers to an interested and sympathetic listener created an immediate rapport. They were pleased to have someone who listened, who appreciated the complexity of the organisation of relief teaching, and understood the time it took each day (e.g. appendix 13). Their comments showed that, in general, such difficulties were unnoticed or unrecognised by many of the school staff, and senior officers in the Department.

The interviews provided glimpses of personal struggles and successes as administrators described how they had risen above some of the problems which occurred when school routines were changed during a regular teacher's absence. The researcher noted that administrators who had created a better timetabling system were pleased to explain how they had devised strategies to match the needs of their school. One administrator (45), for example described how he had developed an 'operations centre' in the staffroom rather than operating from his isolated office, another 'economised' with relief teachers and ran a 'chook raffle', as a means of thanking the regular school staff who supervised students (Y).

The researcher noticed an unexpected dimension to some interviews. A few administrators seemed to use the interview initially as an opportunity to practice their own interview skills. The researcher responded to their needs, by providing a series of probing questions which redirected their faultless, but generalised answers to those which required a more specific response based on their own school context. In this way, she adopted what Eisner (1991) termed a 'transactional orientation to the process of knowing' (p.60), by ensuring that the answers reflected a lived experience

rather than one which was conceptualised (van Manen, 1990). For example, one administrator who included references on a 'good' relief teacher and an induction program for relief teachers, sounded excellent but further probing questions revealed that the textbook answers were based on what he 'would like to happen'. The reality in his school was very different. He admitted his initiatives to improve relief teaching had failed through lack of time or staff support. Another administrator however, during the course of the interview, equated a 'good' relief teacher as a good manager and explained his philosophy: he believed that children would not cooperate or learn unless they felt secure (12,7). Such clues about personal values, provided opportunities for later analysis. The researcher developed, what Schön (1987, p.13) described as 'a kind of knowing' to 'handle indeterminate zones of practice', when she sensed inconsistencies between what was said and what was felt.

The Agency coordinators' perspective

The three Agency [CES] coordinators had defined their role as purely administrative, and, therefore, were able to distance themselves from many of the problems experienced by relief teachers and administrators. They were well aware of the problems, but they placed great importance on building trust between their clients and were careful to preserve confidentiality. Official communication seldom went beyond routine calls for relief teachers, or from a relief teacher enquiring about work. At times, they had to cope with an extreme number of telephone calls within a short time, possibly each one representing further combinations of schools, subjects, times and people. The researcher used the interviews as the means to establish the way in which Agency coordinators received and directed information. While ensuring that confidentiality was preserved, it was still possible to tie up 'loose ends', and make aspects of relief teaching visible. The researcher asked questions, such as, How were relief teachers selected for schools? What training did the coordinators receive? These questions helped, in turn, to identify some of the more specific links, gaps and mismatches which occurred locally or within the wider Tasmanian context.

The systems perspective

Telephone conversations with twenty-eight officers from the Department and interviews over a three-year period produced no more than a handful of written notes. Most of them knew little about relief teaching, nor was it possible to find people who had the time or interest to search for answers. The researcher concluded that more fruitful results could be reached through other channels. In general however, the interviews at system level which were intended to 'fill a gap' in the researcher's understanding or 'fill in' an aspect of the relief teaching context, complemented each other and produced a conceptual meta-system or framework which extended the researcher's insights into the structural issues in management at system level (e.g. appendix 17).

When possible, the researcher used seminars to up-date her professional development. On several occasions she interviewed overseas educational consultants and gained some understanding of their perspectives on relief teaching (appendix 18). They were usually deeply interested in her research. In Tasmania, attitudes to relief teaching seemed polarised. The researcher noted the hidden curriculum particularly at seminars. On these occasions her name tag, unlike others, had no identifying school or work place. People were often curious as to where she fitted in to the

community. One participant, on discovering she was a relief teacher/ researcher remarked, 'It was good of the Department to let you come.' The researcher was not sponsored by the Department. During the seminar she worked with a senior officer from the Department who offered her personal help (appendix 16). From that contact, it was possible to overcome some of the previous barriers in communication which existed at system level.

Interviews conducted out of the school context arose, therefore, from opportunities at seminars or by appointments with senior Departmental officials. They required a 'sensitive' approach by the researcher (Lee, 1993, p. 107). As Sieber and Stanley (1988) argue:

> Sensitive research addresses some of society's most pressing social issues and policy questions. Although ignoring the ethical issues in sensitive research is not a responsible attitude to science, shying away from controversial topics, simply because they are controversial, is also an avoidance of responsibility. (p.55)

Interviews were, therefore, driven by the researcher, and her 'need to know'. Her 'responsibility' was to find a way to piece together jigsaws of information, which could be used to create a holistic picture of relief teaching which could map, or act as a guide, to explain and predict links between the important issues and problems (Eisner, 1991, p.59). The researcher's 'responsibility' as an interviewer was to ensure that she searched to find connections, by searching for the 'right' questions to utilise the knowledge both she and the department held but which was, as yet, 'hidden'. Eisner explained such an approach as 'transactive', rather than as subjective or objective entities (see p.52). Persistent attempts to interview officers brought little positive response, as she was referred on to others. As a relief teacher, she was an 'outsider', both in terms of the education system and the bureaucracy. She was on less familiar territory and did not know the connections and networks within the Department nor had she much information to 'trade', as relief teaching was of little consequence to senior officials, and any focus represented a change in the status quo (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, pp. 18-32).

The collection of written data

Little was written formally about relief teaching. Following the conclusions from the previous investigation, that relief teaching depended on a context (Webb, 1993, p.85), the collection of written data was a means by which aspects of the relief teaching context could be observed and identified at personal, school and system level (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973, pp. 94-107). In practice, the collection of written data could be a dynamic and fluent activity or a spasmodic jotting-down of words and phrases, depending on what was happening. At times, there was tension between the competing needs of relief teacher and researcher: to observe, or to teach. At times, she wished she had a visual recording of an interesting sequence of events in the classroom, which happened while she was actively teaching. The interactive nature of the setting, noted in earlier research (Webb, 1993, p.88) enabled her to gain rich data but as there was often little time available to make notes in between classes, except at recess or during the lunch break: what was written was spontaneous. Field notes were collected from anecdotal evidence or snatched conversations, perhaps in the course of playground duty. The researcher gained written data from a number of

sources, such as, union information for relief teachers, or unsolicited information from people who sent newspaper cuttings, or printed material from the internet (Kilpatrick,1996).

The data was categorised as it was collected. This was considered important to retain some structure within the avalanche of information which could occur. At the end of each day, field notes collected from personal observations or from written data, were transcribed and placed into one of a number of lever arch files. It was classified by perspective. Each piece of data was dated and coded where possible: for example the school, teacher or student, gender, and/ or grade. The codes formed a quick, practical, method of reference. Codes made it possible to identify particular schools, administrators, or teachers, over a period of time, while retaining confidentiality. Student grades rather than names were considered important, but both were secondary to recording accurately what students did or said.

Description of the settings

Understanding the relief teaching context depended on knowledge of the setting. The amount of descriptive writing varied according to the time available and the particular focus of the setting, whether a physical description of the setting, or one which depicted student relationships between each other or towards their work. A relief teacher taking a practical class in a large laboratory, for example, might have additional difficulties of organisation because of the echoing acoustics, the number of doors through which students could enter or leave the room, and the temptation for students to 'experiment' with equipment or spray water from the nearby sinks. Note-taking might include additional comments such as memos, reflections, or insights, which arose from the observations. They were recorded separately. In a laboratory, further queries arising from a lesson might include written observations about evidence of safety procedures. Often the researcher 'tested' and recorded the varying strategies which she used to counteract the negative aspects of the setting.

Records of relief teaching assignments

In her role as a relief teacher, she chose to leave notes for the regular teacher after each class, although feedback was rarely requested or expected, therefore by the end of each day, she might have a record of what had happened in up to eight different classes. The day's notes, were useful in other ways. As well as providing the researcher with a sense of continuity and focus, they also provided a written record, a means of establishing accountability the next day: students could not claim, 'The relief teacher didn't tell us!' The notes were mostly a simple record of the work completed, and also contained observations of individual students. For the purposes of research however, they provided an overview of the day's activities, and an understanding over time, or of the particular issues noticed as important in, say, a practical or theoretical lesson, or within differing school cultures. Techniques of observer participation (Spradley, 1980) provided guidance, although the researcher had to work spontaneously where and when she could. Limited time provided an intense focus in note taking. Examples included the settings:

- *in a classroom setting:* evidence of individual and group dynamics; classroom management routines; provision of work left for students; amount of information given to the relief teacher and student preparation

for a change of teacher; student acceptance, or rejection of a change of routine, for example, individual/ group dynamics; metaphors and phrases; non-verbal communication; particular behaviour; areas of responsibility.

- *in a staffroom setting:* contents of noticeboards; arrangement of chairs; individual and group responses to a relief teacher, for example, the provision of coffee-making facilities or the degree of welcome and support observed for visitors.

- *in a school setting*: in assembly; on the playground; on the sports field; observation of policies in action, for example, behaviour management policy.

- *at system level*: in the education department, union headquarters, or seminars concerning aspects of education.

There were different focuses and approaches to note taking in the investigation. Many strategies were familiar and 'internalised' to enable the researcher to respond quickly to the changing opportunities. The examples above, showed the embedded nature of the research. Guba & Lincoln (1981) noted the importance of remaining observant:

> Observation ... maximizes the inquirer's ability to grasp motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviors, customs, and the like; observation ... allows the inquirer to see the world as [her] subjects see it, to live in their time frames, to capture the phenomenon in and on its own terms, and to grasp the culture in its own natural, ongoing environment; observation ... provides the inquirer with access to the emotional reactions of the group introspectively–that is, in a real sense it permits the observer to use [*herself*] as a data source; and observation ... allows the observer to build on tacit knowledge, both [her] own and that of members of the group. (p.193)

Through notetaking and observation, the researcher captured fleeting relief teaching experiences in order to reflect on them and find how aspects of the context contributed to the issues and problems of relief teaching. In doing so, she remained central to the teaching and learning contexts, both in theoretical and practical terms:

Observations

The duality of researcher/ practitioner was an advantage because a changing role produced a changing focus for synthesis. Hours of 'tuning in' to the relief teaching setting created a sensitivity to the unwritten aspects of a school community. Within a matter of seconds, for example, she could assess the mood of a particular class and judge how to respond in order to maintain a 'balance'. There were times, too, when she felt increasing uneasiness, which signalled to her that a particular student or a group of students needed 'checking'. It seemed as if there was an automatic signal when students contravened her 'unspoken' boundaries, say with noise, and by writing notes she was able to clarify her own tacit understanding and map some of the events around it. The focus of observations and understanding changed over time. For example, notes made on her initial visit to the Department, reflected her surprise when, an officer after greeting her, remained standing in the reception area, not venturing, it seemed, from the presence of a 'witness', the receptionist while the

'interview' she had anticipated and arranged, proved to be little more than a series of casual comments (2,4). Two years later, she was able to appreciate some of the factors which might have influenced the senior officer's approach, such as, the lack of readily-available information on relief teaching, i.e. it will take time to sort out; and his need to remain polite but uninvolved, i.e. ... and she'll try somewhere else.

Notes written by the researcher were used as a sequential reference to the culture and climate of the schools and the Department, over time. The researcher examined her role as interviewer within various settings at school and system level, by noting feedback from the respondent, or others. The relief teaching context, unlike many of the regular teaching contexts, was multidimensional in that relief teachers covered a variety of grades, subjects, and student age groups often quite rapidly and often without much prior notice. Changes in routines and procedures were often strikingly different. Effective relief teachers noticed some of the hidden aspects of their peripatetic teaching role, in the same way, as people might travel to different regions within a country and see aspects of the community which was not evident to those more familiar with their environment. A rich source of data, therefore, was provided by the researcher's visits to a number of school cultures (see appendix 20). As she commented on one occasion, 'The best way to deal with relief teaching is from the cultural side. Relief teaching is very fluid and dependent on the attitudes and assumptions and way in which people view one another.' (316)

Reflections

The researcher's awareness, feelings and interpretation of events formed a major focus in understanding what Schön (1987) called 'turning the problem upside-down' (p.12), by reflecting on 'a kind of knowing' which was 'different in crucial respects' from the standard model of professional knowledge. He argued that a knowledge of a teacher's applied knowledge, such as the art of framing problems, improvisation and implementation, was particularly valuable in the '... complex, unstable, uncertain, and conflictual worlds of practice' (p.12). The researcher needed to stand back; what seemed so fluid in the classroom was difficult to write or explain. Walking along the beach allowed ideas to surface. She invariably carried a notebook: She used a tape recorder to record her impressions and to express aspects of her research when talking to others. In this way, she was able to 'hear herself' and distance herself from the embedded nature of relief teaching. At times, she found it difficult to do so. Although she had developed a broad understanding of relief teaching and had developed links between relief teaching and its problems, she was not satisfied. Her personal challenge, to make sense of the paradoxes and recurring problems, became an obsessive puzzle. What felt easy in a practice, was difficult to write about and what looked effective when written did not translate to practice, so creating a sense of frustration and conflict (Rice, 1992). Goleman (1996) described how 'two fundamentally different ways of knowing interact to construct our mental life':

> One, the rational mind, is the mode of comprehension we are typically conscious of: more prominent in awareness, thoughtful, able to ponder and reflect. But alongside that there is another system of knowing: impulsive and powerful, if sometimes illogical—the emotional mind (p.8).

Audiotaped conversations with others who adopted a co-counselling role, provided the means for the researcher to externalise her thoughts and feelings and 'separate' the

roles of practitioner and researcher which, in reality, were integrated. Such conversations were seen as a means of debriefing by distancing herself from the data and externalising her feelings, but at the same time acknowledging and recording tacit knowledge which might in itself provide insights. The tapes, also, showed the dynamic process of a grounded research approach in which the researcher was attempting to make sense of the data at each phase of the inquiry. Schön (1987) acknowledges the challenges, too:

> Clearly, it is one thing to be able to reflect-in-action and quite another to be able to reflect *on* our reflection-in-action so as to produce a good verbal description of it; and it is still another thing to be able to reflect on the resulting description. (p.31, writer's italics)

Through a process of constant note-taking and analysis the researcher was able to record events and incidents which passed quickly. Over time, she realised that she had developed a sensitivity to non-verbal communication that enabled her to read the school context as a navigator might read the changing weather conditions.

The collection of data had, at times, extended beyond what seemed logically practical. Driven by her own motivation and her perception that she wanted to 'balance' her understanding as a practitioner with her understanding of administrative, regular teaching and student perspectives, and that the perspectives themselves were dependent on differing cultures at personal, school and system level, the research complexity had escalated. She hoped, nevertheless, to find under the complexity, a simple set of rules or laws which might explain how problems were related.

Analysis of data

A constant comparative method of data analysis was chosen to build a solid theoretical base which was strong enough to challenge the different biases and assumptions which surrounded the relief teaching context (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The analytic procedures were designed to '... provide the grounding, build the density, and develop the sensitivity and integration needed to generate a rich, tightly woven, explanatory theory that closely approximates the reality it represents' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57). For the purposes of this investigation the process was used to identify organising themes and integrate categories and their properties, as a way towards establishing links between the phenomenon of relief teaching and the problems which surrounded it.

Analysis began with an examination of the interview transcripts. The researcher was familiar with the audiotapes and diary entries. Each reminded her of a particular person, event or setting. Interviews had not been only a matter of recording words; factors such as a tone of voice, body language, or the researcher's involvement in active listening, ensured that each audiotape conjured an image, in its own right, as well as contributing to the wider grouping of data within a school or within one of the research perspectives on relief teaching. Although each interview was seen initially as unique, the researcher had 'positioned' it conceptually to cover a particular area, or a spectrum of feelings, or events, within the relief teaching context (Webb, 1993). She thought of each transcript rather like a collage of rich material, which had its own strengths and patterns but reflected one of a number of realities. Her first

response, therefore, was to examine the transcript for what it had to offer. As she studied other transcripts common categories developed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The administrative perspective was considered the dominant one. A summary sheet (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 53), with a date, a coded contact name and site, provided an overview. The four main questions were:

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this contact?
2. Summarise the information you got (or failed to get) from each participant.
3. Anything that struck you as salient or interesting, illuminating or important in this contact?
4. Future connections?

The sheet (see appendix 6a) was modified from a number chosen, because of its flexibility in dealing with complex and multi-layered analysis and as a strategy for condensing lengthy data for analysis (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 105). Three copies were made of each interview transcript: a working copy; a copy which was cut up; and an unmarked copy kept as a 'holistic' reference to enable the researcher to review it or compare it with others, if necessary. The method satisfied the researcher's preference to handle and interpret the material by using her own judgement rather than using computer-based analysis.

Accordingly, important words, themes or passages were highlighted in the working copy. The right-hand margin was used to note down any observations or responses to aspects of the text which seemed interesting or significant. These comments could be in the form of, for example, preliminary interpretations and connections with things said elsewhere in the texts. The left hand margin was used to document what might be loosely termed, emerging themes, issues or problems (appendix 6a). Clues within the context itself usually determined which category the data fell into. As has been stated already (Webb, 1993, p.87), what might be described by one respondent as a 'problem' might be seen as another as a 'challenge', so the researcher identified areas of ambiguity or ambivalence, such as a 'gap' between theory and practice, as a theme (e.g. appendix 14). Later sections of interview data, showing various 'gaps' say, in areas of organisation, management, understanding, or communication could be compared and subdivided further. In this way, analysis was conducted using a constant comparative method. Although the research used a number of methods to code data, all the interview data were 'deconstructed' into themes. The researcher cut up the coded data, the second copy of interview data, and placed the sections into a plastic folder with twenty separate envelopes. On each envelope, memos were kept to show how data gradually clustered and became integrated into a number of further categories. In comparing incidents or issues with others of a similar category, issues cluster together and become more encompassing and more abstract to account for the differences in the data,

> To make theoretical sense of so much diversity in his [sic.] data, the analyst is forced to develop ideas on a level of generality higher in conceptual abstraction than the qualitative material being analysed. He is forced to bring out the underlying uniformities and diversities and to use more abstract concepts, to account for the differences in the data. To master his data, he is forced to engage in reduction of

> terminology. If the analyst starts with raw data, he will end up initially with a substantive theory: a theory for the substantive area on which he has done research. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 114)

Eventually, data from each perspective were grouped to show the main issues seen as important from each perspective. The provision of work for relief teachers, represented an organisational issue which caused frustration for many administrators. By studying relevant interview data, it was possible to trace how various administrators did, or did not organise work for relief teachers and what issues and problems arose from it, say, with timetabling; what information was given to the relief teacher; or what happened before, during, and after the lesson. Caught up with the obvious practical difficulties of providing work when the regular teacher was absent unexpectedly, were insights into the hidden curriculum: the perception of which work was appropriate; or expectations of novice and experienced administrators on where their responsibilities lay in the context of relief teaching. Similarly, an examination of the 'provision of work for relief teachers', viewed from regular, relief teaching and student perspectives, each provided issues which arose from their particular perspective.

Analysis, therefore, built up a multidimensional understanding of why and how problems occurred and how effective administrators and others had developed strategies to cope with changes in the school and classroom. In addition, the use of a range of data from different schools, ages of teachers, and subjects studied, enabled the researcher to gain a conceptual understanding of the more specific phenomenon of 'work' within a relief teaching setting, not only creating possibilities for transferable knowledge but at the same time throwing light on the teaching and learning setting from a new perspective. In this way, analysis of data over a period of months, using a constant comparative method, enabled the researcher to stabilise and consolidate information, by identifying issues from each perspective, by building up detailed and fragmented information, and by consolidating what was formerly conceptual quicksand.

Linking fragmented evidence

The researcher searched for patterns of incidents in varying settings which arose from her own observations and also were linked to other perspectives. She believed increasingly from the evidence, that seemingly inconsequential factors could provide insights into many relief teaching problems. The key was one such example. Keys were seldom given to relief teachers in high schools. As a result, students crowded in the corridor, sometimes for ten minutes or more, while a student was sent in search of a key for the locked classroom. Not only was the relief teacher uncertain as to how long the procedure would take, but also s/he had to counter any restless behaviour from the students while they waited, and as they changed from corridor to classroom. Anecdotal evidence confirmed the sense of frustration from all parties (167,3; 228,1). Students saw the keys as a symbol of control (43,5). They questioned the professionalism of someone who 'knew nothing' and was patently made vulnerable by the system. Bursars and administrators presented a different pattern of responses. They described incidents when relief teachers employed through the Agency, had left the school with vital keys. Due to government regulations of confidentiality, the Agency was unable to provide the relief teacher's home telephone number. On

occasion, several days elapsed before the keys were returned. One bursar, with over twenty years' experience in the position, described his concern with school security if keys were not returned promptly. He noted the casual approach of some '... particularly young, inexperienced relief teachers' who neglected to lock cupboards containing valuable sports or music equipment (13,4). As a result, students in his high school were only able to 'borrow keys for a few minutes', for the relief teacher, even if they had to return to his office to repeat the procedure half an hour later.

As could be seen recurring comments about 'having' or 'losing' a key, or jokes about giving keys to relief teachers, provided an indication that similar patterns of events had recurred and had become part of the storytelling cultures in schools; indeed, one incident described, had occurred 18 years earlier (26,1). Seen from a practical viewpoint, patterns of events concerning 'keys' were viewed from different perspectives, invariably with frustration. However, without communication or feedback from others, or an incentive to do more than 'shallow coping', each person was locked in to a vicious circle of events (Senge, 1992, p.81). An examination of the organisational procedures surrounding keys illustrated how information, which was often embedded within the interview data, became increasingly significant during the process of inquiry and analysis. It appeared from interview data, for example, that relief teachers new to a school had to find out the necessary procedures involved in collecting keys (33,2), as they claimed, and subsequent investigation by the researcher confirmed, that no information was written about keys for relief teachers. Their initial response, of sending a student to the office to get a key was, therefore, of no use. Unless a student had written instructions: s/he was sent back to the relief teacher and the process repeated. By the time students were eventually in the classroom, it was extremely difficult for an unfamiliar teacher to use the lesson to any advantage (39,4). By viewing the 'key' as a symbol of 'power', or of 'control', it showed how the status of a relief teacher was reduced.

The considerable time spent in some schools on a daily basis, to collect, deposit or 'track down keys', as viewed from the interview data, would show a dismal record of organisational effectiveness. By making aspects of relief teaching visible, it was possible to predict where the lack of a key would result in further problems, frustration and delays, through a number of perspectives and thus link issues and problems. As the investigation progressed, data clustered around issues enabling the researcher to establish further links, both in the material collected and data to be collected (for example, see 'points for reflection': appendices). It was important to stress, however, that on most occasions, the researcher did not actively seek to 'solve' problems, rather her focus was on extending the collection of data to *encompass* incidents at personal, class, school, and system level.

> Isolated problems are not real problems. Real problems include not only the specified problem situation but also the 'person situation' which includes the people who have to accept and act on the solution. (de Bono, 1990, p. 167)

As the researcher identified links between problems, without apportioning blame, so the phenomenon of relief teaching was seen as separate from the problems and it was possible to view relief teaching in a new light. All the while, the researcher checked data to ensure that she reflected the actual comments used and had an accurate record

of events, as far as she was able, for otherwise, as one student queried, 'Who would believe a relief teacher?'

Trustworthiness

Little evidence within the relief teaching context could be 'proved'. But by activities such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.301) the researcher maintained trustworthiness. She was intrinsically motivated to search for the different realities of relief teaching: she sought a diversity of perspectives; accepted all data as relevant; used the voices of participants where possible; examined her own research approach; was reflective, aware and had developed strategies to 'balance' within a very unsettled relief teaching environment. Moreover, interview respondents from each perspective, volunteered further information after their initial interview. In addition, she kept careful records of the interview data and wrote a reflective journal so that data analyses and interpretations could be examined and compared over time. Memos also provided evidence of the research process.

A research approach was chosen which would not only define relief teaching, but provide links so that others might reconceptualise it. Translating experience from a visual to a written medium, from a fragmented to a conceptual understanding, and from a personal to an onlooker's view, took considerable thought. There were difficulties too, in explaining and clarifying a practitioner's tacit knowledge. The objectives listed at the beginning of the chapter, for example, could also illustrate potential gaps in understanding. Although, the objectives appeared separate and seemingly clear cut, the reality in practice, was very different. Throughout most of the research process the objectives were interrelated, sometimes tangled. The research context was dynamic, it reflected relationships and a search for the hidden elements in each setting. Over time, the pathways became firmer and emerged as part of the inductive process. In a sense, the objectives did not relate solely relief teaching as a phenomenon but to the creation of a metasystem, such as, theoretical links; conceptual boundaries, to establish a 'space' for relief teaching in its own right, rather than as a part of everything else, to show, for instance, how it rested on the various cultures at school and system levels. The objectives also provided opportunities for a stability of approach, enabling the researcher to gain the means to consolidate, balance, and structure aspects of relief teaching and her research approach to create a 'holistic' view of the phenomenon of relief teaching carefully anchored, methodologically and conceptually, as a base for further research.

The analysis of research data showed conclusively that the present approach to relief teaching was highly ineffective. There was no shared picture of relief teaching, and no clear role for relief teachers. Relief teaching was entangled with other aspects of education and, therefore, largely invisible. Problems too, were rarely discussed formally. The absence of written information on relief teaching or its problems led, also, to a lack of knowledge or understanding that relief teaching was different from regular teaching. As a result, both problems and relief teaching remained hidden. The following chapter shows that by examining the issues and problems which arose from grounded analysis, relief teaching will become visible as a phenomenon, and by

making relief teaching visible from a number of perspectives it will be possible to see how problems occurred.

Chapter 4
PERSPECTIVES ON RELIEF TEACHING

For me it's a physical sensation. I have two kinds of knowing. I have the knowing that comes out of my head that is subject to conscious awareness. And I have the knowing that, for me, comes out of my heart which I where I feel it ... that comes out of what I consider to be subconscious information ... (Agan, 1987, p. 67)

Knowing through analysis

The chapter will make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon. It describes the heart of the research: the findings. Its purpose is to identify the issues seen as important by students, relief teachers, regular teachers, school administrators, and Agency coordinators from their various viewpoints. At system level, where relief teaching is viewed as marginal to educational policies and practice, the researcher develops her own focus: to make relief teaching visible. The systems' perspective describes her search for scattered information which would provide opportunities for better communication links towards a shared understanding of relief teaching: an objective of the investigation. The chapter concludes with a summary which links data from the perspectives and shows how three underlying factors perpetuate the recurring problems and paradoxes of relief teaching.

The challenge for the researcher, when writing this chapter is to make relief teaching and the problems visible as part of the same phenomenon. There is a further challenge in the 'alignment' and selection, for each comment, whether from a grade seven student or a experienced principal, from a social worker or a school caretaker, reflects a different viewpoint and focus. Richness of data brings complexity. One of the major issues, which became more dominant as the research progressed, was the difficulty of 'translating' stories, incidents, explanations and insights into a holistic entity which not only conveyed the 'immediacy' of the relief teaching contexts, but also protected confidentiality and framed the data in manageable pieces. The selection of material for this chapter, therefore, proved a difficult task. The focus evolved from the collection of rich data, to a process of analysing, selecting, balancing, and linking comments, each of which could be interpreted at a number of levels, but which conveyed the 'essence' of relief teaching (van Manen, 1990).

The headings in each perspective convey the dominant issues which arose from analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For example, a dominant issue for administrators was 'lack of time'. The heading, 'Relief teaching came on top of everything else' provides, not only a sense of the lack of time but that relief teaching came *in addition* to other commitments and was seen often as 'the last straw'. The blending of issues and relationships, and the juxtaposition of issues with a participant's comments, provide further insights into the negative feelings which surround relief teaching. The issue of 'lack of time', therefore, is positioned within the administrators' perspective and, also, within a holistic context as part of the phenomenon. For example, 'lack of time' leads to another heading [issue], 'Personal and professional compromise'. When both issues are viewed from the relief teachers' perspective, they

may help to explain why there is so little information for relief teachers in schools. In turn, 'lack of time' might provide links to other issues, such as the 'isolation' of relief teachers. By linking the dominant issues and showing how they relate to each other, it is possible to see how each perspective has a unique orientation to the phenomenon, and the analysis 'fits' and 'works' to explain the behaviour under study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.3).

The information that was gathered from interview data was used to build a holistic model which serves both to describe and explain aspects of the phenomenon by linking themes in a network or pattern (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The perspectives form a base of data which can be 'framed' in a number of ways to suit particular audiences (Bolman & Deal, 1991). The objectives of this investigation indicate the development of interrelated themes rather than the pursuit of linearly related objectives (chapter 1). Each perspective can be viewed side by side, like instruments in an orchestra, however, there is an assumption that few readers would wish, or expect to read the chapter without pause for reflection. For readers less familiar with the settings and perspectives, the appendices provide additional material for comparison.

The dominant issues, which arose from a process of inductive analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), form the headings in each perspective, and link relief teaching and its problems. Each heading [issue/ theme] can be fully substantiated from evidence in the investigation, or from an examination of interview scripts, in the appendices. The comments, chosen from many, provide evidence of the varying contexts and assumptions underlying relief teaching and its recurring problems (e.g. appendices: 'points for reflection'). As might be expected, each of the perspectives has its own characteristics, but together, they create 'synergy' (Stoner et al., 1985, p. 404), by providing opportunities for comparison between perspectives; or by the juxtaposition of comments which might trigger fresh insights. By examining the interview data within each perspective it is possible to view relief teaching from the intensity of classroom relationships, or to the systems view of relief teaching where it is viewed distantly. The approach from the systems perspective provides insights into the 'hidden' nature of relief teaching. Paradoxically, at the 'head' or the 'heart' of the education system (Agan, 1987, p.67), where it might be assumed that protocols are in place to maintain the appropriate organisational links between educational policies and classroom practice, relief teaching is invisible. In consequence, information such as the numbers of relief teachers or the costs of relief teaching receives little official attention, and only emerges after a lengthy process of detection. In this way, the systems perspective illustrates the paradoxical nature of relief teaching where the people who have the possible resources, for finance or support, are not in a position to use them effectively.

The following headings are used to show the collective orientation of the group in relationship to the phenomenon of relief teaching:

> *The students' perspective:* A change of teacher; Are you a real teacher?; What can we get away with?; I just want to be with my friends.

The relief teachers' perspective: Lack of personal control; Changing demands; Lack of professional status; Ambiguous status; Professional responsibility; Lack of respect; Stress.

The regular teachers' perspective: Creating a 'manageable' setting; We don't know who'll we get; Picking up the pieces; Student behaviour.

The administrators' perspective: Relief teaching came on top of everything else; Arranging to cover teacher absences; Getting someone to class quickly; The stress of uncertainty: a hit and miss approach; Finding good relief staff; Maintaining the reputation of the school; Counting the costs; Personal and professional compromise.

The Agency coordinators' perspective: Working as an Agency coordinator; Understanding the clients; Managing the crisis; Filling the gap.

The systems perspective: Unanswered questions; Searching for answers; What is relief teaching?; How many relief teachers are there?; How many days do they teach?; What qualifications do relief teachers need?; What is the cost of relief teaching to the Department?; How are costs calculated?; Trading in stickers; Are there statistics on relief teaching?; Who is responsible for relief teaching?; What support does the Department offer its teachers?

The purpose of deconstructing evidence from interview data into a number of perspectives allows an examination of relief teaching at a deeper level. For example, the student perspective provides insights into the 'political' (Bolman & Deal, 1991) aspects of relief teaching, when students have 'lost' work, or developed alliances with their friends to outmanoeuvre the relief teacher. An examination of the relief teaching perspective shows, that relief teachers feel they have to battle for control and respect, with little support or information. Regular teachers try to structure the classroom settings, and hope that students will behave. Administrators need to demonstrate their management skills within the school, but also to maintain their reputation as an effective manager within the broader school community, often, without time, resources or knowledge to resolve the problems. In contrast to the ambiguity and negativity in schools, Agency coordinators feel motivated and positive about their approach to relief teaching. They show how they have structured their jobs to respond quickly in a crisis, and have improved their own understanding and strategies.

As can be seen, each of the perspectives reflects a different focus on relief teaching, brought about by the dominant assumptions underpinning a particular point of view. The concern of the research, however, is in providing information which goes beyond the administrative issues which occur in teacher substitution such as, Who will come? What preparation is needed? What will happen in class? What will happen after the relief teacher has gone? It is these questions which are addressed in the literature (Brace, 1990; Stanley, 1991; St. Michel, 1995). The questions answered by the research go deeper. For example, What are the links between relief teaching and

the recurring problems? Why do attitudes of hostility occur? Why do relief teachers remain a low priority when problems surrounding relief teaching are endemic? These are issues which are seen as part of the 'Alice-in-Wonderland' context of relief teaching (Galloway, 1993, p.161) and have yet to be understood.

The Students' Perspective

It's natural to play up in a relief teacher's class. It's not our teacher and we don't really care. (grade 10 girl. 4,5)

The student perspective represented the views of 12-18 year old students, the majority of whom attended one of the six high schools (grades 7-10) or two senior secondary colleges (grades 11-12) in the investigation. Conversations about relief teaching often arose incidentally. It was a deliberate strategy on the part of the researcher. In this way she could be seen as a 'researcher' or 'interested adult' rather than as a relief teacher: a possible focus for role ambiguity. The researcher treated any incidents in the discussion, nonjudgmentally, and, if necessary, explained the need for a 'no-name's policy' of confidentiality. The students' perspective, therefore, reflected the 'reality' of what students thought and felt about relief teaching. The following themes, denoted by the headings, arose from the analysis of fragmented anecdotes, comments and conversations from students of different ages and in numerous school settings (see Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

A change of teacher

The uncertainty surrounding the arrival of a relief teacher in the class proved unsettling. One group of four students (11,1: appendix 1) in their first year at high school spoke wistfully of their primary school days where relief teaching classes were conducted in an atmosphere of playfulness. They could remember incidents in several relief teachers' classes which had occurred up to eight years earlier, when they were in kindergarten. 'In primary school, they used to laugh and swap names around. Teachers *told* you what to do. They didn't use as much shouting' (11,1). When they reached secondary school however, the challenges became more serious and a greater tension had developed between students and relief teachers. Comments from one of the grade 7 boys, who described the changing group dynamics, indicated that he felt vulnerable as to what might happen if a relief teacher was unable to keep control. Other students were nervous, not only of the unknown teacher but wondered what changes might occur in the class routine, or whether the class would get into trouble for the behaviour of individual students. A change of teacher frequently signalled a change of behaviour.

> Once you get up a grade they [students] start to get more and more violent. They throw chairs, swear and backchat. (11,1)

> Three different people, they trigger off the rest of the class ... It's a chain reaction. (11,1)

The major theme underlying the student perspective was the theme of change and conflict. Change affected students in different ways. The more sensitive or withdrawn students were apprehensive as to 'what might happen'. They saw themselves as being caught up in powerful group dynamics over which they had little control. Others disliked a change of routine, particularly when the outcome was seen as chaotic or boring.

> Whenever we have a relief teacher, it sux. We don't do anything interesting. It's bad. The kids are swearing, naughty and they run around play-fighting. (grade 9. 82,2)

> It's too hard to change from one teacher to another; we are half way through something interesting and suddenly we have to jump from one thing to another. Or we want to start on a lesson and we have to sit down and listen to a relief teacher who doesn't know anything. Even the best behaved class can be good but when a relief teacher comes they go psycho. (82,2)

Changes in routine, in work and in behaviour were seen to upset the balance of relationships, particularly when students found that their previously interactive environment had changed to a passive one when they had to sit down and 'listen to a relief teacher who doesn't know anything'. (82,2)

Are you a real teacher?

The relationship between a relief teacher and a group of students was an important one. The initial impressions of what a relief teacher wore or did, often determined how individuals or a group of students reacted. Students proved very observant and could identify a particular relief teacher from fragments of information, even if his/her name were not known. They judged a relief teacher as s/he walked through the door of the classroom. One grade ten student explained:

> The older ones have different ways. It is probably what they are used to, and they worry about noise. Education has changed. My mum and dad said that they wouldn't have dared ... Children had to be seen and not heard. (60,1)

Comments on the personal appearance of relief teachers, their clothes, mannerisms and behaviour formed part of the everyday informal conversations of students, overheard by the researcher in classrooms and in corridors. Indeed, many such observations were woven among the anecdotal evidence from students within the investigation. Students noted differences amongst older and younger relief teachers, their routines and teaching styles. They assessed relief teachers by the clothes they wore, their body language, their manner towards the students and their ability to defuse a situation of conflict with a humorous comment (see appendices 2-3). Relief teachers who gained respect were those who appeared genuine, who could turn a difficult situation to their advantage, and who did not overstep the invisible boundaries of what was considered 'appropriate' behaviour for a relief teacher,

> Smithie taught us Australian studies. He was a relief teacher, a 'legend'. He was young and funny ... He said funny things and has a good sense of humour. He was an interesting person but no one listened to him when he was talking seriously. (173,9)

> [Students] give cheek to the try-hards. They are older teachers in their 30's or 40's who are trying to fit into the teenager's style, like Billabong tops and surfing brands. Some teachers wear dumb clothes ... brown dresses with flowers, horrible cardigans, perhaps they can't afford suits. The relief teachers do have time to go shopping, not like other teachers. Most are reasonably dressed. They have more chance to wear something up-to-date. It helps them get on with the students. (grade 7. 73,2)

The frequent question asked by students, 'Are you a real teacher?' (60,6), indicated that relief teachers were seen as different from regular teachers. A longer-term relief teacher for example, who had built up a relationship with the class and gained knowledge of the school, was considered a hybrid between a relief teacher and a regular teacher.

> We have a relief teacher here while our teacher is away on long service leave. She sort of is and sort of isn't a relief teacher. (82,3)

The ambiguity of whether the relief teacher was a 'real' teacher, extended to the work set in class. Comments made by students indicated a variety of occasions when a relief teacher had little knowledge of the work set, little information about equipment, relied on staff or students for help, lacked the appropriate keys and did not know the students' names nor the standard of work or behaviour that was expected within the classroom. Students of all grades showed that they were puzzled by the paradox that a relief teacher was supposed to be a teacher, and yet knew less about the class or school than they did.

> One relief teacher spent all the time checking everything before she would let us go to the library. So we had no time to do our work in the library. (138,10)

> Relief teachers would have to be very patient because the children's behaviour changes. It takes them a while to catch up because they don't know what's happening. (grade 11 students. 138,10)

> Relief teachers are definitely better than the normal [regular] teacher. They put up with more flak and anything the children throw at them ... As soon as the students are bored they pick on the relief teacher. (73,2)

Interview data showed that students expected relief teachers to work within a different set of boundaries. Feelings of resentment arose when a relief teacher attempted an authoritarian approach, which in the students' eyes, appeared unjustified.

> If relief teachers act too strict and say, 'Put your head down. Be quiet!' That's when the class play up. (grade 10 girl. 43,1)

> It's really weird. Some classes go most weird. What determines how the class is going to act, is how the relief teacher goes about it. If they come in and say, 'Huh, you are going to do this!' The class turns off and we say, 'We don't care.' (grade 9 girl. 74,1)

Interview data showed that throughout the interviews there were definite expectations of how relief teachers *should* approach the class in comparison to regular teachers. They noted the reactions of other staff to relief teachers. If there was an obvious lack of integration between relief teachers and the school staff they saw the relief teacher as representing an outsider. At times evidence showed that an authoritarian relief teacher was considered to be over-stepping the invisible boundaries and 'taking over' from the regular teacher.

> Some relief teachers are mean, they sit on their backsides and do nothing; just sit there, 'I want you to be quiet and go on with your work.' No. That's *not* the way you [should] speak to people! I'd just go on talking. (grade 9 girl. 82,3)

> We don't have relief teachers often. Some tell you off at the beginning but they don't exactly tell you off ... They make a stand but they do not know what's going on ... They are pretty stupid ... They have to find out what the kids are doing. (82,2)

There were many instances of ambivalence towards relief teachers. Students wanted relief teachers to have authority and yet resented direct authority when it occurred. The comments above, indicated their attempts to challenge, negotiate and redefine

the status of a relief teacher within their classroom, in comparison with their regular teacher and themselves.

What can we get away with?

It was clear from the interview data that students recognised that what happened in a relief teacher's class was often 'overlooked' by regular school staff and, therefore, there were different expectations of what passed as 'appropriate' behaviour,

> You listen to every word with a principal or vice-principal, in case you get into trouble. With relief teachers it's wicked fun giving them a hard time. (82,2)

Students in high school were able to 'reel off' a number of patterns of student behaviours which occurred in relief teaching classes. Strategies depended on the student ages and cultures (43, 44). The following [written] example was representative of many responses from students from the various high schools within the investigation. Additional data from senior secondary students [grades 11 & 12] confirmed a similar pattern of behaviour had occurred in high schools, over a number of years. Their list included:

> Having [chewing] gum; being naurty [sic]; very loud noise; paper being thrown around the room; people not doing their work; telling [relief] teachers to get f---ed; getting into fights in class; 'chucking spazems'; getting suspended for fighting; spray painting cars; sneaking out of class; stealing things from the teacher, such as, books or pens; unplugging the loudspeaker in the classroom. (73,1)

> Two boys were dunking [throwing paper in] the bin the whole lesson. It was awesome. The relief teacher was not upset. When she walked out of the room there was a roar. We know what you're [researcher/ relief teacher] like but if we got a relief teacher who doesn't know us, we try to muck up and have fun with them and try to confuse them. It's sort of funny ... Probably not for him or her but a laugh for us. (132,1)

Interview data frequently indicated extremes of behaviour and the relief teacher's inability to control the situation. They saw that different relief teachers had varying approaches but on a professional or organisational level 'most of them do not know what they are doing' (4,5). Students were well aware that relief teachers had little authoritative power and therefore it was 'wicked fun' to see just how far they could challenge, without any repercussions. On occasion, students greeted the researcher and reminisced about incidents that happened in school up to four years earlier (6,4). The events were remembered with great pleasure.

> I remember putting glue on a relief teacher's bag. That was over a year ago. (2,1)

> In your [relief] class, Andrew, a big fat boy, and I got into a fight. Mr H. [grade 7 supervisor] had to break it up. It was exciting! [laughs] (grade 10 boy. 6,4)

Evidence from students in the investigation however, suggested that although they had definite opinions as to what a relief teacher 'should' or 'should not' do, they rarely applied the same criteria to themselves. In other words, the change of teacher appeared to them to be a 'natural' opportunity for them to have 'fun' and make personal, often discriminatory comments about a relief teacher [e.g.'You're gay'], but they saw it as a form of ritual, and were unconcerned about the one-sided nature of

the challenge. They were indignant when a relief teacher 'could not take it' and suggested that the fault lay in his/ her lack of training.

> Someone who can take a joke ... against them sometimes. Sometimes it's fun. We can make fun of their name or their hairstyle. (grade 7 student. 60,1)

> Some relief teachers cope, most don't. It's a hard job, coping with behaviour problems and students you are not used to. Relief teachers need more training to be prepared. We are not going to see the relief teacher again, so the discipline's not there. There is no respect. You know some are well qualified by the way they react to you. The older ones can be funny. Their reactions are slower. They don't know the younger generation especially with PE [physical education]. (60,1)

> [Student behaviour changes] ... because no one has respect. We change names, change nationality, bludge ... If a male [relief teacher] gets real angry [sic] with you, we make fun of him or mutter a comment like, 'You're gay.' (73,2)

> They [relief teachers] could be trained, like going to a Boys' home [for young offenders], learn to cope with them and then come here [high school]. (60,1)

Analysis of data provided many examples of behaviour which might be described as brinkmanship. Students tested the personal and professional boundaries of a relief teacher, firstly, to see what his/ her reactions would be and, secondly, to see how much they could get away with. Students rarely mentioned any serious repercussions which occurred as a result of the incidents they described. They seemed unconcerned, too, of the consequences if their work were not completed in a relief teacher's class. One group of grade 9 students (84,2) agreed that they could 'give excuses' to the regular teacher. They pretended they had 'lost their work sheet', 'didn't have time', or 'showed other work' that had been completed previously. Students relied on their anonymity and the poor channels of communication between regular and relief staff. 'Sometimes, the [regular] teacher comes in and says, "I am not very impressed. When you had a relief teacher the other day ...".' (33,4). It seemed, that staff responses were predictable, too.

While much of the interview data represented the potentially explosive nature of some relief teaching classes, other comments from students provided a stark reminder of the outcomes when student behaviour remained unchecked.

> A relief teacher walked out of the classroom, straight to the car and drove off. (37,1)

> Female teachers get picked on because males will tell us off. We made a relief teacher cry (1994), she was pregnant she has never been back to school. (74,1)

> They [class] are trying to get as much pain out of relief teachers as they can. They try to get the relief teacher to cry. Oh, we got her to cry! Oh yes! (grade 9. 74,1)

What did students feel about the conflict they described? Anecdotal evidence showed differences between the active challengers and the reflective observers. Some students seemed ill-at-ease, particularly if their family's values conflicted with what was happening in school. They felt torn between what was right and whose side they were on. On one occasion, for example, after a noisy class, the researcher was surprised when one grade 7 student remarked, almost apologetically, to the researcher, 'We are not always like that, we just do it for relief teachers '(1,5). He

volunteered the information quite unexpectedly, almost as a way of explanation. Older students were able to frame their observations and generalise (43,4). At times, analysis of interview data suggested that a challenge was less directed at a specific relief teacher but more as a tactic towards a student's personal goal. Challenges, therefore, fulfilled an ulterior motive: to escape the confines of a classroom or to change the proposed lesson into an opportunity for socialising with friends, either inside or outside the classroom.

> I test them [relief teachers] just as much, to get sent out of class and I miss my work and wander around ... that's more fun anyway. Some of the young relief teachers don't have a clue. Students give them heaps. Relief teachers don't care ... not really. (60,1)

> R: They [relief teachers] get upset, shout, storm out of the room. They ignore students and let them do what they like. All students want to do is sit there and talk, so when they do that, they're happy. I've seen relief teachers with tears in their eyes ... or cry. The more the kids got the relief teacher upset the more it makes them laugh. With one relief teacher we started humming. When she walked up, the others would stop and she'd get upset.
> Q: You seem to have thought a lot about this.
> R: My mum is a relief teacher. (4,5)

The comment above (4,5) indicated the ritualistic nature of some of the challenges in terms of power or storytelling. Many similar comments indicated the powerful effects of student group dynamics within the varying relief teaching settings.

I just want to be with my friends

Relief teachers who were able to 'negotiate' rather than try to dominate students groups, won respect. 'It's the clever things they say' (74, 1); they 'act comfortable with the way they are' (74,1); '... look confident and they are enthusiastic' (74, 1); and 'know every trick of the trade' (43,8). Evidence from the interview data showed that once the regular school routine was weakened, however, other student sub-groups within the class became more intent on their own goals: to confuse the relief teacher; create a story to tell others; or to 'win respect' from their friends by 'lacing out' [outwitting] other student groups and the relief teacher. When students saw relief teaching classes as a chance to be with their friends and have fun, a relief teacher represented an obstacle, or an opponent, in the pathway to their goal.

> They [relief teachers] get a lot of crap, it's getting worse ... Some walk out ... others try, but they give up eventually. It's like a game for us. One keeps control. She's that real nasty one that always wears yellow. She's old ... crabby old cow. (43,8)

Student behaviour, therefore, developed into a blatant or devious struggle for power, both within and between student groups, and between a student group and a relief teacher. Interview data showed that at times strategies extended between classes, particularly those with other relief teachers (Webb, 1995). Beneath the confrontational, aggressive power of the pack was a manipulative power, taunting and strategical. Beneath that, was a fascination to find out just how much power they had and how much they could get away with, as a group. At the heart of the relationship was a need for emotional security and for someone who could be trusted. Occasionally, comments from students indicated a deeper understanding of the ambiguity inherent in relief teaching: could a relief teacher trust the students?

> That's the truth. But you are a relief teacher. If I told you the truth would you believe me? (grade 10 student. 216,8)

The main issues from the student perspective related to the changing balance of power in the classroom, due to the absence of the regular teacher. Observation, written evidence and comments from students indicated that while the challenging behaviour towards relief teachers had formed part of the school and class cultures over a period of years, the degree and intensity of the challenges had escalated, particularly in the last few years.

The Relief Teachers' Perspective

I can't speak for other relief teachers but I felt somehow I had to justify my existence, being a relief teacher. (149,1)

The relief teachers' perspective reflected diversity. Attempts to compare 'new' relief teachers, for example, illustrated their wealth of experience but there were few other definable links. Relief teachers, for example, could be new to the school, to the State, or to relief teaching. Their pathway to relief teaching might have been: direct from university, as a student teacher; from overseas, as an international traveller; after an absence of ten years bringing up a family; or after retirement, as a regular teacher, or principal. Qualifications ranged too. What were the qualifications needed to be a relief teacher? In Tasmania, relief teachers did not need to be qualified teachers. Some relief teachers were indeed qualified, not only as teachers, but with higher degrees, including one Doctor of Philosophy degree. Other people were unqualified as teachers, but qualified as tradesmen, as small business owners, as authors, as artists, or musicians. Their reasons for relief teaching also were varied. Relief teaching could be seen: as a stepping stone to regular employment; an opportunity to travel the world while being paid; or as a 'career' or lifestyle which balanced other interests or occupations. There was also variety within the job: relief teachers could go to one school, or to many schools; work locally, or around the State; work in primary, secondary or senior secondary schools; for a day, or almost full time.

Within diversity was unity. Each relief teacher told a different story which was unique. Each person illuminated an aspect of relief teaching either at personal, class, school, or system level. Together, they also provided stories, over time and place. One interview respondent, for example, had taught in northern Tasmania, as a relief teacher, for thirty years (42). Another relief teacher had worked in seventeen different schools, and proposed to travel to many more, working almost full time to do so (138,6). The purpose of the investigation was to glimpse aspects of relief teaching which could unify rather than diversify data, and structure experiences thematically. The headings used in the following relief teaching perspective can be linked to the themes of relief teaching (Webb, 1993). All the linking comments made from this perspective, can be substantiated from evidence within the investigation (see appendices 4-8).

Lack of personal control

Interview data and anecdotal evidence showed that the telephone call offering employment was a crucial factor in the relief teaching context. It was seen as a fragile lifeline to employment and often to self-esteem. For those relief teachers who waited for weeks to get a telephone call, or who worked hard at a school and were not invited back, their apparent rejection by the school or system affected them deeply. In one interview a respondent commented with surprise, that even at the mention of the morning telephone call [from a relief teaching coordinator] she experienced physical signs of stress: she felt anxiety and her heart beat faster. Her husband recounted how she had felt so pressurised by relief teaching at one time that she deliberately left the telephone off the hook. If he wished to contact her he had to

telephone a neighbour. Such anecdotal evidence became more significant when the relief teacher concerned was an experienced, dedicated and successful relief teacher. She realised that her reaction was less due to the actual teaching but the lack of personal control engendered by the elements of dramatic change and uncertainty,

> What got me was the waiting for the phone to ring. Sometimes it was okay if you were employed on a regular basis, but sometimes you got one day and another, a couple of weeks later. You were waiting two weeks for the phone to ring! That is the worst part. You get yourself hyped up each morning, thinking, I'd better be ready and get organised in case I have to work, and a lot of the time you didn't have to. So you had nothing else organised, because you leave yourself open for the phone and being in the network. Lately I haven't even worried about it and have not even got my name down at CES [agency] at the moment. My heart is beating faster. [laughs again] (18,1)

Relief teachers noted that they often started their job 'on the back foot'. From a position of extreme uncertainty at home they had to 'psych. themselves up' to face an unknown group of students, teach work set by another teacher and cope with a range of unforeseen tasks, perhaps only thirty minutes later.

> I had a phone call at 8.30 to be at 8.45 am. I was there at 8.45 am grabbed the stuff [work] and walked to the classroom. I had no morning tea because I was on duty, no dinner because I was on duty. I had packed a lunch in case. I had no free periods. (249,4)

> I agreed to take up a day's work at a school 168 kms from Launceston [336 kms round trip]. I went there and was paid for four-and-a-half hours for the day. I argued before they gave me five hours pay. I have never refused a job and will go anywhere and any time. I have built up a reputation. (406,1)

Comments showed how each of the relief teachers responded to an unstructured setting and an ambiguous role. Experienced relief teachers attempted to create personal and professional boundaries of what they would or would not do (406,1). Some relief teachers, for example, were prepared to travel extensively to gain work, while others chose to work in a few schools locally. Any relief teacher who chose to make a two-hour journey to a school for a day's employment, was not reimbursed with travel expenses; payment for petrol came from the day's pay. It was not only a question of money. Incidents, where administrators attempted to 'bargain' with a relief teacher over pay, particularly after s/he had finished work, represented issues of deeper significance. The act of bargaining represented a personal challenge to the professionalism and status of the relief teacher concerned, and on several occasions in the interviews, relief teachers reiterated their sense of outrage and powerlessness. Their words, body language and tone of voice indicated that they still felt resentful and angry at what they saw was an imbalance of perceptions by school staff and office staff: while they were expected to remain professional, others treated them unprofessionally (124,4; 131,6). Anecdotal evidence showed numerous occasions when conditions of employment were seen as open-ended, and even varied during the day, seemingly, at the whim of the administrator (158,9). In extreme examples, relief teachers had been called to a school, only to find that they were not needed, and told to go home with no more than a promise of work on another occasion (33,2).

Evidence from the respondents showed that the uncertainty of the role and conditions of relief teaching, reduced the confidence of many relief teachers, particularly as

there were few opportunities to debrief or come to terms with the anger and frustration they felt. The issues surrounding student behaviour emerged as further evidence of many relief teachers' sense of powerlessness and isolation. Inexperienced relief teachers found that at times they felt 'shocked' (157,1) or overwhelmed (38). Despite trying to cope, several relief teachers admitted that they had 'given in' to student demands or ignored problems in order to 'survive' (21). The more experienced relief teachers were prepared to be assertive. Interviews showed increasingly that some of the older teachers, in particular, no longer wished to subject themselves to the 'unnecessary stress' of staff indifference or of student language (42,3). Indeed, during the period of the investigation, several of the relief teachers who were interviewed on more than one occasion, admitted that they had refused to return to particular schools, and some of the more experienced relief teachers had left teaching altogether (220; 42). Such evidence showed how people created their own 'balance' to compensate for the blurred boundaries between personal and professional expectations. In doing so, their actions generated further problems for the broader education system (18,1).

Changing demands

When a relief teacher went to a school s/he did not know what to expect. The amount of work, the behaviour of students and the attitudes of staff depended not only on whom s/he was replacing, but was determined by the 'interpretation' of his/her role by the regular teaching staff, administrators and students. Most high school relief teachers interviewed, worked in isolation and were rarely asked for specific feedback from the assistant principal [AP], or for a record of what had happened during the day. What they did, or did not do, rested largely on their own perception of their role and their capacity to cope with the changing demands of relief teaching. A relief teacher's attitude and experience were crucial factors in determining how s/he would, or could, cope with the challenges. The following examples taken from interview data, showed a number of the practical realities that relief teachers experienced. Underlying many of the comments from interview data were conflicting tensions which reflected deeper issues, such as role ambiguity or personal compromise.

Replacing a number of regular teachers

> The school can call you in, for example, to get you to teach seven periods, and do morning break, lunch, bus duty and detention ... and make a pig's ear out of it. When you look across you find you are not relieving for *one* teacher but for *half a dozen.* The AP is putting you under pressure to do it. But you are not supposed to do any yard duty because you are not a regular teacher in the school and it could be dangerous if you do not know names or rules. (14,2)

Being placed in an impossible and often dangerous situation;

> In one school the horse was faulty in the gym, its leg was wobbly and it was in danger of collapsing. I removed it from the area. The kids were whinging because they wanted it. I had to explain. I was in sole charge of the entire gym. I was somewhat intimidated by it all. It's not my line, that's for sure. (249,1)

There's no such thing as a free period

> More and more is expected of relief teachers. No free periods. You used to be in for half a day or a full day of employment. Now you are employed by the hour and there is

no such thing as a free period. They whack the duty on top of that, plus the Class period. You teach all day and are on duty at lunch as well. (18,8)

Open-ended boundaries

Apparently the regular teacher 'did not turn up'. I was told, 'Two or three children have disappeared from the class' and I was given a day of general relief teaching: Indonesian, French, Speech and Drama, Peer Support and English. (218,1)

Unsure of goals and standards

I found one student who was a 'work refuser', and obviously so, and I did send him to the AP. I didn't know if that was the usual thing to do. There is no indication how to deal with difficulties that will inevitably arise with a relief teacher. I did have one to two minutes with the AP on my first day of relief teaching in that first contact. He was off for an excursion himself. (80,1)

'Go there!'

In the last two-and-a-half years I've taught [as a relief teacher] in forty schools and colleges in the north east of Tasmania. From my experience, one-third are moderately to reasonably well organised the remaining two-thirds are pretty hopeless and disorganised. One [high school] administrator does not employ a relief teacher to *replace* anybody; he employs a relief teacher ' *to go there*!'. You find '*there*' is a 'war' in the library because the library is booked by another group. I've been told to go to a class, where another teacher is already there, so I've gone back to [AP's name]. 'He's there? Well, go *there* [another classroom]'. (248,1)

Lack of professional status

The theme of professionalism ran through much of the interview data. Relief teachers, either directly or indirectly, acknowledged their low status. It was evident by the way other staff and students treated them: the lack of resources supplied by the school; and the expectation from others that they would fit into a situation, whatever it might be, without consultation or support. The assumption that they would be available and ready for teaching at a moment's notice was seen as 'normal and inevitable' for emergency teachers. Relief teachers interviewed, however, frequently observed that not all staff absences were due to emergencies. Apparently, the school staff had known about absences well in advance but often had neglected to organise relief teaching until the last minute, thereby putting additional stress on the relief teacher(s) involved. Comments, too, showed that relief teachers who had arrived early at school to familiarise themselves with the work, often found themselves waiting until the work and timetables were provided. Relief teachers who wanted to maintain a professional status believed in many instances that the system did not encourage professionalism,

'I think the class is over there. Check with Bill' (Who's Bill?). Sometimes I try three or four classrooms ... Then the door is locked. 'Please go and get the key from the office.' Someone is sent off. Five minutes later s/he hasn't returned. I try another student, 'Can you go and find a senior teacher?'... [The students] haven't got pens ... by that stage it might be twenty minutes into the lesson time. Then the school wonders why the children get out of control. There are so many little practical things that need to be sorted out. I am a good teacher but sometimes I am not allowed to be one, because I have to cope with things a professional shouldn't have to. (1,2)

Interview data and anecdotal evidence showed that many relief teachers felt angered by the unproductive use their experience and knowledge. They resented the effort involved in trying to manage classes that seemed to have no educational purpose and 'go nowhere'. Relief teachers often knew little about the students they had come to

teach, and their comments suggested that many of them felt under pressure. They were confused by the lack of support they encountered from school staff. Several people described how their anger created further problems in class: a sharp comment, or sarcastic remark, could become a catalyst for disruptive student behaviour. Evidence showed that relief teachers who wanted future employment, did not wish to alienate any regular staff or students, therefore, they acted pragmatically so they could 'last the distance'.

Ambiguous status

As has been seen by the changing demands of the relief teaching context, a relief teacher's role varied considerably from day-to-day. The organisational aspects, such as information on school policies and the attitudes of staff and students, contributed to the relief teacher's role effectiveness and status in the school, which in turn, affected the professionalism with which s/he could approach his/ her work. A relief teacher was expected to undertake active supervision. What was 'active supervision'? What and who was s/he supervising? What procedures and organisational structures were in place? An analysis of the different expectations and concerns surrounding the provision of work, provided insights into the role ambiguities and into some of the issues/ problems affecting relief teachers.

In a primary school context, relief teachers largely provided their own teaching material and taught a single class during the whole day. Much of the interview data, however, reflected the experiences of relief teachers in a secondary school context, where relief teachers could be required to 'supervise' up to eight different subjects in a day, face 150-200 students and often follow a work assignment prepared by other teachers. Experienced relief teachers recognised the need to have additional work available for use in an emergency, or as 'emergency work' to stimulate unmotivated students. Some relief teachers had prepared a system of modules which would cover a range of teaching settings (225), other people concentrated on providing extension work in one subject such as mapping (30,3), or in work which they believed would complement the regular curriculum, such as mind mapping (149). Analysis of interview data showed that, frequently, a relief teacher indicated s/he needed more information and additional time to assimilate the school routines and policies in order to cope adequately with the students and subjects. Comments from interview respondents described how they were 'parachuted' into a situation with little knowledge of what had happened in previous classes (21,1). Frequently s/he did not know the name of the absent teacher, the room number of the classroom, or the number of students.

It seemed that in the majority of classes, while individual students offered help to a relief teacher, there was little evidence that students, in general, helped an unfamiliar teacher to cope. As a consequence, relief teachers were uncertain of the boundaries of responsibility between the students, themselves and those of the school staff. For example, how much work were students expected to complete in class? The following comments suggested that a proportion of students chose to remain uninterested whatever material was provided by the relief teacher,

> When the work is done very quickly you need something. With primary schools you could have a portfolio of what you can do in maths and English. With relief teaching [in high school] you never really know what subjects you are going to be taking. (18,3)

> R: We [as relief teachers] bear some responsibility. If I'm not prepared I expect some flak from the kids. I've put a lot of effort developing a series of [work] modules which I carry in a bag. Just in case. You have to keep students busy. Let's be fair, otherwise they'll get bored and muck up ... The dregs ... they [school staff] put them into one class. It doesn't matter how interesting the work ... you can have a video on sex or porno and they would *not* be interested! (249,3)

> I loved one-off classes in primary schools. I won't go [relief teaching] now because unfortunately, in small places like Tasmania, it reduces your status. Let's say now, I wanted to take professional development in schools on mind mapping [Buzan, 1989]. Now it would be very difficult to go to schools where you've been a relief teacher and then present yourself as an expert in particular learning concepts. (149,7)

The previous quotations reflected issues raised by several other relief teachers. They found that they were not seen as professional because of the many uncertainties which confronted them. For example, what procedures were in place if a student refused to cooperate in class? Who was responsible for the provision of work? Was the work adequate in terms of interest or length? Was it valued by students and staff? One relief teacher commented that he was left with a dilemma when students found his work more interesting than the classwork left by the regular teacher. He had to insist that the students complete their teacher's work first, which was seen by him as 'time wasting', before they could attempt the work he had brought (225).

Professional responsibility

Anecdotal evidence often highlighted how ambiguity served to perpetuate the assumption that relief teachers were not 'real' teachers and, as such, occupied low status. Many relief teachers appeared to accept that they were employed to fit into a gap created by one or more absent teachers, and their role was to do whatever that entailed (42,1). Comments from one relief teacher encapsulated the prevailing attitudes of many other relief teachers,

> I've worked totally out of my area. I've been all over the place. I've never refused any work. My understanding was [that] a relief teacher was there to relieve. (249,1)

In some interviews, the settings described by relief teachers were 'chaotic', with few apparent guidelines in place. On occasion, interview data showed that despite recognising that many tasks were new [to them] and possibly dangerous, either for them or for the students, relief teachers rarely questioned their right, or duty, to say, 'No!' It appeared, too, from their comments, that they were often in the midst of the situation before they realised any of the more serious implications. The dilemma of, 'What do I do'? (131) was a common concern. Relief teachers were usually isolated, not sure how or where to go for help, and they knew that any abrupt changes would impact on already unsettled students, possibly creating problems of a different nature (157; 225; 124). Apart from the assistant principal, who was often difficult to locate, anecdotal evidence suggested that, in most schools there was no specific person to contact, and rarely a system of communication from the classroom to the office. Sending an unknown student to find a member of staff also presented difficulties, particularly when a relief teacher was not sure if his/ her query or complaint would be

seen as justified, or as an admission of incompetency. Underlying some of the issues surrounding the role of a relief teacher was a paradoxical, but crucial ambiguity. Did school staff *really* want to know about any problems which occurred in a relief teacher's class? (33,1; 249,3). In practice, relief teachers usually coped as best they could and later developed strategies to ensure that a similar situation did not recur.

The following incident illustrates one of the occasions when a relief teacher took a class despite recognising the potential danger of working with unfamiliar equipment both for himself and the students. He had worked in industry previously and was 'amazed' when his queries about safety were brushed aside by the principal. Realising that the school did not have the necessary safety equipment or information, he attended a TAFE [technical college] course on safety, in order to 'cover himself' on further occasions.

> R: In country schools I teach agriculture. What do I know about agriculture? The kids [grade 10] had to show me how to use the equipment, rotary hoe cultivators. I've since got my license to drive forklifts so I've covered myself now. I got that afterwards because I'd had that sort of experience.
> Q: Could it have cut your toes off?
> R: Damn well it could, if you didn't know what you were doing ... or don't know how to handle it.
> Q: What about safety equipment?
> R: None of the kids had safety boots. I didn't have any, and I wasn't supplied with any. If I'd been warned I was going to do that I'd have brought my safety boots [from home]. I would have insisted. (male relief teacher, 33,1)

Underlying much of the interview data from the relief teaching perspective was a sense of conflict/ frustration/ surprise, that relief teachers were placed in situations by other staff, which were legally and professionally questionable. Some comments, particularly by former regular teachers who had become relief teachers through, say, illness or retirement, showed how they were bewildered by the changing attitude of their former colleagues. Several relief teachers puzzled why the previous sense of collegiality was replaced by the general expectations, that as a relief teacher, s/he would work longer for less pay and cope with situations which seemed openly 'unprofessional' and which presented deeper moral and legal implications. One relief teacher described relief teaching as a 'continual fight to gain respect'. She could not understand why many regular teachers provided inadequate support, work, or information to enable relief teachers cope effectively, in difficult situations (220).

> The behaviour of [school] staff needs to be discussed ... particularly cutting down on money deliberately. It is not for us to get into discussion with the AP. I *did* work the extra half hour. It's demeaning. You are told to your face, 'We don't pay for that time'. Where do you go? You risk very highly never being asked back to that school. Whether it's your choice to go back or not is irrelevant. You are not going to be asked back, because you have asked for that half hour. Somewhere along the line there has to be something said at a principal's conference, very high up. This is what's required. It's in the handbook agreed by DEA and we are the bunnies at the bottom of the line. We are meted out this treatment. (female relief teacher. 228,3)

The attitude of staff and students towards relief teachers represented a major issue in the investigation. Interview data showed that there was a clear distinction between working in a primary or a secondary school. Relief teachers who worked in primary

schools and who were responsible for their own work confirmed that the school staff were concerned with developing relationships within a school ethos. Interview data from the investigation showed that the secondary context was far more complex and, therefore, more challenging for relief teachers without adequate support from other school staff and with little recognition from senior management.

> If you are a relief teacher in a primary school you don't have that hassle [of student challenges].
> In assembly they talk about relief teachers. ' How do we treat relief teachers? We treat them the same' [as regular teachers]. It's drilled into them. (249,3)

> The primary school culture is working towards self discipline, collegiality and culture. In high schools senior management are chasing their tails. Most of them neglect their staff members. (249,4)

Lack of respect

One of the recurring themes illustrated by the comments such as those above, was the way in which the nature of relief teaching, and indeed regular teaching, depended on the organisational structures put in place by school leaders. Anecdotal evidence showed how relief teachers and others, were able to decode the hidden elements to depict not only what was said, but what was *not* said. Patterns of experiences served to confirm his/ her position as an 'insider' or 'outsider'. Some incidents, described in the interviews, particularly those which proved puzzling to the respondent, or which contravened his/ her personal values, had occurred many months or even years previously. As there were few opportunities to debrief or question the attitudes of other staff, relief teachers reflected on these incidents to make sense of them. The following comments showed how many relief teachers had closely observed the balance of relationships in school, and in doing so had developed a deep awareness of the hidden boundaries which existed within each school culture and climate.

> The old principal out there, since retired, used to walk in the class. I didn't mind that so much, but she used to belittle you. She'd come down, waltz into the class, and make you feel as if you weren't coping. I couldn't bear it. I hated it. That was the worst thing out there. It's different things for different schools. People don't realise. (18,1)

> The teacher's aide ... . It's her territory. She's been here for years ... I've even brought my mug. I worked that one out. You are not very popular if you use the wrong person's mug, sit on a staffroom chair, park in the wrong parking space and so forth. (124,5)

> I heard of one primary school relief teacher who went to a school whose teachers were going to a seminar and all she got was, 'Good Luck for the day!' No curriculum ... no ideas ... nothing. They thought it was her responsibility. (42,3)

> Most teachers treat me as a teacher, with two or three teachers, however, you get the feeling, 'She is just a relief and she can suffer this.' (44,1)

Anecdotal evidence and the interview data showed that the school staff often 'did not want to know' about problems connected with relief teaching. Many relief teachers expressed a sense of disbelief at what they saw as the AP 'turning a blind eye' to problems in school, particularly incidents involved with student behaviour or with the payment of salary to relief teachers. The following anecdote was taken from an interview. The man had still not come to terms with the way the assistant principal

dealt with the incident, and in doing so reduced the relief teacher's credibility and authority as a 'real' teacher.

> At [high school] one kid jumped out of the classroom window but he left his bag behind. He came afterwards and asked for it.
> I said, 'Come with me to the AP.' He swore at me and went off to the bus.
> I went to the AP and said, 'Here's his bag. You've got to show this guy you [sic] can't get away with it.'
> 'Oh all right then' ... He spoke as if he were doing me a favour.
> We went to the bus, which still had a few minutes before leaving.
> 'That's the kid then.'
> 'Oh. Okay'... and he turned away.
> I said, '*Don't turn away. Get him off the bus!*'
> The AP got on the bus and had a little talk to the boy. *I couldn't believe it.* No wonder the children are like that ... if *that* is the level of discipline. It's unbelievable. (male relief teacher. 249,3)

Student behaviour posed a major issue for relief teachers particularly when, as one relief teacher commented, many of the students were bigger than she was (418,1). Interview data showed that relief teachers were faced with the dilemma of how to cope with challenging students, particularly if s/he had few guidelines as to the school's behaviour management policy or little time to follow up any incidents. Student behaviour was often extreme. In a high school context, 'challenging the relief teacher' had become an art form and had continued as such [to a greater or lesser extent], for many years (42). The following passage taken from a longer interview described how one relief teacher employed for a three-week period learned to adjust from an authoritarian approach to one of cooperation, and a balance of relationships. The words, like many used in the interviews, expressed the emotional dimension of being close to an experience. They provided insights into the deeper elements of relief teaching.

> I was dropped in the deep end. Kids know they can bluff you, and they often did. But I took the view that kids are kids. Initially, I was surprised at their behaviour. A class almost allows itself to be supervised ... almost becomes a creature that has a mind of its own. You have to get it and lassoo it. You have to take control. It's very frustrating sometimes. It depends on what you do. If you go in there and are hard on the kids straight up, they respond in a very negative way. I applied a blanket rule of oppression for the sake of maintaining control and it didn't work very well. I tried it at first. After three days I ended up feeling really wasted ... I felt tired, physically and mentally. After that I got the kids to cooperate. I offered them something to do and I got them to offer me something. It worked better through choice and the acceptance of responsibility on the kids' behalf. I had thought, 'There must be a different way,' and I used relief teaching to experiment. (21,1)

Students, in general, were seen to adopt a very casual attitude to relief teachers, particularly in a high school context. Evidence showed that many relief teachers did not know how to counteract 'unpleasant' comments made about their clothes, their hair, or sexual orientation, without providing the fuel for a potential classroom drama or an escalating struggle for power between themselves and their protagonists. Their pragmatic solution was to ignore what was said and, instead, concentrate on the positive aspects of their work,

> Relief teaching is a different sort of teaching, with different goals. If you think you are going to be able to teach with 10% or 20% students who are going to muck up, you're

> kidding yourself. Your attention is going to be so concentrated on those kids that you'll lose the plot; because you try to concentrate on them, the others start to play up. They are getting bored. (78,2)

> I found in the secondary school, they come in and they sit down, they know they have a relief teacher but they had very, very little respect for relief teachers in the two schools I went to. They [students] are not going to sit down and focus. They are not prepared to be openly defiant. In a primary school children see it as an opportunity to muck around; secondary students see it more as an opportunity to have a conversation; not to be involved at all. That's difficult. I'd rather have a child openly defiant than having students come in and assuming that you are not there. There is no way the lesson will progress, as they want to have their conversations. (149,4)

Interview data showed that relief teachers in high schools spent considerable time and effort 'settling the class'. At times fifty per cent of class time was seen to be 'wasted' because of student unrest, or coping with attitudes of alienation or indifference. Relief teachers admitted that their role as a teacher was secondary to their need to develop a relationship with the students.

> My objective was to cope with the behaviour of the day, and my second aim was the content of what they were going to learn. (149,2)

Experienced relief teachers had developed strategies to manage, such as, positive and confident body language, a quick sense of humour to diffuse student challenges, and the ability to recognise potential troublemakers or withdrawn students, in order to balance group dynamics. A seemingly relaxed open approach, often masking underlying feelings of frustration, was seen to provide students with less opportunity for confrontational behaviour. Challenges could be gender based but the incidents described, depended on a number of variables such as the school culture, or the age and experience of the relief teacher. For example young male relief teachers who reported 'difficulties' with adolescent girls were possibly more wary of how their own responses might be interpreted. Older female relief teachers who commented on the behaviour of groups of girls who 'were rude, talked to their friends and ignored instructions', might have based their response on comparisons with the regular teaching context when they had more authority as a regular teacher. Relief teachers had to work hard to gain 'respect'.

Stress

While interview data contained many insights from practitioners who enjoyed relief teaching, in general there was a perception that relief teachers were increasingly expected to undertake a broader assignment with less opportunities to be effective. Evidence showed, too, that as onlookers to the school culture and climate, relief teachers recognised that some of the problems they experienced, such as challenging student behaviour, affected regular teachers too. One relief teacher spoke for many others when she remarked,

> I started off feeling fairly confident, but I lost my confidence too. It means not being able to control classes like you think you should be able to. (18,1)

> I have anonymous phone calls abusing me. Vicious phone calls, 'I am going to get you.' When I was with my fifteen-year-old in town some students recognised me and abused me. (249,4)

> Relief money is good now, but you should be able to go to a school without someone calling you a 'F---- old bitch!' But even teachers get it. (42,1)

> Relief teachers can't do anything; they're only there for the day ... Kids get naughtier ... they throw things and swear. If they are told off they do not get into trouble. It happens practically all the time ... perhaps not so much in the primary school level with smaller kids, but those in secondary school are often the same size as the teacher. People at the top know perfectly well what's going on. They are not fools in those positions. For example, some reporters in the local paper have been teachers, but when you read about what happens in the paper it bears no reality to what is going on in schools. Why do you think only three people from state schools got in the top twenty academic students? [1996]. Why do you get so many teachers on stress leave? ... And they predict there will be a shortage of teachers. The Department don't want to know. I don't have any feelings of anger ... just sadness. I realised that individuals at the top have the power and there was nothing I could do about it, so now I help with school for seniors [adult education] where I can make a difference and have a positive role. (former relief teacher, 418,1)

The former relief teacher (418,1) had accepted that until school problems were acknowledged, rather than hidden, individuals could do little. She, like several others interviewed, made a deliberate choice to use her professional skills elsewhere. Much of the interview data from the relief teaching perspective, however, conveyed a sense of helplessness and puzzlement. Respondents were still coming to terms with events which had occurred, perhaps, months or years earlier. Lack of debriefing indicated that, frequently, relief teachers who became overwhelmed, blamed themselves. They lost confidence, experienced anxiety and were even traumatised by classroom incidents where their values were challenged, their energy depleted, and despite their best efforts they could only provide a stop-gap solution to what they saw as profoundly disturbing problems.

The Regular Teachers' Perspective

> *I get angry when relief teachers expect the school to feed them with everything ... I don't say they do their knitting, but they sit back, a face in front of the class, and expect to be seen as a professional teacher. It doesn't work. There are not many of them but that gets my back up. If I am unwell for a day, I like to be home, be unwell and get better, without having to worry about my class for that period of time. (57,1)*

Regular teachers could be absent for a number of reasons, and it was an unwritten policy in the high schools within the investigation, that if they were away for seminars organised by the education department, they should prepare work for the relief teacher who covered their classes (appendix 9). If they were absent unexpectedly, however, there were often few arrangements in place and on many occasions relief teachers were expected to 'keep things going'. Analysis of interview data from many teachers, of different ages, subjects, schools, temperaments, provided insights into the issues and problems which were seen as important from this perspective.

Creating a 'manageable' setting

Comments from the regular high school teachers' perspective indicated that there was a considerable frustration and anger directed not only towards relief teachers, but to the education system in general. Many regular teachers indicated that they had barely time or energy to cope with their own commitments in school, yet they were expected to attend seminars and prepare classes for relief teachers. They wanted periods of consolidation rather than facing what they saw as the further problems and uncertainty from the relief teaching context. Some regular teachers expressed their resentment in strong terms. They generalised about relief teachers and saw that although some were good, others were labelled 'a disgrace', '... who only come to collect their money' (82,3). Their comments showed that they were only too aware of the changes in student behaviour, the additional duties and the unpredictability of the relief teaching setting. Isolated phrases or disparaging remarks indicated the depth of resentment felt towards a relief teacher who could avoid meetings, paperwork, marking and long-term responsibility. Relief teachers could walk out of school and forget about their day's teaching in a manner that was impossible for regular teaching staff. The role of a relief teacher when viewed in comparison to the role of a regular teacher in this light, indeed seemed superficial and unprofessional. One high school teacher summed up her view of the relationship between regular and relief teachers. It was borne out by much of the interview data.

> The major problem with relief teaching in schools is that everyone thinks they are paid too much and won't give them any assistance. (60,3)

Other teachers, particularly those with former relief teaching experience, appreciated the hidden difficulties of relief teaching, such as isolation and lower status, and realised that there was an added dimension to taking over someone else's class. They were sympathetic and looked for ways to prepare the students and provide thoughtful work.

> Relief teaching is soul destroying. I'll never forget it. As a result I've always tried to be particularly nice to relief teachers now I am a permanent teacher. You can understand the little monsters [students] exploiting the situation, they are only semi-tame but it was the other teachers who surprised me. They were so patronising so condescending ... as if you were a different and inferior species. You do have discipline problems. They would occur with anyone. Instead of thinking, 'There but for the grace of God' ... permanent teachers seemed to think there was something inherently wrong with you ... in being a relief teacher. If someone had come up with a big hand and plonked them into someone else's school, the same thing would happen to them. (173,8)

Views on relief teaching polarised. At one end of the spectrum a relief teacher was seen in terms of a stereotype, an outsider, whose job it was to provide or administer work in return for payment. At the other end of the spectrum, regular teachers empathised with relief teachers: relief teaching was seen as a difficult job which 'should' have school and system support (2,1). Many interview comments illustrated the varying perceptions of a relief teacher's position within the local school context.

> Not only are you a relief teacher but you are having to deal with a more complex situation and, therefore, require additional skills. (4,1)

> Relief teachers have to go from one thing to the next and they need to be more skilled in areas that the regular teacher is not good at. You can't find another teaching job where all your interpersonal skills are utilised more fully. (138,11)

> We get some relief teachers who are wonderful entertainers as well as being very skilled teachers. My perception of a relief teacher would be one that was more highly skilled than a regular classroom teacher in relation to the breadth of their skills: going to cope in different schools, able to pick up a tradition of how the school works, and what's expected of them in the classroom. Basically, 'What do I do [in this school culture]?' 'Does the AP like them [students] being sent to the office?' (57,2)

Comments such as those above, recognised that relief teachers needed the ability to judge and interpret situations, the confidence to entertain students, and the versatility to accept change. An effective relief teacher was seen to control [manage] a situation through his/her flexibility, personality and ability to fit into the culture and adapt to other people's expectations. An ability to entertain and motivate students appeared a valuable prerequisite, particularly at high school level; having an academic background was secondary, to keeping the students happy. There was a 'balance' of expectations, however. An effective relief teacher needed to be 'politically' sensitive and walk a fine line between the [often unwritten] expectations of both teachers and students, otherwise his/ her goal to keep the class occupied at the expense of the curriculum, ensured that the regular teacher was angry at the wasted time,

> The kids have a wonderful time and the regular teacher came back spitting chips. For example, in science, the kids may be expected to revise the table of elements, and this relief teacher will be teaching them to juggle. It makes his life easier. The kids have a fun time. I suppose it's good now and again if you regard that as important. (141,1)

> I was attending a PD [professional development] workshop at school and I popped into my grade 8 class in the break, to see how they were going. The relief teacher had them set up with fingers on the edge of the tables ... they were shooting goals. My lesson wasn't being done because the kids had said to the relief teacher, 'We've done this already.' He believed them; it didn't get done. I said to the guy, 'Why would I give you work that they've already done? That does *not* make sense.' He went, 'Ahhhh ...' (82,6)

On occasion, however, interview data did show that relief teachers took advantage of their temporary status and acted 'unprofessionally'. Indeed, some were unable to cope. Observations made by regular staff [in different high schools] indicated their frustration and sense of resentment when a relief teacher who would not, or could not, cope effectively, was given further work at the school because 'CES [Agency] has the say' (82,3). One regular teacher felt strongly that relief teachers should be trained to the task of taking over someone else's class. (180,11)

> There are some good relief teachers but bad ones too, who only come to collect their money. They are a disgrace. There should be standards and you [the school] should be able to choose if you don't want someone; you shouldn't have to have them back. The amount of money they earn; they come and settle in the library, reading a paper, away from the class, I feel like spitting chips. Why am I holding the fort while they are getting the money? I think, 'Moron!' Actually they are all men. I've reported them to the AP and I know he has requested a relief teacher, or doesn't want one, but CES has the say. He is not happy if people he doesn't want, or are not suitable, come back again. (library aide, 1994. 82,3)

> A regular teacher gets resentful when they see a relief doing very little and the children running out of class. I go and help the relief teacher and then *my children* start misbehaving. It's pretty impossible for someone to take over someone's class. There may not be enough work so there is a case of bringing your own if the work runs out. They should have a few things prepared that they like teaching. They are earning good money, and well paid. Why should I do their job as well as my own? They should be trained to be a relief teacher. Why don't you start a school for relief teachers? You'd make a lot of money. (180,11)

We don't know who we'll get

Interviews with a range of regular teachers covering different subjects showed that there were few guidelines for regular teachers or relief teachers. The researcher could find little evidence of written policies, processes, advice or instructions for regular teachers concerning the relief teaching context, in any of the schools within the investigation, beyond a general instruction to give the AP as much notice as possible in case of absence. As a consequence, each regular teacher interpreted what s/he considered 'appropriate' for the relief teacher. Increasingly a pragmatic approach took priority, work that was 'foolproof', easy to organise and clear up afterwards. General work such as negotiated study, private study, or a video formed the basis of many lessons taken by relief teachers. It was seen as a compromise which was flexible enough to deal with the unknown factors inherent in the present method of organisation. Yet, even the most simple lesson took time to organise for a stranger. Conscientious regular teachers provided: a class list; advice on reliable students; instructions on the class routine; which teachers would provide help if needed; reminders to count books, and so forth. They structured the taken-for-granted aspects of teaching, so that a newcomer could take over. Other regular teachers, for whatever reason, provided little information and expected a relief teacher to cope. In each school there was no apparent system of accountability required either from the students or the regular or relief teachers. Here again, the relief teaching context relied on individuals to create their own system and cope as best they could.

Whatever the degree of preparation involved, most of the regular high school teachers interviewed begrudged the extra time, organisation and thought that they spent on the organisation of relief teaching. For some people, it was an ineffective

exercise from the start. One regular teacher commented, 'There isn't a relief teacher who could teach my subjects: English, Social Science, Japanese and Indonesian.' and based her provision of class work on the assumption that a relief teacher would have a generalist's rather than a specialist's background in one, or more, of her subjects. The comment highlighted one of the major issues which regular teachers faced: they often did not know who would take their class. Instructions needed for an experienced relief teacher, familiar with students, subject, and curriculum would be obviously very different from the instructions needed by an inexperienced relief teacher who had never visited the school, or who was, for example, a secondary trained [relief] teacher who felt insecure in a primary situation' (60,5). Interview data expressed concerns, such as, 'I don't know whether I am belittling the relief teacher by over-preparing. Everything needs to be done' (60,5). Another regular teacher, at a senior secondary college, who had spent two days preparing a home economics class for a relief teacher, commented, ' ... But I haven't heard back yet. I don't know if the relief will turn up' (43,10). The uncertainty of who would come, or how the students would react to an inexperienced teacher, proved unsettling. One classroom teacher commented:

> I don't know who they're getting as relief teachers any more. Some of them are young teachers who haven't had any experience. How do you take a class, especially as a relief teacher when it's one of the hardest things to do if you haven't had any experience? (18,6)

Regular teachers might request that a particular relief teacher take over in his/ her absence, but factors such as the relief teacher's availability, or differing administrative priorities, often prevented clear-cut relief teaching assignments (57,1). Perhaps the most ingenious solution the researcher encountered was from one primary school teacher who arranged for her mother, a trained teacher, to take over in her absence.

On the occasions when a regular teacher was unwell and 'phoned-in sick', interview data showed that most schools coped in an ad hoc manner, because of limited time and the complexity of each individual problem. The preparation of work, for example, not only depended on the provision of suitable material, but also on factors, such as whether the lesson was practical or theoretical, the cooperation and ability of the students, and the manner in which relief teaching was linked to the larger organisational framework within the school. In several of the high schools studied in the investigation, the response for obtaining emergency teaching cover rested on the person in charge of relief teaching [usually an AP] who often attempted to coordinate relief teaching unaided. Instructions were given verbally. Regular teachers, particularly those who worked in a practical subject, anticipated student problems and felt a sense professional of obligation to other staff who might 'have to pick up the bits and pieces and behaviour problems' (66,1) if inappropriate student behaviour escalated outside the classroom. They described the scene as, 'a last minute scramble' or 'muddle and confusion' (2,1; 167,1). Interview data showed clearly that in many high schools, a domino effect occurred if one aspect of the ad hoc system fell down (66,1).

The following passage, illustrated the personal effort needed, when regular teachers had to provide additional instructions for the organiser as well as for a relief teacher. A regular high school teacher recounted her feelings,

> When a teacher is sick, you say, 'I am not coming in today'. The co-ordinator says, 'What have you got for period 1?' And after several minutes of explaining what to do and where everything is, you feel like dropping the phone and saying, 'Look, I'll come in anyway; I'm not that sick.' You think, 'How am I going to explain it?' You've lost your voice and you're on the phone for fifteen minutes saying what a relief teacher could do. It's such a lot of pressure for the other teachers in the block [building]. They have to pick up the bits and pieces and behaviour problems when the regular teachers are away. You can't blame relief teachers; they should be supported as all staff should be supported. If students in school haven't got their regular teachers, the problems go outside the classroom. (66,1)

Similar comments from other regular teachers indicated the sense of exasperation they felt, for what was to them further evidence of an ineffective approach and mounting problems within the relief teaching context.

Picking up the pieces

Even with the best plans, regular teachers found problems on their return. Several interview respondents declined to attend professional development [PD] seminars. One art teacher was concerned with, what he saw as, the potentially detrimental effects of having a person with a different philosophical approach taking his class, as with the organisational aspects of working in the studio (60,8). His views were shared by other regular teachers who preferred to remain with their students rather than attend seminars organised by the Department.

> I used to hate it when I was away. Nine times out of ten the work wouldn't get done or it wouldn't get done the way you wanted it done and all your equipment, like the scissors and glue were spread around. (art teacher. 82,6)

> In fact I don't apply to go to seminars or personal development now. From experience, I have found it takes double the time to organise for a relief teacher, and when you come back you have to sort everything out. You can't choose who comes, you could get a traditional rather than a creative relief teacher, this causes problems for the class and I am left to pick up the crumbs. (high school art teacher. 43,1)

The power of student group dynamics was another major issue which arose from analysis of the interview data. One regular teacher described her pastoral care class covering four student grades, as a 'real drag because the only thing they enjoy doing together is going to buy something at McDonalds' fast food outlet (173,4). Evidence from the interviews showed that, on occasion, particularly in some schools, regular staff had difficulty managing student groups. Some regular teaching staff anticipated that a change of teacher would unsettle the students' behaviour even further (173,6) and attempted to minimise the escalation of potential conflict by providing videos rather than work for the students, particularly if practical lessons were cancelled (66,1).

> When professional development [a seminar] comes up, it's ... 'Oh. no!' You've got to be away. You can't go without planning for a relief teacher and dictating who's who and what's what. The video is our salvation. 'Round the Twist' takes periods 2, 3, 4 and 5. They all love it. It's by Paul Jennings and we've had 'Round the Twist' going for two

> terms. You have to hit on something they like. They think 'White Fang' the video is cool, too. You have to have those things up your sleeve. It sounds lazy but as long as they are educationally viable ... I've got a practical room to maintain. We have to have a certain amount of students out of the room to be prepared for the next class, as the rooms are used fairly constantly. It's time to recover or get the rooms back to rights for the next class to go. People must recognise what the situation really is like. (66,1)

Regular teachers indicated by their comments that no matter how enthusiastic or motivated a relief teacher appeared, factors such as the layout of the room, a change from a practical to a theoretical lesson or the difference in teaching style between a relief teacher and the students' regular teacher caused student unrest, and led to problems for relief and regular staff. (121,6)

Student behaviour

Much of the regular teachers' resentment was a result of the underlying problems which surfaced in a relief teacher's class. The real determinant of a relief teacher's 'success' was seen to be the behaviour of the students. Regular teachers admitted that student behaviour often changed when the regular teacher was away. A primary school teacher described how one child could affect others while a teacher in another school said her normally manageable class became 'little rotters' for a relief teacher. In a high school context, students were seen to look up to negative behaviour. It was apparent too, from comments made in the interviews, that regular teachers experienced increasing difficulties with student language and behaviour. Many high school teachers expressed little sense of pleasure or control in their job. They knew that to 'survive' in school they had to ignore language from students which was personally confronting and 'do cartwheels or whatever' (64,1) to achieve short-term goals. Interview data provided insights into the varying school cultures which indicated that many students were frequently using any opportunities to push the established school boundaries of authority or behaviour to get what they wanted. Teachers were only just coping. They felt tired and demoralised. Observations indicated that in some schools student behaviour was extreme in a relief teacher's class. (29,11; 61,4)

> Some of the grade 7's are near feral. They have no social skills whatsoever, they say whatever comes into their heads, they take no notice of you, yell out, screech, laugh and carry on ... I have a few years left before retirement. My efforts are like confetti before the wind. I just think of it as a time to get over'. (121,5)

> A couple of years ago, a relief teacher arrived. It was her first time at the school. On that first morning there was a stand up fight in [her] class. That was unusual for [high school]. By the end of the day she said. 'This is the worst school I have been to, and I'm never coming back'. (18,8)

Interview data showed that the relief teaching context was often precariously balanced on the existing network of student/ staff relationships. Student behaviour varied from class to class. Regular teachers in some high schools could barely cope with the daily barrage of confronting student language and behaviour. Many staff were 'pushed to the limits' by student behaviour (43,3) and the implementation of Departmental and school policies. In one high school regular teachers patrolled in pairs at recess and lunch time in order to contain escalating student 'challenges' such as illicit smoking, or defiant behaviour. As a result regular staff had more duties, less time for their own needs and were apprehensive as to what might happen when relief

teachers took their classes. Their concerns appeared justified. Anecdotal evidence indicated that on occasion, relief teachers had refused to return to the school (18,8). Further comments from a number of regular teachers, particularly in a high school setting, felt that principals were not supporting their staff adequately in coping with student behaviour and that the staff at Departmental level did not understand the realities of working in schools either (138, 11).

> The top of the school are not taking behaviour seriously. They are putting problem children in different classes and rotating them rather than tackling the problem. I want to come to school to be pleased to come. It's just too much. I need chocolate to restore my energy levels. We now patrol two-by-two, and we have reduced the numbers of students [in class] by adding an extra class, so there are more classes and more duties. Everyone is just too tired ... everyone suffers. People feel 'down' and grey and heavy. All last term I felt like that. I had no energy. (156,8)

> The school is always trying to get relief. One ex-teacher here came as a relief but will not come back. In the practical areas I've witnessed appalling behaviour ... in animal mode. It must be a hard school, as the permanent teachers have a battle. (teacher's aide. 156,8)

General comments from the regular teachers' perspective indicated that the education system within Tasmania was viewed with cynicism, particularly by older teachers, who felt trapped in what they saw as an increasingly alien school culture. Their values and beliefs were not shared by the students and at times they did not know how to stabilise the noisy uncontrolled student behaviour or the accompanying offensive language. It was seen that senior officers in the Department did not tackle the important questions but 'tinkered at the edges' (174,8) and the approach to relief teaching was seen as a 'cover-up job' (2,1): few people in authority were seen as wanting to know what happened in schools and turned a blind eye to any problems (173,8). The approach of many senior officials was seen as deliberate. 'It [the Department] had reasons for keeping relief teachers isolated' (2,1). 'The approach to relief teaching is to disguise weaknesses' (123,3). Most comments from the regular teachers' perspective shared the belief that 'the chief reason for relief is that the Department wants to save money' (206,7).

Regular teachers who had worked as relief teachers in other Australian states and overseas, confirmed that the Tasmanian system of employment, which accepted non-qualified teachers as relief teachers and provided no form of training, was from their experience, far more casual in approach than systems of employment elsewhere. As a result, the Department's lack of contact with relief teachers was seen to cause more problems for school staff because relief teachers were out-of-touch with education policies and practices. There appeared a general sense of mistrust, low morale, and evidence which suggested that regular teachers saw themselves locked into a political, rather than an educational context, over which they had little imput or control. As their work intensified, they saw those in authority, including principals, becoming more concerned with the political rhetoric and less with the reality facing classroom teachers. As a consequence, the relief teaching context, which represented a change from routine, assumed another dimension. Analysis of the interview data showed that the attitudes and patterns of responses from regular teachers were diverse: for some people, relief teaching was seen as 'the last straw'; for other people, the arrival of a relief teacher represented the opportunity to 'escape' their daily

responsibilities; while a third group of regular teachers 'fought' changes, either by restricting their own absences or by the detailed preparation of work for the relief teachers who came to their classes. These responses formed part of the hidden agenda of relief teaching.

The Administrators' Perspective

> *An AP's job is the dogsbody job in the place. Everything that needs doing instantly is the AP's job. When I first became an acting AP [at high school] I used to make a list of all I had to do. I soon gave it up, for the list grew longer than at the start of the day. Nothing got crossed off. It was very much prioritising ... coping with the changing scene ... so many different hats. (250,3)*

Administrators in schools played a pivotal role between the school and the Department, and the school and relief teachers. Comments selected from interviews with principals, assistant principals, school bursars, caretakers and administrative staff illustrated a number of the issues and problems underlying the relief teaching context within an administrative perspective. The respondents represented a spectrum of administrative experience, ranging from an acting administrator on her first day as a co-ordinator of relief teaching, to an administrator with a total of thirty years' experience in several of the local schools in the investigation. Although each school context was different and each administrator presented a personal perspective on relief teaching, analysis of interview data showed common problems, centred around the management of limited resources. It seemed to many of the administrators, they were locked into a cycle of recurring problems, which were frustrating and time-consuming (27). Many administrators did not have the time to cope and adopted a pragmatic approach to problem-solving (45,1).

Relief teaching came on top of everything else

It was generally agreed by administrators, that the management of relief teaching was a complex and time-consuming challenge which came on top of an already demanding day. Many of the assistant principals [AP's] expressed conflict at the reactive nature of their job when they worked 'flat chat' to provide 'patch jobs' and experienced the stress of not being able to cope as they wished. Interview data showed how administrators in some schools battled daily to contain a situation, which to them, seemed overwhelming. Their major concern was primarily to fill the gap left by the absent teacher(s). In doing so, however, they did not wish to create problems, for themselves, the students, or the school. All too frequently interview data showed that the administrators who coordinated relief teaching were walking a thin line between what they saw as 'success' and 'failure'. How could they attract motivated and competent relief teachers? How could they attract relief teachers who wished to return? The two were often not synonymous. So much seemed a compromise between what they hoped for and what happened. Data from the interviews illustrated the complexity of combining the interrelated aspects of the relief teaching context.

Many administrators worked hard to save money by limiting external relief staff, but found that if the regular staff had too many supervisions, they become stressed, unable to cope and went on sick leave, thus compounding the initial problem. As some administrators became more experienced they were able to modify their initial approach by viewing the organisation of relief teaching in terms of a cycle of events which were dependent on factors, such as 'the sickness we expected in Term 2 came

in Term 3' (45,5). Many of the extreme fluctuations of staff absences were unpredictable and administrators coped on a reactive day-to-day basis, with varying degrees of success.

> ... we've tried to do a lot [of relief cover] internally ... mind you it's taxing. It doesn't really save you money as [regular] staff get sick at the end of it. Generally, it's going to cost you the same so I feel we'll go back to relief. Everyone, from my position down [as AP] has a full load of twenty-six periods. It really is difficult. (27,4)

> I start [organising relief teaching] later now. I deliberately do that. I never start before 8.15 am. On a good day I am still going at 9.00 am. I don't think there's ever a day when we don't have one or two [relief] staff a day, some days five or six, and that's when I am still going at 9.30 am because I've exhausted my own relief teachers, rewritten timetables for five or six people ... then I have got CES [relief from Agency] people arriving. I don't phone CES until 8.20 am so I can't expect people to be here before 9.05 am. I rarely have to put in a stop-gap. This morning was classic. At 8.30 am there was nothing. I thought, 'That's great!' I had nothing to do so I was sitting at the table tidying it up ... I don't get a chance to do that very often. Another teacher said, 'I bet you get a phone call any moment.' Two minutes later, the other AP phoned through and said, 'Sorry, I've been held up. I've known for the last fifteen minutes that two people are away today.' So at 8.30 am I started. I didn't try to get my regulars at that late stage, so we did supervisions. (45,4)

Underlying many of the comments was a tacit need: firstly, for administrators to structure a manageable situation for themselves and the school; and secondly, to fulfil their 'political' task as an administrator. Comments from some administrators indicated that they were conscious of the need to 'satisfy' the Department, the parents, and regular school staff, by providing visible evidence of their economic management and ability to maintain the school's reputation and ethos. It was not an easy task. As was seen by the above comments (45,4; 27,4), relief teaching was unpredictable, administrators learned as they went along and had to rely on meagre channels of communication. There were few instructions or points of reference to help them.

Arranging to cover teacher absences

Administrators had a daily unremitting task to arrange cover for absent teachers. Analysis of the interview transcripts showed that teacher absences fell into two groups: those which were anticipated such as seminars or school camps, and those which were unpredicted and often occurred with little warning such as an absence due to personal sickness (195,2). One high school coordinator admitted that during the period from the start of school in February until the end of October there had been only two days in the whole school year when there had been no need for relief teachers (69,1).

> ... it's not unusual to have eight or nine [regular staff absent]. The main reason is illness. We use relief teachers for professional development and sometimes for student excursions. They are rare, but if it is an all-day excursion for example, then the teacher's other classes have to be covered. Sometimes there are other types of leave to cover, like one teacher who has taken off the last two weeks of term as part of her long service leave; sometimes those who represent the State for, say, cricket. Also union people here, who are away on a regular basis ... where we try to use the same [replacement] person. (AP high school. 20,1)

> The 'Intensive Literacy Skills' [policy] this year meant that the whole staff went through the process of how we could teach literacy across the curriculum. On several days this year the whole staff had to have relief. We were suddenly getting eight relief teachers for the day. They would get bits and pieces [of timetables] to fill gaps, as 8-10 staff would go for one-and-a-half hours. People who came to do relief on these occasions would have to be jacks-of-all-trades in order to cope with the diversity. (62,4)

Getting someone on class quickly

The task of providing cover was not always straightforward. The majority of administrators arrived at school early, even two hours before school started, to prepare for the day and reorganise for staff absences. They could choose whether to contact the Agency [CES] for relief or to contact relief teachers directly. It was not uncommon for an AP to make as many as ten to twenty telephone calls to get relief staff (221;1,9;4,2). Each morning before school, the organisation of relief teaching included some of the following tasks: organising timetables; providing instructions for routine administrative tasks, such as, register and absentee forms; allocating duties, such as, canteen duty, playground duty, bus duty; checking the provision of class work; changing work for non-specialists; reorganising a practical subject if necessary (51); collecting text books or student work; booking videos or rooms; and organising the issue and return of keys and equipment [e.g. scissors, videos, sports balls, television]. These arrangements were, in addition, to his/ her other commitments such as talking with parents or students.

For many administrators, their principal concern was to 'get someone on class quickly' rather than worry about searching for a specialist. There were several aspects of getting someone to fit in. It was often difficult, for example, to provide relief staff to cover the range of subjects on the curriculum, as there were few trained maths or science teachers available, and music teachers were in short supply. At times, university students were approached to cover subjects such as Japanese or sports. It could be difficult to blend a new and often unknown person, into a gap created by an experienced member of staff. There were hidden barriers and tensions,

> You feel frustrated and fed up when you have a lot to contend with in the morning and the relief teacher comes and you feel they are not giving it their best shot during the day. They don't take it seriously. The ones that do come on our preferred list. (27,2)

The organisation of relief teaching extended beyond school hours. Administrators recognised that there were potential ramifications which extended beyond the school precincts if a relief teacher did not take his/ her role seriously, but with lack of time and perhaps lack of 'suitable' relief teachers, little could be done beyond compiling a 'preferred' list of relief teachers. As one senior administrator commented,

> A relief teacher comes in moments of great crisis. They had brief instructions and were expected to manage. In most cases that doesn't happen. They were met at the door by a harassed AP and pointed in the direction of the classroom ... They would have been told to contact the AP with any difficulty but the AP was probably there, crossing his fingers and hoping to god there won't be any more problems as he had enough of his own. (154,1).

The task of getting someone to class quickly posed many problems and uncertainties.

The stress of uncertainty: a 'hit and miss' approach

The stress of uncertainty provided a major theme within the administrators' perspective. Evidence from the investigation indicated that what were seen as personal inadequacies, were often symptoms of deeper problems within the organisation of relief teaching. Interview data showed that administrators were caught between coping with, what one principal described as, 'the challenge of underperforming staff'(154,3) without having time to stand back or feel a measure of control. Indeed, many administrators did not know how to 'motivate' or retain good relief teachers. There was no time to develop systems which would provide induction for relief teachers or lead to greater personal accountability. As a consequence, interview data showed that in settings of change, particularly radical and sudden change, many administrators expressed frustration and uncertainty. Lack of clear guidelines, coupled with the need to replace an absent teacher within a limited time-frame produced a 'hit and miss' approach (33,1) which led to further uncertainties. In turn, the various ill-defined boundaries of organisation and responsibility, created further wide-ranging variables.

It is necessary to examine the comments from administrators within a context of extreme change. While doing so, there are other factors which might explain some of the frustration and hostilities surrounding relief teaching, such as, the balance of responsibility between the administrator and the relief teacher; or, between the time spent on relief teaching and its perceived outcome.

The overall responsibility for the organisation of relief teaching varied from school to school. In some high schools an administrator had taken responsibility for the organisation of relief teaching for several years (45; 59) in other schools which had two AP's, or a number of senior staff, the job was alternated, a term at a time. Should an AP become absent through factors such as long service leave or illness, a senior member of staff would assume responsibility. Anecdotal evidence and interview data suggested that the context of relief teaching was seen as a testing ground for demonstrating a person's administrative expertise. It was judged important, particularly for a 'career orientated' or ambitious administrator, to be seen as a competent and effective 'housekeeper'. Indeed, the management of relief teaching was a complex task, particularly in a high school. In many of the schools within the investigation, it could be seen as 'crisis driven' (154,2). One relief teaching coordinator [R] claimed she had been 'thrown in at the deep end' when she transferred to a new primary school:

> Q: What instructions about relief teaching did you get from the previous person?
> R: 'Here's a list of good relief teachers. Unfortunately, the good ones have found employment. See what you can do with what's left!' (65,4)

Interview data showed that despite the complexity, or perhaps because of it, little had been written about the organisation of relief teaching in schools.

Comments indicated that some administrators enjoyed the timetabling and problem-solving aspects, whereas others felt nervous and were glad when they could pass on their duties of administration to another staff member. Sometimes, there was no real choice. The following comments show the ambivalent feelings experienced by a

newly appointed AST 3 [senior teacher] who was asked to organise relief teaching. She described the offer as one that, 'I politically can't refuse' (38).

> The coordinator [AP] became ill and the principal approached me to step into the role, which was wonderful ... but it came at an awful time for me. Next week we are having [grade 10] English and social science exams and I head both those departments. I have to try and organise the exams as well as do this [relief teaching]. Quite a job in itself. I still have my teaching load of 23 periods. I haven't been given any time to take this on. It's one of those things. You can't really knock it back or you won't be asked again, plus it's valuable experience for me I only came into the AST 3 job in a formal capacity at the beginning of this year. As I was racing around trying to find out this and that, [a colleague] very kindly suggested that I tried to phone you [researcher/ relief teacher] to confirm whether you could come. When I rang you I was embarrassed. I wasn't sure whether I was intruding on your personal life and whether you were in a situation where I could ring you and say, 'Look we need you. Could you come in?' I wasn't sure of the set-up. I had even to say to the principal, 'How many teachers do we have to have away? How critical does it get, before we can have someone in?' She said, 'If people have loads of six or more lessons, it's going to overburden the other staff.' (38,1)

There were fundamental difficulties of integrating relief teaching and other school commitments, particularly when no additional time was given by the principal to undertake the additional tasks. The acting administrator [AST3] spent three hours after school attempting to make sense of the AP's job and 'wondered more than anything'. Nothing from the relief teaching context was written down so she felt as if she were in a vacuum. The unpredictable and unstructured context of relief teaching caused additional stress. Her comments [R] presented a graphic description of how she felt about her new role

> R: I asked [colleague]. There is no page I can pick up and say, ' 1) Do this. 2) Phone here: *these* are the numbers and *these* are the people.' There's nothing like that here. It would have been wonderful. It would have given me a procedure to follow. It was very hit and miss. The scariest part of the whole lot, was once I had done the supervision list, people were coming to me this morning and saying, '*I* can't do this ... take this class because I have *another* meeting,' which wasn't formally documented. I couldn't have known that. So there at the last second, I was racing out to heaps of people with supervision slips, who shouldn't have got them, but I was desperate at the last minute to get someone. That's fairly awful.
> Q: [researcher] You are an organised person?
> R: It upsets me very much, if I can't have things in advance and running smoothly to my liking. I really get upset by that.
> Q: You mean, there's an extra tension?
> R: What it is, I like to work to a system and it's nobody's fault that I haven't had an opportunity to develop one, but it ties back to what we were saying before ... to have something set down for me to look at, to work from ... I have nothing to say [indicate], 'This is the way to go and the steps to follow.' It would have been useful. (38,2)

The acting AP (38,2) went on to describe how she realised just before the close of school on her first day, that the school had run out of green stickers [for pay claims], needed by relief teachers before they went home. She did not know what to do,

> The Bursar was telling me, because I went straight to him, that we've ordered six [days] more but they haven't arrived yet. This was at 2.50 pm. I was running around frantically saying, 'What am I going to do?' So he got his car out and went straight down to the primary school ... by car! [to borrow stickers] (38,2)

Many of the interviews showed similar instances of administrators who were locked in to a reactive, 'hand-to-mouth' (4,2) approach to management. There were few steps to follow. One administrator referred to his task as a 'filtering process', where relief teachers who could not cope were not invited back (241,2). In general, it seemed a 'hit and miss' approach to find relief teachers who 'fitted the need' (62,1).

Finding good relief staff

Although there were some references to 'good' relief staff, the ideal relief teacher seemed rare. In comparison, there were far more comments made about relief teachers who were 'unmotivated' and 'there to collect the money'. Administrators described several relief teachers who seemed unaware of their professional responsibilities in dress or in behaviour and, therefore, fundamentally alien to the school ethos (Y, 6). The following comments from a primary school administrator indicated some of the inherent frustrations and difficulties when 'unsuitable' relief teachers worked in his school,

> They [relief teachers] arrive with self marking sheets. Relief teachers are baby pacifiers. Instead, they should be able to demonstrate they are making a meaningful contribution to learning. They have a bundle of [work]sheets in their basket and hand them out. One parent came in to see me and alerted me. 'Look at the children, [they're] always filling in photocopied sheets. The relief teacher has not spoken to them all day.' I don't know where these people have come from. Relief teachers with not enough nouse ... leaving a class ... walking away to go to get photocopies. They are unsuitable. They either hype the children up with lollies, or show poor management ... one step removed from volunteer Sunday school teachers. There are lousy relief teachers from Uni. I have told CES [agency], 'Don't send them again.' I don't like relief teachers who come for the easy cop. Our teachers work hard. They are out of school for a reason. There is no way I would expect a program to be connected and fluid but I would expect a good learning day. Relief teachers don't challenge the students. They send the red card [behaviour management system] to the office. Children are bored because of the lack of preparation and unsuitable work such as games, silent reading, and photocopied sheets which lead to discipline problems. It would be preferable for the school's culture to build up a cohort of regular relief teachers. (195,2)

Evidence from the investigation showed that although it might be preferable to build up a cohort of regular relief teachers (195), in practice, it was difficult. Within the present system, relief teachers were employed on a casual basis. The influence of factors, such as: the fluctuations of supply and demand; the size of the school population; the complexity of the curriculum; the location of the school; and the socio-economic background of the students, affected the funding and organisation of relief teaching.

> You may start the year with perhaps five [relief teachers] you are going to call on fairly regularly but during the course of the year you have to employ two of them yourself in the case of someone becoming pregnant or on extended sick leave ... that means your pool is down to three and one of them is probably likely to go off and get a job somewhere else. Then you have to introduce a new group who are not necessarily committed to working in a fairly close relationship with the school. You might end up with ten or twelve different faces. That is when difficulties start to occur for relief teachers and for the school for that matter. (X,4)

Even when an administrator was well-organised, some weeks were still described as 'disastrous' because the absence of a large number of regular staff had such an impact

on the school culture. A good relief teacher was only part of the equation. In the following example, taken from a high school context, an AP illustrated how the changes of teachers and routines unsettled the students, and the previously-established routines crumbled inevitably.

> A couple of weeks ago, we had about ten relief teachers in one day and eleven the next. Two big chunks of relief teachers and the whole tone of the school changed. It's probably the maximum. It was a fairly heavy PD [professional development] day and two staff were out .... Quite horrific, to the extent that I had three staff coming to me and saying, 'Can we try to spread these events out?' 'Is it necessary to have everyone involved at the one time?' The students feel, 'It is only a relief teacher. *They* don't know the system' and, 'Ah, beauty ... relief teacher ... we can do whatever ...' Yes, a boy was sent down to me. He had decided that the relief teacher would not know about school rules ... that you didn't have a cap on, ... couldn't chew, etc., etc. ... Except the relief teacher *did* know and chipped in and chipped in, to the extent that the kid mouthed off. Luckily the relief teacher went to get someone else, brought the kid straight down here, and he's had a detention for it. Some relief teachers are reluctant to do that. (63,2)

While it was apparent that the administrator welcomed the relief teacher's approach, further questioning showed that both the principal and administrator (59; 63) 'took it for granted' that regular staff would support relief teachers in difficulties; they '... thought relief teachers enjoyed working at the school but had never asked' (59,3). Yet, there was no folder of information available for relief teachers, nor instructions on behaviour management policies within the school (59). The principal of the school explained,

> We'd never thought about it. If you are dealing with relief teachers at 8.00 am and four or five people are away, your main concern is to get people on classes, and then you've got teaching yourself. You haven't time to discuss behaviour management policies (59,2).

A good relief teacher had to know how to 'fit in' and 'fill in' unobtrusively but firmly. The majority of relief teachers came at a busy time and their role was considered short-term. Changes in student behaviour were acknowledged, but in the absence of resources, or time for reflection, few administrators had thought deeply about relief teaching or about any further implications to the school. They were often only able to cope with their own immediate problems.

Maintaining the reputation of the school

Administrators were frequently faced with complex management problems concerned with relief teaching. They had to steer a course between supporting their teaching staff and pacifying the students (154, 1). Underlying their decisions was a predominant concern to protect the reputation of the school (247,1). In one high school, for example, the administrator claimed that two relief teachers 'had spread rumours' about the school which caused the school to use its own teachers as supervisors, rather than employing 'outsiders'. Their regular teachers covered classes for a year before the school reverted to relief supervision. Incidents which got out-of-hand, therefore, could lead to unwelcome publicity or even result in legal repercussions.

> In 1992, we had a really difficult grade 10. It was amazing and caused us all sorts of problems. Some relief teachers went from the school and gave the impression that the

> school was terrible to work in and that the kids ran riot and there was rubbish everywhere. It was a bad experience and helped to give us a bad name which was not deserved. We've just started to recover, so we've got a small band of relief teachers we've developed strong relationships with ... . They are treated as members of staff. Many of them even sit with the staff, not by themselves, almost like pseudo staff members in their own right. (45,3)

A school caretaker (53) confirmed the changes which occurred when relief teachers came to the high school. He did what he could to ensure students 'wandering around the school' returned to their classes. He suggested that 'someone had to complain and test the system' [in the law courts] because students were 'getting away' with inappropriate behaviour. A caretaker in another school agreed that students reacted to relief teachers: 'students set you up, they definitely set you up' (13). Evidence, from a school bursar, confirmed that students who were out-of-class, for any reason, posed problems for the school (26,2) in terms of damaged equipment or accountability. References to student behaviour and problems with students were often described in terms of patterns of behaviour, rather than as specific events. There were a few anecdotes, however, which represented a humorous, stressful or dramatic occasion (250,1).

> R: The most incredible thing I saw, was a class using a relief teacher as a basket ball backboard. The kids were trying to get things off her head into the rubbish bin. They were throwing paper at her?
> Q: She knew this or was ignoring it?
> R: She was ignoring it I think. One of the good kids in the class came and got me and said, 'You've got to do something.'
> Q: Was the relief teacher upset?
> R: A little bit ... but not to the degree I was.
> Q: Was she a new relief teacher?
> R: ... in the school, yes. But what made it worse was the key culprit was the principal's son!
> Q: What happened?
> R: The principal followed it up to some degree. I got the relief teacher to go off and have a cup of coffee while I hit the bloody roof. You've got to, otherwise they'll try it on the regular teachers as well. (250,1)

Relief teaching could be seen as a potentially explosive setting. If parents were 'told the wrong story then problems escalated' (1,2; 247,1). Evidence suggested that these worries were well-founded (27,1)(250,3). Sometimes students complained about a relief teacher, but it was often too late to follow up an incident as the relief teacher was no longer in school.

> We had a terrible situation last year ...a relief teacher actually hit a kid and I couldn't contact him for three days to find out. They [CES agency coordinator] wouldn't give me his phone number, they said, 'We will get him to phone you' ... and it took three full days ... and I had a parent screaming in here, of course. The kids were prepared to verify it, but the one thing I wanted was a statement from the teacher as to what actually happened. I explained the situation to [named the agency coordinator]. She said, 'Look, I just cannot give you his number, I will keep trying to phone him.' But of course, as soon as they [CES] go home that is the end of it, whereas I would have phoned him at night, at midnight if need be, to get a response. (X,3)

Underlying many comments from this perspective, were elements of conflict and change. Such clues indicated how the relief teaching context was interwoven with

other events at personal, school and system level. The problems and issues of relief teaching, therefore, could not be seen in isolation. Difficulties with relief teaching took considerable senior administrative time to resolve. There was an additional dimension to the management of relief teaching. An analysis of interview data showed that 'thrifty' economic management was considered politically and professionally commendable and, therefore, of high priority within the current educational settings.

Counting the costs

The problem of 'getting value for money' and 'working the relief teacher every lesson' (12,4) was the goal of many administrators. If an administrator could use one relief teacher to cover for a number of regular teachers, s/he felt the day's green stickers were justified. Administrators felt 'betrayed' by relief teachers who did not 'give it their best shot during the day' (27,2). One of the underlying frustrations which occurred through the interview data from the administrative perspective was that administrators felt that the education department had moved away from an interactive model of working towards a common vision. Instead, they felt that the Departmental officers at system level attempted to dictate what should or should not happen, with little reference to the practical implications of organising relief teaching. Administrators in schools, for example, resented the inefficient system of relief teaching forms, salary claims and stickers, when there seemed to be simplified alternatives. Lack of communication and obvious lack of understanding between administrators at school and system level, produced a sense of alienation and cynicism among administrators. Interview data showed that several administrators had voiced their concerns to the Department about aspects of the administration of relief teaching. Their initial attempts led nowhere, and with no Departmental initiative or support, it was 'unwise' to admit any continuing concern or difficulties, particularly as relief teaching was of low priority and would not win any 'brownie points' (58,2).

> Schools have to pay $170.00 (24.10.94) a day for relief teachers, regardless of their experience and qualifications. Somewhere down in Hobart [Education Department] the money for the agency has been 'creamed off'. It's probably $25.00 a head, I would think, for every day's relief. (X,1)

> Schools get ripped off by the Department. Relief teachers are employed at a set rate regardless of the person who is employed. If the school employs relief teachers directly we should get the administration charge back. Though we use CES it's a hassle going through it, and it can take one-and-a-half hours for a relief teacher to reach school. On top of the cost, we pay for the Department workers. There are four people working full-time processing relief claims. (218,6)

> The new [salary claim] form is terrible. It has no address to send it to. Who can sign it? There is one line for a supervising officer to sign, yet, a relief teacher might be at a different school every day. (33,1)

While administrators in schools attempted to minimise the costs of relief teaching they felt that senior officials in the Department had another agenda (350,1; 45). 'Everybody was competing for a slice of the cake' (W). An administrator, described how he had contacted the Department ten years previously, to suggest ways of reducing relief teaching costs but he had been 'wrapped over the knuckles'. Another

administrator who 'was always looking for ways to save money' for the school wrote to senior officials in the education department more recently, suggesting that schools had the computer facilities to be able to pay the relief at the point of service, rather than using the present unwieldy and often inaccurate bureaucratic process. Interview data confirmed his frustration. He got a '... sort of condescending, don't-be-silly-and-schools-have-no-right-response, because they would have to change the regulations' (218,6). Comments from a number of administrators indicated that they had to compromise, increasingly. As one interview respondent remarked, 'Principals feel they are pushed around by people who don't know what they are talking about. It is a malaise of our time' (350,1).

> Practical operational management is so different from administrative management. The administrators [Department] seem to say, 'Don't waste my time. We're showing you the future and how you can cope with change.' Everything is broken up. They are trying to make you feel inadequate by playing on your own latent sense of inferiority instead of developing your strengths. [Name] is a 'supreme bureaucrat'. When a situation in school is announced the answer seems to be, 'What problem?' Six months later when the situation is almost out of control and the Department is again approached, 'We haven't got a problem ... It's you. You're the problem.' It becomes an irreversible problem. Then they undermine your subordinates. That weakens your approach and support falls away like frost on a summer's day ... Your supporters get passed over or offered a crook job. It's like hurting your own family. You are asking your supporters to show the same zealousness. I could rally support anytime, but if I take an out-of-line step, they [Department] lean on your staff or make you realise the limit of your own power. Many senior teachers are cynical now. They find that people with less talent and experience are telling them what to do. The belief is that management [i.e. theory] can solve it all. Algebraic solutions are not the solution in life. It's far more obscure. The search for money and power is endemic. But fragmentation has occurred and it is precisely that fragmentation which has always occurred. The answer is not to break up the problems but to see how they are linked. (350,2)

A careful examination of interview data revealed examples of some of the underlying problems. Administrators talked about what 'they would like to happen' and further questioning revealed that the reality was different. The relief teaching context therefore produced competing tensions, where administrators found themselves compensating for: an ad hoc system of low priority at Departmental level; relief teachers who did not understand the aims and priorities of the school community; and for staff who failed to provide 'one-off lessons' over a period of time. Many administrators found that 'they were left picking up the pieces'. Any attempt by them to economise on relief teaching produced additional hidden costs in terms of time and frustration. As a result, relief teaching continued to be seen as 'a clutch-and-grab job' which never tackled the real issues of providing a professional emergency task force, able to cope with the extreme fluctuations of regular teacher absences, or a system where relief teachers could fit effectively into the culture, climate and organisational processes of the school.

Personal and professional compromise

Analysis of the interview data from the administrative perspective showed that one of the central issues of relief teaching was the lack of time to cope with the reactive and complex nature of the organisation of relief teaching. Many administrators responded to each small problem without appreciating wider patterns. At times, relief teaching was 'incredibly hectic' and administrators had to respond quickly to

obtain emergency cover, often using an arbitrary means of selection of relief teachers. An effective administrator, therefore, not only had to coordinate the practical aspects of relief teaching [such as the provision of work or timetabling], but also ensure that the interpersonal, political, and cultural aspects of management were covered adequately, by retaining effective relief teachers, maintaining a good school reputation, and ensuring that staff and students were aligned to a positive goal.

As was seen by the examples given, an administrator had little time to stand back and view what was happening before confronted with another combination of events, often with little appreciation or support from his/ her colleagues. In addition to the compromise inherent in the, often arbitrary, appointment of relief teachers, there was the complexity of integrating timetables, work and student groups,

> If everyone was away for one day at a time then that would be fine. It [our plan] breaks down when we have four people away for a day ... to go to a seminar together ... then, one person just can't physically coordinate it ... that's eighteen periods of class, so it is eighteen lots of work you might have to gather up ... You not only have to prepare those individual sheets for the relief teachers on the day, and so forth, you try to match talents and skills to classes ... *when* you know the relief teacher. 'Sue would be able to do this grade 8 class better than this unknown person' ... that's really important because a calmer class is likely to continue calmer throughout the day. If you lose a class with a relief teacher in period 2, then period 3 and 4 and all the rest of the day, is going to be like hook-in-nail ... or catching fish. You can wind them back in but you know jolly well that they can go again at any point. You are better off not to bait the hook. (X,9)

The organisation of relief teaching depended on many factors such as: the personality and ability of the AP to manage his/ her own job; his/ her ability to coordinate the varying resources; the experience and understanding s/he brought to the job; and his/ her ability to cope with complexity. Without support from the Department, an administrator was 'locked in' to an 'impossible situation' (X,9). In a wider context, relief teaching was directly linked with teacher absences. As one administrator commented, 'We used to use relief teachers in extreme emergencies now it's the reverse' (51). Other administrators acknowledged, 'There [was] less accountability with relief teaching. I have known staff members to take time off at report time' (80,10) and 'play the system' (33). Evidence from administrators showed that relief teaching came in addition to their other commitments and although they tried to create a manageable setting for themselves, and arrived an hour or more before school started, in general, their efforts were spent on short-term solutions based on a reactive, ad hoc approach. Interview data from the administrators' perspective showed that, far from being marginal, the context of relief teaching demanded increasing attention from senior administrators in schools. There was strong evidence to suggest that the problems surrounding relief teaching were explosive, and could no longer be contained within a school context. Paradoxically, in the wider education community, relief teaching continued to be seen as a low priority and few people recognised the implications of such a fundamental oversight.

The Agency Coordinators' Perspective

Any subject can be hard to fill. Supposing you have a request for five teachers on a Thursday and everyone is out? How do you fill it? (235,5)

An examination of relief teaching from the Agency coordinators' perspective fulfils three functions: first, as an opportunity to look 'objectively' at relief teachers, schools and the education department [DEA], through an analysis of interview data from the three coordinators who worked in different parts of Tasmania; second, to show what issues are important from the coordinators' perspective; and, third, to provide data which would help to structure aspects of relief teaching, such as, by filling 'gaps', establishing links, or by providing opportunities for triangulation. The use of specific quotations from interview data, can be used to illustrate a number of issues and well as providing a basis for developing further connectedness between perspectives.

While aspects of the following material might seem more appropriate in the introductory chapter, its positioning within its grounded context serves as a reminder of the idiosyncratic nature of relief teaching, where the Agency coordinators, were able to provide a more comprehensive picture of relief teaching in Tasmania, than most, if not all senior officers in the Education Department, or indeed, school administrators. Paradoxically, what might seem little more than general description, is the result of piecing together evidence from the coordinators over a two- year period.

Since 1980, when the Tasmanian Department of Education [DEA] had decentralised the organisation of relief teaching, the Relief Teachers' Service Agency provided the crucial link between relief teachers and their work. In 1996, the Department of Education paid $70 000 per year for the 'state-wide service' (357,2), and, in return, the Agency coordinated relief teaching and sent statistics on the numbers of filled and unfilled vacancies [of teaching positions] each month (221,2). The Agency covered the eight government school districts. The more remote schools such as the district or primary school on King Island used their own methods of obtaining relief locally. Anyone wishing to work as a relief teacher, therefore, could either contact one of three Agency coordinators, based until 1996, at the Commonwealth Employment Service [CES] in Launceston, Hobart and Burnie, or visit a school personally. Relief teaching coordinators in schools had a choice: they could to use the Agency or contact relief teachers directly. Some administrators relied exclusively on the Agency to provide suitable relief teachers, in times when there were insufficient regular staff available to cover student classes but other administrators relied on the school's list and used the Agency as a back-up, if there were difficulties. On paper, the Agency coordinators fulfilled an important role. Between them, they linked relief teachers, school administrators, and officers from the education department. In practice, their administrative role revolved around the process of matching schools, teaching vacancies and relief teachers within a short space of time. The demands on Agency coordinators varied considerably. For example, on the first day of the school year, there was only a single request for a relief teacher, but at the height of an influenza epidemic one coordinator reported she had sixty calls in a morning asking for relief teachers and had 'reached the bottom of the barrel'.

In the course of interviews from regular school staff and administrators, it was apparent that there were some concerns expressed about the professionalism of many relief teachers sent by the [local] Agency, but, they concluded, 'CES has the say'. They blamed relief teachers 'who had not followed CES instructions', although, paradoxically, no administrator identified what these were. They described relief teachers, 'arriving late', 'off the streets' and who had 'come unprepared'. Further questioning revealed that their chief remedy was to put an ineffective relief teacher on the school's 'non-preferred list', and hope that the particular relief teacher would not return to the school. It seemed from evidence, that more detailed discussions to resolve problems rarely eventuated. The CES coordinator was visualised as little more than a name, or as a voice on the telephone: she had not visited many schools, nor had the majority of administrators visited the Agency. Similarly, she had little contact from the Department. Channels of communication were limited.

Working as an Agency coordinator

'People asked me questions and I've learnt everything by doing it' (235,1) summed up the approach used by each of the three female Agency coordinators. From the late 1980's, there had been few opportunities for contact, either with each other or with the education department. Their job was seen as purely administrative: linking schools and relief teachers. As a result, they had attended no specific training sessions, beyond the normal CES training 'which enables people to become operational in areas other than their own and creates awareness of other people's jobs' (226,2). The effectiveness of each Agency depended, to a large extent, on the ability and motivation of the coordinator, coupled with her length of employment in the position. In one centre, for example, the coordinator had built up her knowledge of the educational network in Tasmania over a ten-year period. She took trouble not only to spend time with each new relief teacher, getting to know him/ her, but telephoned afterwards to see how the day had been. Her goal was to match schools with relief teachers who would fit in with the particular school culture. She provided a package of information for new primary and secondary relief teachers to enable them to adjust quickly. She was on call at home too. Her mobile telephone helped her to avoid a long list of answerphone messages in the morning, so she was ready to work quickly. She recognised the importance of keeping in touch with relief teachers and enjoyed doing so (183). Her approach, developed over a period of time, was far more comprehensive than that of the other coordinators who had less experience.

Their Agency was not on the DEA mailing list, 'so things that should be known never get to relief teachers' (183,2). The statistical department [DEA] telephoned at the beginning of each month and collected the data. 'The Department asks for very little' (310,2). Inquiries from relief teachers, however, kept them alert. They had to find answers to such questions as, 'How much lunch break could relief teachers have?' 'What were the new salary claim arrangements?' Communication links were tenuous. As one coordinator commented, 'Gaps in understanding are often due to ignorance rather than intent' (226,1) and explained that information for relief teachers was sent by DEA to the school principals with a request to put a notice on the staffroom notice board. This was the official link to inform relief teachers. The register of relief teachers remained confidential information. Coordinators were not able to divulge the names or telephone numbers of relief teachers on their lists, therefore, any school

wishing to contact a relief teacher directly had to gain his/ her telephone number through other means.

While factual information regarding the numbers of relief teachers employed by the Department, was 'confidential' or 'unavailable', through official channels, a lateral approach worked well but took time. In the course of several conversations with individual coordinators, over a two-year period, the researcher gathered a picture of the other two agencies. In the second centre, the coordinator followed the same organisational system as her predecessor, who had left seven years earlier. She supplied staff to 65 - 70 government schools which she tried to visit personally every two years. In addition, half of the independent schools in her area obtained casual staff from her list of 140 - 150 relief teachers and paid $15.00 per vacancy filled (3.5.96). The third centre had a different approach. The job of coordinator was seen as one element of a job rotation scheme among CES staff. As a result, relief teachers had seven different coordinators over a two-year period (509). One person however, had started the usual three-month term and stayed on. She 'enjoyed the job immensely because she could set her own workload and establish the job as her own' (235,1). As she described it:

> My role is as a referral agency. My involvement should not be outside that. It also helps to match the school and relief teacher. (235,1)

Each coordinator described how she needed to win the confidence of her clients by listening to their questions and reassured them of her impartiality. One of the chief concerns expressed by relief teachers was the method of selection that was used, and the implications of future job prospects if they declined work. Would they go to the bottom of the list?

> Often people complain, 'I haven't had any relief teaching.' I can't remember everyone in the register though I have a fair idea. Some are only available for certain days and the job might not be there. Someone might not get work for a couple of weeks, not because I don't want them to get work but I might be matching all over the place and I might miss one or two people. So I say, it's entirely up to them. They can ring me if they haven't heard at 8.15 am. It jogs my memory. (235,2)

Interview data showed that as coordinators felt more secure in their own role, they were able to offer more information or reassurance to their clients. Either explicitly or through indirect reference, each coordinator showed that she tried to be fair to all parties.

Understanding the clients

Interview data from the coordinators' perspective indicated that, from their observations, there were many reasons for relief teaching. A 'new' relief teacher could be a new graduate or someone after a period of redundancy or maternity leave (221,1). The labour market as well as economic considerations was seen to define the terms on which relief teachers worked. The development of part time, rather than full time employment, meant that some jobs could be incorporated with relief teaching assignments, thus, changing the numbers and types of relief teachers. Between them, relief teachers had many reasons for relief teaching,

> Some are looking for permanent employment, others would run if people offered them a temporary position. They just want to be relief teachers. Others like set blocks of teaching. They work for a week a fortnight or three months. Relief teaching is the way to provide income. I have long term well experienced relief teachers. A few would be in their 40's and have, perhaps, only done a few years of long term employment, they've mostly done relief teaching. Some go to one or two schools and others are reasonably flexible. They go to four, five or six high schools in the locality. It suits their temperament and they are familiar with a cluster of schools. Travel comes into it too (221,2).

> People have various reasons for relief. They are married with a young family and can spend a day here and there to get out of the house. Relief teaching gives them the options to follow a personal lifestyle, with a hobby. If the children are at school, they may want the freedom to be at home if the children are sick. They prefer a choice of schools to work in and like the variety that relief teacher offers. Many are women. A husband travels and it suits the wife to have the flexibility to be able to accompany him rather than be locked into a full time work situation. They like the freedom to pack up to do something else. Relief teaching gives them the means to have choices. (226,2)

> There are just a handful that have had no formal teaching training. They complete their Dip. Ed.[Diploma of Education] after three years and in their fourth year they can go into schools for experience. There must be 20 out of 350 in primary and secondary schools. They give feedback. Some are after the money and some the experience. (235,2)

In Tasmania, relief teachers did not need to have teaching qualifications if there were insufficient teachers in a particular subject area. Anecdotal evidence from the coordinators showed that potential relief teachers might have formal trade qualifications, or academic qualifications such as a degree in geology which would provide a background in maths or science, both difficult subjects to cover. They might be overseas students from Indonesia or China, or professional basketball players who came from United States with a work visa, but with no teaching qualifications. The coordinators knew which relief teachers would visit the outlying schools, because they '... enjoyed travel and the chance to see Tasmania' (226,1). There were no allowances for petrol but relief teachers who ventured to one of the more isolated areas gained cheap accommodation in one of the [subsidised] school houses (235,5). On one occasion a 'very good' relief teacher who had enjoyed travelling to a hard-to-staff school, was offered full time employment and took it. Her absence represented a loss for the coordinator from 'her' pool of relief teachers. 'Some people don't want to be a relief teacher for ever. She wanted something more stable. Something she could get her teeth into'. (235,5)

It was seen by the coordinators that the predominant concern by the school staff was to get someone immediately to cover classes, whatever their background. Any delay in the process caused irritations. They knew that some schools were difficult to work in. Even experienced relief teachers still got 'the run-around from secondary school students or even from upper primary' (221,1). Complaints noted by the coordinators included: student behaviour, such as, 'screaming in classrooms' or 'not behaving'; no organisation, such as, 'no folder available'; 'no information on the layout of the school'; no register to show 'who should be in the class at the time'; or information regarding 'where the equipment was kept if they want to get it'.

> I do get a whole lot of complaints if relief teachers have had a horrific day at school, but I never pass comments on to a school. I don't know how they would react if I did. I think it would cause a lot of problems. It's difficult. (235,1)

One coordinator felt that schools were generally happy with relief teachers she sent. She recognised that there were recurring difficulties. A relief teacher had to be able to use initiative in a crisis. She commented, 'Many people could not cope with relief teaching. They like the stability and predictability of a work structure' (226,2). She provided anecdotal evidence where school staff and relief teachers took a pragmatic approach. Some schools made last minute provisions for relief teachers which seemed inadequate or even dangerous (226,1). As a coordinator, she was aware that some relief teachers were at school to earn money and did not take their job seriously.

> I know of some relief teachers who say 'I'm only here for the day. I'm earning this good money and I don't care what the class does.' (235,4)

> There was the odd occasional disaster when a school would send a message back. 'Please don't send that teacher back. We've had six parents in already.' It's happened once or twice ... when someone has got out of bed the wrong side ... or s/he [relief teacher] hadn't been able to handle the students ... or it had been 8.30 am when they were called to school ... It was a new school for them ... or it just hadn't worked out ... They hadn't had the right strategies. It might be a school where there were difficult children and they've come from an area where less discipline had been needed. (221,2)

The coordinators emphasised that it was important to gain the trust of her clients and remain above any conflicts. Indeed the whole tone of the interviews showed that they each cared about retaining their own sense of integrity.

Managing the crisis

The greatest challenge among the coordinators was coping in an emergency. It was not an 'issue' which appeared to worry them. Each had a clear administrative role, had developed a personal system of management and enjoyed the varied pace of work during the day. Although they were isolated from the Department, one coordinator commented that she enjoyed having other people working alongside her in the office so that in the event of any crisis she would have someone to help. Similarly, when the relief teaching context was quiet, she helped others. Each of the coordinators had a sense of control, built up through experience. They also liked the independence of their work and felt that entirely through their own efforts they had developed a better understanding of what was needed. Interview data provided insights into the enormous demands placed on them when many teachers were absent. It was a complex task not only to coordinate numbers and vacancies, but to accommodate the range of variations which occurred within the process.

> A coordinator's job is one of intense activity in the morning. You have to have your wits about you, good records to find out who is worth ringing, and be sharp about what they have told you. (221,1)

> I thrive on pressure, and at times as coordinator, it's crisis management. How am I going to get relief teachers? You can only do what you can and the schools are under pressure too. Although it's a close run thing, I always find someone, even if it means they have to travel to the ends of the earth. For example it takes two hours [one way]

travelling to [names schools] and the relief teacher is not paid for the petrol or time spent on travelling. (226,1)

I start work at 7.30 am and finish at 4. 30 - 5.00 p.m. It is busy until about 10.30 am. Occasionally we have difficulty getting maths, science and music teachers. I deal with things as they crop up. I don't worry, I just get on and do it. It's like driving, sometimes you're watching ... others, you don't remember going past that. It's fleeting and at times very focused. The times you have a fire or when someone's fainted, you avoid panic, rely on your skill and stick to the procedure. Afterwards, you can list what you did and judge it, provide a report in writing and send it to the office [DEA]. I spend time talking to people. I get to know the resources I've got, and know what I've got to get, and then match them up. (226,2)

If a school [administrator] contacts me at 8.00 am wanting a relief teacher for English/ speech and drama and has not asked for anyone specific, I see who is on the [information] cards and try to match with the vacancies. I check the days of availability ... dates ... whether transport is available ... do they [relief teachers] need notice or can they leave at a moment's notice? Then, I ring them. That is the difficult part. They might not be at home. You might get hold of them and then they'd say... 'Ah! I can't ... hang on ... I have to organise this ...'; or '*Yes*, I can do it.' And you give them the time, and the school and they're off. Others will say, 'I haven't had a shower yet ... I need to get dressed ... I'll be there at ... time'; or, 'That will be okay.'

You take it all in your stride because you have to realise that not every relief teacher will be up and out of bed at 7.30 am waiting for a phone call. Some are, they get up religiously, get dressed and are ready waiting for me to ring. If I haven't rung by 9.00 am they think, 'Okay. There's no relief. I'm not teaching today.' They do what they need to do. The difficult thing is when a school [administrator] rings at midday. 'We need someone to start at 1.15 pm'. I flip through two piles of cards. People might not be at home. I have a pile of people I have tried, and those yet to contact. I may have ten phone calls before finding someone. That might even be an average, depending on the day. I might find someone after two or three calls. I have never monitored it. I throw cards here and there. One morning I had over sixty calls from schools wanting relief. It was when there was a 'flu epidemic. I nearly ran out of relief. Though I still had a swag of relief teachers on the register, in theory, some of them were infant trained and I might be trying to fill primary/ secondary vacancies. It depends on who can cover rather than the subjects. (235,2)

The actual process of matching jobs and people quickly was not straightforward. There was an additional dimension to consider. Interview data showed clearly that there were variations according to the requirements of the school administrators. For example, did a school want many specialist relief teachers for a single subject, [social science seminar] or generalist relief teachers who could cover a a range of subjects? Some schools had a 'preferred and non preferred list' of relief teachers. Relief teachers, too, might have particular schools where they would not work, or times they could not work. Timetables from different schools could overlap. A coordinator had to check the various starting times, particularly when a relief teacher attended two schools within the day, perhaps visiting one in the morning and another in the afternoon (235,3). It was seen as 'inevitable' that the coordinators contacted some relief teachers more frequently than others. As one coordinator commented, 'You can only do what you can and the schools are under pressure, too' (226,1).

On occasion a school can lose ten regular teachers for a day. That's where you are caught short some days, because relief teaching vacancies have already been filled by other schools [booking relief]. (253,3)

Filling the gap

Each coordinator had built up her job through a combination of personal initiative, common sense and concern to resolve administrative problems. One coordinator, for example, volunteered to start work half-an-hour earlier [7.30 am], to reduce the morning pressure and also enable relief teachers to reach country schools nearer the start of the school day (235,1). Interviews with one coordinator, over a three-year period, showed that as her confidence increased, so she felt a greater sense of personal authority and understanding which, in turn, enabled her to develop ways of providing practical and emotional support for relief teachers who were isolated. She realised that confident relief teachers were more effective. Another coordinator who had gained experience over a number of years explained,

> Half-an-hour with a prospective relief teacher will answer their questions, where, when, what, how and why. It helps the relief teacher to settle. They personally, have got the information without bothering the school. It eases the stress of 'What should I do?', which is natural in a new job. I tell them the name of a contact so they are not running around asking anyone in the school, 'Who do I ask about relief teaching?' The contact could be anyone nominated by the school. Usually it is a senior teacher or AP. I usually have some feedback from them, rarely complaints, because I have helped them fit in. I've had a good day ... I'm happy. (226,2)

At times, coordinators were placed in a counselling role. They listened but did not offer advice. In addition, each coordinator had refined her administrative system whereby she could contact many people at short notice. It appeared that coordinators enjoyed the change of pace each day, as their one-and-a-half or two hours of, often intense, activity in the morning was complemented by a more leisurely and varied approach to work during the rest of the day. They saw themselves as building a relationship with their clients that was mutually beneficial.

> Sometimes, if I'm really stuck they'll say 'Yes'. They like the variety, need the income and are prepared to go. Others I wouldn't consider asking. A few do one or two days a week but if I'm stuck they are cooperative. Sometimes I feel they are just doing it for me because I'm begging, 'Please, please I *really* need you to go.' It's all I can do ... build up a rapport. It works both ways. (221,2)

> I give as much notice as possible and do not ask anyone to go anywhere. I provide links where I can so a lot of problems are ironed out. I know as a female, single-supporting parent, that it is not always easy to get away for work, so when I ask if they are available, if the answer is, 'No' I say, 'That's fine. I'll call again' and I ask them again later. I meet them half way and, in turn, they know by my tone of voice when I am struggling to get relief teachers and they agree to work when they might not have done so. (226,1)

Problems were 'ironed out' through an open approach. Coordinators empathised with their clients and understood the hidden effects of uncertainty and change. They were aware of the affect of Departmental policies on the collective pool of relief teachers. Programs, such as the literacy programs, employed extra [relief] teachers on a regular basis. Individual relief teachers were employed to work consistently with a small group of students, in order to build up initial reading skills. In this way, relief teachers had regular income and potentially opportunities for integrating with staff and students. In the process, however, the larger pool of relief teachers became less flexible,

> When you are in a relief teaching pool it's your right to say, 'No.' People have said that to me I say, 'Don't worry. I haven't got the luxury of too many people.' I honestly haven't. I'm down to 120 people on the pool. Last year it was 140-150 and we've just lost a lot of people on the literacy program. It started on 6 May 1996 and it's had quite an impact. (221,2)

Although the coordinator had some versatile relief teachers she could rely on, there were times in the year where there were dramatic fluctuations in the need for relief teachers. For example, on the first day of school 1996, one Agency coordinator received a single request for a relief teacher. At the height of a 'flu epidemic [July-August 1995], she received sixty requests for relief teachers, in a single morning (235,2). The number did not include other relief teachers who were contacted by the schools directly. The coordinators recognised that the selection was not equitable. 'Naturally', some relief teachers were favoured as they were on the school's preferred list or came to mind quickly. One coordinator recognised that, 'A relief teacher may be fine for one school but not another' (235,1) and that school settings could 'make all the difference'. 'Schools will phone back and say whether they liked a relief teacher. It's human nature' (235,1).

> I like to feel confident that my relief teachers are able to go in and do a good job. They are going to teach and can do the subjects they specified on the form ... Students really need your help. The relief teacher might only be there for the day but that one day can make a very big impression on the students. (235,4)

The coordinators were in a position to see the interrelations of the relief teaching context. They recognised the education system did not make adequate provision for relief teachers and this influenced their motivation in 'making a difference' on a personal basis. As one coordinator commented, 'Lots of things happen in management [DEA] that would not happen in private enterprise (226,1). Comments from the coordinators indicated that they knew about many of the problems and pressures in schools. One coordinator noted that, 'the person responsible for relief teaching often treats the money as their [sic] own' (226,1) and expected relief teachers to work in a variety of subjects, with apparently inadequate safeguards.

Interview data showed that the isolation experienced by the coordinators also proved to be a catalyst which enabled them 'to make a difference'. Their reward was seen as getting positive feedback when their efforts were appreciated. Unlike school administrators, their isolated position within the educational community gave them a freedom to transcend the problems and issues in schools.

One of the 'gaps in understanding' was clearly identified through an analysis of interview data.

> In our office we have a print-out everyday of every primary and high school vacancy and how many were filled. The reports are totalled each month to show how many vacancies were notified by schools, and those vacancies filled. (221,2)

A 'vacancy', for example, was the unit of measurement used when a relief teacher was employed to replace an absent teacher, however, it appeared from the coordinators' comments that there was no clear definition of what a 'vacancy' entailed (1,7; 253,3). In some schools, for example, a different relief teacher might come

every day to cover classes for an absent teacher, whilst in other schools, a single person might be employed to cover classes for the duration of the regular teacher's absence. Variations occurred, too, when administrators, particularly in a secondary school context, were seen to 'economise', employing one relief teacher to cover classes for several [absent] teachers during the day. As a consequence, the definition of a vacancy was described in very different terms in the investigation. For example,

- A 'vacancy' can be a two-hour period, the minimum payment, or a whole day ... however long it is. Therefore, ten teachers employed for two hours would be [counted as] ten teachers [i.e. ten vacancies]. (1,7)

- A 'vacancy' could be for the minimum two-hour period or for the maximum period of twenty days. (253,3)

Not only were there different perceptions about what constituted a vacancy, but any statistical information about relief teaching was 'always part of something else' (226,2). As a result, the monthly statistics sent by each Agency coordinator to the Department was ambiguous and intertwined with other data. A basic anomaly occurred when information from the CES computers, used to analyse labour market employment trends and classified into the three telephone districts areas [002; 003; 004 until 1997], did not correspond with the eight education districts. As a result there were few clear lines of communication to present an overview of relief teaching. Any information depended on an officer extracting data from the computers. This, according to one coordinator, presented additional problems

> There is a 'humungus' computing system, so it is difficult to tell how many relief teachers there are or how many times they are used during the year. The figure is orientated to labour market trends. Relief teaching statistics are combined with others. The Department should have an idea how many days relief [teachers] are employed, by [counting] the number of vacancies. If a member of staff is absent, one relief teacher might cover for three teachers, or come for part of a day [each of] which is a 'vacancy' (226,1). We notify the DEA of people referred and placements and numbers. We also notify them of the vacancies we can't fill. (180,1)

There was an additional barrier. Discussions confirmed that after continuous employment of twenty days for a single vacancy, a relief teacher's terms of employment changed. S/he became a 'temporary teacher', receiving less salary but accruing other benefits in the form of sick leave and holiday leave. Here again, interview data showed that the rudimentary information sent to the Department each month by CES, was not aligned accurately with other labour markets, therefore, any statistics were based on widely differing interpretations and of questionable validity (253,3).

The Systems Perspective

Relief teachers are doomed by definition under the current culture. Teaching is exhausting. The best people give up and let things float past them. It is the system's fault. (49,3)

Unanswered questions

Many comments made by interview respondents, like the one above (49,3) convey a sense of conflict, futility and resignation, where 'even the best people give up and let things float past them'. The system is blamed. Yet who or what comprises 'the system' with regard to relief teaching? At times, during the research process, it seemed that the researcher, as an 'outsider' was attempting to find a way into an impregnable castle. It seemed as if she had to pass tests, retrace her steps, look for hidden paths and secret doors, all the while gathering others who knew part of the way, or had a fragment of map, a key, or time to help. In between sorties to the castle the researcher searched for others who had clues or who could pass on information. In the process, she not only became closer to her goal of finding about relief teaching as a phenomenon, but closer in understanding the surrounding cultures and contexts, which formed layers of obstacles and hidden barriers to its discovery. The negative elements strengthened her determination to find answers. Finally, she gained access and found a pathway. It had been there all the time but she had not known where to look or the questions to ask.

> We try to make sense out of the situations in and through which we live and to use what we learn to guide us in the future ... Themes are the dominant features of the situation or person, those qualities of place, person, or object that define or describe identity ... These themes are distillations of what has been encountered. In a sense, they provide a summary of the essential features. They also provide clues or cues to the perceptions of other situations ... . (Eisner, 1991, p. 104)

The examination of relief teaching at systems level was seen as a fact-finding mission. Although, paradoxically, evidence soon emerged which showed that there were few facts. An investigation, which had begun as a personal search to understand relief teaching by examining it from a number of perspectives in order to make sense of many puzzling inconsistencies and paradoxes became caught up a major paradox: the employment of relief teachers cost the Department millions of dollars each year, yet it seemed invisible.

Senior officers in the Department knew little about relief teaching, nor of the problems which seemed of so much concern to relief teachers in schools. Nor did they formally accept that there were problems. The search became, therefore, not only a search for answers, but a search to find appropriate questions which would provide further understanding of relief teaching as a phenomenon. A lateral approach neatly side-stepped the conundrum. Additional interviews with people who were familiar with aspects of the research context [such as, social workers who visited the schools in the investigation, education consultants, or parents], supplemented or linked the fragmented evidence from officers within the Department. The account of the research from a systems perspective, therefore, provided its own trail of events, to

link evidence and show how the 'current culture' within the education system, appeared to affect relief teaching (Giroux, 1981; 49,3).

A view from the systems or wider perspective of relief teaching has several purposes. In the investigation it provides:

- a means to gain an understanding of how relief teaching is seen by senior officers who are responsible for aspects of education, such as, policy-making, administrative structuring, human resource and economic management;

- a 'political' framework to indicate some of the priorities and pressures which might influence decision-making in the education department or create a flow-on effect to administrators in schools;

- a means of illuminating links, gaps, and mismatches which arose from research data from other perspectives;

- glimpses into the broader aspects of educational management; and

- an increasing sense of developing connectedness towards an all-encompassing concept. (Kee, 1987, p. xii)

The systems perspective enabled the researcher to balance and extend her own knowledge as a practitioner, to a wider understanding of experience at, and from, the systems level of management (Glaser & Strauss, 1971). In this manner, she searched for understanding '... pursued against the background of an evasive character of ... the *whole*, the *communal*, or the *social*.' (van Manen, 1990, p. 7, italics in original). The perspective shows the researcher's attempts to 'fill in the gaps' as part of a process of understanding, and making visible the deeper elements of relief teaching from each level of the organisation (appendices 17 & 18). The research approach is multilayered, for as the researcher searches for information which will provide insights into management at systems level (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Stoner et al., 1985; Bolman & Deal, 1991), her understanding as a practitioner enables her to triangulate data, from other viewpoints (Brown & McIntyre, 1993). The process of constant cross-checking data from a number of points of reference not only ensures a consistently grounded approach but is one which provides a dynamic sense of involvement and fluidity which are harder to convey in writing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This perspective, therefore, can be read in many ways. It illustrates, the research path taken to find interrelationships between the invisibility of relief teaching and the process of making it visible (de Bono, 1979; Schön, 1987; Eisner, 1991).

The use of an inductive approach when writing about this perspective, therefore, emphasises the effects of the invisibility and the ambiguous nature of relief teaching, noted by other researchers (Bourke, 1993; Stringer, 1994; Ostapczuk, 1994; Preston 1997). The researcher as writer, uses the systems perspective to illustrate the way in which data on relief teaching emerge almost incidentally, causing each person to structure information in ways which make sense (Rogers, 1978). As little is written

in relief teaching, it is not possible to assume that information alone will address the problems. In demonstrating the difficulty in obtaining information, the research provides insights which may be further analysed to explain the nature of the barriers to visibility (Bernstein, 1971; Silverman, 1993). There is another issue which is of importance: the thesis is seen as a means of 'translating' invisibility, to visibility, to an interpretation of relief teaching which rings true (Eisner, 1991). From the researcher's observations, it is only by deconstructing aspects of relief teaching and reconstructing information from a shared base of knowledge that it will be possible to break away from the recurring problems and ambiguities.

Searching for answers

In practice, from anecdotal evidence and from personal experience, no single person bore responsibility for relief teaching. The task, therefore, to find out even basic information quickly became lengthy procedure. For example in her notes (17.5.93) the researcher detailed one of several attempts to gain information on basic information such as: the numbers of relief teachers in Tasmania; the number of days they worked in schools; the administration of relief teaching; and statistics and costs on regular teacher absences (notes: 17 May 1993). The researcher was told to contact the Agency at CES; CES told the researcher to go to Human Resources department; from there to the Finance department; and so the queries were passed back and forth but with few results, except advice to 'try again' at CES. Most people were pleasant but the questions remained unanswered. 'Exploratory' interviews with DEA officers, to find out about policies and written material, resulted in two pages of printed information from the School Resources Handbook, written eighteen months earlier, detailing the administrative process for the payment of relief teachers. It had been superseded. A year later, her queries to the Union were directed to one of their members who was involved with issues concerning relief teaching,

> What policy? Its a policy [for DEA] to ignore relief teachers. The Department considers relief teachers bottom of the totem pole. You get little support for long service. There is no one to help except the Union, unless they can find a different hole to crawl into. Although they *are* starting a relief teaching group in the north west of Tasmania to deal with problems. (July 1994. 22,4)

In 1995, the researcher arranged an interview with a senior Union official. They talked and after a few minutes, the researcher challenged the views expressed,

> Q: You say a relief teacher takes the duty of the absent teacher s/he is replacing. What happens if one relief teacher replaces *four* absent teachers in a day?
> R: It doesn't happen!'
> Q: But it does. It's happened to me. And I could find others ... (166,1)

The interview progressed on a different footing. The researcher challenged the generalised, 'one-dimensional' view of relief teaching with more specific questions. 'If the union regarded regular and relief teaching members on equal terms, why was there no mention of relief teachers in the index of the Union Handbook (1995)?' The official was surprised, and made a note to include relief teachers in the next copy.

In turn, another comment made by the Union officer surprised the researcher. The officer informed her that relief teachers should arrive half-an-hour before their teaching assignments and receive payment for that time. In the previous five years as

a relief teacher, the researcher had never received such payment. She queried the officer's interpretation of the Award with evidence from her own experience. The officer restated the rules. Later, the Union advised relief teachers of the Award and their entitlement through the newsletter.

> The award states that a teacher in a school *shall be in attendance ... at least one half hour before beginning lessons*. (This does not apply in colleges.) This is a legal obligation and you should endeavour to comply with it, unless of course you receive a late or urgent call in which case it may not always be possible to do so. **Relief Teachers must be paid for the time for which they are required to be in attendance, not just the time for which they actually teach.** (AEU Members Diary and Handbook, 1997, p. 71, emphasis in original)

The Union's announcement of the payment came as a surprise to both administrators and relief teachers. Anecdotal evidence suggested that many relief teachers saw the half hour's payment before school as a 'test' of the Union's credibility towards them. Was the Union paying lip service to the policies? What did Union 'support' really mean? In practice, any reference made by administrators to payment before school was seen as 'a joke'. Personal observation showed that administrators in schools were not prepared to give a relief teacher four hours' pay for a morning's employment from 8.30 am -12.30 pm, when an extra hour's payment would cover a full day's relief teaching, or up to seven hours in school. If relief teachers pursued the matter, they were labelled as 'mercenary,' and felt they might not be given future teaching assignments in that school. How would the Union ensure that administrators paid relief teachers? It was seen as the relief teacher's responsibility to demand payment from the administrator.

The following comment, taken from a longer interview comes from an experienced teacher, but a new relief teacher,

> The Union says that relief teachers should be paid for half-an-hour before school. I discussed this with an AP I had known for 20 years. He said AP's had no intention of paying it. How do you make schools pay for it? It is causing a lot of anguish. I feel cynical. It seems a political move to have something on paper that can be traded off. The union has divided loyalties. They can get more new membership from relief teachers than from regular members. Pay is way of attracting relief teachers. If we complain, what will the Union do about it? (269,2)

Relief teachers, who were members of the Union, voiced their concerns (249,2). Many people expressed cynicism and believed that whatever appeared on paper would not be reflected in practice. Anecdotal evidence among a group of relief teachers suggested that the Unions were faced with a conflict of interest between their relief teaching and regular teaching members (293,2). It was also suggested that there were 'political trade-off's' between the Union and DEA (269,2) and that letters were written by both parties to 'keep the records straight', but not acted upon (184,3). Relief teachers knew that any policies which indicated clear divisions, for example, of payment or of duties, could easily become ambiguous within the more complex relief teaching setting. At times, for example, the role of a relief teacher who was employed to take the classes of an absent teacher, found that s/he was 'down traded' (120,1), and asked to perform tasks such as covering library books or perform additional duties after school. Interview data showed there were many anomalies

between written and enacted policies which led to individual, and often varying, interpretations.

As a perceived 'outsider' to the system, it was important for the researcher to gain access, in order to explore 'gaps' [such as the examples above] which had emerged in the research. The task involved being recognised as a researcher, who was both objective and persistent, and creating a gap, or 'space' in the accepted framework of events and ideas. A legal responsibilities seminar run by the Union (March 1996) was one such occasion when the researcher challenged some of the conventional assumptions about relief teaching. Using hypothetical situations based on data from the investigation, she drew attention to some of the inconsistencies and inherent dangers within the relief teaching context. In this way, she extended the focus of the day's seminar, which had not included the context of relief teaching, in order to gauge the responses from senior teachers and others at system level, who were in the audience. She noted that several school administrators identified with the issues [such as lack of information] and recognised their vulnerable position 'if things went wrong' (249,1).

By 1996 and 1997 the Union had appointed an officer responsible for relief teaching who had herself been a relief teacher, information appeared in the Handbook, relief teachers were invited to attend meetings and seminars, and more information on relief teaching appeared on staffroom notice boards. The researcher contributed an article entitled, 'Focus on relief teaching' (Webb, 1996) to the Union journal. It highlighted the present 'gaps' within the system and presented an overview of some of the disparities. The article was intended to draw attention to the relief teaching context in a way which did not alienate the stakeholders. Instead, it showed relationships and identified 'gaps' within the management and communication processes, while drewing attention to the seriousness of the problems which were simmering beneath the surface. It was intended to align the divergent views of relief teaching into one of shared understanding.

During the process of the investigation, therefore, not only had the climate within the wider perspective changed, but also the researcher's relationship to the Department and the Union. Her personal interest in relief teaching became a catalyst. As her 'credibility' changed, so did the willingness of people prepared to talk about relief teaching. She met people at system level, who fought against what they saw as 'entrenched' attitudes among regular teachers and senior staff towards relief teachers (293,2).

> Attitudes are entrenched. So much so that relief staff and others do not want to join the same Union. Members have to stick up for their rights otherwise it's the only way we can solve and get people working together. Call a meeting in the Department and say this is how relief teachers should be treated. They do not see the relief teaching area as important. They are equal [Union] members as far as I am concerned (293,2).

Evidence supported the researcher's own observations, that officially, over a period of many years the Department had ignored the context of relief teaching. Any inconsistencies were hidden or covered up. What was widely known informally received no formal recognition. For example, one senior member of the Union who

worked as a teacher in high school, confirmed the extent of the problems surrounding relief teaching.

> You have to look at the concept of relief teaching ... I think we don't get near the best we can from relief teachers. They are prepared to give a lot more, but the vast majority take a supervising role in a very difficult and extremely tough situation. It can be organised better. Relief teachers have dreadful conditions ... rather it's the stress they work under and the difficulties they have in schools. They are expected to be waiting for a job every morning ... ready. It's the way the Department pays them, the way schools use them, there are massive problems. Schools have enough other problems to worry about, national profiles, curriculum statements, temporary teachers, discipline ... relief teachers are bottom of the pecking order. (30,1)

Underlying evidence at systems level was a strong 'political' dimension. For example, evidence from a senior union official confirmed that relief teachers might telephone the Union with a complaint but wanted to remain anonymous for fear of indirect discrimination. Inconsistencies, say, in payment, or in the open-ended working conditions seemed discriminatory, but many queries at Union level (March 1996) were fielded by comments such as, 'That's what the Award states'. There were suggestions, too, that if queries about relief teaching were taken to a higher level, relief teachers *might* find they were working longer hours or getting less pay. It was inferred that despite some inconsistencies, the present system of payment for relief teachers was best left alone. The officer acknowledged, after persistent questioning by the researcher, however, that, 'If relief teachers could make a case that they were teaching over and above the number of hours the regular teacher was teaching, the industrial agreement, the Award, had been broken' (251), but gave no indication of the Union's concern. At the time, the Union was engaged in negotiating an increase in pay for its regular members.

What is relief teaching?

In the Department there were two main responses to the relief teaching context, 'official' [formal] and 'informal' comments. The researcher termed the 'official' line, as a response often consisting of answers which relied on jargon or platitudes and which might be labelled as 'politically correct', but from her practitioner's perspective ones which bore little understanding of the relief teaching context in schools, other than in stereotyped images. In one telephone conversation, for example, the officer identified personnel in the Department with the encompassing comment, 'We're all administrators here.' There were similar comments from a senior Union official, who assumed and said, that, 'A teacher was a teacher' (120,1) a view which might assume that teachers were a homogenous group of people.

Interview data showed that when an administrator viewed relief teaching from a theoretical stance, a 'relief teacher' [as opposed to a temporary teacher] was seen as a short-term teacher. Without evidence to the contrary, his/ her generalised opinions and assumptions crept easily into any information and were taken as 'facts' by others. An analysis of evidence from this perspective examined the gaps and inconsistencies, too. In the following definition, for example, taken from the 1997 Union Diary/ Handbook, it stated that relief teachers were 'typically' employed for half or whole days. Evidence from personal observation and experience, supported by information from a number of perspectives suggested that there were no statistics to support this

assumption, and showed many examples where relief teachers, particularly in high school contexts were employed for parts of a day and for unusual combinations of hours.

> A 'Relief employee' as defined in the *Teaching Service (Tasmanian Public Sector) Award 1995* [TO546] means a person engaged to teach on an irregular basis by the employer as and when required but does not include any person employed on a part-time, full-time or permanent basis. This is typically for half or whole days to cover for teacher absence. Anything up to 20 continuous working days is regarded as 'relief.' After 20 days you become a 'temporary employee' and subject to different conditions of employment. (AEU Members' Diary and Handbook, 1997, p. 70. emphasis as stated)

By the same token, if relief teachers were seen from an administrative rather than a pedagogical viewpoint, any expectations of the role of a relief teacher were based on an administrative paradigm. For illustration, in 1994, the researcher sought advice from one of the most senior officers in the Department about who to contact, or where to find information on any policies relating to relief teaching in Tasmania. She had found little written information through her own efforts. He confirmed there were few references,

> I would have thought that relief teachers are a subset of regular teachers and therefore the policies would apply equally. I am aware that relief teachers are dealt with fairly spottily, but that would reflect on the nature of the officer rather than the absence or existence of policies. (36,1)

What was seen to be the role of a regular teacher? The organiser of a seminar on legal responsibilities for teachers described the role of a teacher in general terms, as an introduction to his seminar. As relief teachers were considered a subsection of regular teachers, where similar policies applied, the expectation that a relief teacher would take over the regular teacher's role had rarely come into question.

> The role of a teacher is to instruct, supervise and maintain discipline so you can perform the function of a teacher. That is to provide an environment in which children learn. The level of supervision you provide will depend on a number of factors: the age, younger students need a greater level of supervision and therefore greater responsibility and duty of care; the size of the group will influence how you will operate; the nature of the activity;and the equipment and location. A laboratory, manual arts and home economics [classes] contain an element of danger. (251,5)

An 'official' response at Departmental level indicated that relief teaching was a minor factor in the educational budget costing $5 million (36,1) out of a possible $300 million annually. Informal comments indicated that relief teachers were seen as expendable, 'a natural wastage of the system' (36,1). Officers clearly indicated that the Department did not have money for induction, training or professional development for relief teachers. From then, the researcher was locked into a 'mismatch' situation: while she tried to elicit further data and search for possible connections, so officers attempted to stonewall or distance themselves. It was easy for them to say, categorically, that they could not provide further information. Some interviews were 'uncomfortable' because there were so few facts and, in hindsight, it was evident that the researcher was trying to uncover information which others wanted left well alone.

Information gained about the relief teaching context was largely anecdotal, fragmented and was part of a puzzle which often required a knowledge of the education system to decipher. Several people estimated that there were two thousand relief teachers. One person in the Department was more specific, 'In 1993, I was told there were about two thousand relief teachers statewide who had been paid for at least one day's work as a relief teacher' (251,1). More often, responses were vague or expressed opinions, such as, 'I wouldn't have a clue how many relief teachers there are' (178,1); or, 'There are so many relief teachers, it's unreal' (512,1). The following answers represent some of the 'clues':

How many relief teachers are there?

> At present we don't know how many relief teachers there were.(10.10.96) My guess for CES would be about 2 000. The temporary register [for temporary teachers] was 1 800. (Departmental official. 356,1)

How many days do they teach?

> They taught the equivalent of 26 000 days in 1996. (Departmental official. 359,1)

> There are a lot more circumstances now such as workers' compensation and sick leave. Years ago, mature-aged workers did not take sick leave because there was no relief, now they go at the drop of a hat. (346,1)

What qualifications do relief teachers need?

Relief teachers in Tasmania were not required to be qualified teachers. Prospective relief teachers completed a form which was checked by officers in the Department. One officer dealt with 'the more unusual overseas applicants' (423). He cited examples, such as, overseas basketballers who were not qualified. His job was to check the educational content of their courses with the aid of NOOSR [National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition] and then determined the level of pay needed (27,5,96). In response to the researcher's questions he admitted that no check was made on an applicant's personal or moral integrity. There were no requirements for interview, induction or assessment.

> It's important that a relief teacher is going to be a successful and appropriately qualified person, if possible a four-year qualified, though there is no compulsion. You could have a zero-year qualified person. I think four-year trained [relief teachers] are gradually filtering through the service.

> The Award prescribes which teachers are re-employed. They can be untrained, two-year, three-year to five-year trained. For example, someone with a PhD in an area of [subject] shortage, can be employed but they will get lesser pay. (423,1)

Information from data showed that while comments from senior education officials indicated that the presence, or absence, of policies had nothing to do with the way that relief teachers were treated, comments from other interview respondents indicated that the notion of employing unqualified relief teachers should be of serious professional legal and moral concern. Not only were interview respondents [particularly those from overseas and mainland states] dubious about an untrained person fulfilling the legal and professional responsibilities of duty of care as a teacher, but one senior officer in the Union in New South Wales cited incidents of alleged paedophelia linked to substitute teaching staff in mainland states (218,8;

29,2). Lack of information or accountability enabled paedophiles to cross state boundaries and apply for work with a new education authority (1994).

> There are no checks for paedophiles at the moment. That may become an Australia-wide policy with the Unions. It's up to them to give us information. It's a tricky subject ... with a transient work force. (423,1)

What is the cost of relief teaching to the Department?
After repeated enquiries and written questions, a senior officer stated that relief teaching cost the Department $5 000 000 per annum and represented 26 000 day's teaching. In October 1996, verbal information was given to the researcher from another department, that 'the salary and associated costs for relief teaching' were:

1993-94	$4 091 270.52;
1994-95	$ 4 578 835.06;
1995-96	$4 938 906.065. (355,1)

Interview data indicated that relief teaching costs were also included in aspects of the costs for professional development which in 1995-96 cost $ 1.215 million (non salary cost) which covered travel, accommodation and meetings. There was an added difficulty in calculating relief funding because the Department received costs based on a calendar [school] year, but needed, also, to adjust costs to provide information for the financial year.

How are costs calculated?
The Department was responsible for centrally controlled staffing and major building issues. The rest of the school money went towards management. The Grants and Assistance Unit bore responsibility for calculating how much money to dispense to each school for the payment of relief teaching. The money allocated was based on a formula which had been developed over a period of time in an attempt 'to provide a fair and equitable scheme'. The funding took account of the enrolment numbers of students in the school, and the size of class.

> In a primary school a class size might be 25 students and in a secondary, 20 students. It is assumed that secondary schools need more relief teachers. So although each kid attracts money, the more students in a class means the school effectively gets *less* money. The system favours special schools. They get four times as much money as primary schools because of their even smaller class sizes. So there is an exceptional weighting funding to special schools. (355,1)

'Issues of disadvantage' was another part of the formula. It favoured schools which were considered disadvantaged, socially. The rurality of a school was another factor. 'Issues of distance', the size of the school community, and its isolation, determined the size of the school management grant. The officer interviewed, saw that the real problem was due to the effects of limited resources and of trying to balance the varying needs of schools, rather than to the funding formula (355,1).

Trading in stickers
The relief teaching sticker seemed a symbolic aspect of relief teaching. The stickers were similar to small green strips [or stamps] which could be traded for all, or part of, a day's relief teaching. It could be torn into ten portions, each one representing

half an hour. At the beginning of the school year, schools had to estimate staff absences and purchase an appropriate block of stickers from the Department in advance. In effect, the school's money was tied up by the Department in Hobart each year. Later, it was possible to obtain more stickers, although there were no statistics on the numbers purchased by schools each year. The procedure caused friction among school administrators (Y,1) who resented the way in which the Department had access to their money well before it was needed. Relief teachers were paid incrementally by the Department, although a relief teacher on his/ her first day, or a person with thirty years' experience cost the same to the school. Stickers were also used as incentives 'to sell the idea of professional development by doing a trade in stickers' (335,1).

> The payment system [for relief teachers] is a primitive system in this day and age. (218,8)

> A relief sticker is $180. I'm not sure how the fractional bits are worked out. They are quirky things in relief teaching. For example, a relief teacher could go to two schools in one day and teach over 5 hours. Although the time would add up to more than a day [5 hours = maximum time] the relief teacher is never paid for more than a day. Which of the two schools gets the portion of the relief sticker back? (355,1)

> But here [DEA] they have got the traditional ways stuck in their mind. The senior people in the Department have the perception that the sticker system is loved in schools and we haven't been able to convince them otherwise. The trading in stickers is a way of dealing with money. No accounting system has the capacity to say, 'I gave three stickers to another school'. (355,1)

Some people in the Department who understood some of the practical implications of relief teaching management saw that the method of administration, for example the payment in stickers, was both laborious and outdated. Lack of organisational structure, lack of a unified approach, and no clear goal to work towards, compounded the problems generated by outdated equipment.

Are there statistics on relief teaching?

> We had difficulty in determining placements as one [Agency] coordinator used a placement for the time a relief teacher was in a school, while another coordinator counted a vacancy on a daily basis. Therefore, a relief teacher teaching at a school for three days would be *three* vacancies in one agency and *one* in another. There are no records of staff sickness. We are in the process of establishing a module, to see the patterns of leave. There is no decent information in relation to leave usage and types of leave ... The need for relief teachers is static or marginally increasing. (357,2)

The officer (357,2) could offer no evidence or suggest information that would confirm his opinion that 'the need for relief teachers was 'static or marginally increasing'. He confirmed that there were no statistics in Tasmania on relief teaching. However, he provided some insights into the factors which affected the collection of statistical information about relief teaching. The Agency [CES] was unable to provide information electronically. 'Its antiquated mainframe computer' could offer little other than the total number of placements on 002, 003, or 004 telephone areas, as educational [relief teaching] vacancies were integrated into other general [labour market] vacancies. Despite information that there were about 1 200 salary claims a fortnight from relief teachers, each claim form could represent employment of

between two hours [minimum] to ten days [50 hours, maximum], thus representing a considerable variation (357,2).

Who is responsible for relief teaching?
Evidence about relief teachers was fragmented and blurred. Interview data and anecdotal evidence suggested that relief teaching was seen to be complex and 'part of everything else'. Interview data throughout the investigation confirmed that the Department continued in its daily administrative role with a focus on economic rather than a human management orientation. (22,1; 216,10)

> [Name] might know the number of them employed every week. There is an administration book which tells the school staff when relief teachers can be provided. It's is difficult to come up to total expenditure with relief and for replacing people. Some teachers are on sports leave without pay, for jury service, and sometimes relief teachers are employed in a gap in between regular people when they can't get regular staff. If someone resigned suddenly cost would not be against relief teaching but a cost to the consolidated vote. A teacher may be absent for a moderation meeting and though the Department pays, the money may be reimbursed by Schools Board. Relief teachers may be may be employed for example, if the kayaking association had a canoe course. Perhaps, there is a course in Japanese cooking in school, they charge participants and then the money is used to pay for a relief teacher. (58,1)

What support does the Department offer its relief teachers?
Despite major Departmental restructuring, no apparent support or reporting mechanisms existed for relief teachers. 'The Department can't do that. They [DEA] do not have any money, though there is a little ... The *schools* would have to fund relief teachers. It would be *their* job.' (8.5. 95: 138,3). It seemed that high priority Departmental policies did not include relief teachers (DECCD, 1997; DECCD, 1997a). One senior officer responsible for personnel stated:

> Our priority has been the creation of the District support service, linking specialist support under one banner, curriculum, educational programs, literature, guidance, speech, special schools as well as the provision of specialised education. In 1995 this will become fully effective. So the groups will look at the behaviour management, gifted and talented, and bring together different reporting mechanisms under one umbrella. It's a significant change and basically an idea to get the best out of the resources and use them more efficiently and so they can provide effective support for the schools. About 450 staff will be involved. It's been at the back of a number of minds to get it to work but we must make sure it does in the process of transition. People working together as part of a full collegial team. It's good for the Department. There will be professional development to enable the new teaching staff to mix together culturally ... speech therapists, social workers, literacy, behaviour etc. They will come from different perspectives. It's harder, but it will be better in the long term as they can provide synergy. (24.10. 94. 179,2)

Relief teachers did not 'qualify' for support. As casual workers, they were considered responsible for updating their own skills to match the changing educational context (24,2). There was no evidence to suggest what particular skills or training were needed. It was assumed that relief teaching was a temporary occupation and any training provided the means for relief teachers to 'get back in the system' (131,2).

Barriers to communication

A theme that arose in the data was the shifting relationships between, for example, the Department and schools (355,2) or, between teachers and parents. Underlying the conversations were many tensions and frustrations.

> It's a big hassle with the organisation: the lack of association between the centre in Hobart and the schools. We live in a separate context. People in schools say, 'Those idiots in central office' and we say, 'Those clowns in school'. The experiences just don't tie together. (355,1)

Analysis of interview data from people in the wider perspective indicated that there was a strong feeling that there was a 'big cover up' as to what went on in schools, and a gap between what should go on and what occurred in practice. The Departmental approach, driven by politically expedient solutions, was seen to cause many of the existing problems in schools. Comments indicated that officers in the Department were 'looking over their shoulder', (22,1) or 'creating paperwork', rather than developing good morale in schools (39,4). It was recognised that when policies demanded social equality and integration, a principal did not want his/ her school to seem inadequate. Everyone was competing for scarce resources and limited time. One educational consultant advocated a new approach, to create professional development seminars which built up understanding and practice, rather than providing instant recipes 'where schools want answers in five minutes without working through the process.' (19,3). He had lost confidence in the educational leadership in Tasmania.

> The only people who do anything in our system are individual teachers in individual schools who have the courage, vision, foresight, teaching capacity and persistence to do something. It's the only way that anything comes through. The only change that happens is with a group of committed individuals. (education consultant. 19,2)

Comments from a wider context showed that people, who were in contact with the relief teaching setting, saw that effectiveness was not dependent entirely on the skills of a relief teacher, it was also seen in relation to the context of students and change. They noted how schools had changed within the last few years, and, indeed, some parents were wary about the discrepancies between what they read about in schools and what they saw and heard from their children.

> Parents are concerned because they get reports from the school and see good marks, but they are very sceptical of the report when they see evidence of homework, and the work the children have done ... They complain about the behaviours at school. I heard tales at one local high school, with quite a good reputation, where a mob of children pick out someone and surround him and thump him just hard enough ... but not hard enough to cause damage. (educational adviser. 16,2)

Another parent was concerned that the frequent practice of holding meetings in school times, necessitating the employment of relief teachers, but also bringing unnecessary disruption to the school routine. She advocated a different approach: if schools were serious in maintaining a viable teaching and learning setting in schools, there needed to be a consistent approach to relief teaching to ensure that relief staff had some degree of familiarity with the school and system. She commented:

> It means that relief teachers have to do fill-in lessons. My son, 14, complains when he gets home. It makes him very frustrated that he is held up with his work. It's a weakness in the education department that regular teachers are not taking lessons because there are too many meetings in school time ... with moderation for example. (43,1)

Legal responsibilities

What was a relief teacher's professional responsibility? What was his/ her duty of care? As a relief teacher herself, the researcher understood the lack of information available for relief teachers. Instructions for duty, notification of students on medication, fire drill procedures, and behaviour management policies were often forgotten in the rush to get someone to a classroom quickly. Who was responsible for providing adequate information? Was it a legal requirement for relief teachers to be given a class list? Anecdotal evidence showed that relief teachers were taunted by students. Where did the division of responsibility lie? What was harassment? The following comments, taken from a day's seminar, identified a significant 'gap' in the relief teaching context at system level: that of responsibility. Who was legally responsible when relief teachers could not cope? What safeguards were in place to ensure both a student's and a relief teacher's safety? A senior officer in the Department commented:

> Schools are exploiting relief teachers but it's been no one's business. Relief teachers have every right to complain as a full teaching member. They should have access to all facilities. Schools should be made aware of the responsibility to relief teachers. (251)

> If a school does not have a folder, or fails to notify the relief teacher in some way, a relief teacher is left in an impossible situation. S/he can't go running to the principal or someone else every few minutes. An amazing amount of things are covered up. This is what ought to happen. In practice it doesn't happen. There are gaps and it's ad hoc and filled with basic legal loopholes. (251)

> Playground duty makes me angry when I see schools drop the relief teacher in it. A relief teacher turns up for the first time. Even when a new teacher turns up they are told, 'You are on duty.' Too often they are not told what the school rules are, what areas they are responsible for, where the kids should or should not be, what the kids should or should not be allowed to do, or what kids in particular they should look out for. I think schools take an enormous risk because if such a [relief] teacher was sued for negligence, I should imagine one of the defences would be, 'I was inadequately prepared'. A lawyer suing would aim his/ her guns widely and go for the principal teacher, or even the Department. Schools must take a lot more care when they induct new teachers and relief teachers. (251)

The responses given by the senior union official to the researcher's questions showed that although problems within the relief teaching setting were well known, and anecdotal evidence was freely available, at system level, relief teaching was 'no one's business' (251). In consequence, interview data showed that its low priority, based on a fragmented and inaccurate perception of relief teaching and its various contexts, engendered further difficulties. Not only was there an outdated system of organisation, based on assumptions, which failed to make adequate provision for relief teachers and administrators in schools, but the continued focus on issues of a higher priority, and often more politically appealing nature, such as computers, ensured that relief teaching remained 'invisible' and amorphous (Galloway, 1993; DECCD, 1997). As problems multiplied and subdivided unseen, many people at system level indirectly admitted that relief teaching was best hidden, and that if relief

teachers and others were scattered, they presented a weaker challenge to the status quo. Few recognised the significance of relief teaching, in its position at the heart of the teaching and learning settings. Even fewer people at system level recognised that relief teachers could become a resource.

The researcher, therefore, collected data which might appear to represent polarised views, or appear unconnected with relief teaching and put them together under a single concept that there were underlying links which would make sense of the complexity (de Bono, 1990, p. 76). She tapped into the extreme variety of data ensure that she gathered evidence which depicted the context of relief teaching as viewed from people at system level while ensuring that her approach was balanced (Bolman & Deal, 1991). She sought respondents, not necessarily connected with relief teaching, who could provide information on aspects of organisational and interpersonal management issues. Comparison of data within the relief teaching context, and external to it, ensured new juxtapositions of data which might help to bridge any gaps in information and understanding which were apparent from her own observation or which had surfaced from the research data. She compared DEA and Union perspectives on relief teaching and examined how they fitted into a wider context. She extended her own thinking by discussing management issues, with managers in private enterprise, to compare their methods of employing and integrating emergency staff in the workplace. In time she was able to view the range of data holistically.

Unifying the perspectives

What is the answer? In that case, what is the question?

What were the common questions or issues underlying relief teaching? As can be seen, the issues from each perspective varied greatly. There were no satisfactory answers to address the problems, and few structures in place to map them. Instead, there was frustration, confusion and at times, even chaos. Analysis showed that patterns of problems recurred within each perspective, but students, teachers and administrators had no common goal or framework to provide links (de Bono, 1990). It was evident that there was a need to search for deeper issues and relationships (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This section of the chapter summarises evidence from the perspectives while presenting further links which serve to explain the paradoxical nature of relief teaching. Its purpose is to gain insights into the assumptions and attitudes which surround relief teaching; including the development of appropriate methodologies for understanding relief teaching and the relationship between relief teaching and its problems.

An analysis of evidence showed that problems arose because there was no official recognition that relief teaching was different from regular teaching. Relief teaching was equated with a form of supervision which took no account of the hidden curriculum or the effects of change. An assumption that relief teachers could 'walk in and supervise' was rarely achievable. At times, delays were caused by factors such as, lack of information, work or equipment; however, there were other difficulties, too. Interview data confirmed, from both the students' and the relief teachers' perspectives, that often much of a relief teacher's lesson was devoted to gaining the students' attention. A relief teacher's lesson was seen by students as a 'bludge' where no classwork need be done.

The investigation showed that problems continued and escalated because many school staff had little time, energy or even inclination to cope with additional difficulties. Many people thought that relief teachers were well paid, and without initiatives from those in authority, relief teachers were left to deal with problems as best they could. Attitudes within the education system, therefore, perpetuated problems. Relief teachers who could not cope, hid the problems, left relief teaching or effectively allowed students to take control. Students enjoyed creating diversions, working in a pack, or 'having a few laughs'. They relied on the ambiguity of the setting to test the unseen boundaries of organisational and personal authority. The changing balance of power among student groups, went beyond the classroom, especially when, as the data confirmed, twenty per cent of regular staff members could be absent at one time.

Evidence showed that problems occurred because relief teachers 'were on the back foot', particularly in unfamiliar schools. Employment opportunities were erratic and depended on them 'taking risks' or 'having a go'. Administrators in high schools, with wide ranges of subjects to cover, needed relief teachers who would supervise any subject (appendix 23). Relief teachers were 'encouraged' to accept what they were offered. On occasion, they worked in open-ended or potentially dangerous settings

without the skills or knowledge to predict where the dangers might be, particularly if students took advantage of their lack of knowledge. Problems, therefore, occurred on several fronts. While the relief teacher was dependent on his/ her ability to 'read' the situation and predict how to cope with any issues which might arise, the students were also 'reading' the setting to determine their responses. In classes where the students' and relief teacher's perceptions matched, the lesson could be exhilarating. More often, a relief teacher stepped out of his/ her depth, and the resulting tensions and the sense of 'What do I do next?' signalled corresponding insecurities, or opportunities, for the students. On many occasions, relief teachers found themselves in settings where they could not provide adequate duty of care. Relief teachers often trod a thin line between being in control of the group and being overwhelmed by the diversity of unfamiliar settings and people. Role ambiguity created further tensions. Evidence showed that the students, teacher and the system were vulnerable because there were few checks and balances in place to act as stabilisers.

The management and effectiveness of relief teaching were dependent on the efforts and personal initiatives of individuals. Any improvements therefore were localised. The reactive ad hoc approach to relief teaching caused many problems for administrators and teachers. Not only were there no easy channels of communication, but there was no recognition at system level that relief teaching was complex and demanded time and support for people to 'get it right'. Individuals were under pressure because of the complexity and because of lack of time in an emergency situation, which often came in addition to a demanding work schedule. In each of the schools in the investigation there were common problems which had not been discussed. Administrators and relief teachers felt defensive and vulnerable for fear that they might be seen as the cause of any problems. Isolation and invisibility, therefore, bred suspicion and not openness. It was easier to blame relief teachers and continue with the out-of-sight, out-of-mind approach until the next emergency. Relief teaching remained a low priority. Short term responses ensured that, over a period of time, many problems returned with more intensity, posing further complications in an already unsettled environment.

The comments from interview respondents showed that administrators, teachers, and students had a different 'connection' to relief teaching (see appendices). Their experiences were dependent on their positioning [involvement] and their ability to affect the issues they saw as important. Underlying many comments were expressions which reflected the changing relationships in a dynamic and unpredictable setting. One relief teacher, for example, described his class as one which 'almost allows itself to be supervised ... almost becomes a creature that has a mind of its own.' His attempts to 'get it and lassoo it' resulted in 'frustration' and 'feeling really wasted' (21,1). Analysis of data from different perspectives showed how the different patterns of issues and responses emerged within each perspective. The Agency coordinators, for example, had developed a clear understanding of their role and could visualise how they related to other aspects of relief teaching. Their efforts were directed at improving their links with relief teachers in schools. Students, on the other hand, were focused on brinkmanship and challenging the boundaries of authority within their classrooms. Their challenges impeded relief teaching effectiveness. In this way, important issues were seen through diverging viewpoints and assumptions:

- Analysis of the data showed that students tested relief teachers to see what they could get away with. They wanted to be with their friends, have fun and 'become a legend', leaving stories of their exploits to be broadcast informally among the broader student cultures.

- Relief teachers, like other interview respondents, represented a spectrum of attitudes and experience. Many of them enjoyed relief teaching for its independence and flexibility. They found increasingly, however, that their teaching assignment was becoming untenable, particularly if students refused to cooperate or exhibited a lack of respect. They felt powerless to counteract any threatening behaviour, without support from the AP, and found student language particularly confronting. During the course of the investigation several experienced relief teachers decided to leave relief teaching and work where they were better able to utilise their teaching experience.

- Many regular teachers could barely cope with the pressures of their work and, frequently, despite their best efforts, they found further problems on their return from absence. Some regular teachers expressed anger that relief teachers wanted everything done for them and could walk away at the end of the day. They felt trapped by the system and begrudged the extra time spent on preparing for uncertainty.

- The predominant issues and concerns for administrators: were the management of scarce resources such as time and money; the reduction of problems which might injure their own reputation or that of the school; and the reactive nature of their role, where any small problem had the potential to escalate. The context of relief teaching posed many problems because it required complex management within a short space of time. In an effort to minimise costs, relief teachers were employed to cover for parts of a day or for a number of teachers. Relief teaching, therefore, was closely interwoven with other administrative tasks during the day. Although several administrators knew how to reduce student problems and improve relief teacher effectiveness, they accepted that some form of compromise was inevitable because they did not have the resources to cope adequately.

- Agency coordinators had a well-defined role and boundaries in which to work. They had built up their job through their own initiative and interpersonal skills. Their energies were channelled to a positive focus and they saw that as their skills improved, they were able to play a more effective role, linking relief teachers and schools.

- Officers from the Department saw relief teachers as short term teachers who had a supervisory role. They viewed relief teaching distantly, and did not wish to upset the status quo. Queries about relief teaching were often lost in the system. There was no shared information on relief teaching. Many officers saw relief teaching and its contexts as outside

their concern. The invisibility of relief teaching, therefore, was an advantage in that they could focus on more easily quantifiable aspects of education, such as, the provision of computers for schools.

Each perspective reflected a different perception of the role of a relief teacher. There was little shared knowledge. Like the Agency coordinators, each person had a limited view of relief teaching and did not look beyond it. Views were sometimes extreme: while, officially, relief teachers were viewed distantly as one-dimensional figures, unofficially, relief teaching was seen as 'a can of worms'. In schools, views on relief teachers were polarised, from 'a gold medal person' to 'a parasite'. Such divergence encompassed a spectrum of views, reflecting the links and mismatches between different paradigms, within the various settings. With the low priority accorded to relief teaching at Departmental level, combined with a lack of communication, feedback and accountability between the schools and the Department, the fragmented, individual perceptions of relief teaching were rarely challenged. Few people saw relief teaching as more than a stop-gap measure, 'to keep things going'. Relief teachers were described in terms of warfare, conflict or humour; they were seen as 'fair game', being employed 'to keep the kids from killing themselves'. However, while opinions remained entrenched within the educational culture, that relief teachers lacked professional credibility, the context of relief teaching had changed radically. There were many paradoxes. The findings showed that despite spending millions of dollars on relief teaching each year, there was no obvious method of accountability for where the money went, nor what happened in relief teacher's class.

An examination of diversity, paradoxically, provided unity. Underlying the superficial diversity from each perspective, the findings showed that relief teaching was composed of five interrelated themes (Webb, 1993) which affected administrators, teachers, and students, linking all the perspectives. Linking each perspective were also themes of conflict and change. The relief teaching setting was one of power and powerlessness, of compromise and ambiguity. Those people who did not know how to manage the unsettled environment, became defensive or lost confidence if they could not cope effectively.

Analysis of data using a constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) showed that three factors linked relief teaching and its issues and problems and perpetuated the gaps between policies and practice:

- relief teaching was largely 'invisible', isolated and of low priority, therefore, what happened in schools or in the classroom was rarely acknowledged formally;

- relief teaching was different from regular teaching (Webb, 1993). A relief teacher could not take the place of the regular teacher: there was a different balance of relationships, which took time to establish;

- problems were rarely understood or formally recognised by senior officers in the Department. The out-of-sight-out-of-mind perception of relief teaching ensured that problems recurred and intensified.

These three underlying factors which linked relief teaching and its problems produced a situation whereby the stakeholders were locked into 'the maelstrom of relief teaching' with little knowledge of what to do, or how to focus on the heart of the phenomenon. There was a political dimension to the responses, too. Many interview respondents, such as administrators in schools or at systems level did not wish to draw attention to any problems. The lack of reference to relief teaching, therefore, enabled them to 'turn a blind eye' and perpetuate the negative aspects of relief teaching. The individualistic and uncoordinated approaches to relief teaching brought a vicious cycle of increasing problems, with few checks and balances to realign any discrepancies.

By making relief teaching visible from a number of perspectives, the investigation has shown how relief teaching is different from regular teaching and has uncovered many of the issues and problems seen as important by students, relief teachers, regular teachers, Agency coordinators administrators, and other people from a wider educational community. For the first time, relief teaching is seen as a phenomenon. The common base of data allows people from each perspective to gain a conceptual understanding of the relationships and to see how ambiguities and mismatches could occur and cause recurring problems (Drake, 1981; Rawson, 1981; Jansen, 1997). The following chapter discusses some of the hidden elements of relief teaching and shows how they are linked.

Chapter 5

LINKS, GAPS AND PARADOXES

> *Relief teaching is still a no man's land. It is a highly skilled form of teaching but people think they are idiots in those positions. There are so many opportunities to learn. Relief teachers deserve some sort of consideration. The lack of identity seems to travel around. When it comes to the crunch there is a perception which is almost superglued on, that relief teachers must be failed teachers. (former relief teacher/ researcher. 218,7)*

Relief teaching: a no man's land

What is relief teaching? The quotation (218,7) at the beginning of the chapter contains many of the essential elements at the heart of relief teaching context. It was made by an interview respondent who had spent three years researching 'the amorphous mass of material on relief teaching' before it became too overwhelming. Her research was never completed, but formed the basis of later analysis by another researcher (Bourke, 1993). She regretted that the rich material she had obtained from relief teachers and others, had become 'one dimensional'. In the process of analysis the personal feelings and experiences of relief teachers had become generalised, and in her eyes, bore little relationship to the relief teaching context she knew and understood (Stringer, 1994). The reality of her experiences showed the dilemma facing researchers: relief teaching is multilayered and complex to analyse, yet its complexity is one of its essential characteristics as a phenomenon. Her description identified some of the assumptions, paradoxes and ambiguities inherent in exploring a no man's land. There are others which remain unanswered. For example, is the reference to a 'no man's land' a reflection on issues of gender, too?

The purpose of this chapter is to:

- provide a conceptual framework which links relief teaching and its problems;
- draw together research data which shows the diversity of relief teaching and how it differs from regular teaching;
- illustrate some of the links, gaps and paradoxes which arose from the analysis of research data;
- show how the invisibility and non reference to relief teaching can lead to increasing problems within the education system.

This chapter explores the deeper links between the issues and problems and shows some of the consequences of the present approach to relief teaching. The chapter is organised thematically, in order to build a concept of the relationships which exist because of the present invisibility of relief teaching and its positioning within the

educational community. The chapter shows how three underlying factors perpetuate the gaps between the theory and the practice of relief teaching. It challenges commonly-held assumptions and shows how the lack of reference to relief teaching increases the ambiguity and conflict within relief teaching settings. The third section draws attention to some of the hidden 'costs' of relief teaching. The chapter shows how many of the current perceptions and management practices surrounding relief teaching serve to heighten rather than reduce costs and leave aspects of the management and practice of relief teaching legally and professionally open to challenge. Together, the illustrations provide the means to fulfil the research objectives, and show how by making relief teaching visible it is possible to demystify some of the recurring problems and paradoxes which have been noted in the literature and the investigation. The chapter will provide insights into the complex of assumptions and attitudes which surround relief teaching.

The universal links between relief teaching and its problems

The grounded analysis of data in this investigation has shown that there are three major faultlines which perpetuate the problems of relief teaching and reduce relief teaching effectiveness. They provide the universal links between relief teaching and its problems:

- The context of relief teaching is largely invisible.
- There is no recognition that relief teaching is different from regular teaching.
- There is no official recognition or acknowledgement of the problems surrounding relief teaching.

One or more of these factors serve to create a setting in which there is a constant imbalance between what 'should' occur in theory and what happens in practice, often leading to anxiety and frustration and a barrage of professional contradictions. The invisibility of relief teaching, like a no man's land, is central to the investigation. It helps to make sense of the fundamental ambiguities which surround the issues and problems of relief teaching. The investigation has shown that relief teaching operates in the margins of the educational system (Shilling, 1991) and relief teachers have an ill-defined role (Webb, 1992). In one sense they are overlooked; in another sense, they are looked down on as mercenaries, or people without an identity, and perhaps without responsibility or commitment. Yet, effective relief teachers fulfil an important role. They are expected to take the place of a regular teacher to maintain the social, organisational, and educational boundaries (Shilling, 1991). Like boundary riders, effective relief teachers have developed strategies to cope, often with little support. However, many people are not aware of the changing boundaries or the field forces and minefields and remain unprepared for change in relationships which may occur in a 'no man's land' (appendix 7).

The invisibility of relief teaching

The investigation showed that the general lack of official recognition relief teaching in policies, practice, and research, created recurring problems. There was no clear identity for relief teaching. For example, after working for twenty consecutive days,

some relief teachers might become reclassified as 'temporary teachers' and work under different structures of employment. Statistics were flawed as there was no common definition of what a 'vacancy' represented, and information was 'locked in the computer', or 'difficult to access'. The hours that relief teachers worked were also difficult to tabulate because a relief teacher could replace a number of absent teachers, work under different systems and scales of payment for different periods of time. Funding relief teachers was complex, too, as regular teachers were absent for a variety of reasons, and as a consequence were paid from different sources. Evidence from the investigation shows that over a period of years there was no consistent information on relief teaching, even with regard to a list of relief teachers, or the numbers of vacancies filled. There was no direct line of communication from the Department to relief teachers, nor was there a clear division of responsibility or accountability regarding relief teaching (appendix 5). Policies regarding educational initiatives, professional development or 'whole school support' for regular teachers did not include relief teachers (DECCD, 1997). Paradoxically, as 'a subsection of regular teachers' they were employed under the same Award as a regular teacher and assumed to perform the same duty of care.

Relief teachers were 'invisible' because of their lack of identity. Partly due to the lack of conceptual understanding of relief teaching, other than to offer 'relief' in an emergency, because a relief teacher's identity was seen in terms of the absent teacher. What went on in a relief teacher's class was also largely unknown, for in many schools, s/he was 'paid to cope with problems'. Often, as the investigation showed, a relief teacher did not succeed: students were noisier, work not completed and equipment damaged. Relief teachers were seen as a 'necessary evil', a short term solution to the absence of regular teacher absenteeism. Their apparent ineffectiveness gave rise to feelings of hostility among regular staff. The invisibility of relief teaching masked the complexity of the organisation for relief teaching. Administrators found that the time allocated for the organisation of relief teaching was insufficient to cope with its complex and often unpredictable demands. They spent extra time, before and after school, planning timetables and events which they knew would, most likely, be subject to further changes during the day. Through their personal efforts, therefore, they compensated for the lack of written material on relief teaching, by taking personal responsibility for its management. There were additional pressures, in that administrators did not want to acknowledge difficulties which might be regarded as an indication of their inadequate management strategies. Evidence showed that problems were often ignored. So a culture grew up in which relief teaching was viewed largely from an administrative perspective, with little understanding of its nature as a phenomenon. The investigation showed that many problems would remain undetected while relief teaching continued to remain a low priority within the education system and transient relief teachers provided an obvious target for blame.

Relief teaching is different from regular teaching

There was little understanding that relief teaching was different from regular teaching (Webb, 1993) and affected by factors such as: lack of professional status, an ill-defined role, inadequate information, isolation and frequent change. As a result, a relief teacher was placed in a 'no-win' situation. Other people equated relief teaching with 'active supervision' and saw a relief teacher's role in terms of the absent teacher,

rather than examining the context in which s/he worked. Advice given from a different knowledge base could, and did, create recurring problems.

The general visualisation of a relief teacher as babysitter, for example, implied that relief teaching was a short term occupation and that s/he, as an outsider, was paid to cope with any difficulties. The metaphor implies that the task of relief teaching was seen in a supervisory capacity, as concerned with 'holding the fort' rather than with 'educating students'. In an emergency, school staff assumed that relief teachers 'would know what to do'. After all, in an encompassing view of relief teaching as babysitting, the notion of rights and responsibilities would be part of the equation: that there would be structures in place to enable the persons concerned to know whom they were supervising, and their role and duties. There would also be an expectation that, except in extreme emergencies, the children would be 'ready' and 'prepared' to accept the inevitable changes; any problems which occurred would be considered incidental.

In contrast, evidence from the investigation showed that, in general, little attention was focused on the selection or provision of work or on preparing the students to accept a change of teacher (appendix 24). Thus, the responsibility is seen to rest almost entirely with the 'babysitter'. Problems, too, were considered 'inevitable' rather than incidental. Administrators, regular staff, relief teachers, and students could anticipate problems, and enumerate them readily. The problems were persistent and consistent, as is shown from the interview data from student transcripts (appendices 1-3). It is also evident that, on many occasions, any concerns expressed by the relief teacher were considered 'out-of-place' or not taken seriously (appendices 7 & 10). Relief teachers lacked credibility because of the problems surrounding them.

Problems are not officially recognised

The perception, at system level, that any problems were 'due to the individuals concerned and not due to the presence or absence of policies', perpetuated a culture in which the context of relief teaching was largely ignored. As a result, no space or time was allocated to relief teaching. Individual administrators and relief teachers had to cope without reference to information, and there were few resources to enable people to see connections, or contradictions, and to understand a wider picture. In an attempt to cope, many people adapted their own behaviour to respond to, what the investigation showed were inadequacies of the system. As a result, people worked harder but ineffectively: in time they became disillusioned, lost confidence and covered up problems.

In effect, the Department had by-passed relief teaching. There were few safeguards in place to monitor the process or outcomes of relief teaching, or the learning outcomes of students in their classes. Relief teachers who applied to work in schools came from a variety of backgrounds. They need not be qualified teachers. Their employment often depended on their availability, rather than their suitability for a particular school. At the time of the investigation, for example, there were no requirements that relief teachers supplied information concerning their health, classroom management skills, or knowledge of school curriculum or policies. Relief teachers relied on Agency coordinators for work. Interview data showed that these

coordinators had no training, rarely visited the schools or met the people concerned. However, they tried hard to judge what was needed. At times, such as an influenza outbreak, they worked under intense pressure to provide emergency teachers at short notice (Pattie, 1995). They had additional difficulties, in that when they contacted a relief teacher, it did not guarantee that s/he would be available to leave home at short notice, prepared to teach in a particular school and had knowledge which corresponded to the subject and age of students.

The investigation showed that the extreme range of relief teachers provided an on-going problem for schools, particularly when school staff did not have prior knowledge of who would arrive at school to replace an absent teacher. It was evident that many administrators and relief teachers found difficulty in coping with sudden and unexpected changes, particularly if they felt isolated and unable, for whatever reason, to discuss their difficulties concerning aspects of relief teaching. Some school administrators attempted to retain 'good' relief teachers by listing their 'preferred' and 'non-preferred' relief teachers. However, anecdotal evidence suggested that such practices were discriminatory and open to challenge, as interview data showed that relief teachers were 'listed' without their knowledge or authority. In attempting to provide cover for a range of subjects (appendix 23), on a day of 'general supervision', it followed that many relief teachers were outside their own area of knowledge. Lack of awareness, therefore, created many potentially dangerous situations, for example, with regard to safety in a laboratory or a gymnasium.

Evidence from the investigation supported Ostapczuk's observations that problems were 'longstanding in nature' and that there was 'a gap in what research suggests be done regarding substitute teaching and what is practiced' [sic] (p.11). For example, words such as 'general supervision' or 'active supervision' were euphemisms which cloaked the realities of relief teaching. In practice, supervision was often equated with 'survival' or 'problems' (Pronin, 1983; Cannon, 1984; Brenot, 1985; Ostapczuk, 1994). Similarly, comments from interview data showed that many students were not prepared to be 'supervised' by a relief teacher, who, like a step-parent, brought a different balance of relationships in the classroom (Ochiltree, 1990). Similarly, the policies for relief teaching were inadequate for the practice of relief teaching.

Most of the policies in use, lacked the flexibility to cope with the management and practice of relief teaching. Often, relief teachers were called to school with inadequate time for preparation. They had limited information about student groups, student names or student numbers. They arrived in class with no job description, or day book to ground the lesson in a wider context. They were asked to take duties in the playground, without knowledge of factors such as the school rules, the behaviour management policies or first aid procedures (appendix 4). Evidence has shown that while, in theory, school staff might offer support, in practice, they had their own work and did not have time or resources to help a relief teacher (appendix 9). As a result, inadequate policies which were intended for regular, rather than relief teaching contexts, led to frequent mismatches on a daily basis. Administrators admitted, for example, that the information that they intended to write, or the 'one-off lessons' that they had hoped to organise for relief teachers, had not eventuated. There was evidence, too, which suggested that at times, groups of students had goaded relief teachers to such an extent, that they had refused to return to the school. At times,

relief teachers, too, had lost control, and were accused of shouting or even hitting students.

Unfortunately, the incidents described were not isolated, but they were often unreported. Student challenges were seen as a 'normal' part of relief teaching. What was disturbing, from evidence, was the extent to which students could 'get away' with group challenges, which, as one student remarked, were getting 'violenter and violenter' (appendix 1). One relief teacher described the chant from high school students:

> 'Relief, Relief' chanted in a whispered way. It started well before I got there, about fifty yards down the corridor. It's psychologically damaging in a way and threatening (41)

There was indeed a gap between the assumption that relief teachers 'held the fort' until the regular teacher returned. In effect, the fort was crumbling, and patterns of student behaviour which had remained unchallenged in the classroom, were becoming more insidious elsewhere in the school. Again, the investigation showed that what was interpreted as a 'problem' for the relief teacher had broader implications for the whole education system (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Simmons, 1991).

Relief teaching, therefore, was locked into a paradoxical situation in which the Departmental policies which created organisational, educational, legal and social structures for regular teachers, were not adequate to deal with the various contexts of relief teaching. As a result, there were gaps in accountability. Many practices were ineffective and questionable. For example, interview data has shown that, during the period of the investigation, the equivalent of twenty-six thousand days' salary was paid to relief teachers in a year, yet there were no relevant statistics, information showing the comparative use of relief teachers in, say, primary or secondary schools, or reports to enable the system to self-regulate. Any discrepancies were difficult to detect, and problems recurred. Moreover, anecdotal evidence indicated that many current practices were questionable and could be challenged on grounds of health, safety, equity, or discrimination. A relief teacher who was unable to fulfil the role of a teacher could not fulfil his/ her professional and legal responsibilities.

Gaps in management and practice

The continued use of an improvised organisational structure, in which relief teaching 'fitted into everything else', created further instability (appendix 9). Lack of induction intensified the difficulties for relief teachers, school staff and students. Each day the extreme range of experience, knowledge and abilities held by relief teachers, perpetuated their marginal status (Waters & Crook, 1990). It was difficult for school staff to provide continuity, when they did not know whether the relief teacher would be a new graduate or an experienced teacher (e.g. appendices 5 & 8). Lack of time for integration meant that a relief teacher often knew little of the teaching style or classroom organisation. Although some relief teachers and administrators had developed positive strategies to minimise problems, there was little encouragement at system level to adopt changes (appendix 15). The investigation showed that the ad hoc approach provided extreme inconsistencies

within the relief teaching context, and indirectly created hidden costs by the ineffective use of time, money and resources.

The aim of the investigation to make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon, and show the relationship between relief teaching and its problems, also identified many inconsistencies between what people 'expected' or 'would like' to happen and what went on in practice (e.g. appendices 6a; 13; 14). For the first time, it is possible to identify some of the common gaps in understanding and in practice, which have led to the paradoxical nature of relief teaching and generated further problems. The following theory/ practice gaps emerged from the constant comparative analysis of interview data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Each 'gap' [theme, issue] can be studied further to illustrate recurring patterns of problems:

- a lack of a recognised 'purpose' or priority for relief teaching within the educational hierarchy. For example, is the workload given to relief teachers viewed in terms of cost, class contact time, or educational outcome?;

- a lack of defined policies or benchmarks for relief teaching. For example, in theory, a relief teacher is assumed to replace an absent teacher. The investigation has shown that in practice a relief teacher may work for a number of teachers with insufficient time or information to provide adequate duty of care;

- an imbalance between the conceptual understanding of relief teaching and the reality of the experience produced a series of divergent assumptions which reduced relief teaching effectiveness (Stoner et al. 1985);

- advice given from a different knowledge-base could, and did, create recurring problems. For example, books on classroom management often assumed that teachers could establish class routines over a period of time. Relief teachers needed 'instant' strategies to gain student cooperation;

- a conflict of interest. Evidence suggested that the invisibility of relief teaching enabled administrators and others to distance themselves from problems and so ensure continuing gaps between the rhetoric and reality of education at system level and in the classroom (Bolton, 1987);

- the marginal position of relief teachers in the educational context belied the impact of the relief teaching context in schools (Senge, 1992; Lee & Renzetti, 1993);

- the lack of accountability at system level produced gaps in the division of responsibility at personal, class, school, and system levels (Glatthorn, 1990);

- gaps in attitude. The hidden curriculum of negative messages exerted a powerful effect on relief teachers and relief teaching. Such attitudes led to an increasingly ineffective setting for relief teachers by focusing on weaknesses rather than strengths (de Bono, 1979; Rice, 1992; Brown & McIntyre, 1993).

It is evident why many relief teaching settings were seen in terms of conflict and hostility. Gaps in the organisation and practice of relief teaching led to gaps in understanding.

Gaps in understanding

A relief teacher was in the centre of the competing priorities and areas of focus, described by one relief teacher as 'the meat in the sandwich' (33). The issues which arose from analysis showed that relief teachers were affected by varying expectations from others, as there was no clearly stated role for relief teachers. An examination of interview transcripts, for example, provides evidence of a range of attitudes and responses to organisational questions, such as, the role of a relief teacher or the provision of work (see appendices). Instead of converging to a common focus, the perspectives diverge. An examination of three key factors in relief teaching: the role of a relief teacher; the organisation of work; and the behaviour of students, provide clear evidence of how the boundaries of information and responsibilities seldom synchronise:

- What is the role of a relief teacher? *It depends on the school.*

- Does s/he replace a single member of staff or several absent teachers?
  It depends on the administrator.
  It depends on the timetable.
  It depends on who pays.

- Does a relief teacher provide work?
  Does the school provide work?
  Does the absent teacher leave work?
  It depends on the setting.

- Who is responsible for ensuring students complete work in a relief teacher's class?
  It depends on the person.
- Who is responsible for their behaviour?
  It depends.

It is evident that lack of specific policies or written information concerning relief teaching perpetuated fundamental ambiguities, noted in the investigation and in the literature (Shreeve et al. 1987; Galloway & Morrison, 1994; Ostapczuk, 1994). Role ambiguity created complexity and reduced effectiveness (Waters & Crook, 1990). Data from the investigation showed that at system level relief teachers were seen as: a 'cheap casual labour force' in terms of employee benefits; 'outside Departmental responsibility'; and 'needed for emergencies'. From an administrators' perspective, relief teachers 'filled a timetabled gap'; and were viewed in terms of the 'cost' to the school. A 'good' relief teacher was one who kept the students quiet and presented no problems. From a regular teacher's perspective, relief teachers presented an interruption in their curriculum and routine, and students wanted 'control' and a sense of security.

Different expectations, divergent priorities

By making relief teaching visible from a number of perspectives, it is possible to see the gaps and inconsistencies. However, without knowledge of how relief teaching was different from regular teaching, and with no shared purpose for relief teaching, a gap in information or understanding created further diverging patterns of thought and action. An examination of some of the dominant issues which arose from analysis showed how the issues from each perspective, each represented a different focus on relief teaching as part of the whole phenomenon. Issues from:

- the students' perspective, showed that *a change of teacher*, led students to develop strategies to *be with their friends;*

- the relief teachers' perspective, showed that *lack of personal control* led to *stress*;

- the regular teachers' perspective showed issues of ambiguity and uncertainty. The heading *creating a 'manageable' setting*, implies the difficulties of preparing work for another person to teach, particularly if they were unknown. What was 'manageable'? What would reduce potential problems for the relief teacher and for the students? The issue of *student behaviour* was an issue of high priority from this perspective.

- the administrators' perspective, *lack of time*, encapsulated in the heading *relief teaching came on top of everything else,* led to another dominant issue: *personal and professional compromise.*

- the Agency coordinators' perspective was *understanding the clients* in order to *fill the gap*.

- the systems perspective, the issue of the *unanswered questions* was not an issue of real concern for the Department. It was the researcher's 'problem'. From the Department's perception, relief teachers were casual employees and the management of relief teaching was outsourced. The lack of reference to relief teaching was recognised at systems level; when asked how often he contacted the Agency coordinators, one senior Departmental officer replied, 'As little as possible'. Evidence showed that the lack of overall responsibility led to barriers to communication and questions of legal responsibilities. Therefore, the dominant issue from the systems perspective, by default, was *lack of responsibility* in the provision of effective teaching and learning outcomes during the absence of the regular teacher.

An examination of interview data in the varying perspectives (chapter 4) has shown how these issues interrelated in the various relief teaching settings, as part of an encompassing phenomenon.

Stress reduces effectiveness

The following cycles of problems show how difficulties recurred. The gaps in the management and practice of relief teaching were fuelled by factors such as lack of communication. The gaps in understanding were heightened by the effects of the dynamic and changing settings. It was no wonder that the search for effectiveness continued: many people did not know what they could do to be effective when the settings seemed so challenging. Stress was an inevitable part of relief teaching (Cannon, 1984; Brenot, 1985; Bransgrove & Jesson, 1993). Factors such as frequent change and uncertainty, staff or student attitudes, or lack of time, created further stress, particularly for a relief teacher who was 'parachuted' into an unfamiliar environment and expected to cope (Fullan, 1991; 21,1). Moreover, a relief teacher's uncertainty or frustration caused further problems for, without support, any difficulties at the start of the day, often compounded during the day (X; appendices 4 & 9). Again, stress reduced effectiveness, because the investigation showed that some regular staff interpreted the effects of change as 'incompetence' on the part of the relief teacher, or did not know how to help without reducing the 'authority' of the relief teacher (Clifton & Rambaran, 1987). Interview data illustrated the stress which occurred when a relief teacher could not cope. It also identified how problems intensified, because of the belief expressed by interview respondents that the admission of any problems might result in a loss of personal credibility within the educational hierarchy (Bolton, 1987; Jansen, 1997).

Although there were administrators and relief teachers who enjoyed improvisation and knew how to structure the settings, their efforts took time, and were largely unrecognised. The investigation showed that effectiveness in reducing problems, depended not on the amount of change but on factors such as the current attitudes surrounding relief teaching and the strategies in place to deal with the changing contexts in schools. For example, evidence from the literature, even in 1975, showed that practitioners believed that 'a change of name' might produce a more positive response from regular staff and students (Freedman, 1975; Rosecrans, 1983). Similar suggestions from anecdotal evidence twenty years later, indicated a perception among some administrators and relief teachers in the investigation, that a change of name for relief teachers might evoke a change in attitude. Evidence from the investigation, however, showed that attitudes and problems were deeply entrenched. There was a need to challenge basic assumptions.

Challenging basic assumptions

In order to demonstrate how problems can radiate from gaps in understanding between the lived experiences and the conceptualised experiences (van Manen, 1990, p. 30), the following section of the chapter challenges some of the main assumptions underlying relief teaching. For illustration, it examines a concept of *relief teaching: as an emergency force, but forgotten as soon as the emergency is over* (Drake, 1981). The relationship between relief teaching and emergencies is a theme which recurs throughout this investigation, where the focus of the research is to understand the conflicting tensions which arise from the visualisation of relief teaching as 'essential' in an emergency yet, at other times, neglected by the 'out of sight, out of mind' attitudes from the educational community (Galloway, 1993).

Can a relief teacher 'teach'?

Patterns of assumptions occurred from those who viewed relief teaching distantly. Evidence from the investigation showed, that although relief teachers were paid according to their qualifications as teachers, in many instances their role in class was described as 'babysitting'. The expectation, therefore, that a relief teacher could expect to go into class and be able to 'teach' was seldom justified. The extent to which relief teachers had to create a framework in which they felt *able* to teach, for example, before they were able to fulfil the function of a teacher, became dramatically clear when comparing the competencies expected of a newly qualified secondary teacher [NQT] with interview data from practitioners. The following excerpt on class management, was taken from a career entry profile compiled by a teacher training agency in England. It illustrated how far the perceived role of relief teacher as 'active supervisor' relied on the assumption that a stable context and appropriate information were accepted prerequisites and that the teacher had an authoritative status within the school context.

> [A newly qualified teacher] decides on the most appropriate classroom organisation, including teaching the whole class, groups, pairs or individuals, to meet specific learning objectives. Establishes and communicates clear expectations of pupils' behaviour and performance in the classroom. Creates a purposeful, safe and orderly environment for effective learning and teaching, devising and using appropriate rewards and sanctions to maintain it. Communicates effectively with pupils using a range of styles appropriately, including: instructing, explaining, questioning, discussing and providing feedback. Generates and maintains pupils' interest and motivation, using an appropriate range of strategies to establish and maintain positive relationships with them. (Teacher Training Agency, no date)

By substituting the term 'relief teacher' in place of 'a newly qualified teacher', the passage above provides an interesting demonstration of some of the deeper links and gaps between the theoretical and practical realities of relief teaching as shown from evidence in the investigation. What are the implications at system level, if a newly qualified teacher becomes a relief teacher? S/he has the theoretical knowledge of varied methods of classroom organisation and behaviour management strategies, but may not have much knowledge of the school or of the absent teacher. As a consequence, s/he may not know the school routines, or have the practical information necessary. However, a retired relief teacher could also be classed as a 'new' relief teacher. S/he has experiential knowledge but now operates within a different set of constraints. S/he no longer has the same status within the school or system, for example, in terms of employment conditions, or the 'respect' accorded him/ her from students and other regular teachers. What are the implications for the system when teachers return after a break of many years? What are the implications when a relief teacher who worked in the same school for a thirty year period, admitted that sometimes her experience counted for little, and she had 'just as bad a time as a young teacher, particularly on a day-to-day basis' (appendix 8).

Does a relief teacher offer 'relief'?

Assumptions by the Department that an unknown teacher could provide adequate duty of care with no induction, training, support, or accountability, would seem naive. Yet again, evidence from the investigation suggests that the term 'relief' might seem a misnomer. De Bono (1979) described the concept of 'relief' as: 'Freedom from fear and worry; freedom from guilt; freedom from pressures ...' and noted that

the happiness from relief tended to be brief (p.112). When looked at from the students' perspective, however, a change of routine often did provide 'fun'. Naturally, when relief teachers were objects of fun, they wished to devise ways in which they could engender respect. Evidence from the literature (Webb, 1992) and from interview data indicated that relief and substitute teachers wished to be known as 'visiting teachers' (186; 228). They hoped that and a change of name would lead to more welcoming behaviour from other staff and students. Comments from other writers and interview respondents indicated that such views were simplistic and it would take more than a change of name to alter well-established patterns of behaviour (Jansen, 1997).

Is a relief teacher an emergency teacher?

It is evident that there are many gaps between the theoretical benchmarks of being an effective classroom teacher and the practical realities of relief teaching. The concept of an emergency teacher highlighted a further dimension to relief teaching. An emergency setting is one which demands immediate action. It is an occasion when there is a sudden break from routine, or a pressing need to cope with unpredictable changes and events. It is easy to visualise other emergency workers, such as firefighters or nurses who have some form of induction, or training to enable them to take charge. They have familiarised themselves with settings and equipment; they have developed strategies and communicated with more experienced practitioners to ensure that they have confidence to predict and cope with a number of options. A firefighter, for example, expects to work as part of a team. A casual nurse, too, works in a setting where structures are in place to ensure that any information is passed on to appropriate colleagues, and that his/ her professional responsibilities, such as duty of care, are maintained despite any changes of staff or routine.

More specifically, the organisation of a First Aid course, attended by the researcher, offers evidence of some of the structures, which are patently missing within the current relief teaching settings. The week's course provided a framework for action which would enable the participants to cope in an emergency situation by showing them how to assess the situation, providing strategies to prevent further complications and detailing ways to ensure that any intervention was based on a clear understanding of the limits of their knowledge and capabilities. Time was spent, not only discussing the core strategies, but those required in special circumstances, where additional records and observations might be necessary. The need to reassure the patient was also important. Of paramount concern was the need for the first aid worker to look after his/ her own welfare, as well as adopting preventative procedures which would ensure a safe environment (St John Ambulance Association, no date). In addition, a large part of the course was taken for mental preparation: in practising for a number of eventualities; discussing emergency events which had happened; and noting the responses which worked. Over the week, any theory became integrated in practice within a 'safe' environment, and individual participants were challenged to see how they responded. The whole course gave participants a sense of confidence and purpose. They learned firstly, to what extent they could cope in an emergency and secondly, they understood that the development of strategies and knowledge was a continuum.

Clearly, there are major gaps in the policies and practice of relief teaching, when compared with other forms of training for an emergency. It seemed from evidence in the investigation that just at a time when the routine could not operate, further changes in the form of an unknown and often 'untested' relief teacher were added, with no time for induction, training or support. Even if a relief teacher possessed adequate skills and strategies to cope in an emergency, s/he may not have worked alongside other regular members of staff and, instead, needed additional help or information from them. Moreover, relief teachers often worked outside their area of knowledge and lacked specific information such as, the names of students in their class, or the school procedures for fire drills. Without initiatives or formal recognition of the problems at system level, evidence showed that school-based attempts to create a more effective approach to relief teaching, rarely succeeded for long without considerable, persistent effort from individual relief teachers and administrators. Evidence from the investigation showed that the non-reference to relief teaching from Departmental levels, had created a self-perpetuating complex of problems, and as each one recurred there were further subtleties and entanglements.

What is a 'real' emergency?

One might assume that an education system which wished to reduce costs would ensure that relief teachers and administrators were helped to succeed and given a manageable assignment. Data from this study indicated that the reverse was true. In one of the twists of relief teaching which added further paradoxes, evidence from the investigation and from the literature, showed that school administrators often knew well in advance that relief teacher might be needed, but s/he was still called at the last moment. In other words, the organisation of absences which were anticipated, was often procrastinated. Although comments from relief teachers 'interpreted' the last minute rush as a sign of his/ her low status and were resentful of the needless additional pressure, evidence from the investigation showed that, frequently, an administrator was busy with other duties and wished to 'economise'. Evidence from the investigation has shown by leaving arrangements to the last minute, it was often possible for an administrator to employ one relief teacher to cope with the work and duties of several absent teachers. In this way, an administrator had demonstrated his/ her good economic management. It also demonstrated how a non-emergency became an emergency. What was an 'emergency'? Evidence from interview respondents indicated that there was little understanding of the 'emergency' role or of the emergency settings in which a relief teacher worked. Does an 'emergency' occur when a relief teacher cannot cope? or when an administrator has no time or understanding to help a relief teacher to succeed? or when a system fails to provide policies which are flexible enough to work and fit within the varying relief teaching settings? or when students hold the balance of power in the classroom?

The invisibility of relief teaching has perpetuated the assumption that relief teachers are needed in an emergency. However, interview data has shown how different patterns of employment have occurred, in response to the changing work expectations and conditions. One experienced administrator reflected on the way in which the employment of relief teachers, at one time described as 'infrequent', now occurred 'at the drop of a hat'. Evidence from the Department and schools confirmed that relief teachers attended some schools on a regular basis and, at times, 20 per cent of regular staff might be absent.

Is a relief teacher a resource?
Shilling (1991, p.5) noted that substitute teachers, as members of a casual workforce, were a valuable resource for their employers. They provided the education system with functional, numerical and financial flexibility, with minimal costs in return. They enabled the introduction of new technologies into schools. They enabled education authorities to implement curriculum initiatives, in literacy or numeracy, for example, by covering for staff who attended professional development seminars. Paradoxically, evidence showed that relief teachers were rarely considered a 'resource' and that as the majority of relief teachers could not utilise their knowledge, many of them adopted a pragmatic approach and operated as 'babysitters'. The paradigm of 'babysitting' becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy (Clifton & Rambaran, 1987). Relief teaching was hidden, 'invisible', fragmented and, therefore, easy to ignore. Relief teachers were seen as 'a group of casual workers who have no allowances and were an easily managed workforce' (22,1). The low status of relief teachers was perpetuated by their dependency on other people for employment, for information or for equipment. Senior administrators saw relief teachers as distant figures and so they did not appreciate the diversity of skills and experience which they possessed collectively. Their skills and strategies varied enormously, but in the course of the investigation, the researcher saw the depth and breadth of the potential resource for schools which was not recognised or utilised by the present system of management (e.g. appendix 7).

A relief teacher is forgotten as soon as the emergency is over
In addition to the gaps in knowledge, expectations, and understanding, come yet further layers of difficulties, for relief teachers were seen as 'outsiders' and 'forgotten' as soon as the emergency was over (Drake, 1981). Such a short-term approach to relief teaching, ensured that relief teachers were 'on the back foot', often expected to travel from home to classroom within the space of thirty minutes, not as part of an 'on-call' routine, but one which was unpredictable. Such a reactive approach failed to develop relief teachers as a cohesive resource or provide a setting in which they felt confident. Once again, the ad hoc system brought further insecurity to the students. As a result, while comments from the literature indicated that relief teachers were seen as unprofessional and unmotivated, evidence from the investigation showed that many relief teachers operated within an open-ended setting, covering for a number of teachers and with little time to 'recover' or debrief. Some relief teachers could not cope and had suffered such stressful classes that they refused to return to the school. Comments indicated that senior officers in the Department operated on the assumption that there was a 'bottomless pit of relief teachers' available and willing to ensure that schools could function in the absence of regular teaching staff. How they functioned rarely came into question. Relief teachers were seen in administrative terms, and were ostensibly employed to satisfy legal requirements. Evidence has shown that in practice, many relief teachers found difficulty in providing the basic duty of care expected from a teacher, particularly if s/he did not know the names or numbers of students in the class. Lack of information on safety procedures too, highlighted the vulnerability of both the individuals and the education system, should any serious emergency arise (appendix 4).

Unrecognised assumptions, therefore, posed a recurring danger in management (de Bono, 1990, pp. 58-59), particularly when organisations need to adapt to rapidly changing social environments (Waters & Crook, 1990; Fullan, 1991; Jansen, 1997). Clearly, the discussion in this chapter highlights some of the fundamental assumptions which have remained unchanged and unchallenged because of the invisibility and non-reference to relief teaching. Each assumption, however, sets in train numerous problems and complexities: each of which contribute to gaps in policies, practices and in understanding. For an illustration, the following part of this chapter shows some of the problems which have been hidden, or not recognised, as a significant addition to the 'costs' of relief teaching (Anderson & Gardner, 1995).

The hidden costs of relief teaching

The costs of inaction

For many years relief teachers have been an invisible part of the education system in Tasmania. They covered for absent teachers in an emergency and then slipped back into obscurity. They were seen as casual workers and as such, outside the on-going responsibility of the Department. Therefore, while radical changes occurred to the methods of employment for regular teachers, while the Department initiated curriculum or policy changes, provided professional development for regular teachers, or encouraged opportunities for developing personal and professional effectiveness, the context of relief teaching remained in a position of continuing low priority (DECCD, 1997).

Data from the investigation showed that as there was little communication between relief teachers, school staff or officers from the Department about relief teaching, there was no conceptual framework, or 'metasystem' (de Bono, 1979) which enabled practitioners or others to stand apart from the relief teaching context and view it holistically. Everybody interviewed had a piece of the jigsaw but most of the links were missing. They did not know how their experience fitted into a bigger picture. Within many varying school contexts there was little understanding that relief teaching was a complex form of teaching or that an administrator's task required skill and time to ensure some continuity of the teaching program in the absence of the regular teacher (Webb, 1993). In practice, it was difficult to view relief teaching from multiple perspectives. As a result, any successes or failures were seen in personal terms. It was easy, however, to visualise the problems because many of them were unresolved. Evidence from this investigation showed similar recurring patterns of experiences and problems, for example, when new administrators took over their tasks of managing relief teaching (38) or with new relief teachers entering school (appendix 5). Without official recognition of the problems or an 'interpreter' to explain them, interview data show that often practitioners or others were bewildered, but did not know what to do when their 'common sense' solutions seemed to engender further challenges (appendix 13).

Obvious interventions, such as providing 'easy' work for the class, for example, did not guarantee that the students would work better. Anecdotal evidence suggested that, on the contrary, normally amenable students became 'little rotters' for relief teachers. Students showed little interest in completing their work, preferring instead to talk to their friends. A system of 'fill-in' lessons was another initiative which

failed after a few weeks. One administrator described how he 'got tired' of the last minute panics when relief teachers found that no work was prepared for the class. Instead, he insisted that his staff had regular lessons prepared in advance of an emergency. In a comparatively short time, however, the lessons were used up and he was faced with a recurring problem (X, 3). Similarly, his efforts to provide an information booklet for relief teachers failed. At the end of the first month, twenty booklets had 'disappeared', others in the staffroom 'were not read'. Interview data showed that the repeated failure of good intentions which rarely resulted in positive outcomes, left people demoralised and overwhelmed. The investigation showed that without a shared understanding and a shared commitment, any attempts to resolve problems had a limited life-span.

Despite the deep-rooted problems, data from the investigation showed that there were individual administrators and teachers who persevered to find strategies which worked (appendix 15). Interview data showed that they looked beyond the simple cause and effect solutions and recognised that they needed to find what Senge (1992) termed as 'higher leverage actions' which would make a difference (p. 364). The comments below indicated one school leader who understood the dynamics of working towards a longer term vision of developing a whole-school approach to relief teaching effectiveness:

> In the ten years [to 1994] I was principal I was never wholly satisfied ... we were on the run ... crisis driven. In the final year I got it together. That may have depended on the skill of the AP. She was a woman, though that may have had nothing to do with it. She was much more demanding of the staff and made sure they left work, if they were away, in folders ready, so there is something to do with organisation (appendix 16).

The costs of an ad hoc system

The investigation showed that underlying the ad hoc management of relief teaching were laissez-faire attitudes which generated what Fullan (1991, pp. 25-27) referred to as 'bias by neglect', when needed changes were systematically ignored for decades. The system of 'payment by stickers', for example, illustrated one aspect of relief teaching which was seen 'to be outdated in this day and age' (12,1) and notorious for its inaccuracies and cumbersome procedures. The stickers represented a source of frustration for administrators and practitioners (appendix 5). They were 'yet another thing to be done' (1,7) for the administrator. Often the administrator was not near the school office and anecdotal evidence showed that relief teachers or office staff in some schools were regularly involved in a time-wasting game of hide-and-seek, trying to 'track down' an AP who might be teaching in class, or delayed by interviews with parents. On occasion, relief teachers waited 40 minutes to collect their signed claim form (1,8). Anecdotal evidence showed that on more than one occasion an AP had to leave his workshop class of high school students, and his duty of care as a teacher, in order to return to the office because there was a query about the number of stickers allocated (27). In the course of the day, a few minutes signing forms, locating people, getting stickers and photocopies, amounted to several hours' work over a week (12). Problems, frustrations and delays did not end in school. Relief teachers and school administrators quickly learned the importance of photocopies and a good filing system (appendix 21). Mistakes were common, therefore, numerous photocopies were kept 'for the record' (appendix 5). Evidence showed from a number of interviews that delays were common: if the stickers did not reach the

Department by a particular time each fortnight, payment was delayed for another two weeks; or stickers had to be sent to other sources of payment, for example, the Union or the Schools Board. According to anecdotal evidence, the process seemed to generate further delays and 'lost' forms. There were few explanations of payment and it was 'up to the relief teacher' to identify and pursue any queries. Indeed, one relief teacher who queried payment received $7 000.00 in back pay (125,1).

The lack of an organisational framework for relief teachers in a school indirectly created more work and stress for the co-ordinator. The AP was often busiest at the beginning and end of the day. Evidence showed that it was rare that administrators gave more than a cursory talk to relief teachers. One conversation illustrated the dialogue between a relief teacher and administrator,

> AP: How did your day go?
> RT: Okay. I just shouted louder.
> AP: Oh!

They both smiled, the green sticker claim form was signed and the relief teacher left. Both the relief teacher and administrator recognised there was a double standard for relief teachers and regular teachers, but there was no time or incentive to do much about it.

The example above showed two distinct ways of looking at a situation, which led to what de Bono (1990) termed 'polarization' (p.25). The ad hoc approach to relief teaching provided many examples of incidents which triggered different patterns of responses from different people depending on their individual experience within an ad hoc system of management (Elliot, 1996).

The costs of ambiguity

The context of relief teaching was inherently ambiguous (appendices 6 & 6a). Factors which generated ambiguity included: lack of information; the lack of safeguards or guidelines to ensure that relief teachers worked within the Award specifications for regular teaching staff; and the prevalent organisational attitudes, which tended to classify any problems as a result of personal incompetence or as an oversight. Many of the comments from the interview respondents indicate how ambiguity reduced effectiveness for the system: administrators loaded relief teachers with additional duties; students were able to claim 'the relief teacher didn't tell us', and evade work commitments and relief teachers could hide problems, because they were not required to provide systematic feedback. The interchange of information, from the point of action to the point of decision-making, which occurred on a limited basis, rarely led to a reciprocating effect on behaviour. Owens (1987) noted that:

> Systems, which do not have sensitive antennae picking up accurate feedback information, or—perhaps worse—which do not provide for the accurate transmission of feedback information to decision makers, find it difficult to react appropriately to environmental changes. (p.73)

In a discussion of systems theory Owens (1987) asserted that static organisations or those 'with poor feedback mechanisms or weak homeostatic characteristics would show declining performance and increasing evidence of disorganization' (p.75). In

effect, the dynamic context of relief teaching, governed by frequent and sudden changes, was locked into a broader setting which did not officially recognise the changes at system level (appendices 7 & 11). Ambiguities also occurred because, although relief teachers were assumed to 'replace' absent teachers and perform the same legal duty of care, they were seen as 'outsiders' to the system, in terms of low status, support programs and opportunities for professional development. Most information received by relief teachers, for example, was written by people who had little direct knowledge of relief teaching, and, as has been seen from evidence in the investigation, who worked from a different base of priorities and assumptions (appendix 22).

One of the major ambiguities relating to the cost of relief teaching was the definition of what represented a vacancy. Interview data showed that it could represent anything between the minimum two-hour period and a maximum of twenty days at one school. At times a 'vacancy' could refer to a relief teacher or to the vacant position. Viewed in this light, any statistical information on relief teaching needed further clarification (Ostapczuk, 1994). Evidence from interview data showed that further ambiguities occurred if a relief teacher went to two schools within a day, taught over five hours, but received the maximum five-hour payment despite the fact that the combined payment from the schools to the Department [green stickers] was over five hours (appendix 21). It was possible too, for a relief teacher to start work at 8.30 am or at 9. 30 am and receive the same payment for a day's teaching. A cost-conscious administrator was well aware of how to 'maximise' on the times of employment. Theoretically, relief teachers were expected to stay for up to seven hours in a school for five hours' payment. It was seen as a way of mirroring the conditions of regular teachers who had a thirty-five hour week. In practice, it led to confusion because the context of relief teaching did not match other conditions of employment (appendix 25), for example, when one relief teacher covered for several different teachers with the resulting higher number of classes and duties.

> I went into a school yesterday and I was expected to provide work for grade 6 students double, grade 11 sport and recreation, grade 9 music, there was a teacher's aide and organise a group activity for Grades 6 and 7. There is no way I could have supplied the work. There was nothing on the sheet [timetable]. I walked in cold not knowing what to expect. I was asked to do duty in recess, lunch time. I was asked to do double duty and not even given time for a cup of tea. I refused and was told, 'The regular teachers have to do it.' I asked if they were given free periods. They were. In another school I spent an hour travelling and had to travel an hour back. I was asked to do the first half of the lunch duty. I was then given 3 hours salary. I complained. It's 3 hours for the morning and two for the afternoon. I was expected to teach, follow through with discipline, know what to expect, be consistent, fair and enjoy the kids. (537,3. April 1995)

As could be seen from evidence within the investigation the cost of ambiguity went far beyond the cost in time or money. Ambiguity bred suspicion (appendix 5). Administrators saw relief teachers as unprofessional and relief teachers saw administrators as manipulative. Unresolved problems led in turn to defensive behaviour. It was costly for any system which failed to adapt to the needs of the various stakeholders. Analysis of interview data showed many instances of people struggling to retain control of 'impossible' and open-ended settings. Indeed many people took personal blame. Lack of a clear framework, instructions or guidelines

for administrators, relief teachers and students, compounded by lack of communication and feedback generated further ambiguity. Relief teachers and other people, therefore, were not only working with radical changes in the absence of the regular teacher but attempting to control further shifting relationships and boundaries (appendix 17). The research showed that the marginalisation of relief teaching influenced the behaviour of others towards relief teaching (Waters & Crook, 1990). Time was spent hiding problems rather than examining them (appendix 13).

The costs of inadequate support

In times of stress, change or 'survival', it has long been recognised that people need support (Maslow, 1970). Yet, the interview data showed that there was little support offered to relief teachers, and its absence also generated attitudes that relief teachers were 'paid to cope' and they were responsible for their problems (Jansen, 1997). Such gap in understanding produced patterns of negative links, which had an impact on the education system, through the escalation of problems. A relief teacher was acknowledged to be 'bottom of the pecking order' (68,5). It would, therefore, seem wise to provide adequate support to enable a relief teacher to have the skills and authority to cope effectively. Hicks (1987, p.79) suggested that a regular teacher in school ought to be responsible for welcoming visiting relief teachers. It was a suggestion supported by Rogers (1992), in his suggestions for a supportive school environment. In the majority of schools within the investigation, however, the administrator who coordinated relief teaching was the sole link between relief teachers and the Agency. S/he was the 'authority' for the selection and deployment of relief teachers, although evidence showed that some administrators needed support themselves (38).

In general terms, the low priority and low credibility of relief teaching was reinforced by the education system (appendix 17). As no one 'understood' relief teaching and the effect of low status, relief teachers were placed in positions where they had no role authority. Their lack of success contributed to their lack of credibility. While relief teaching was seen by some relief teachers as 'a continual search for respect', other people saw relief teachers as irresponsible, unprofessional and not meriting respect. In either case, the investigation showed that relief teachers were dependent on their ability to resolve problems or keep them hidden. It was not seen as their place to offer advice. The investigation showed, however, that many relief teachers were experienced and competent, but their knowledge was often wasted as a resource (appendices 7 &11). Lindley (1994) noted that the lack of support for relief teachers should be seen, not only in terms of relief teachers but in the social and political contexts of education in which the needs of relief teachers might conflict with other, more powerful interests:

> But we are not talking of poorly qualified, inexperienced, or less competent teachers; all occupations have such groups. In the case of education, more than most, our concern is with experienced, well qualified, highly competent teachers (Eyles, 1992). This poses problems both for the trade unions and employers in dealing with the conflicts between interest, equity and efficiency. Trade unions experience conflict between, especially, the first two of these and employers between the last two. (p.175)

It would seem that any system founded on ambiguity and negative perceptions would be costly in terms of low morale, low motivation and stress. Moreover, relief

teaching was seen largely as inconsequential, not meriting official consideration, and as such, little information was recorded or expected. It was, in effect, a 'band aid' solution to cover teacher absences. Therefore, few practitioners, whether administrators or relief teachers, had time or incentive to stand back and view problems sequentially (12; 537). Evidence showed that relief teachers or administrators seldom were rewarded for good ideas, rather their ideas were dismissed or stonewalled (X, 4). Such an approach resulted in wasted opportunities, and wasted resources. The greatest single factor which contributed to a relief teacher's lack of effectiveness was the education system's failure to formally recognise relief teachers as intrinsic to school effectiveness (appendix 14; DECCD, 1997). Without formal acknowledgement, that extra time, resources and support were needed by relief teachers and administrators in schools, evidence showed that it was difficult to gain and maintain role effectiveness. If a relief teacher had little credibility within the education system it was inevitable that students would follow suit (appendix 15).

The costs of a lack of accountability

Data from the investigation showed there was little overall responsibility or accountability for relief teaching at system level, both essential ingredients for maintaining effectiveness (Stoner et al., 1985, p.365). As a result, no monitoring system was in place to identify what was happening within the teaching and learning context in schools. It had been shown that even statistics were not accurate because, basic information, such as the definition of a vacancy, was not uniform. Lack of accountability was also implicit when relief teachers were seen to be 'not real teachers' and outsiders to the school and system. In turn, problems attributable to the relief teaching context led to a changing school ethos. Evidence from the student perspective showed that many students anticipated having a good time or wasted time, revelling in the different balances of authoritative power between their regular teacher and the relief teacher. Other students feared the anarchy of what might happen, and for them, relief teaching classes became a source of watchful anxiety. When few disruptive students were held accountable for their behaviour, and, by extension, their behaviour became a way of life, it was seen as 'natural' to 'lace out' [outwit] a relief teacher. Events which happened in a relief teacher's class generated stories which became part of the school culture. Evidence showed that the greater the disruption and intrigue, the more readily the news travelled through the informal communication networks (218,3) among other students, yet at system level, there were few forms of accountability or communication between relief teachers and their employment authority:

> ... and if something goes wrong with one relief teacher, two hundred children in one day can be affected. I think it's time principals faced up to that. It is a crisis situation that has not been dealt with. (appendix 16)

Evidence showed that many situations within the relief teaching context were becoming uncontrollable (appendices 7 & 10). Even when relief teachers had the qualifications and knowledge to do the job and cover the curriculum competently, they did not have time for induction or acclimatisation to learn the school procedures including safety, and, therefore, there was no manifest of responsibility or log book in which they, or others, were expected to record their observations (appendix 4). There was no means of accountability:

> I've heard people say, 'Gee it's awful being a relief teacher there' and I just think that if I were a young relief teacher and that was the way I was trying to start out then that would be a pretty horrific baptism of fire. It's a non professional approach to initiating young professionals in the teaching service. That is, I think, a poor reflection on the system. (Y10)

Who is responsible or accountable for ensuring that relief teachers can assume the role of the regular teacher within a manageable setting? Who is responsible for providing a setting which is equated with teaching and learning rather than seen as a 'baptism of fire'? Who is accountable for providing an effective system of education?

The investigation has shown that surrounding the context of relief teaching were layers of paradox: there was little formal dissemination of good practice, nor practices which developed confidence and morale, yet relief teachers were expected to cope. The system wanted to attract teachers of quality, but the investigation showed that, increasingly, relief teachers and others saw no future in what they did, and chose not to become involved (appendix 8; 80; 47). As a result, the creation of a flexible and professional system of teaching was in jeopardy, leading to loss of flexibility and, perhaps, teacher shortage. Predictions on teacher supply indicated that, 'Retaining relief teachers will become vital as general shortages develop and the pressures on relief teachers increase' (Preston, 1997, p.16). Yet, the investigation showed that relief teachers were seen in terms of 'cost' and many schools viewed them as not cost-effective (appendix 20). Evidence from many experienced relief teachers confirmed that they no longer wished to work in increasingly hostile settings. Anecdotal evidence from newly graduated teachers, too, suggested that some of them were discouraged from gaining experience as relief teachers, because without support, the day's work was seen as too stressful (appendix 5). One recently graduated teacher who tried relief teaching said that she was horrified when she found difficulty in coping with the lack of respect and cooperation shown by *grade one* students. As an Agency coordinator observed:

> The relief teacher might only be there for the day but that one day can make a very big difference on the students. (235,4)

Overall accountability surely rests with the Department who are responsible for maintaining a system of education which can provide duty of care for the students in its charge. The investigation showed that many relief teachers were not able to do more than 'contain' students in the classroom. At times, even that was difficult. As one administrator remarked, 'The problem is that if you have a relief teacher who doesn't know who the kids are and the kids say they are someone else ... '. (appendix 13). By failing to maintain adequate structures of responsibility, accountability and communication at system level, there were similar gaps in the organisation and practice of relief teaching in schools. As a consequence, there was no holistic understanding of relief teaching or opportunities to recognise the magnitude of the problems.

The costs in wasted opportunities

It was important not to assume, as some people did, that relief teachers were 'failed teachers' (218,7) or imply that their knowledge was generally inadequate. Evidence

showed, that in many instances in a high school context, while a relief teacher's knowledge might be inadequate for the job s/he was meant to do, s/he had wide technical, or vocational knowledge in a different area. The perception of relief teachers as a 'fill-in', rarely recognised relief teachers as people in their own right, with skills which could be used as an additional resource (appendix 17). In many schools, the management process might be likened to putting much energy into fitting square pegs in round holes and wondering why problems occurred (Galloway & Morrison, 1994). Findings from the Nixon report (1997) confirm '... that concerns in relation to education in Tasmania are not due to a lack in overall funds. Rather, the concerns of Tasmanians relate to how these funds are spent' (pp. 107-108). The present approach to relief teaching seemed counterproductive and wasteful in terms of resources and student outcomes. Concern was expressed that the events which occurred in many relief teaching classes were 'damaging' for students (appendix 7). One of the aims of education must be to ensure that students become 'job-ready' (Nixon, 1997, p. 106) by developing responsibilities for their own behaviour, a necessary prerequisite for the work force.

The investigation showed that there were alternative choices. Relief teaching could provide opportunities, for example, for students to relate to adults, other than their own teachers, or to experience a 'repertoire of marvellous lessons' (appendix 18). Opportunities were lost, however, because many students had not developed adequate social skills for cooperative learning when their regular routines were changed (Bennett et al., 1991). They found difficulty in accepting a change of teacher, showing personal responsibility when their regular teacher was away, or managing their work without adult supervision. The system was not only neglecting to use relief teachers as a resource but it was also neglecting to provide students with skills for independent learning, or with opportunities to develop the necessary social skills expected by the wider community. Relief teaching provided opportunities of working with different adults or strangers and within new patterns of responsibility and authority (Ochiltree, 1990). The system, in failing to officially recognise the problems surrounding relief teaching, and by failing to provide professional acknowledgement or support for relief teachers, had also allowed practices in schools where students were wasting a large proportion of their time 'testing' a relief teacher. The interview data provided examples where legal and professional challenges could be made be made by relief teachers regarding equal opportunity, discrimination and harassment. The cases were not isolated and had continued for some time (e.g. appendix 7)

Anecdotal evidence showed, therefore, that gaining employment through relief teaching was not, as some senior Departmental officials conjectured, a question of academic training, it was often a question of developing contacts and if necessary, a pragmatic approach to manage problems by the most expedient method. Any reference to problems, brought with it assumptions of teacher incompetence, rather than student misbehaviour. Interview data showed that the system was breeding a group of cynical survivors rather than emergency teachers. As could be seen from interview data, many relief teachers spent much of their time, creating a suitable environment in which to teach, or babysit. Relief teachers, no matter how knowledgeable or prepared, had first to get students to listen.

There is a certain irony in a system which employed relief teachers to enable regular teachers to attend in-service training and staff development, and yet, which offered comparatively little, if any, professional development for relief teachers themselves. The invisibility of relief teaching at systems level, and the lack of support for relief teachers in schools, in effect, negated a basic condition of professionalism: that of 'recognition' or 'credibility'. The system, therefore, failed to recognise the opportunities that relief teachers could bring to schools, if they were recognised and confident of their skills in an emergency. There were alternative ways of reconceptualising relief teaching. An overseas educational consultant showed how one school district changed the role of substitute teachers:

> ... a small number of crème de la crème teachers are hired as a hit squad. They come together at the beginning of the year. They work out rich, incredible lessons, so when schools need relief, they don't do any plans. This person is coming in to do enrichment. They are your best crème de la crème teachers. They become your principals and AP's. It is a recognised step in their career. They work in all the system to see what's going on. What happens now? He's away for the day. The crème de la crème teaches. When the regular teacher returns from being sick, he hears about this incredible teacher who has come in. He has to compete with this. That's going to force him to think twice about being sick. Children will say, 'I had a great day!' It's a flip, isn't it? It's an elegant solution. (appendix 18)

The consultant's comments showed that by reculturing the educational community and restructuring substitute teaching to be part of recognised career path, 'the hit squad' of 'incredible' teachers had a positive identity, a clear purpose, training, support and were able to turn the negative aspects of an emergency to good effect. Evidence from the investigation showed that relief teachers and administrators possessed excellent strategies but they remained hidden within a school setting.

Adding up the costs

> The present system for relief teaching is unprofessional, insidious and financially catastrophic: paying someone up to $200. 00 take classes and paying for the regular teacher's sick pay on top of that. (293,2)

The comment came from a relief teacher who enjoyed the freedom to 'observe' the education system from a number of schools. His comments were verified from other interview data. The financial costs of relief teaching were calculated by the Department as $5 000 000.00 [in 1995]. These costs were seen to represent 'the total cost of salaries for relief teachers'. The Department was unable to provide the additional costs of regular staff absences or damaged equipment. Evidence from the investigation showed that there were many hidden costs. Seen in 'realistic' terms, the system of employment was neither cheap or nor effective. There was a need to look beyond the basic 'cost' to appreciate some of the implications. Individually, the costs might seem inconsequential but together they were significant.

- Ten minutes wasted at the beginning of each relief teaching lesson in high school represented over twenty per cent of the lesson, or one day a week. Reports from relief teachers and others indicated that time wasted in a relief teacher's lesson was often far higher. [Who was responsible for

educational and financial accountability? In effect one million dollars was spent on 'wasted' time]

- The equivalent of twenty-six thousand days was spent in a year on relief teaching. If one year's teaching was seen as two hundred days [yearly relief teaching salary increments (*)], the number represented the full-time employment of 130 full time teachers.

- The combined salary of relief teachers in one school could cost the equivalent of one teacher's salary per school or $50 000.00 per year.

- Interview data recorded times when over twenty per cent of regular staff were absent at one time. Absences of twelve regular staff were recorded from a school at one time. Evidence showed that the changes affected the school culture.

- One high school (69) had two days without a relief teacher during the period from February to November 1994. Far from being emergency teachers, relief teachers were needed on a daily basis.

- 'Published reports have shown that the statistically average student will have ten of their total classroom days each year supervised by a substitute teacher' (Drake, 1981, p.74). Information from the literature and from the investigation showed that the average student would spend between one and two weeks with a substitute teacher each year. Over a student's school career the amount could total half a school year.

- Evidence has shown that many relief teachers were not able to teach effectively in schools and that a high proportion of the classroom time was wasted.

- No schools within the investigation had a record of what happened within a relief teacher's lesson, nor consistent evidence of the work undertaken. Frequently both the lesson and work were seen as 'a bludge' and a relief teachers role was to prevent further problems.

- There was increasing evidence of a reduction of expectations. Students watched videos or talked quietly when their regular teacher was absent. Many students did not cooperate with the relief teacher, but had their own agenda. Few people in school had the time or resources to support relief teachers.

- The perception that relief teaching was straightforward supervision was rarely possible. Many students were unable to take personal responsibility for their learning and work effectively. Students preferred to be with their friends in school and complete extra work at home if necessary.

- Relief teachers were rarely used as a resource. Many had skills which were unrecognised. Many worked with outdated knowledge of the school curriculum and behaviour management strategies.

- Difficulties which occurred in a relief teacher's affected student learning and the wider educational community. The invisibility of relief teaching masked the seriousness of many problems and their effect on student outcomes. (DECCD, 1997)

Recent information from the Department (June 1998) indicated that $7 200 000.00 was allocated to relief teaching in 1997-1998. Using a similar basis of calculation as above (*), the amount represented the equivalent of 36 000 days' full time teaching or the employment of 180 full time teachers.

'Cost' could be seen in short term or long term costs, it could be seen in terms of administration, human resource, political or cultural terms. There was the cost of indifference too. 'Cost' also implied the value of some less identifiable attributes such as 'motivation', or 'respect'. The costs of relief teaching were seen by the Department in simplistic terms. The investigation showed that in addition to the costs of employing relief teachers there were the costs of absent regular teachers on sick leave, the cost of senior administrative time, damaged or missing equipment, and the costs of the inherent problems such as disruptive behaviour. There were the costs for the students, too, in terms of interruption to their regular program, although many students did not view this as a 'cost'. In all, the present system was seen to be costly as it did not align the needs of the various stakeholders, nor were there positive outcomes, in proportion to the resources available. Some issues, raised by the investigation, represented potentially significant costs.

The purpose of the chapter is to link the issues and problems of relief teaching. It shows that the invisibility of relief teaching, the lack of recognition that relief teaching was different from regular teaching, and the lack of formal recognition of the problems surrounding relief teaching, led to a vicious cycle of events. The chapter examines some of the underlying assumptions and shows that what happens in relief teaching relates to school and system effectiveness. The following chapter concludes the thesis with a discussion of the consequences of the present approach to relief teaching and presents recommendations for further action and research.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS

You are seen as a professional contradiction: I am a relief teacher but I'm not a real teacher. I am also invisible; and I don't teach a subject I fill a gap. (experienced relief teacher, 218,4)

Relief teachers: a professional contradiction

The comment above illustrates the reality of relief teaching for one practitioner. It conveys the essence of relief teaching as a phenomenon and encapsulates the relationship between the issues and problems of relief teaching: a relief teacher is employed to supervise classes in the absence of a regular teacher, yet at the same time, as the interview respondent indicates, *being* a relief teacher is a professional contradiction (van Manen, 1990). She is, in a sense, in limbo (Bransgrove & Jesson, 1993). She is not a 'real' teacher and yet does not have an alternative identity: she is invisible. She cannot be identified as a subject specialist because she fills a gap. Nor is she seen as a colleague, or as 'belonging' to a school. Her comments show, too, the ambiguous and paradoxical nature of relief teaching. How can an 'invisible' teacher gain recognition? How can a relief teacher gain credibility when s/he is 'not a real teacher'? How can relief teachers become more effective if there is no concept of relief teaching other than as a fill-in? It is hardly surprising that relief teaching is hidden under layers of recurring problems.

What is the 'gap' to be filled? The investigation showed that it varies extensively. As a result of the ambiguity, change, and the dynamic balance of interpersonal relationships, the contexts of relief teaching are paradoxical and difficult to define. A relief teacher is caught between conflicting priorities and needs. For example, while a relief teacher might search for respect, a senior officer from the Department might search for economic rationalism and the reduction of costs. Surprisingly, in the contexts of relief teaching, it seems that few people searched for accountability: relief teaching cost millions of dollars but it remained largely invisible at system level.

The investigation has made relief teaching visible. By framing relief teaching from a variety of perspectives, it is possible to understand the relationship between relief teaching and its problems as part of the same phenomenon. In providing an identity for relief teaching as different from regular teaching, the investigation has demonstrated how many of the problems, ambiguities and inconsistencies can be reduced. In conclusion, therefore, this chapter examines relief teaching as a phenomenon by:

- identifying the underlying links between relief teaching and its problems;
- examining the consequences of the present approach to relief teaching at system level;
- showing the significance of relief teaching; and
- providing recommendations for further action and research.

This investigation sought to answer some fundamental questions: What is relief teaching? What are the issues and problems of relief teaching? How are they linked? What are the consequences for the system? The researcher, as a practitioner, adopted an approach which was intended to resolve conflicting biases (Rogers, 1961; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Bolton, 1987). By accepting all data as relevant and enabling the issues and problems to emerge through grounded analysis during a process of time, evidence was produced which, in one way filled in the gaps to make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon, but in doing so also 'positioned' relief teaching within broader organisational and educational settings. The ability to capture the 'bird's eye view' and the 'global vision' was seen as a powerful feature of the investigation (Kee, 1987, p. xii). The development of a flexible methodological approach which integrated the strengths and insights from both the practitioner's and the researcher's perspectives, ensured that the investigation was conducted through its own process of triangulation (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Spradley, 1980). It enabled the collection of rich data which depicted the multiple realities of relief teaching, as can be seen from the appendices. Interview respondents provided evidence where each interview represented data which could be used to illustrate the themes of relief teaching, or used in conjunction with others as part of a holistic view of relief teaching (Webb, 1993). In doing so, analysis revealed that students, relief teachers, regular teachers, administrators, Agency coordinators, senior officers in the Department, and other people at system level had a different perception of the role and responsibilities of a relief teacher. Lack of communication ensured, however, that each person had only a narrow view of experience (appendix 16). An examination of the assumptions held by many interview respondents, showed that in the present settings, problems would not resolve without a shared approach.

The initial focus of the investigation was to gather material on relief teaching from varying viewpoints in order to build up a profile of relief teaching experiences which would provide a 'holistic' picture of relief teaching. A second focus was to present the data in ways which would provide insights into the less definable elements, such as attitudes and feelings, as a means for establishing a new way of understanding and appreciating how and why problems occurred. Underlying the research was a need to balance the dynamic complexity between relief teaching and its problems, with a set of fundamental links which would remain constant, and which would provide a structure for further research to improve relief teaching effectiveness. The need for effectiveness could be seen as a shared need, although with different goals, from each perspective.

In response, the investigation has counteracted the invisibility of relief teaching. It has shown how relief teaching is different from regular teaching and confronted the problems by illustrating how they are generated by unchallenged assumptions which fail to acknowledge the effects of the different field forces which affect relief teachers and relief teaching, within the varying settings at personal, class, school and system levels.

What are the consequences for the education system?

Shilling (1991) notes that the role of relief teaching within the education system is to supply a flexible workforce which can cover classes in the absence of the regular

teacher. Relief teachers, therefore, play a strategic role in covering for emergency absences such as staff sickness, while enabling the educational authorities to provide opportunities for its regular teachers in terms of professional development. Relief teachers are needed to cope with an increasing range of subjects (appendix 23) as well as a range of student age groups and schools. At a system level, therefore, it might be assumed that the functions of relief teaching are: to enable the education system to respond to workplace changes such as the introduction of new technologies; to cope with the variations of teacher supply and demand; and to ensure quality schooling for the students. A question might be asked of senior officers in the Department, 'If the primary objectives for relief teaching are to replace the regular teacher with as little break in routine as possible and ensure to that students are provided with adequate duty of care in a cost-effective manner, what structures or strategies are in place in the various relief teaching settings to translate these objectives into practical outcomes? On a daily basis? In the future?'

An examination of interview data shows that there are few structures in place to provide information or guidelines about relief teaching, from the Department to individual administrators, regular teachers or relief teachers. Nor is there evidence that schools or Agency coordinators send consistent information back to the Department. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are few attempts to monitor relief teaching classes either formally or informally, beyond information of an administrative nature, such as the number of vacancies. Paradoxically, as the investigation shows, even these 'facts' are based on conflicting definitions of what a vacancy represents. As a result, there is little knowledge of how relief teaching links with any Departmental objectives or priorities, such as policies on literacy or numeracy, or teacher employment.

Evidence from the investigation shows that, as a result of the lack of communication or guidelines from the Department, administrators, regular teachers, relief teachers and students each held a differing interpretation of the role and purpose of relief teaching. A relief teacher was indeed, a professional contradiction: while the students interpreted a 'relief' class as a chance to enjoy some relief from routine, their behaviour provided little relief for the administrator, regular or relief teachers who had to cope with the ensuing problems. Nor could it be said that relief teachers were 'teachers', evidence showed that most of the time in their class was spent on 'containing' students in the room or getting them to listen to instructions for classwork (Galloway & Morrison, 1994). While the Department gauged its 'costs' in terms of financial costs, it did not note the dynamic nature of relief teaching or the costs to the staff and students (Anderson & Gardner, 1995). For what were seen as problems by relief teachers were viewed as 'opportunities' for students who had their own agenda (Wood & Knight, 1988). They tested the existing organisational and personal boundaries against their own playful or powerful strategies to shape events in the classroom. It was not recognised that much of the challenging behaviour between students and teachers begun in a relief teacher's class behind closed doors.

In a system which had limited time and understanding of how to deal with the problems, the result was evident: many comments suggested lower academic standards and lower expectations. Interview respondents were concerned about their need to compromise or accept double standards (appendices 7 & 11). Paradoxically,

instead of enabling relief teachers to provide the means to help the education system cope with changes, the presence of relief teachers often led to further changes in student behaviour, in a lower quality of work and in loss of school cohesiveness (appendix 14). So, if the primary intention from the education department was to produce a cost-effective flexible workforce there was little information of where the costs went or what was effective.

The Department's approach was to remain distant from relief teaching. In effect, it placed a 'deregulated' system of teaching and teachers in the midst of an established system of management and expected school staff and students to cope with the differences (appendix 9). In practice, evidence showed that administrators and school staff had neither the time or resources to provide additional support, and, as a result many of them adopted similar distancing or superficial responses. For example, a 'policing' response, which did little more than keep students in the classroom, generated 'hidden problems', by providing opportunities for further elaborate student strategies (appendix 13). So the short term approach, although seeming to work, created its own patterns of responses (Senge, 1992), particularly as there were no benchmarks in place for reference:

> In addition to conflicts created by erratic individuals, intergroup conflict can result from ambiguously defined work responsibilities and unclear goals. (Stoner et al., 1985, p. 494)

The invisibility of relief teaching, in effect, limited any processes of monitoring or accountability and led, in the majority of schools, to an ad hoc system of reactive management. An inability to monitor small changes, over time created patterns of negative events which represented a powerful and destructive leverage on the system. The effects are all the more serious because evidence from the investigation showed that many people were ignoring the real problems and were focused on superficial outcomes.

When examining a cost-effective approach it is necessary to view costs in terms of 'values' too. If the purpose of education is to prepare students for the workforce, or to prepare them to adapt to change, or understand the rights and responsibilities of being in a community, the system of education clearly fails with regard to the various relief teaching settings (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Caring schools who do not 'care' for relief teachers serve to create double standards of expectations in the school communities. In this light, who is responsible for ensuring that relief teachers and others are given a setting in which they feel valued as professionals and in which they can provide quality education for the students in their care? If a system of education is seen not to value its regular staff, by providing relief teachers who have the necessary skills to cope, or by providing a setting in which they can cope effectively, school staff have to compensate, often days later, from the indirect consequences of what happened in a relief teacher's class. Instances of alienation and frustration, as shown in the interview data, served to reduce teacher effectiveness, and led to outcomes for the system where people did not enjoy what they were doing (Goleman, 1996). Such an approach by the system, not only served to marginalise relief teachers but, in effect, discriminated against students by failing to ensure that appropriate 'learning' could take place. For example, it could be argued that by ignoring what happened in relief teaching settings, the Department failed to provide an education for students during

the absence of the regular teacher. Evidence from the investigation showed that many students were quite openly 'bludging' in a relief teacher's class. The consequences for students and the system are disturbing, when students are openly flaunting the espoused policies of 'rights and responsibilities' within the school system (DECCD, 1997a). There are consequences for the system if schools cannot provide the emotional support needed by students, particularly in high school, who are already subject to adolescent and peer pressures (appendix 20).

The investigation shows that there are other factors which need to be considered within the relief teaching settings. Administrators faced pressures, too The investigation showed many instances where the competency of administrators was evaluated by their financial performance. Evidence suggests that there is a need to balance financial costs with the less tangible assets, such as motivation and attitude, to ensure that there are ways of aligning people towards a common objective. However, the objective that seems most common to the perspectives is the perception of relief teaching as 'band-aid', or 'babysitting', surely both ineffective objectives in terms of managing resources or for future planning? The view of relief teachers as 'outsiders' to educational community, effectively perpetuates their invisibility and one-dimensional qualities. In contrast, the investigation has shown that many of the people who are relief teachers and who manage relief teaching are capable, robust, dedicated and resourceful, but they are isolated. As official lines of communication between the Department, school administrators and relief teachers are tenuous and of low priority, there is little appreciation of good practice and few incentives for sharing relevant knowledge. Evidence has shown that without a more comprehensive and positive image of relief teaching, any strategies developed by effective administrators lack credibility. The present approach to relief teaching is based on focusing on deficits rather than a 'building on strengths model' (Brown & McIntyre, 1993, p. 13). Relief teachers are, to a large extent, a wasted resource.

At present relief teaching is a 'resource' which costs millions of dollars to the Tasmanian government but as the qualifications and expertise of relief teachers are largely unknown, relief teaching is not visualised as a resource and from evidence in the investigation, not utilised effectively. So, if the primary objective of the Department is to ensure that students are educated, clearly the objective was not workable in many relief teaching settings. If the purpose of relief teaching is to provide an emergency force, which could react quickly in an emergency, there were no initiatives for induction, training or support to enable relief teachers to cope. As emergency teachers they relied on individualistic skills and strategies. Their time in class was seen in terms of survival and instead of reducing problems in an emergency they often, inadvertently, created further problems. Again, interview data shows many examples of relief teachers who could not cope, and regular teachers and administrators who did not have time to cope. The consequences for the system were evidenced by the time, frustration, and effort spent on relief teaching, with few positive results. It is hardly surprising that relief teaching was surrounded by grey areas of problems and negative feelings (Mullett, 1994). When students were able to challenge relief teachers without being held accountable, so the culture and the climate of the school change accordingly (appendix 10). In some schools, the inadequacies of the system led to relief teaching being discounted as having few real benefits.

The invisibility of relief teaching masked many systemic problems which arose because no one had a clear vision of relief teaching either as a phenomenon or, indeed, of its long-term purpose. The investigation showed that new relief teachers could not cope and experienced relief teachers left. However as there were few checks and balances, the Department continued to rely on the assumption that relief teachers were providing continuity in the absence of the regular staff. The queries of senior officers in the Department focused on how many vacancies were filled, rather than what went on in the classroom. Effectively, the lack of common definitions, benchmarks, or consistent information on relief teaching led to a situation where relief teaching was 'bracketed out' and discounted. Relief teachers relied on written communication from staffroom notice boards or the Union newsletter, to keep-in touch with Departmental priorities and initiatives. While regular teachers received professional development, relief teachers covered their classes. As can be seen from interview data from students, teachers and administrators, the problems surrounding relief teaching were endemic and the consequences severely impeded school and system effectiveness.

Many problems recurred because of the invisibility of relief teaching, and because relief teaching was not recognised as different from regular teaching. Evidence showed that the combination of powerful student dynamics and ad hoc organisation served to reduce perpetuate the characteristics of relief teaching (Webb, 1993). In many schools, a relief teacher's perceived low status, lack of a clearly defined role, lack of information and isolation combined to produce stressors which caused many relief teachers to leave. The investigation showed that because there was little evidence of relief teaching other than as an essential, yet forgotten workforce, there were no frameworks for critical management processes, goal setting or benchmarks, capital allocations or strategic initiatives. There was no focus on what happened in the classroom or on accountability. The non-management of relief teaching at Departmental level led to a system which relied on individuals to 'make it work'. Often, the most practical way to manage what was seen as a 'Pandora's box or a 'can of worms', was in bypassing or ignoring problems. At times, for example, there were accusations from relief teachers that problems were not taken seriously by administrators, while administrators became frustrated with relief teachers who did not 'give it their best shot'. Relief teaching was viewed distantly from officers in the Department who clung to the green sticker system of management and stonewalled queries. Responses, such as these which avoided the other person's concerns, or which passed personal judgement on a person's abilities, in turn provided further barriers to communication (Bolton, 1987). Lack of communication led to further dysfunctional management practices and endorsed the marginalisation, isolation and non-reference to relief teaching. Evidence has shown that what happened in a relief teacher's class had leverage on the whole educational system. In schools where relief teachers were seen as professionals, many of the problems diminished (appendix 15). However, in many schools, effective relief teachers left, posing problems of future teacher supply (Carrigg, 1998; Jones, 1998).

The invisibility of relief teaching masked many recurring patterns of problems which arose because, no one had a clear vision of relief teaching either as a phenomenon or indeed of its long term purpose. The initial confusion, therefore, led to settings

where relief teachers were seldom given time for preparation but they were expected to 'attempt some kind of effective teaching despite the apathy often hostility of students, administrators, and other faculty members' (Drake, 1981, p. 75). The negative emotions and perceptions that relief teaching was of low value and priority, in turn, led to what Drake described as the 'saddest reality of all', when 'substitutes of every type, including the most qualified and dedicated available, [were] seldom successful in their stand-in roles'(p.74). Comments from experienced relief teachers in this investigation, over fifteen years later, supported Drake's claims that a new attitude and a new approach to substitute teachers was needed by school principals. They claimed that, despite their best efforts they were not able to provide an adequate duty of care for the students in their charge. The open-ended nature of their job was also in question; The investigation highlighted some serious problems, at the centre of which were pivotal questions concerning the role and purpose of relief teachers and relief teaching.

What are the consequences of the present invisibility of relief teaching at system level? There are many, but for illustration, an examination of the Department's 'blueprint for better education in Tasmania', *Directions for Education* (DECCD, 1997a), indicates the effects of the long term non-reference to relief teaching. Its central focus is on student learning outcomes 'which will be at the centre of everything schools do and will be the focus of all the reforms' (p. 1). 'Everything', however, does not include the varying contexts of relief teaching, nor explain how the high priority policies 'will ensure students learn more', when there is no knowledge of what is presently happening in a relief teacher's class. Yet relief teachers spend a considerable amount of time within teaching and learning settings. If relief teachers are paid over seven million dollars in a single year for working with students, it would seem that information collected on student outcomes should include references to the relief teaching settings and thereby ensure that student learning outcomes really are the central focus in schools. Comments from one interview respondent shows some of the gaps between the policies and practices, where 'education takes a whole lot of money and it's not doing the job (appendix 7).'

The crucial question which will determine future action will centre on the role of relief teaching within the present system. Once the fundamental position of relief teaching is established, further questions need to be asked about its positioning or 'priority', in relation to other aspects of education. For example, there is a need to ask questions such as, What time and resources are the Department willing to expend on relief teaching? Who will provide training and how will it be funded? How can relief teachers 'succeed' rather than fail? How can we ensure positive student outcomes in the teaching and learning settings during the absence of the regular teacher? As the investigation showed, what happened in the various relief teaching settings had an impact on personal, school and system effectiveness. If up to $7 000 200 is spent per year on relief teaching and up to ten per cent of a student's time is spent in a relief teacher's class (Brace, 1990), it is essential that relief teaching is seen as contributing to better school education in Tasmania and as an important context for student learning outcomes:

The significance of the research

The significance of the investigation lies in its discovery of new knowledge in a subject which is largely overlooked in policies, practices and research. Relief teaching has been elusive for researchers (Huberman, 1993), paradoxical (Galloway, 1993), and affected by attitudes of hostility from regular staff and students (Drake, 1981) or from extremes of opinion (Elliot, 1996). It has been viewed by onlookers from a dominant, usually administrative perspective (St. Michel, 1995) with a view to reducing the problems (Rawson, 1981). Similar problems have been noted for over thirty years (Ostapczuk, 1994) or even, as suggested from anecdotal evidence, for as much as 70 years (appendix, 18). In short, while absences from regular teachers increased, while relief teaching costs millions of dollars to the education authorities (Anderson & Gardner, 1995), it remained a low priority, and in the margins (Shilling, 1991). In contrast to increasing publications on other forms of teaching and classroom management, there has been little written about relief teaching, particular by practitioners (Shilling, 1991; Galloway & Morrison, 1994; St. Michel, 1995), paradoxically, relief teaching is largely 'invisible'.

This investigation, begun in 1993, was developed from evidence gained from over three hundred participants, eighty-five hours of recorded interviews and conducted over a three-year period. It build on evidence gained over a longer period, from a pervious investigation (Webb, 1993) and from the researcher's observations as a practitioner. The investigation presents a unique contribution to educational research by gathering material from multiple perspectives in order to make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon. In doing so, it goes beyond most published research on relief teaching, to search for new knowledge, and the connection of previously unrelated data. The following themes indicate the strengths of the research:

- *The investigation shows how relief teaching is different from regular teaching*

  It takes relief teaching from its peripheral position in the education system and places it as a central focus for the research. In this way, relief teaching provides a new perspective from which to examine the teaching and leaning settings in schools.

  The investigation examines an area which has been largely overlooked in policies, practices, and research and redefines relief teaching by interpreting tacit knowledge and the hidden curriculum so that other people can understand the needs of relief teachers and other people, such as administrators, regular teachers and students who are linked to the various contexts of relief teaching. In this way, the investigation links relief teaching and its problems as part of the same phenomenon and provides knowledge which will lead to more effective practices.

  It shows the complexity of 'fitting in' to other people's expectations.

  It builds on knowledge derived from grounded theory (Webb, 1993) to create a thematic approach which shows that relief teaching is far more than 'straightforward supervision' but a complex form of teaching, where relief teachers need additional skills to cope effectively. The research

identifies gaps in perceptions and shows how further mismatches occur to adversely restrict relief teaching effectiveness. This has not been recognised previously.

- *The investigation provides a systemic view of the education system from the relief teaching perspective:*

  It provides insights into the organisational management and practice of education by showing how decisions at system level affect workplace practices.

  It shows how the present system of relief teaching is 'costly' to the system in terms of unproductive time and low expectations.

  It provides a new source of insights into school and classroom practices, by providing observations from regular teachers and administrators in their workplaces as well as from the relief teachers who cross the traditional boundaries of school and curriculum.

- *The investigation provides insights into the less tangible elements of school communities such as the culture and climate of the different settings. It illustrates why relief teaching is surrounded by problems and negativity, and shows how problems may be reduced:*

  Through a holistic approach, the investigation demystifies the grey areas surrounding relief teaching and reveals the source of many problems, such as, lack of understanding, lack of time, or the gaps between policies and practice. By making problems visible, and showing how and why they occur, the investigation opens channels of communication from various levels of the organisation.

  It shows the different realities of relief teaching from administrative, teaching and student perspectives, by using the voices of participants where possible. In this way, aspects of relief teaching can be reframed, examined individually or in combination, to suit varying purposes. This creates exciting new opportunities which were unavailable previously, because few researchers were able to gain such close access to the various relief teaching settings over a considerable period of time.

- *The investigation identifies the need for a systems approach to reconceptualise and restructure relief teaching as an integral part of the education system:*

  It identifies the serious gaps between policies and practices.

  It provides a new visualisation of relief teaching as a resource.

  It provides insights into the relationships between relief teachers and students in the classroom.

It examines the management of relief teaching and identifies gaps in knowledge, procedures, and understanding.

It shows how research on relief teaching could combine with other areas of research in the teaching and learning settings.

- *The investigation makes relief teaching visible, and in doing so provides the means to improve relief teaching effectiveness and school effectiveness:*

  Not only does the investigation provide an understanding of relief teaching as a phenomenon but it acknowledges and builds on the varying realities of lived experience to show how the present blinkered approach to relief teaching leads increasingly to negative patterns of behaviour and to long-term problems for the educational system, such as, a decrease in a teacher's authority and an increase in student challenges.

  It questions many assumptions and shows how they are 'costly' to the present system and pose serious implications of a professional and legal nature.

  It shows the effect of teacher absences on students and the school culture, and demonstrates how relief teachers can be a resource, or a source of considerable problems and frustration. For example, it shows how the strategies of effective experienced relief teachers and administrators in their varying relief teaching settings, could provide a substantial positive resource for school and system effectiveness.

  It shows that the relief teaching perspective can provide a valuable way of providing material which complements other research by crossing lateral organisational boundaries.

- *The investigation creates a flexible research approach which harmonises with the various relief teaching settings*

  In a broader sense, by creating a 'space' and an identity for relief teaching as a phenomenon in its own right, data from the investigation provides opportunities for triangulation or comparison with other aspects of research, such as, regular teacher absences, student training, or the management of a casual workforce. In contrast to other research on relief teaching which provides information about a single setting, the thematic approach provides a transferable source of knowledge. It provides a flexible resource. The material can be viewed, for example, from a social or cultural stance as well as an administrative one.

  The research approach develops insights into the relationship between the researcher and the field of research. Where possible, the researcher explains her observations and reflections as a practitioner to present a personal perspective on relief teaching. The investigation, therefore, extends beyond the thesis, as the researcher refines her research approach

to develop a flexible response to the various relief teaching settings. Her 'challenges' include lack of information, few 'facts', long-standing assumptions and opinions, frequent and unexpected change, ambiguity and complex relationships. The success of the research lies in the rich evocative data, which is linked closely to a wide range of relief teaching contexts. It is important research in that it provides a base of materials about the work lives of administrators and teachers, as well as relief teachers.

The investigation strengthens the links between educational theory and practice as detailed by the findings of the Australian Research Council's Review: by providing knowledge which leads to more successful educational practices; developing a better understanding of educational processes as they are experienced by participants; and refining and altering the questions that guide research (Boud et al., 1992).

Recommendations

The investigation is significant, as it pioneers research into relief teaching. For the first time, it is possible to see relief teaching and its issues and problems as part of the same phenomenon. It is evident, too, that by making relief teaching visible from varying perspectives, many of the recurring problems become symptoms of deeper structural imbalances. The investigation shows how the three underlying factors have perpetuated and increased the gap between theory and practice. Analysis of data has shown how imbalances of perceptions have caused the paradoxical nature of relief teaching and its recurring problems. In making relief teaching visible as a phenomenon and identifying the underlying links between relief teaching and its problems, there is also a need to show how information from the investigation can provide links for further analysis.

The importance of developing a flexible and cost-effective approach to management depends on developing an equally flexible and capable workforce, which has the strategies and resources in place to respond to sudden needs or changes, and possesses the strategies and self-reliance to work resourcefully and, if necessary, use a lateral path to cross school and subject boundaries. Evidence shows the need to reconceptualise relief teaching as an integral component of the system of education. The recommendations serve to develop an approach to relief teaching which encourages broad-based participation to link the actions of administrators, teachers and relief teachers to achievable organisational goals. Their purpose is: to face the multiple realities of relief teaching, based on the dominant issues and needs from each perspective; to define the long term purpose and positioning of relief teaching within the education system; to gather knowledge which fits and works in practice; to communicate effective strategies; and to provide feedback to reduce any problems over a period of time. In these ways, relief teaching effectiveness becomes linked to the broader concept of management and educational effectiveness.

Evidence from the investigation showed that many relief teachers are leaving. They are also leaving long-term problems for the school and system. The invisibility of relief teaching masked the fundamental, and crucial, issues of supply and demand. For a system to be effective it must plan to attract and retain a supply of teachers who are equipped to meet the challenges of current and future schooling:

> Developing a stable and cohesive emergency force, and moving relief teachers from their often tenuous, marginal role in the teaching workforce, will become crucial for school authorities. Emergency teachers' attachment to the teaching service is often fragile, and potentially excellent teachers are frequently lost to the future on-going teaching service because of bad experiences as a relief teacher. Retaining relief teachers will become vital as general shortages develop and the pressures on relief teachers increase. Attracting many more retired teachers into relief teaching may be an important strategy to ameliorate serious shortage. Research by Penny Webb in Tasmania ... has highlighted many of the issues which need to be addressed ... University courses may need to more explicitly prepare graduates for the professional challenges and difficulties of relief teaching. Systems need to ensure that relief teachers have adequate induction, professional development and support. Schools need to better integrate relief teachers into the work of the school, provide information, support and opportunities for collaboration and for debriefing after a session or period of employment. There should be respect for the professional role and expertise of relief teachers (Preston, 1997, pp. 15-16).

The recommendations, therefore, highlight areas of relief teaching which need further research and analysis, in order to close the gaps which currently exist and to provide for future needs (Webb, 1996). They are based on the assumption that relief teaching will become a high priority at system level and that resources will be in place to ensure that stakeholders will have time and opportunities: for gaining an overview of relief teaching from different perspectives; for examining the issues, links, gaps and mismatches with relation to their own workplace; for discussing ways of confronting any difficult issues; for arriving at decisions from a position of choice and understanding; and for developing processes to cope with staff absences. The recommendations are based on a shared approach to problem solving, driven by initiatives at system level:

Recommendations for future initiatives

Evidence from the investigation suggests that the need to improve relief teaching effectiveness had been a shared concern amongst administrators and teachers. The following recommendations, developed from an analysis of interview data, show significant areas for further research. The recommendations serve to 'position' relief teaching within the educational community, and provide opportunities for structures which will lead to better levels of communication and accountability. There is a need for research initiatives which will:

- reconceptualise relief teaching as a resource;
- improve policies and practices by reducing ambiguity;
- develop a range of options for dealing with teacher absences;
- establish a process of communication and accountability;
- ensure that practitioner knowledge is utilised;
- ensure that relief teachers are prepared before they reach a new setting;

- ensure that relief teachers and others receive ongoing professional support;

- combine the relief teaching perspective with other areas of research.

In making relief teaching visible, the investigation has demonstrated that there are still many aspects of relief teaching which are underdeveloped or unexplored, resulting in a gap between what 'should' happen and what happens in practice. The following areas, derived from analysis of interview data, represent significant areas for future, more specific research. It is recommended that research be conducted:

- to study the effective deployment of relief teachers within the Tasmanian education system, including an examination and assessment of alternative ways of employing relief teachers during the absence of the regular teacher;

- to develop policies and procedures: to clarify the role of a relief teacher in school and reduce many of the ambiguities, such as, the methods of recruitment and selection of relief teachers; the payment of relief teachers; or the hours worked by relief teachers;

- to develop a cohesive system for the management and practice of relief teaching based on the needs of various stakeholders;

- to study the additional skills and strategies adopted by effective relief teachers to cope with their rapidly changing environments;

- to develop programs of induction, training and support for new relief teachers. For example ascertaining the needs of 'new' relief teachers [i.e. newly qualified teachers, teachers returning after an absence, teachers from interstate or overseas, former regular teachers] to enable them to cope effectively;

- to study the skills and strategies adopted by effective administrators within their schools;

- to establish a process of communication and accountability between stakeholders. For example: by developing, distributing, and utilising a relief teachers' handbook; or designing and implementing a systematic method by which regular teachers can prepare for a relief teacher;

- to develop insights into the selection and organisation of 'good' work for relief teaching classes in a variety of subjects;

- to identify existing 'gaps' in the present management and practice of relief teaching, such as the duty of care. Evidence from the present system suggests that issues of equity, professional responsibility and legal accountability are open to challenge within the present system of relief teaching;

- to develop a series of workshops for regular teachers to disseminate information from the investigation: to show how their perspective fits into the 'big picture'; to examine the provision of appropriate material for students over a period of time.

- to use the relief teaching perspective, in general, as a way of gaining further insights into additional areas of research. For example,

  to examine ways of minimising the effects of teacher absence in school with regard to cost, ease of operation and educational effectiveness;

  to understand and evaluate the impact of teacher absence in schools; to plan and implement contingency measures to minimise disruption, and to develop fallback plans and procedures.

The investigation has made relief teaching visible as a phenomenon, shown how relief teaching is different from regular teaching and confronted the assumptions which give rise to the recurring problems and paradoxes. It has provided material on relief teaching which can be used to frame relief teaching in a number of ways. Rich interview data encapsulates the issues of relief teaching from a number of perspectives, while interview transcripts show how individual administrators, teachers, and students view relief teaching from their varying perspectives. The investigation has provided information which give insights into the various relief teaching and research settings. It has shown the relationship between the researcher and the field of research, provided opportunities to communicate through a shared understanding and shown the varying needs and priorities of the interview participants. It has provided ways of linking theory and practice and shown that to achieve effectiveness, a common theme in the literature, relief teaching needs a separate, positive identity, and a shared understanding of its future significance within the system of education. In all, the investigation has shown how relief teaching provides a unique perspective on the teaching and learning settings in schools, and a significant pathway for further research.

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APPENDICES

- ***Appendices 1-18*** contain a selection of interviews from varying perspectives.
- ***Appendices 19-25*** contain background information to accompany the main text of the thesis.

The purpose of the investigation is to make relief teaching visible as a phenomenon: first by identifying the issues seen as important from a number of perspectives; second by showing the underlying links between relief teaching and its problems; and finally, by showing the consequences of the present approach to relief teaching. The selection of interviews from students, teachers, administrators and others, illustrate all three components of the research. The interview data reflect the diversity of attitudes, people and places, and enable the readers to understand how, in the absence of a cohesive approach to relief teaching, different people view relief teaching from their own set of assumptions and priorities. Each interview is unique, and multi-layered. Not only does it provide a portrait of each localised setting, but also shows how the researcher 'guides' the interview. At times, she says little, but gains rapport, as evidenced by the manner in which respondents feel confident to talk about their concerns. Following each interview are a selection of 'points for reflection' which can be framed in a number of ways and which provide opportunities for triangulation. They show, too, how similar phrases, issues, or patterns of responses could alert readers to problems which exist in a number of schools. Each of the interviews could be analysed further, using the dominant issues from that perspective [see chapter 4] or the universal themes of relief teaching (Webb, 1993; Silverman, 1993).

In this way, by making relief teaching visible some of the recurring problems are made visible from each perspective. This is seen as a significant step towards understanding relief teaching as a phenomenon.

APPENDIX 1

The students' perspective: grade 7 students

This interview arose incidentally. After a noisy administrative session at 8.45 am with grade 7 students, the researcher left the classroom. As she walked down the corridor to her first class a student commented, 'We're not always like that: it's because you're a relief teacher!' The researcher asked if he would like to help with some research. Having gained permission from the AP, other students were selected by the class teacher and the group met at lunch time. The students enjoyed the session and were anxious to return at a later date. However, this was the only formal interview arranged with a student group. The researcher found that issues raised by the students placed her in an untenable situation, for as a relief teacher in the school, she felt that her 'unbiased' approach might be construed by the students as condoning their behaviour towards relief teachers. On subsequent occasions, she gathered data unobtrusively. For example, she might question or challenge a student comment which arose in her own class, or ask students whether they thought their behaviour was different in a relief teacher's class. In this way, anecdotal evidence or short conversations with students provided data for analysis. As in this interview, the focus was on the data rather than who said it. 'R', therefore, identifies different respondents. Although it was a practical compromise in limited time, it also conveyed a sense of universality to the research, and enabled the researcher to look for patterns and themes, which encompassed a range of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Data were classified in student grades.

The interview showed that what happened in a relief teacher's class often had an impact on the school culture and was remembered for years. It illustrated how patterns of behaviour developed over time, changing the balance of authority within the classroom (Waters & Crook, 1990). At first the challenges were seen as fun, but later became more serious, upsetting the established relationships between school staff and students. The invisibility of relief teaching at system level has masked the changing dynamics in a relief teacher's class.

The group of students, who attended two different primary schools, held similar opinions about the change in student behaviour when relief teachers took their classes:

> *Q: You said the class behaved differently this morning. Would you like to talk about it?*
> R: With normal teachers you know what to do. With relief teaches it's different.
> *Q: What sort of things happen?*
> R: Throw chairs all over ...
> *Q: Anything you say won't go out of here. I am not going to tell any staff or relief teachers. I don't know any of your names, so it doesn't really matter.*
> R: They swap names around, they did that at [primary school]; everything they are not supposed to do; they do it!
> *Q: Are you talking about here, too?*
> R: Here and at ... [another primary school].
> *Q: Do all the children do it?*
> R: Three different people, they trigger off the rest of the class ... It's a chain reaction. A few do it and they think they'll be smart. They think they're clever, they stuff about. Even today, one person went out of class and another one came in.
> *Q: I didn't know that.*
> R: It's annoying. It really mucks up when you are trying to set a good example. Girls, nice ones are not like it normally. They don't like to do it but everyone else is doing it. People are really stupid and can influence other people.
> R: That's right, they could be taking over half the class ...
> R: If they know the answer of something, they debate the opposite.
> *Q: You've worked all this out. You've done a lot of observation yourself.*
> R: It's gone on for about eight years. It's nothing new
> R: It's gone on since kindergarten. Teachers were not so mean. Everybody was friends, they wouldn't swear at you. If you didn't like someone you just left them alone. You didn't have to tolerate them. You didn't get into trouble, though when I was in Grade 3, we had a relief teacher who brought work on 'Time'. We had done it in Grade 1. The class exploded. When our [class] teacher returned, we were little angels This happened in my class, I don't know about the rest of the school.

R: At [primary school], every class had one, like a naughty person who goes around all the time swearing and bashing people up.
R: If they did it differently in a nice way in a caring way more ... Here they go violenter and violenter.
R: Yes, once you get up a grade they start to get more and more violent. They throw chairs, swear and backchat. In primary school, they used to laugh and swap names around. Teachers *told* you what to do. They didn't use as much shouting. There were people like Mrs S. They were tough and at times you hated them but they did it for your own good. We get good grades now because we know it all. We are not stupid, like K. or S [other students]. When a relief teacher comes, they think, 'This should be fun. We'll muck around and they can't get back at me!'
Q: Is this behaviour just for relief teachers?
R: Sometimes they get back at ordinary teachers, but once the teachers get to know you it doesn't happen as much.
R: Like the first day here.

Points for reflection

- 'With normal teachers you know what to do. With relief teaches it's different.'
- 'Three different people, they trigger off the rest of the class ... It's a chain reaction.'
- 'Girls, nice ones are not like it normally. They don't like to do it but everyone else is doing it.'
- 'It's gone on for about eight years. It's nothing new.'
- 'Yes, once you get up a grade they start to get more and more violent. They throw chairs, swear and backchat.'

APPENDIX 2

The students' perspective: grade 9 students

This conversation between the researcher and two grade 9 students, [A; B] occurred in a classroom. The initial response by the researcher shows how her empathetic comment and tone of voice, both strategies for active listening, communicated her interest to the interview respondents and triggered further discussion (Bolton, 1987). Even brief conversations or anecdotal evidence enabled the researcher to link aspects of relief teaching or fill in gaps in her own research. For example, isolated remarks on issues of gender had arisen in a number of interviews, with few consistent links. After this interview, the researcher concluded that references to gender were often token references to provoke a reaction and that aspects of relief teaching, mentioned by the students, such 'being able to negotiate' or 'confident' body language (Pease, 1981), would provide more fruitful paths for analysis.

The conversation is significant in that it shows the rationale behind some student behaviour, and, therefore, possible links with data from a number of perspectives. The researcher started the conversation by asking why some students seemed to be particularly noisy in a relief teacher's class. The students replied:

A: Kids don't think of a relief teacher's feelings. They're trying to show off to the rest of the class, so they play up the relief teachers who, they think, are really weak.
B: They are trying to get as much pain out of relief teachers as they can. They try to get the relief teacher to cry. 'Oh we got her to cry! Oh yes!'
Q: They don't do they? Has this happened more than once?
A: They'll come out bragging, 'Guess what? We made a relief teacher cry'.
Q: What grade?
A: Grade 8. It's only at the end of grade 9, when the results come out, that you start thinking about relief teachers.
B: I understand. My mother was a relief teacher.
Q: Does she do it any more?
B: She taught when we were little. She now works at a special school as a full time teacher. She is trying to get permanency. She's close to it. She stresses herself and puts heaps and heaps of work into it and then they send her a letter saying 'Thank you for your interest ...' She gets so annoyed with it. She gets that close to it and she doesn't get it. She'd rather get permanency because then it's not so easy to lose her job. She likes working in her school.
Q: So, her relief teaching was like a stepping stone to regular work? But, I'm interested ... earlier you said, 'Kids asked personal questions to relief teachers,' and 'They [students] try to make the women cry.' Do boys behave differently to male relief teachers?
A: The girls are more mature.
Q: If you have a really nice male relief teacher, do you notice any difference in the girls' behaviour ... or aren't there any nice young relief teachers?
A: You notice if they are nice people and you want to work for them. It's the person rather than being male/ female.
B: There is some difference. If it's a nice girl [teacher] all the girls will be nice to her. If it is a nice guy all the boys will be cool.
Q: Is there different behaviour in relief teacher's classes?
A: It's really weird. Some classes go most weird. What determines how the class is going to act, is how the relief teacher goes about it. If they come in and say, 'Huh you are going to do this!' The class turns off and we say, 'We don't care.'
Q: What would be the best?
A: The most enthusiastically they come in. It's cool when a teacher is cool. Even if they are mass-old like Mr [regular teacher] ... but he's really cool. He's a dude, and has a sense of humour so everyone pays him a bit of respect.
B: Some relief teachers mustn't be too cool
Q: How are you 'too cool'?
A: The class is very picky. A relief teacher can't be too cool and too boring.
Q: How is a relief teacher 'too cool'?
B: They try too hard. They say some try-hard surfie word.
A: It sounds mass-corny, but if they'd be themselves, act comfortable with the way they are. If they know they are in control and they look confident and they are enthusiastic ... you can

tell when they are being themselves. When a teacher is able to negotiate ... that really earns respect. It's the clever things they say.
Q: Clever ... I'm not quite sure ...
B: The come-backs ... if a person gives them crap ... is smart.
Q: What happens ... smart ... funny?
B: Some kid who is trying to make the class laugh at the relief teacher, says, 'You've got hairy legs ...' and the relief teacher says something back to him and makes him look like an idiot ...
A: Sometimes it depends on the things he is saying ... something really assertive.
Q: If a relief teacher is equally rude back, would that be okay?
A: If he comes back out of the blue and says, 'Hah!' ... everyone would probably laugh and think, 'Okay, he deserved it ...'
B: It's the level of response ...
A: I like it when a teacher can negotiate. They can be clever sometimes.
Q: Give me an example.
A: It's hard to think. If they are clever ... not arguing ... Ms S [relief teacher] was a mass-cool relief teacher.
B: Ms S. She's wicked!
A: If the teachers get up-tight and stressed out, the class will pick it up. If they are relaxed, nice and comfortable and still assertive and enthusiastic, the class will respond.
B: Teachers you can talk to are really cool.
Q: You've done a lot of observation! I've found that I can have a certain reaction from one class and a completely different response from another.
B: At the start of the year, grade 9, my report said I was unsatisfactory at the lowest level, not because I was not clever, but I didn't try, I just talked all the time and then I realised, I wanted to talk to all my friends, real cool, but I realised it wasn't getting me anywhere, and I learnt I had to balance it.
A: I like to balance it, too, ... work and talk at the same time. I split my brain in two. I'm sitting there, my friends saying, 'Talk to me, Talk to me!' and I'm sitting there getting sick of the teachers saying, 'It would be so good if you just stopped talking'. I decided to learn to do the two things at once.
Q: You found that balance?
A: Yes. It worked really well but it took a while to learn.
B: You need a motive. A good thing ... when you see your report is unsatisfactory, and your parents go, 'Yah, yah, yah'. You think, 'What's it all worth?' Now I've got a HA [High Achievement] at the highest level.
Q: Terrific. You must be really pleased.
B: Yes. My parents are proud of me.
Q: And given yourself more choices for the future too.
B: In Science, I really don't care ... I answer all the questions ... and they [students] say, 'You're such a smart-arse!', and I don't care.
A: I think what a lot of people need to do is not care what other people think. You must realise it's your life.
B: It's a mistake what parents do. They try to get their kids to learn through their mistakes, but you have got to learn through your own.
Q: As a parent it's very difficult to be on the sidelines.
B: My sister made me realise. She stopped school after grade 10 and she's living with her boyfriend in a flat. She's done everything in her life. She can't do anything more without money. You can't get money if you don't have a job. You can't get a job if you don't have an education. If you meet someone when you are young ...
A: You've got to be able to work with people no matter what job you're in. No matter how much you hate someone, you can try to put on a good show. My aim is being myself and being nice to everybody.
Q: A lot of people don't know who they are to start with.
A: It takes ages.
B: Some people find it easier than others.
A: I want to do naturopathy or marine biology.
B: My sister wants me to be a model. I'm keeping my options right open. I'm doing a course in computing and Indonesian; they will be useful in other jobs.

A: I will get myself going as a natureopath, have a job then have a family and get them going and finally go towards my art background, music and writing ... I want to save up lots of money for my retirement and have heaps of fun.
Q: You have a wonderful lot of opportunities but it will mean hard work at times.
B: It does take a while to find out what you want to be. At first I wanted to be a hairdresser and then a teacher of Indonesian. It's what you know. What are your school friends to you when you are older? My father left school at grade 9. He's a builder. Now he doesn't have anything to do with his best friend from school. They used to spend all their time together, that's why they left school. They thought, 'Who cares? Who needs school?' Now he can't do much. Building is all he can do.

Points for reflection

- "They are trying to get as much pain out of relief teachers as they can. They try to get the relief teacher to cry. 'Oh we got her to cry! Oh yes!' "
- 'You notice if they are nice people and you want to work for them. It's the person rather than being male/ female.'
- "It's really weird. Some classes go most weird. What determines how the class is going to act, is how the relief teacher goes about it. If they come in and say, 'Huh you are going to do this!' The class turns off and we say, 'We don't care'."
- 'When a teacher is able to negotiate ... that really earns respect. It's the clever things they say.'
- 'If the teachers get up-tight and stressed out, the class will pick it up. If they are relaxed, nice and comfortable and still assertive and enthusiastic, the class will respond.'
- 'You can't get money if you don't have a job. You can't get a job if you don't have an education.'
- 'You've got to be able to work with people no matter what job you're in.'

APPENDIX 3

The students' perspective: grade 10 students

The following comments from a group of students illustrate one of the ways in which the researcher gained data for the students' perspective. Notes accompanying the data were written at the time, to provide contextual evidence. Together, the comments and notes show the embedded nature of the research. The opportunistic approach used for the collection of data is seen to provide an additional dimension to the research, in that there is a sense of spontaneity between the relief teacher [researcher] and a group of students which provides insights into the personal relationships within the group and within the broader cultural settings of the school.

The responses provide instances where students can identify some of the strategies and techniques they used to 'win' relief teachers or 'give them heart attacks'. It shows the researcher seeking clarification of the terms used by the students. Even short passages can provide opportunities for triangulation with evidence from other perspectives.

Researcher's notes
The group of 16 year old students chatted to me at the end of a class on Tourism. I would like to have had longer with them. It was difficult to tell who supplied the comments, but they poured out. Everyone in the group offered a comment or opinion. It seems that they have had some quite graphic memories of relief teaching classes. Because of the time factor, I asked direct questions. These produced a gut response, and I felt an 'honest' one, which reflected general patterns of incidents in the classroom.

Q: Have you had many relief teachers for your classes this year?
R: This is the second time, and we had one for keyboarding. She was only a relief teacher.
Q: What do you mean, 'only a relief teacher?'
R: Bludge, bludge, bludge ... get away with heaps of stuff ... win them over real easily ... give them heart attacks. Mrs G. was so cool ...
Q: What do you mean by 'so cool'?
R: She'd let you do anything so long as you stayed quiet.
R: Yes, some [relief teachers] went off like sausages in the sun!
R: She used to go off at Neville. She liked to wear a gold brooch; she lost it and she thought someone in the class had taken it.
Q: She must have felt upset. Did she find it?
R: Yes. You feel sorry for them sometimes ... with people like ... [names students in the class].
Q: When do you feel sorry?
R: When relief teachers are nice, and don't go troppo when all the kids play them up.
R; If they are really horrible. If they don't know anything about the work and tell you to get on and do it but don't understand ... When they're crabby ... they're all cut.
R: You get more done if they let you get on with what you want to do.
Q: Do you mean what the students want to do?
R: Yes.
Q: That is sometimes different from what the [regular] teacher expects them to do.
R: [laughs] Yes, but if the relief teacher has a sense of humour, it's easier. Often they scream over the top of the noise.
Q: Yes, I've had to do that sometimes.
R: The relief teacher breaks down and goes to the principal.
Q: Does it happen?
R: It really does. It even happened with a regular teacher.
R: Students don't respect relief teachers. If you can tell the relief teacher is really quiet, *that's* when you go out and do what you really want to.
R: It's a compromise. Relief teachers should have a joke with the class ...

Points for reflection

- 'She'd let you do anything so long as you stayed quiet.'

- 'She was only a relief teacher.'
- 'Students don't respect relief teachers. If you can tell the relief teacher is really quiet, *that's* when you go out and do what you really want to.'
- 'Bludge, bludge, bludge ... get away with heaps of stuff ... win them over real easily ... give them heart attacks.'
- 'If they are really horrible. If they don't know anything about the work and tell you to get on and do it but don't understand ... When they're crabby ... they're all cut.'
- 'Some [relief teachers] went off like sausages in the sun!'
- 'You feel sorry for them sometimes.'
- 'If the relief teacher has a sense of humour, it's easier. Often they scream over the top of the noise.'
- 'When relief teachers are nice, and don't go troppo when all the kids play them up.'

APPENDIX 4

The relief teachers' perspective: primary school setting

In most primary schools a relief teacher takes one class for the whole day, in contrast to high schools settings, where a relief teacher takes a number of different classes. There are particular difficulties associated with fitting into an unknown setting, when a relief teacher's approach is dictated largely by factors outside his/ her control. In this interview, for example, although the relief teacher had prepared work for the class and 'arranged everything' before arriving at the school, she has to adapt to the unexpected presence of a student teacher and non-functional equipment. Her comments indicate the stressful nature of the 'frustrating day' when she was 'just so panicked'.

The interview, like others (for example, appendix 7), shows how the reactive nature of relief teaching created a 'readiness for fight or flight' responses as the relief teacher sought to gain personal control (Goleman, 1996, p. 205). This interview is important because it shows the changing relationship between the relief teacher and the process of relief teaching in one class, over a period of time. At first, the relief teacher's energies are focused on her own need to 'survive' (Maslow, 1970), but by the end of the week she has started to 'settle' down, 'make friends' and 'get a favourite chair.' She admits that the challenges she experienced have provided her with opportunities to learn 'at a tremendous rate'. Her successful adaptation, is due in part, to her attitude towards relief teaching: she views any 'problems' as 'opportunities' for learning within a broader framework of the school and system. In this way, she searches beyond the reactive responses to achieve 'personal mastery' (Senge, 1992, p.141). The interview demonstrates how the relief teacher is prepared to take risks in order to learn how to cope more effectively. The underlined words, while detracting from the holistic nature of the interview, serve to show how a further analysis of words and phrases can provide evidence of the relief teacher's deeper responses which were part of her 'reality' (Silverman, 1993).

This interview raises questions of issues such as 'responsibility' and 'accountability', as well as providing examples of several of the problems experienced by relief teachers. For example, who was responsible for welcoming the relief teacher to the school, ensuring that classroom equipment was in working order, or providing information on first aid or playground duty? More significantly, who was accountable for what went on in the classroom; for providing clear expectations of the relief teacher's role in the school, or for providing records of classroom activities and student behaviour? A closer examination of the context surrounding the problems, shows how assumptions by the regular staff, for example, that the relief teacher will 'find the classroom' or 'complete student records', led to a school culture which isolated the relief teacher from information or support. The interview illustrates how easily relief teaching can become 'invisible' to others outside the classroom, leading to a culture and climate where problems are easily hidden or discounted. In this example, the management of relief teaching in the school remained largely unchanged because the relief teacher modified her own approach to compensate for any inadequacies which occurred.

The following comments highlight many of the problems, such as 'isolation' or 'uncertainty', experienced by other interview respondents from the relief teaching perspective (e.g. appendix 5). They illustrate the emotional impact of managing change:

> R: I turned up at a primary school. I was told ,'Turn left and go to the next building.' When I arrived at the classroom I was <u>shocked</u> to find a student teacher there. No one had told me about her. What role is a relief teacher, new to the school supposed to take with a third year student teacher?
> *Q: Was she teaching the class?*
> R: No she was watching me teach. The grade 2's were very nice children. I was very <u>fired up</u> with a Design and Technology course I was doing for my B Ed [degree] at uni. so I had decided to work in that area but use the facilities at school. I arranged everything and tried to get organised but it wasn't successful. The earphones, the tape recorder and batteries wouldn't work. It was a very <u>frustrating</u> day because I felt I was on display. I felt the student teacher was learning what to do when everything went wrong.
> *Q: How did she take it?*
> R: I don't think she noticed really. She was trying to do one or two of her own little things. She had enough of her own to cope with.
> *Q: Did you see what she wrote?*

R: No, I don't think she wrote much down. She was supposed to be observing; she was trying to be helpful whenever she was needed. I keep thinking what I would be like in that position if I were a student. I would be very critical of the relief teacher.
Q: In the past maybe, but she'll soon be in the same boat.
R: She had come to the class a day before me so she knew half the children's names and in that situation she was more comfortable. It was a very confusing week ... not knowing who was supposed to be doing what. That was the first day. I was asked to stay a second day. Then I tracked down one of the senior staff and asked what the student [teacher] was supposed to be doing. I didn't know. She told me the student was only allowed to take a small group situation, mainly just observing. I had let her do more than she should have.
Q: Did it matter?
R: I don't think anyone was worried but it was putting stress on the student as she wasn't fully prepared. With this confusion I felt responsible for her and also for the children as no one had mentioned what the student was supposed to be teaching either. Perhaps no one had realised she was in the relief teacher's classroom, so no one informed me of what my duties were to her.
Q: Did you mention this on the first day?
R: I didn't think about it. I didn't realise it. I was just so panicked the first day. By the time I'd calmed down on the second day I had tracked someone down and checked. The time flies when you are trying to cope.
Q: Do you find it easier?
R: Each session gets easier. Every time I do some more I pick up extra skills along the way. You learn at a tremendous rate. You call it a highly accelerated learning curve. That's the best way I've heard it described. One of my lecturers described my learning on a computer in time to do my first written assignment in one week. I've applied it to relief teaching now.
Q: Are you enjoying relief teaching?
R: Actually I really do enjoy it. It's stimulating. I really do feel alive when I'm teaching. Going into new situations all the time means you are not stagnating and tied to one place, though I would prefer to have a permanent place because then you get to know the staff.
Q: Do you feel isolated at times?
R: Everyone finds it scary when you walk into a room full of strangers. You have to do that in each new school. It takes a while. You need to go at it full strength and be in one place for at least a week to know a few faces, or you need to go back a few times so faces become familiar.
Q: Do you find staff talk to you?
R: Staff are willing to talk after a few days. They like to 'eye you off' first. They'll watch you the first couple of days and on only about the third or fourth day will anyone come up and start chatting to you. That's the way I feel about it anyway. Nobody likes to rush in. If you are going for one day, you feel a bit like a shadow on the wall, but by the end of the week you start to make friends and settle yourself down and get a favourite chair. All the things that are so nice in a staffroom.
Q: Can you think of any good or bad times?
R: [Pause]
Q: From what you've said, you're facing everything. You're trying to cope and in doing so you're reducing the stress and learning the techniques for classroom survival ...
R: Yes. You come out with a wonderful feeling of confidence at the end of the day if you have survived. The trick is surviving it. [laughs] You really do feel confident and capable after a few of these sessions. You feel, 'I can do it!' In that way you learn to feel confident very quickly. With one class it would take much longer. Going from school, to school, to school, what you learn in one situation you immediately apply in the next. I find it good. One thing, I did feel rather traumatic one day when I got lost.
Q: Where?
R: On the way back from the toilets ... [laughs] .... Can you imagine it ... the humiliation? Lost!. I had to ask someone for help to get back to the classroom.
Q: Was it in a small school or a big school?
R: A reasonably small school ... but you had to go down a hall and through a classroom and turn. My room was at the back of the school. I missed the cue the first time I was being shown. I was actually shown. I must have been concentrating on the person I was talking to.
Q: It's very easy to do when you are taking in so much that's new.

R: Yes. The fact I was worried about other things I had on my mind. I didn't have any labels on me for name tags. I was so busy worrying about this and I didn't keep track of where we were going. The humiliation of getting lost was truly tremendous.
Q: Name tags ... for you or the children?
R: I usually have about thirty in the class. To get through that first day, sometimes I have name tags, sometimes I don't. I leave it up to the children. If they are very reluctant or relaxed, I don't bother, but if they are tense or a little bit unruly, I give them name tags to get over that crucial first period of getting to know them. A lot of people use name tags. If I don't have to, I don't.
Q: You are one of the first relief teachers [I've talked to] who's done that.
R: I thought everyone did.
Q: We don't do it in high school, so it's one of the differences for relief teaching. It may be done in primary classes.
R: I put my name up on the board too, but for little ones who can't read it doesn't help much.
Q: What work would you bring?
R: Books... my repertoire of songs and games. I actually took extra in extra activities but found it did not really work because it was too much of a change of routine for the class. If I'm going in I'm trying to use what's in the classroom. It flows much more easily because children know what it is. You don't have to start from scratch. So the idea where everyone says 'take your own things' doesn't really work for the children (grade 2) are not really used to it; you have to explain the routine in so much detail that everyone gets lost in the bedlam of the routines. It's a strain for everyone.
Q: It's true with secondary classes too. It's easy to say, 'This is what you should do' ... but getting them to listen, take it in, and then do something can be quite a challenge.
R: If there is something they always do and they know exactly what they are supposed to be doing, they're very happy. If you bring in something new and fresh, then try to explain it, it's often just too much, especially in the larger sized classes.
Q: Is a class of thirty [students] a normal size?
R: Anywhere between twenty-five and thirty is normal. I haven't had a class of under twenty-five.
Q: How much relief teaching have you done?
R: Two weeks in one school and in another I've been back six times ... that's only doing one day or a half day here and there with other things in between. I have gone to [school]
Q: That's quite a long trip.
R: I don't mind if I get some more work there. They have a tendency to ask for half days ... it's a bit of a nuisance but I still go. They are nice people, every little bit helps and each time I go to a classroom with a different group of children, I learn something else. With a different group of children I gain more out of it than the inconvenience involved.
Q: Looking at the uni. and BEd course. Can you use this relief teaching work for assignments?
R: Well that's going to be a problem because all the units usually ask for a period of time with some children at the same place. They are not really interested with one classroom here and one classroom there. They are interested in a unit of work set around a certain number of children that you can keep on going back to. It's going to be a real problem.
Q: I'd be interested to know what their comments are.
R: I'm hoping to get a part time place. I have put in a couple of applications. If that doesn't work I'll have to negotiate that. I spend quite a lot of time in between relief teaching on the computer. I don't have many computer skills. I don't even own a computer. I don't like to ask for help, so I tend to do things on my own.
Q: Maybe that's the best way.
R: For the first couple of relief teaching sessions I wasn't sure. Doing the longer stretches made me feel better about relief teaching. When you do it for half a day here, and a day there and nothing in between, you really don't get confident.
Q: When you went to the school with the student teacher were you given a file or folder?
R: They had a folder for relief teachers which was good, but there was not much time to read it. There was no time off during the day. We do the regular teacher's roster. Fortunately, the first day she wasn't on duty. Although at some schools I have been on duty and that's fun, because they say, 'You're on the Oval" and nobody tells you where the Oval is [laughs] or 'You're with such and such a group' and you think 'Great, Where's that?' So you go around looking for a place with a large number of children without a teacher. You think, 'Ah well, I'll stand here.'

Q: Do they ever tell you the rules of the playground?
R: No they don't. You're not told what areas you are responsible for; you're not told the rules. You can work out what they are, but nobody mentions them; there are too many to tell you. In every single school I've worked in no one has told me the defined limits or rules; not one school mentioned it. I've just gone in. Children have come up to say, 'He's punched me, now he has to go to Detention.' Fine. Where's Detention? What is it? Children come up and say, 'Such and such is hurt' and they'll say, 'I'll go to the toilets and wash her off'. I don't know where the toilets are. I do first aid and I'm patching these children up but there are always set regulations of what to do when children are hurt. I don't know what they are. There are always accident books and all the things that make up teaching young children.
Q: Do you have a first aid bag to take with you on playground duty?
R: No some people do. I go to the staffroom and get first aid from there. One school had a waist bag and in the event of an accident children got the bag and took it to the teacher. I thought it was a grand idea but I only saw it at one school. Did you read the book 'All in a Day's work?', the only book which tells relief teachers what they are supposed to do before they get sent off to classrooms. It's got the most detail, about half a page. It mentions that you must find out whether to put money in the kitty for coffee. I was glad I read that. People assume you know how much to put in and you get filthy looks if you don't put anything in. If you ask, 'Is there a kitty?' They say, 'Of course there is', but never mention it.
Q: In a secondary school teachers pay by the term or everyone brings his/ her own coffee.
R: Some schools make an arrangement with the canteen for a small morning tea and you are supposed to donate a certain amount of money.
Q: That's interesting: how to get on the wrong side of the school without knowing!
R: Yes. You are making all these mistakes out of sheer ignorance. Two dollars here or there won't make any difference to a relief teacher.
Q: Is there anything you want to ask me?
R: There are probably lots of things but out of sheer ignorance I don't know what to ask. Yes, I try to let it all flow past me. I tell myself at the end of the day, no one has gone home bleeding. They don't expect to learn much with the relief teacher there. The longer the period the relief teacher is there the more s/he is expected to do for planning. I don't know how to explain that. There's no time limit on it. If you are there for one week you are expected to do certain things. In the first place I was there for one day, then they asked me to come back for another couple of days. Then it was the end of the week and I was asked to stay a second week. I asked myself, 'Where do you start to be responsible for the children learning something?'
Q: It's a good point. You start by keeping the situation together and going on someone else's way and then suddenly you have to start to think ahead ...
R: And because I'm there, I don't do any observations. After two weeks, everyone expects you to start knowing the children and, 'You haven't been doing observations.' Well, some teachers ask if there have been comments from the relief teacher. I don't do that because teachers are different and children behave differently with different teachers. I have never seen the point much, myself.
Q: You don't write anything for the teacher? Do you say what you've done?
R: No I don't. When I stayed there for two weeks, I put a few comments of what I had done; less than that, I don't. So they don't know really.
Q: And they don't ask either?
R: There's no feedback. They just expect the relief teacher will take charge and organise everything. I try not to do what the regular teacher does. For example, the teacher was just about to start a topic. The student teacher told me, so I thought the class teacher would be really annoyed if she thought I'd mucked up her introduction. I went out of my way *not* to do it. I said to my lecturer, 'Am I supposed to do what the regular teacher does?' I was told to do my own work. Though no one says what your own work is supposed to be!
Q: Did you find the help and discussions in uni. useful?
R: Yes. The lecturer was more calm about the issue. She could get on a broader view of what the teacher and school were expecting. I was only seeing it from my own viewpoint. The university gives a wider viewpoint rather than being narrowly focused. There is never much time at uni. to talk about our experiences in teaching. I think you need to have been a relief teacher to appreciate the ins and outs of it ... the speed in which you come into or leave a school. I think a lot of relief teachers out there would really appreciate feedback. I was there on a seminar day and there were about eight relief teachers in school, and they get to know each other's faces. The literature rarely mentions relief teachers. I knew a couple of

relief teachers I saw back and forth. On this particular day, there were older relief teachers and they were chatting. They hadn't seen each other for a long time and they were saying, 'How is it going?' 'How are you ?' 'Are you getting much work?' I didn't know any of these people but I was sitting back watching them. There were eight relief teachers and only about two full time teachers at lunch. That was at [school] ... a seminar to do with collaborative planning.

Points for reflection

- 'What role is a relief teacher, new to the school supposed to take with a third year student teacher?'
- It was a very confusing week ... not knowing who was supposed to be doing what.
- 'Actually I really do enjoy it [relief teaching]. It's stimulating. I really do feel alive when I'm teaching. Going into new situations all the time means you are not stagnating and tied to one place.'
- 'Everyone finds it scary when you walk into a room full of strangers. You have to do that in each new school.'
- "Staff are willing to talk after a few days. They [school staff] like to 'eye you off' first."
- 'You feel a bit like a shadow on the wall ... '
- 'You come out with a wonderful feeling of confidence at the end of the day if you have survived. The trick is surviving it.'
- 'Going from school, to school, to school, what you learn in one situation you immediately apply in the next. I find it good.'
- 'I did feel rather traumatic one day when I got lost ... On the way back from the toilets.'
- 'In every single school I've worked in no one has told me the defined limits or rules; not one school mentioned it. I've just gone in.'
- 'I asked myself, 'Where do you start to be responsible for the children learning something?'
- 'There's no feedback. They just expect the relief teacher will take charge and organise everything.'
- 'There is never much time at uni. to talk about our experiences in teaching.'
- 'I think you need to have been a relief teacher to appreciate the ins and outs of it ... the speed in which you come into or leave a school.'

APPENDIX 5

The relief teachers' perspective: new relief teacher

This interview shows a new relief teacher trying to make sense of her experiences. She is frustrated because she has not received her correct pay. She cannot understand how the relief teaching system works, nor why other regular staff distanced themselves and did not welcome her to their school. She expresses a sense of anger and feels somewhat exploited by the system, although acknowledging that she did 'take a punt' to get work as a relief teacher, in the hope that her efforts would be rewarded with a regular teaching position.

The interview illustrates how the deeper themes of relief teaching affect relief teachers within their various relief teaching settings (Webb, 1993). For example, it shows how factors, such as the lack of a clearly defined role for relief teachers coupled with the development of ad hoc management practices, serve to create additional stressors, particularly for a novice relief teacher, working in an unknown school at the start of the school year. The interview also provides links between relief teaching and other aspects of education, such as the training or employment of teachers, by identifying some underlying assumptions which might give rise to problems. As the relief teacher comments in the interview, 'They are never going to change the system, because they do not accept the system is wrong.' In the course of the interview, she suggests alternative approaches, such as, support for new relief teachers, which she feels would lead to more effective practices:

> *Q: You have just told me you have had problems with relief teaching. What's happened?*
> R: Being paid on time is an important issue for me. It's my income and I have a child to support. There are no other jobs available and I was asked to go up to north west Tasmania to teach. I had to prepare twenty-seven lessons over the weekend. I only taught for six days and then the regular teacher came back. If she hadn't I would have taken her job. I don't think it's realistic to do a practical class, unless you know the kitchen and the students well. Presumably, the [regular] teachers wouldn't give you students who were too difficult ... but it's a dangerous environment. I always worry about my duty of care. I'm the one whose head will roll if someone decides to muck about. It makes me feel uncomfortable. I find it stressful.
> *Q: Are you a member of the Union?*
> R: No. I cannot afford to join at this stage. I've only received one payment from my relief teaching so far and that wasn't the correct pay either. I've realised it's particularly important because of all the pay hassles I've had. I see it's important to have someone to advocate on your behalf. I couldn't even find out what I should have been paid. There's all this confusion. There needs to be one central person who can find out the very straight-forward answers. 'Okay, these are the band levels [of pay] which should s/he be on?' And all that.
> *Q: You said you had nine phone calls?*
> R: Yes, I hadn't been paid $200.00. They still owe me that from the beginning of term, and every time I ring ...'I haven't got round to it yet, but I'll ring you if I need to contact you.' She [Departmental officer] doesn't seem to realise it was my income.
> *Q: Did you phone from school or from home?*
> R: I phoned from home. First they didn't pay me. I'd said to the AP, 'You check my bank number because I've heard these things go missing and when it is queried, they say, 'You didn't give me the right bank number.' Everyone knows that this is what happens ... That's what infuriates me, I've heard from other people who have done relief ... So, he sat there and checked my number. When my pay hadn't arrived, I phoned up the Department and they said they hadn't received anything from the school, so I phoned [high school] and the secretary was furious because she insisted she'd sent it.
> *Q: Was she furious with you, or the system?*
> R: She was furious with the system. She was really good. Her attitude was, 'You deserve to be paid on the day.' Any other employer wouldn't get away with it. It was six weeks since I'd taught there. The school faxed a copy. [The officer in the Department replied.] The money was going to be paid into my account on Friday night, I said, 'Good. Thank you very much.' Friday came; it wasn't there. When I phoned on Monday, they said no one had taken the special cheque and as the girl was at the post, they weren't sure if she was posting it that night. Nothing came [on] Monday. I phoned on Tuesday. [They said] 'Could you tell me what your bank account number was? Obviously you've given us the wrong number.' I

thought, 'Hang on!' ... I didn't realise I should have photocopied all this stuff. In my naivety, I'd thought, 'Oh yes, it's just paperwork.' The following Tuesday, the cheque turned up. No documentation arrived with it. After that, I phoned again. 'Where is my pay slip? You've underpaid me. There's $180.00 missing.' It turned out they had just paid a cheque out. There was no record of it. Apparently, it wasn't even on the computer. Another lady looked it up and said, 'I can't find it anywhere. Only a cheque's been paid out'. I said, 'You've paid me on the wrong [salary] band.' She said she was going to change that. It's just gone on and on, and it's infuriating ... because it's not their money. [All I say is,] 'Can you please fix it?' I would love to do a survey ... I have spoken to three people since then, who've done relief, and every one of them had their pay stuffed up. So far they've been paid on the wrong band. It's always underpaying. Then I get paid on the wrong band. They quoted me one figure. I ended up phoning the school again. 'No, you should be getting this'. Then, I found out that I had been doing a full teaching load, I was expected by the school to be there at 8. 20 am and mostly I didn't finish until three o' clock and I was preparing [for classes] until eleven o' clock each night. I said, 'Why haven't I been paid for a full day?' And she said, 'We only pay five hours for a relief teacher.' I said,' I didn't know that.' I should have told the principal that, 'I'm doing five hours and that's it!' It's discrimination, no other employer can do it. If you work these days they should pay you an hourly rate, and you can decide whether to do it or not.

Q: This has come up. It's a grey area that people can interpret in different ways. Little is written down.

R: If I am getting paid for five hours, that's how long my duty of care in relieving should last. How can people expect me to be legally responsible for seven-and-a-half or eight hours, if I'm doing duty and things like that. Legally, you are responsible for things as soon as you are on the school premises. You are an employee as far as you are concerned. That's how I see my role.

Q: You mentioned your concerns for safety in an area such as cooking.

R: You are paid for a day-long process. There are lots of extra phone calls, a lot of aggro and unnecessary work and traumas. Most of my friends, I think it's really sad, just refuse to do relief teaching because of the stress. You are going somewhere, into a place 'cold'. They don't feel there is enough support or knowledge, as far as disciplinary steps to take. For example, if this [problem] happens in my class who's the back up person to contact?

Q: Are these people in [trained for] *high school?*

R: Yes: I think it seems so hit and miss. The system would be so much better if they put people on a retainer to do specific schools. Something like that would be a much better idea. They are never going to change the system, because they do not accept the system is wrong. The school loses out and the students lose out as well. They haven't necessarily got someone who's there with the right attitude and prepared to teach. If you are coming in for the money, you don't come in for the pleasure, you need the money and are not going to feel inspired. 'Take it or leave it, I'm getting paid for this school whatever I do'. I think the situation is just going downhill.

Q: Do you know many relief teachers?

R: No because I graduated a few years ago. I know a lot of unemployed people, looking for jobs. Relief is all that's available. They prefer not to do it. I don't think that many people would volunteer to do [local high school] for example.

Q: The staff are fabulous

R: I did a six-week stint. That was good. I could establish class rules, but it was a stressful school. A lot of behaviour problems.

Q: Why has it got so bad?

R: I don't know. I think it's the school layout; I think the expectations are different too. I think the kids get away with a lot more than kids in other schools will ... Not having a key, to the class means that you are banging on one side of the door and the kids are on the other, pretending they have not heard! You're on the back foot before you get into the classroom, aren't you? You really are! The students will muck up. Having your own key means you have control over the room, doesn't it? Meaning you can confidently walk up and open the door rather than standing looking nervously, saying, 'My god, I hope someone comes and opens the jolly door. I feel a real Burke standing out here. You're approaching the start of the lesson with very mixed feelings, you are giving off different kinds of body language. I feel that all that's really important.

Q: You've obviously thought about it.

R: I've done it many times ... especially in teacher training. That really gets your status down, so your ability to appear as if you've got control is far more limited and kids pick up on that. They see a weakness there and say, 'Here we go again!'
Q: Was your training relevant?
R: I did Home Economics. They've had two major philosophical shifts since I started. It's confusing and my qualifications were redundant before I even started teaching because they have changed it to Technology. People who are coming out now are computer skilled, there is a cross-over curriculum, a student [teacher] might do woodwork and technology so they are at an advantage. That's happened in the last two or three years.
Q: Would you say you were helped to cope by the course?
R: It was the internship, the long practical in the school. It depended on the supervisors and their attitude to the student. I think a mentor system would have been better.
Q: What approach did your supervisor have?
R: In the program what I found were the contradictions. Supervisors on the one hand were supposed to be advising and coaching, so you should be able to go to them and say, 'I'm not coping' but they are also your assessors so that you are not likely to do that. I thought there was a contradiction in aims. You are supposed to be learning how to do something rather than have the pressure to feel that you've got to prove what you can do. I don't know if they have changed that. Things do change quite quickly out there.
Q: You mean that you should be able to admit you don't know something in order to learn from it. Instead you have the tension of trying to look good and concentrate on the image?
R: You are not relaxed. I was fortunate I went to a private school. They were very nurturing and supportive. They made me feel part of the school. They were so supportive to the point that if I had a problem with one student, the principal would be there.
Q: So you could concentrate on your teaching ...?
R: Yes. The philosophy was, 'You are a guest in our school and you shouldn't have to put up with that. I found it really empowering. You didn't have the problems because you felt there were back-ups there and you felt you could relax more.
Q: Then you are a better teacher.
R: Of course, because you are not always trying to keep your mind on behaviour management and cope with teaching skills, too.
Q: When you left the private school and you had to face [another] *'reality', did you find that you had the skills for that stage, too?*
R: I had a big shock with student behaviour, when the principal was not there in the background to whisk away the students. I had the skills. There was a huge difference in attitudes between the staff in the private and state school system. In a school like that, everyone had similar values, they came from a common viewpoint. The principal walks in and says, 'Good morning'. I found the staff were valued and enthusiastic. In state schools the staff are like little islands. They [regular staff] can't remember what's involved if you don't know names and go in cold. It's pretty horrendous.

[Another member of staff joins in. The tape recorder does not pick up her comments. They describe the traumatic time she had when she first started teaching and endorse the respondent's comments on tiredness and stress.]

Q: Did you have any debriefing after your school practice?
R: It was a good idea, and happened once. You had to maintain a standard of distinction or higher in forty-six areas, or you could be kicked out. I burst into tears, I was so tired.
Q: Did the staff at University recognise this?
R: I don't know. They did at school. I think the staff at Uni. forget so easily. I've just done two weeks at [secondary college] and I'd already forgotten what grade 8's were like, until I was standing up there and had to cope.
Q: Going from one school to another ... when I'm away I think it's easy but when I'm there I realise how stressful it is. Experts or lecturers may come in for an hour and look at one fragment of a day.
R: It's not the same as an ongoing day ... the preparation, the forty-six criteria, getting ready for the next day. It's inhumane. I think it's insane. I don't think it's effective. I think it should be, 'You've got a problem, let's see what the problems are and how we can come over them,' rather than, 'Let's see how good we are.' It's what you discover rather than trying to think there weren't any problems. In retrospect, though, I think one aspect was very good for me. It was so tough. I developed quite a high degree of expectation for myself, and I've got a

better professional expectation out of it. I did six weeks in [local high school] and I thought, 'If I can do this and survive it and be positive, then I'll be fine'. I did, and that was my goal. I was also trying to come home without being totally stressed out. I was aware of my personal attitude. I have a son who is six and so it is very important. There's no one else to fall back on if mum's in a bad mood.

Q: People don't think of the other parts of your life.

R: I know I am more tense now than if I were at a regular school, because I am in a constant state of change. That's what it is. Stress is when you feel you are not in a state of control and you are constantly being put in circumstances when you are dealing with unknown qualities. If you did measure the stress flow in relief teaching, you'd probably blow right off the scale. I see 'change' as a bit of a personal challenge. It requires that sort of attitude for people to enjoy relief teaching .... adaptable to change. You have to make so many snap decisions. Do I let it go, or do I assert myself? ... What's the right time? Relief teachers use a lot of interpersonal skills too.

Q: The teacher's aide. Does she know you are a home economics teacher?

R: I think she does. It's her territory. She's been here for years ... I've even brought my mug. I worked that one out. You are not very popular if you use the wrong person's mug, sit on a staffroom chair, park in the wrong parking space and so forth.

Q: [laughs] *You went to* [distant high school] *for six days. Did you stay up there?*

R: They provided me with a unit. I had to book my son into a school up there. I asked him. He thought he could cope.

Q: Did they [Department] *pay for petrol?*

R: No. I was $150.00 out-of-pocket for the whole venture. It was a punt I was prepared to take, because I needed a job.

Q: It may help that you showed willing. Did you enjoy it?

R: I found it very stressful except that by the end of the week, I thought I do not want to work here. The staff were really stand-offish. I had so much running around to do. The first two days I had six periods a day. Each night I would be up preparing until 11.00 pm but, almost the last night I was there, three young girls who had seen me at university two years ago, knocked at the door and said, 'Come out for a walk.' They told me all the things I needed to know. They said, 'The staff are always like that. Don't worry about it. It is not you.'

Q: They reassured you?

R: I thought, I wouldn't mind if I went back there.

Q: Then it didn't happen.

R: That was on the Wednesday. I finished on Friday and the girl [absent teacher] decided to take the job. It was a really weird experience. It was almost like no one bothered to get to know me in case I didn't stay. It was like being in limbo.

Points for reflection

- 'I always worry about my duty of care. I'm the one whose head will roll if someone decides to muck about.'
- 'I've only received one payment from my relief teaching so far and that wasn't the correct pay either.'
- 'There needs to be one central person who can find out the very straight-forward answers.'
- 'They are never going to change the system, because they do not accept the system is wrong.'
- 'Most of my friends, I think it's really sad, just refuse to do relief teaching because of the stress.'
- 'If you did measure the stress flow in relief teaching, you'd probably blow right off the scale.'
- 'It was a really weird experience. It was almost like no one bothered to get to know me in case I didn't stay. It was like being in limbo.'

APPENDIX 6

The relief teachers' perspective: male relief teacher

This interview provides an example of a relief teacher, aged thirty-nine years, who had graduated the previous year. He had worked as a relief teacher at a college and a high school 'doing everything'. As a mature adult, working in a new career, it is interesting to note his impressions of his relief teaching experiences and his general observations of the various workplace settings:

Q: How do you find relief teaching?
R: Not too bad because we live locally and I did internship in the school last year and I got an insight into the school. It's not good ... a bit of a jungle-like atmosphere to the place.
Q: What are your impressions, both good and bad with relief teaching?
R: In a nutshell, it's much more difficult than being a teacher on site. The most difficult thing is when you go in to do relief for a teacher who is a disorganised person anyway. I find it extremely frustrating because you have to find out the truth from the children ... where they are at ... and I get annoyed at that. Most teachers are good but one or two fall in the 'poorly-organised' category. On some occasions: 1) there's clearly defined work; 2) sparse notes; 3) in an emergency, nothing prepared. Out of the three I dislike the middle the most. Where there are clearly defined notes, that's good, or it's okay when there's nothing because I can formulate something myself. I really quite enjoy ad-libbing.
Q: Do you notice any behaviour changes in the students when a relief teacher comes?
R: Definitely. I've been told by students, 'You can't give me a detention. You're only a relief teacher', and they have found out to their amazement and sadness, that, yes, I can! They definitely try you on a lot more and treat you with a lot less respect. It's hard. Probably because they tend to test you all the time. 'Our normal [sic] teacher doesn't get us to do this!' When you say, 'No!', you are the biggest mongrel under the sun. They are testing. I know from internship it doesn't go hand-in-hand with full time teaching.
Q: How does school help you?
R: You are in a special position. The staff attitude is a hazy area, however, in the school where I *wasn't* an intern, a relief teacher is not really given the time of day in the staffroom. The only person you'll clap eyes on and have a dialogue with is the AP. Schools have not got a good safety net for the relief teacher.
Q: At [high school] are you given information to help you?
R: A timetable on most occasions.
Q: What about a behaviour policy?
R: Yes, the behaviour policy in school is an utter joke. I've refined and streamlined my classroom management as much as possible. I try and take care of it myself in classrooms, recess and at lunch times. In extreme cases, I'll knock on a teacher's door in the room next door. If I have a student who refuses to do anything and keeps distracting others, I ask the teacher if he can sit in a corner. It works extremely well. I've had to do that, occasionally. I've spoken to my wife about this: I'm there to take on board the least amount of stress I possibly can, and get the students to do as much work as a relief teacher can get them to do. I haven't got the time to go through the stupid eight-point discipline plan and I just have to deal with it quickly.
Q: Say something, warn someone, then action?
R: I think I'm fairly tight. I guess I care about people's feelings. I don't like to be the heavy. I also have to add I'm 6'4" and 16 stone. If I get annoyed and I get in someone's face and let them know about it. I don't have a lot of discipline problems. I'll be fairly generous and give them three warnings.
Q: Do you have to shout, or is your size and non-verbal communication sufficient?
R: No, I shout occasionally, as a last resort. If they won't quieten down and listen to my normal voice, then on occasion, I will shout. That depends on my mood. I went in yesterday. I had a class for speech and drama. I said first off, 'Look. I'm not in the mood to shout today, I'm not going to raise my voice. If they're any problems at all, they'll be handled in another way'. I stuck to that. It does depend on your mood.
Q: A good point. The sort of things that books don't tell you.
R: It is important that kids realise that no matter where, teachers have moods too. I've had the odd occasion when I've gone to school at 9.00 am and done a full teaching load for the entire day, including duty, recess and half lunch. I've been paid for five hours.
Q: Are there any definite pluses in being a relief teacher?

R: Definitely. No prep ... no marking ... no reports; the money is reasonably good. I don't believe the pluses outweigh the minuses. The big minus is that you don't have time to form relationships. You can't do that. It's hard to teach because of the hidden curriculum. The social skills ... I think that is the most important thing in education. There is not enough emphasis put on that. The whole system is falling apart.
Q: Do you get enough work relief teaching?
R: I get enough money because my wife works at CES for four days. It's not what I'd call enough. I find it quite frustrating. I'm nearly forty. It would be very different if you spoke to someone younger. I've heard a lot of stories about relief teachers in floods of tears because of the way that kids attack them ... not physically, but the kids push them to their limits and break them down, by the continual challenge. The biggest sadness is if you are not involved in a confrontation with the students, you are braced for it. I think that is the reason so many teachers are going out on stress leave.
Q: It's only when you watch others teach that you see the stress. When you're in it, you're coping.
R: Relief teaching is more stressful. Do relief teachers know why they are failing? Sometimes the administration is failing, but if they modified a few things, such as attitudes, that would help them to succeed. Then everything would be a lot more effective. An aside: you can't expect a lot more from the existing [regular] teachers in schools. A lot of them are in survival mode and they haven't really got the time to look after and assist relief teachers much. A new person is ignored in the staffroom. You think it is you. So someone tries their hardest and is rejected. They think it is their teaching. I'm trying to say it's not. The staff are hard pushed. The teachers are suffering and not just making excuses. It's nice someone is doing real research. It's about something real. If you want more information I'd be pleased to help.

Points for reflection

- 'I really quite enjoy ad-libbing.'
- 'Schools have not got a good safety net for the relief teacher.'
- 'Yes, the behaviour policy in school is an utter joke.'
- 'The big minus is that you don't have time to form relationships.'
- 'It's hard to teach because of the hidden curriculum."
- 'The social skills ... I think that is the most important thing in education.'
- 'The biggest sadness is if you are not involved in a confrontation with the students, you are braced for it.'
- 'Sometimes the administration is failing, but if they modified a few things, such as attitudes, that would help them to succeed.'

APPENDIX 6A

Analysis of interview data: appendix 6

A summary sheet of each interview and an analysis using the themes of relief teaching, enabled the comparison of varied interview scripts and the emergence of further issues and categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Memos provided further conceptual links, often of a philosophical or pedagogical nature, for example: What is 'respect'? What is lack of 'respect'?, when seen from each perspective. The material was based on the researcher's written notes which were too indistinct to photocopy.

The following analysis of the interview transcript (appendix 6), therefore, provides illustrations of the various ways in which interview data was analysed, to 'break down', 'examine', 'compare', 'conceptualise' or 'categorise data' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.61). It identifies the differences between regular and relief teaching and shows a relief teacher who has developed strategies for classroom management. balanced the negative elements with positive strategies. The grounded approach is used to code data with a 'line-by-line analysis' (Strauss and & Corbin, 1990, p. 72), which is detailed, but generates further links, either as a means of triangulating evidence from this interview or combining with other interview data. The grounded approach could be used to 'stimulate theoretical sensitivity' (p.41), for example, to show how the relief teacher had developed strategies to manage 'stress'. Further analysis could reveal the problems the relief teacher faces and the strategies he used to cope. In this way, an analysis of experience as it is lived, utilises the personal experiences of both the interview respondent and the researcher to provide insights which enable others to understand 'how things work' in various relief teaching settings (p.42). Grounded theory can be thought of as a transactional method of analysis that enables people to understand the interactive nature of the events (p. 159). The analytic procedures are designed to:

> provide the grounding, build the density, and develop the sensitivity and integration needed to generate a rich, tightly woven explanatory theory that closely approximates the reality it represents. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 57)

The following analysis of the interview transcript (appendix 6) illustrates the way in which each interview was reduced to the underlying issues and themes [*bold*]. Themes were written on the left hand side of the page. The researcher's comments on the right hand side of the page suggested possible links, or patterns [*italics*]. Further notes were made regarding tone of voice, settings, further points of interest. Words or sentences were selected from the data to provide links and capture thought-provoking comments during the process of analysis. Memos provided links which often went beyond the relief teaching settings to themes of a universal nature, such as, the purpose of 'education'.

The following illustrations show the grounded approach to data analysis used in the investigation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967):

A. Summary of the interview

B. Analysis using the model developed in the previous investigation (Webb, 1993)

C. Issues developed from analysis.

D: Memos

A. Summary of the interview

After trialling a number of summary sheets, a simple summary sheet (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.53) was chosen for its flexibility in handling conceptual or detailed information for a variety of purposes. It contained four sections. The researcher provided evidence from the interview:

1: What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this contact ?:

> *Personal balance*: Although there were obvious stressors the relief teacher had developed strategies to resolve conflict and cope. He had worked out his own needs and communicated them to the students . He knew the 'pluses' and the 'minuses' of being a relief teacher: 'I'm there to take on board the least amount of stress I possibly can, and get the students to do as much work as a relief teacher can get them.' [*definite purpose; balanced approach*]

2: Summarise the information you got or failed to get from this participant:

This relief teacher was committed to an approach which valued people and education. He knew what he could change and where he needed help. He was assertive and met his needs.

This relief teacher positioned relief teaching in a wider educational context, was self-aware and able to see alternative ways of resolving problems. He gave well-reasoned answers.

The relief teaching context is affected by the culture and climate in each school, and in the wider community. If regular teachers are badly organised or suffer stress, a relief teacher has additional problems.

3: What was salient or interesting, illuminating or important, in this contact?:

Link: research/ systems perspective? Offered further help; a useful contact for structuring practical situations for relief teachers or school administrators; work with teachers' absence.

Link: new relief teachers? Comments from a mature adult, working in a new career, provided a systems approach to relief teaching: he could see important conceptual relationships. They led to further insights. For example, he commented, 'It would be very different if you spoke to someone younger.' He demonstrated how he, as a new relief teacher with experience in the workforce, was able to deal with problems through interpersonal skills, rather than relying on the traditional school hierarchy. Further development?: Did a relief teacher's age, or experience in the workforce, make a difference to his/ her relationship with students?

Link: administrators perspective? He noted that with a little modification and a change of attitude, many aspects of relief teaching would be a lot more effective. There were few procedures in place to help relief teachers succeed: 'Schools have not got a good safety net for the relief teacher.'

Link: language?
'A bit of a jungle-like atmosphere to the place.'
'The big minus is that you don't have time to form relationships.'
'Schools have not got a good safety net for the relief teacher.'
relief teacher is not really given the time of day

4: Future connections?

What can the school do to help relief teachers to succeed?

What is the effect of 'lack of time' in relief teaching settings? for administrators and teachers?

So many teachers are going out on stress leave.[*on-going stress in schools; reasons; adaptive strategies?]*

B. Line by line analysis using the themes of relief teaching (Webb, 1993)

The themes of relief teaching are used as a conceptual framework for organising and unifying a variety of data. Comments made by the researcher indicate possible links. The theme of 'ambiguity' represents 'gaps' for the researcher or interview respondent, and may be further categorised. The quality and the richness of data obtained by the unstructured interviews, shows how a single interview can provide material which can be of use for a number of purposes. For example, the theme of regular/ relief teaching illustrates one which will lead to further analysis and help define how relief teaching is different from regular teaching.

Low status:

'You can't give me a detention. You're only a relief teacher;' [*common phrase*]

'a bit of a jungle-like atmosphere to the place'; [*issues of social power; rights and responsibilities?*]

'They definitely try you on a lot more and treat you with a lot less respect'. [*common theme*]

Different expectations:

'Sometimes the administration is failing, but if they modified a few things, such as attitudes, that would help them to succeed.' Then everything would be a lot more effective. [*lack of understanding? low priority?*]

Lack of information/training:

'... because you have to find out the truth from the children; [*takes time; lowers status; will students give the 'truth'?'; ambiguity*]

"... 'poorly-organised' category. On some occasions: 1) there's clearly defined work; 2) sparse notes; 3) in an emergency, nothing prepared." [*takes additional time; ad hoc system; little consistency*]

'Do relief teachers know why they are failing?' [*lack of understanding*]

Isolation:

'... however, in the school where I *wasn't* an intern, a relief teacher is not really given the time of day in the staffroom.' [*low status; outsider; different school cultures; different pressures?*]

'The only person you'll clap eyes on and have a dialogue with is the AP.' [*lack of communication networks*]

'The big minus is that you don't have time to form relationships.'

Stress:

'It's hard to teach because of the hidden curriculum.' [*hidden forces recognised*]

'The most difficult thing is when you go in to do relief for a teacher who is a disorganised person anyway. I find it extremely frustrating.' [*conflict: coping with organisation rather than teaching; no sense of purpose; lack of professionalism by regular staff reduces relief teacher's credibility; not a 'real' teacher; waste of time; student challenges*]

'I find it quite frustrating.' [*conflict*]

'... and I get annoyed at that.'

" 'It's hard. Probably because they tend to test you all the time. 'Our normal [sic] teacher doesn't get us to do this!' "[*manipulative student behaviour; recurring patterns of testing behaviour; negative*]

'I haven't got the time to go through the stupid eight-point discipline plan and I just have to deal with it quickly. '[*need quick, effective solutions; different from regular teaching*]

'When you say, 'No!', you are the biggest mongrel under the sun.' They are testing. [*power games*]

'No, I shout occasionally, as a last resort.' [*behaviour management strategies*]

'If they won't quieten down and listen to my normal voice, then on occasion, I will shout.'

'The biggest sadness is if you are not involved in a confrontation with the students, you are braced for it.' [*anticipation of stressors*]

Ambiguous comments: gap/ conflict?:

'Not too bad ... It's not good.'

'The staff attitude is a hazy area,'

'... a timetable on most occasions.' [*any other information?*]

'I've had the odd occasion when I've gone to school at 9.00 am and done a full teaching load for the entire day, including duty, recess and half lunch. I've been paid for five hours.' [*anger; exploitation?*]

'The behaviour policy in school is an utter joke.' [*contemptuous of policy; source of problems? not adequate*]

'I get enough money because my wife works at CES for four days. It's not what I'd call enough.'[*uncertainty of casual work*]

C. Issues developed from analysis

Effectiveness: a sense of personal balance:

'It's okay when there's nothing because I can formulate something myself' [*resourceful*]

'They have found out to their amazement and sadness, that, yes, I can!' [*follows words with actions*]

'I've refined and streamlined my classroom management as much as possible.' [*developed strategies*]

'I try and take care of it myself in classrooms, recess and at lunch times.' [*copes where possible*]

'In extreme cases, I'll knock on a teacher's door in the room next door. If I have a student who refuses to do anything and keeps distracting others, I ask the teacher if he can sit in a corner.'[*asks for specific help*]

'It works extremely well. I've had to do that, occasionally. '[*confidence*]

'I've spoken to my wife about this.' [*debriefing?*]

'I'm there to take on board the least amount of stress I possibly can, and get the students to do as much work as a relief teacher can get them to do.' [*definite purpose; balanced approach*]

'I think I'm fairly tight. I guess I care about people's feelings. I don't like to be the heavy.' [*underlying conflicts of judgement and control*]

'I also have to add I'm 6'4" and 16 stone. '[*humour; aware of body language*]

'If I get annoyed and I get in someone's face and let them know about it.' [*open approach to conflict resolution*]

'I don't have a lot of discipline problems. I'll be fairly generous and give them three warnings.' [*positive approach; prepared plan*]

'I said first off, 'Look. I'm not in the mood to shout today, I'm not going to raise my voice. If they're any problems at all, they'll be handled in another way'. I stuck to that. It does depend on your mood.' [*assertive process; explains mood; provides feedback; developing students' awareness; adult role model for conflict resolution*]

'I really quite enjoy ad-libbing.' [*positive approach to change*]

Regular teaching and relief teaching:

'Relief teaching is more stressful.'

'It's much more difficult than being a teacher on site.'

'I know from internship it doesn't go hand-in-hand with full time teaching.'

'You are in a special position.'

'Schools have not got a good safety net for the relief teacher.'

'Relief teaching? No prep ... no marking ... no reports; the money is reasonably good. I don't believe the pluses outweigh the minuses.'

Education and broader issues:

'The social skills ... I think that is the most important thing in education. There is not enough emphasis put on that. The whole system is falling apart.'[*developing cohesion; important issue; future trends*]

'You can't expect a lot more from the existing [regular] teachers in schools. A lot of them are in survival mode and they haven't really got the time to look after and assist relief teachers much.' [*hidden curriculum; understanding of staff attitudes to relief teachers*]

'A new person is ignored in the staffroom. You think it is you.' So someone tries their hardest and is rejected. They think it is their teaching. I'm trying to say it's not.[*important aspect of hidden curriculum*]

'The staff are hard pushed. The teachers are suffering and not just making excuses.' [*systemic problems*]

'I think that is the reason so many teachers are going out on stress leave.' [*link relief teaching to teacher absences*]

'It is important that kids realise that no matter where, teachers have moods, too'. [*rights and responsibilities; emotional awareness*]

'I'm nearly forty. It would be very different if you spoke to someone younger. I've heard a lot of stories about relief teachers in floods of tears because of the way that kids attack them ... not physically, but the kids push them to their limits and break them down, by the continual challenge.' [*anecdotal evidence; patterns of behaviour; resilience to stressors? look at strategies and age?*]

'It's nice someone is doing real research. It's about something real. If you want more information I'd be pleased to help. [*what is 'real' research in schools?*]

D. Memos

Memos provided thought-provoking links to further inquiry:

- What is 'real research'? What is really needed to link theory and practice?
- The social skills ... I think that is the most important thing in education.
- 'A relief teacher is not really given the time of day in the staffroom.'
- Respect.[*relationships between students, relief teachers; school staff]*
- Do relief teachers know why they are failing?

APPENDIX 7

The relief teachers' perspective: former regular teacher

Many experienced or retired teachers (228; 186; 7), who became relief teachers, found they worked under a different set of expectations. At times, they were confused and angry when their former colleagues treated them differently. This relief teacher's comments about the attitudes of the regular teaching staff, her observations of student behaviour and her deeper reflections on the education system, are all the more poignant, as they are based on the changes she experienced between being a regular teacher and being a relief teacher, in the same school. The passage shows how she attempted to come to terms with an environment which did not value her as a resource and which conflicted with her own sense of self worth as a person and as a teacher, 'I still have all the skills and expertise and things to offer, but for some reason I'm treated as invisible.'

The unstructured interview has enabled the respondent to talk at length about the problems which affected her so deeply. Although her experiences cannot be 'proved', the intensity of language and feelings convey, what were to her, traumatic and overwhelming experiences because of her perceived isolation from other staff and the emotional impact of relief teaching where she was caught between maintaining her own professional standards as a teacher, and adapting to the role expected of her as a relief teacher. The resulting 'complex set of conflict behaviours' (Owens, 1987, p.63), included, attempting to seek support from the school hierarchy [AP], and appealing to members of the class. Her inability to resolve the conflicts, despite her personal awareness of the strategies needed (Bolton, 1987), led her to question broader issues. Her comments, concerning 'responsibility' or 'respect' pose questions concerning the moral and ethical aspects of educating children, and of the role of the school and education system in providing a caring environment. The interview, therefore, is multilayered, and is illustrative of data which can be framed in a number of ways, for example, to illustrate the paradoxical nature of relief teaching, or to show some of the gaps between stated and enacted Departmental policies in schools.

The interview shows the contrast between the intensity of problems in the classroom and the apparent distancing strategies adopted by the AP or regular school staff. In this way, problems which are given 'lip service', or 'not taken seriously' retained their invisibility by remaining part of the out-of-sight-out-of-mind' response noted by Galloway (1993). The interview shows another form of invisibility which arose from the taken-for-granted aspects of relief teaching. As the interview respondent commented, relief teaching 'could be so much better organised with very little extra effort.' Interview data shows how, because of the invisible nature of relief teaching and the non-reference to the everyday problems surrounding relief teaching, small difficulties clustered and escalated until, as in this example, the relief teacher had little personal control over the stressors, and she considered whether it was 'worthwhile being a relief teacher'. She felt:

> R: ... so tired. One boy [in] grade 10 didn't attempt to do anything. He picked up a chair and broke the leg off. He went into the corridor with the chair. I told him to come back in [the classroom] and then had to go into the corridor myself and retrieve the chair.
>
> Most schools feel that relief teachers are expected to cope with all sorts of problems in the classroom without backup. I asked what happened if you had a child you could not handle. The AP replied that you must find a teacher around to give you a hand. I'm considering very seriously whether it's worthwhile being a relief teacher. I don't only consider it personally but worry that it is not happy for them or healthy. It's destructive to allow children to behave like that. Several would not cooperate: I said they would have to stay in at lunch time if they did not have the introduction written for an essay. How much responsibility do you take? I am not comfortable. You don't want to deliberately provide extra stress for yourself and you don't want to do the teaching that you don't believe in.
>
> I never had this problem as a [regular] teacher. I achieved a great deal and I knew I'd get support if I presented an AP with a problem. It was taken seriously; never shrugged off and given lip service ... To complain about it would be a waste of time. What happens in your classroom is *your* problem. My worries are not related to simply teaching but to education as a whole. A person lives in a community: What are young people being allowed to do? They need support otherwise it's a flow-on effect. I give children all the respect I can. I speak

nicely, I am persistent. Even getting heard is difficult enough. If people approach students in a reasonable manner and this happens what hope is there for others? I teach two days a week and almost need a day to recover. I am not prepared to live my life like that. I need to believe in what I am doing.

There is no 'good' staff feeling. The staff are polarised. It's not usual in a high school. Perhaps the problem of 'climate' has got too big. He [AP] may not even recognise that a problem is unmanageable and as long as it is not damaging to the teachers, the AP puts his energies into other things.

I am a pretty tough person. I've been here for five years as a full time teacher. I've always helped relief teachers. I think relief teachers need their own small room for a private study; a place to put their coats etc. You have to cart everything around and take things away. It could be so much better organised with very little extra effort. A place should be provided for relief teachers to get over any stress and unwind for a few minutes. It's not a big thing.

Some of the kids are pitiful. They are so isolating. High schools seems to be the worst place. It's just becoming able to get them quiet. All teachers seem to be in a big cover-up job. I find it really worrying. The literacy is down and numeracy is down too. Teachers are virtually coming in like zombies. Permanent staff are not getting whatever it is they need. What is sad and worries me is how the children will perform with respect for themselves. I remember one person a fortnight ago, a thin boy who did his work and then got out a book and read. It's rare. I've shown them a lot of respect. I've been trained in conflict resolution but it's little use. What of the damage? For whatever reason there is an air of defeatism in the staffroom.

My husband says, 'How was your day?' Then he went on, 'Who do you share your difficulties with... other staff?' I am not good at dealing with things that I do not believe are worth doing. Relief teaching is not worth doing.

The only way you can be heard is on a high level. I'm not prepared to keep going. I can achieve more with 7's and 8's but cannot do it with grade 9's. Grade 10's were delightful. They nattered away to me in the corridor but when they got into a classroom they turned themselves inside-out and were different people. I kept them in class in their seats. That's not work. I tried for about half-an-hour. They said they had done enough work but in the last period they were going to sit in groups and talk. Some did not even bring books to class. A teacher walked by. It's crazy that the kids are delightful outside class. Their desks were in rows. I'm not accustomed to teaching in rows. I got their attention for a couple of minutes to tell them about their essay ... that it needed to be completed. I'd had them yesterday too, but several were adamant. They said, 'We are not going to work' and got up and moved their desks around so they could talk. I just didn't cope well as a relief. The responsibility belongs to the school. Having said that, if I am going to do something [it's because] I value myself more than that. I am a worthwhile teacher and I am not prepared to be a babysitter. If I don't work we are on the breadline. It's a waste of a resource.

I used to watch relief teachers and help them, I knew it was difficult but the school had always been supportive. But I had no concept it was as difficult as it's been the last two weeks. I had no idea. I wouldn't have thought professional people would allow relief teachers to be treated so badly. It came as a huge shock. I still have all the skills and expertise and things to offer, but for some reason I'm treated as invisible.

A lot of people have talked professionally but ignored listening to feedback and providing relief teachers with somewhere to be. Even canteen workers have somewhere to be. It's the general lack of thought. There is no way of communicating, no discipline policy. What do you do with children you can't cope with in class?

I try to be positive but there is very little to be positive about. I was told one day to come for social science but it was English and PE. PE was organised (grade 9) and I was left to supervise the awful children dropouts in grades 8, 9, 10. Three different classes. Disgusting things. They had no work. We were shoved in a room with two windows that had been broken and glass was spread over the floor. They were like a bunch of wild tigers. I know that people realised the group was unmanageable. I did not think that the teaching profession

would knowingly leave another teacher in that situation. It changed my thinking. Perhaps the problem is mine. They don't want a professional person. Perhaps they would use anyone if they were able to ... but there's more to it than that. I have other concerns. If you can't stand the heat get out of the kitchen seems to be the reaction. Instead, I find it is an indication of long time trouble. The whole school system is not working. The deterioration of the level of standard is horrific. Grade 10's and a whole group of grade 9's, in an essay ... they can't spell effectively. They could talk but barely write it down. I was totally horrified. I sat on a chair in the group and spelt out words. They virtually were illiterate. They don't have a whole lot of time left at school. Education takes a whole lot of money and it's not doing the job.

'Pathways' was formulated a few years ago. Everyone was interested. We sold the program around the schools, had relief people in. They went on 'retreats' used transport and went to launches. It's now in total disuse. It's incredible, the perception of relief teachers. Lift the standard. How much do they care? I have trouble with the phone ringing and not ringing in the morning. I get really anxious and feel vulnerable. We desperately need a support group. That would be good.

Note: Shortly after this was recorded, the relief teacher decided to leave relief teaching.

Points for reflection

- 'They nattered away to me in the corridor but when they got into a classroom they turned themselves inside-out and were different people.'
- 'I am not good at dealing with things that I do not believe are worth doing. Relief teaching is not worth doing.'
- 'I am a worthwhile teacher and I am not prepared to be a babysitter. If I don't work we are on the breadline. It's a waste of a resource.'
- They were like a bunch of wild tigers. I know that people realised the group was unmanageable. I did not think that the teaching profession would knowingly leave another teacher in that situation. It changed my thinking.
- 'A lot of people have talked professionally but ignored listening to feedback and providing relief teachers with somewhere to be.'
- '[Relief teaching] could be so much better organised with very little extra effort.'
- 'Education takes a whole lot of money and it's not doing the job.'
- 'I still have all the skills and expertise and things to offer, but for some reason I'm treated as invisible.'

APPENDIX 8

The relief teachers' perspective: a relief teacher with thirty years experience

'Mrs Worthy' was described by one regular teacher as a 'legend' and mentioned, by respondents, in the course of several other interviews. The researcher contacted her, therefore, and asked for her reflections on 'being' a relief teacher.

Mrs Worthy's comments provide insights into the changing role of a relief teacher within one school in the investigation. Her comments show some of the conflicts which arose in her day-to-day work as a relief teacher, both personally and professionally, as well as providing the rationale behind many of her actions. She explains, for example, why she changed from a regular to a relief teacher and how she coped with aspects of student behaviour or aspects of the broader curriculum, when her personal philosophy counteracted what she was expected to teach. Years of experience as a relief teacher in a single school, have enabled Mrs Worthy to 'position' her experiences in relief teaching, within broader social and educational contexts. Her comments, which include her perceptions of student behaviour, or remarks about regular school staff, illustrate how interview data from a relief teacher's perspective can offer a rich source of data for a range of educational and sociological issues affecting teaching and learning. For example, she identifies situations, where non-specialist or untrained staff, such as relief teachers, may be required to take Health Education lessons without adequate consultation, or indeed choice. This gap between the policies of preparing students for their adult roles in society and the practice where sensitive subjects are treated with little sensitivity, provides evidence of deeper ethical concerns and an indication of potential problems for the staff, the students, the school and the present system of education. Mrs Worthy comments, 'Though I've always liked kids, I've got to the stage when I'm having little delight.' Subsequently, she decided to leave relief teaching; the system lost a resourceful teacher, and also lost a potential source of knowledge based on consistent observation of one school over a period of thirty years.

This interview respondent has a holistic understanding of relief teaching as a phenomenon. She could anticipate and describe patterns of behaviour, as well as tasks and procedures. In a similar way, seemingly fragmented incidents, also 'made sense' to the researcher, from her experience as a relief teacher, so she did not intervene but chose to utilise the time by enabling the respondent to talk freely. In this way, interview data was 'layered' rather than sequential, as further information emerged about aspects of relief teaching, as they came to mind. It is important to note that the researcher held the view that each interview was unique, and thus, all data were accepted as relevant. The researcher's approach was consistently focused on gaining rich data which reflected personal experience, and which could be used for later analysis and synthesis. While it may not be obvious from written interview transcripts, the researcher's role in the interviews was in creating a sense of empathy and interest, through body language or active listening skills, where respondents felt they could talk deeply about issues which concerned them.

After an initial description of her search to understand relief teaching, the researcher asked Mrs Worthy [R] for her observations:

> R: A lot of the time schools don't know they have to get someone in advance, so it's a 'spur of the moment' decision. The relief teacher has to be versatile and try to cope. This is easier for some people than for others, who find they are in situations where they are not qualified. For example, Maths and Science teachers are scarcer than hens' teeth. If you are thrown into a situation like that, you learn to use the kids. Sometimes I have just as bad a time as a young teacher, particularly on a day-to-day basis. Kids don't think a relief teacher is qualified and some relief teachers are genuinely frightened of the kids, who sense it. One group said to me, 'Why didn't you come last week? The lady [relief teacher] we had was scared stiff'.
>
> Classes can be daunting. There are some things schools can do to help. In [high school] they have a folder which gives you an idea of where the rooms are. It's helpful, but as far as dealing with kids in a school situation, if you can't deal with them, you've had it!
>
> I find it easier if you have the same group for two or three weeks, or you can deal with them consistently. I had some kids I'd had three years ago ... we got on so well ... I just couldn't believe it when I heard that they threw stones at one relief teacher! Sometimes when they try

you out, they are not really trying you out, it's just automatic. If you start to shout, they love it and that's when they really get going. I have lost my cool sometimes and I usually follow that up with a detention.

I first started teaching at [high school] forty years ago. I left full time teaching at the school in the late fifties when I had my first child and I went back as a relief teacher when my own children started school, so that I could say, 'No, I cannot come' if I needed to be at home. That was thirty years ago. Teaching has changed dramatically. It's the nature of society and societal change causing so many problems. I disagree with a lot of the counselling. Kids are allowed to put it over. There are too many rights and more exceptions to the general rule. Years ago we were told to use psychology and now kids use it back at you. Some classes give you a great deal of satisfaction; in others I get none. The students have not got the work ethic; their behaviour is based on the belief that, 'All will be given to me when I leave school.' In this school's area we are coming across the third-year-unemployed. They have got used to the idea they are entitled to their rights. The government owes them. Kids get it all for nothing. They have seen their families 'succeed' without working. They have never had the pleasure of making their own way and of having to struggle. People blame the schools. We have some magnificent kids out there, but they throw them all together. We had a sub-school system for 1200 children, now we have 500. From a staffing point of view it needs to be changed.

I don't know what can be done to make relief teachers more effective. Relief money is good now, but you should be able to go to a school without someone calling you a 'F.... old bitch!' But even teachers get it. It's easier for me, I know the kids. I don't ever let rude language go, if it is said directly. I also avoid having someone else deal with it. If you do, you've had it. Nine out of ten relief teachers say [to the offending student], 'You go to the office.' But they don't check that the student has been. I try to take the attitude that they are paying me to handle the situation. I do try to handle it, and when I can't succeed, I let it be known. One kid that swore at me was suspended.

One thing I ask for, but you don't often get it, is class lists for every class. I take out a pad and pass it round for class attendance. They say, 'Are we in trouble?' I say, 'No. This is just for class attendance.' I might have one child that asks to go to the toilet, and later two other students come into the classroom. I might say, 'I have been asked to give an assessment which will go on your report, for listening behaviour.' If you try to insist on absolute silence the whole time, you've had it. The noise level gets too high. It's easier to forget about the muttering as long as it's not too boisterous or loud and people are out of their seats. Grade 7's are getting worse. They used to be a piece of cake, but last year one [student] came over from the primary school on orientation day and his behaviour was so bad he had to go to the principal.

I took one class in the library, I had asked them to do research and photocopying. They were lousy. I said, 'Tomorrow we won't go to the library.' If anyone is going to make a fool of me they can do it in class. The next day a girl wanted to go there. I said, 'You have ten minutes.' When she came back I said, 'Where is your information?' She said, 'I didn't know that was why I went.' You bang your head against a brick wall and some days are torrid. It takes me fifteen minutes to get out of the car when I get home.

You come across whole groups of students that cannot stand each other, but try to put it over. I find it more difficult on individual days.

Until this year I have never turned a day of relief teaching down. I need the income. Now my health has not been so good. I get really tired. I like the good interaction with the staff and with the kids. I have grown up with the worst of them. Last year a kid stole $15.00 from my bag. I knew it had gone and someone told me who had taken it. As it was a Friday, I phoned the parents, not accusing their son but just explaining what had happened. The father said he would sort it out within the next thirty minutes. He came with the boy. I could see the father was more upset, so I didn't say much, but the next day eggs and spaghetti were thrown at the door. When I went to school on Monday, someone said, 'You got bombed last night!' I said, 'Oh no, not me! If they think they got me, they must have got the wrong house!' I heard nothing more about it. If you let them get away with it, it's not doing them a

favour. They have no respect for anyone's belongings. At one time they would have been grateful if you lent them a pen or paper. Now it's 'right' not to return things, even belonging to their friends. I get to the stage when they start their petty bickering, and I say, 'If you haven't anything nice to say, don't say it!' It's probably the same at home, people niggling, arguing over the back fence. That's how they go through school.

As I go to the one school, I know where the resources are ... who to ask for help. I have collected quite a pool of work sheets which I keep in the car. I don't normally have to use them, but I dread the comment [from the AP], 'They know what they have to do'. Nine out of ten times these are famous last words. They haven't got work or won't say what it is. So I pull a swifty. I give them a test ... I tell them to pass it in and not write on the sheets.

Every [new school] year I take the first three or four weeks of term because someone hasn't arrived and the school has to provide a relief teacher. It used to be an easy time as the students think you are going to be there day after day. Some classes, however, make the teachers think of tearing their hair out. It goes for everyone. They are not dumb groups but bright ones. It's hard. With relief teaching it's a bit of pot luck. You have to race in with dozens of [photocopied] sheets to find who's who and what's what.
Q: Have you been given work?
R: Occasionally. The Union states that teachers who are sick are not obliged to provide work. The relief teacher is paid enough and therefore should be prepared to provide work. That's all very well if you are teaching in an area you know, but how are you going to know what units are planned? How can you provide work in all the areas that relief teachers have to work in? I heard of one primary school relief teacher who went to a school whose teachers were going to a seminar and all she got was, 'Good Luck for the day!' No curriculum ... no ideas ... nothing. They thought it was her responsibility.

Though I've always liked kids, I've got to the stage when I'm having little delight. I had one Ag. Science [Agricultural Science] group that had sent others round the bend. I called into the office before I went home, 'Don't ask me to do it tomorrow.' There is no point in me coming to school when I have this attitude. When you get to a stage you can't find anything to like, it's time to have a break.

I have lessons prepared that work absolutely wonderfully with one class but not with another, so relief teachers have to change tack and apply themselves to make the work more applicable. It's very difficult. Full time staff have so much to do; they put in the extra hours. Teachers are not lazy. They have to work for the money. I see their point of view, that we are paid for 'Relief.'

I am doing several days' relief for a nice young fellow who is a temporary teacher and only out of college last year. He has taken time off for training to be a tour guide. He does not want to teach. It's a shame.

Health work is a 'yuk' subject. I cannot make a lesson out of Health. The students are introduced to so many subjects, that they are taken away from the core ones. Sex education is taken far too far. They need biological information. Often, relief teachers have a couple of Health lessons thrown in. They may have work on AIDS. There is assignment work on AIDS in Social Science, Sports and Recreation, too ... New subjects take away time from the other subjects; some topics seem over emphasised until they become part of the classroom banter. Kids pipe up, 'What about oral sex.' I say, 'That sort of talk belongs in the gutter. I am fussy about what goes in my mouth.' What do they learn? Some of the things they come out with are enough to make you blush. Lot's of comments that are made by grade 7's and 8's I find repugnant and sexually orientated. I can't help thinking it's all talk, but you can't let these comments go. It's worse when it's last period on a hot day, or there are ten regular teachers away and the kids have been passed from one relief to the next. Relief teachers haven't got a show. So much change. All you can do is stick with it.

Points for reflection

- 'Sometimes I have just as bad a time as a young teacher, particularly on a day-to-day basis.'

- "You should be able to go to a school without someone calling you a 'F.... old bitch!' "
- 'You bang your head against a brick wall and some days are torrid. It takes me fifteen minutes to get out of the car when I get home.'
- 'Teaching has changed dramatically. It's the nature of society and societal change causing so many problems. '
- 'You come across whole groups of students that cannot stand each other, but try to put it over.'
- 'Sometimes when they try you out, they are not really trying you out, it's just automatic.'
- 'The students have not got the work ethic.'
- 'They have never had the pleasure of making their own way and of having to struggle.'
- 'I dread the comment [from the AP], 'They know what they have to do'. Nine out of ten times these are famous last words.'
- 'Nine out of ten relief teachers say [to the offending student], 'You go to the office.' But they don't check that the student has been.'
- 'If you let them get away with it, it's not doing them a favour.'
- 'I heard of one primary school relief teacher who went to a school whose teachers were going to a seminar and all she got was, 'Good Luck for the day!' No curriculum ... no ideas ... nothing. They thought it was her responsibility.'
- 'It's worse when it's last period on a hot day, or there are ten regular teachers away and the kids have been passed from one relief to the next. Relief teachers haven't got a show. So much change. All you can do is stick with it.'

APPENDIX 9

The regular teachers' perspective: social science teacher

Lunch-break in a small staffroom. A casual conversation with the single member of staff developed into a recorded interview on the theme of relief teaching:

Q: *What are your thoughts about relief teaching in the school?*
R: Relief teachers need to be valued as part of the staff. If school staff do not talk to them they feel 'not included', a 'bit out of it' and seen as an 'extra'. How can you overcome that? What I would like to see is a core of people who work as relief teachers in a few schools. They should be included in the extra training days, as part of the staff. They can go through professional development. You can see it as social development if you like, to develop 'connectedness'. They may have to do that for several schools. For relief teachers to be used as teachers rather than babysitters, they have to be professionally ready. They can use that particular time to check out the general situation in Grade 7 Maths, for example. They can't prepare for all subjects as they will be put in a few lessons where they won't have a clue what they are doing. At least they can have a day-to-day basic repertoire of mini lessons ready and think, 'I can do my own lesson unless I am instructed to teach something specific.' Maybe they're feeling that they want to organise something of their own. I get angry when relief teachers expect the school to feed them with everything ... I don't say they do their knitting, but they sit back, a face in front of the class, and expect to be seen as a professional teacher. It doesn't work. There are not many of them but that gets my back up. If I am unwell for a day, I like to be home, be unwell and get better, without having to worry about my class for that period of time. If I am away for a day it's probably best for relief teachers to come and show their skills rather than trying to connect with what is happening. You know which lessons work for you. I would never be angry or put out, if the relief teacher left a note saying s/he was not comfortable with the work I had left, and had done something else. I think that is quite appropriate. In another situation, if I strongly wanted the kids to finish something, I would give explicit instructions, for example, where kids are doing research and the relief teacher would just have to supervise and fit in. If I go to a seminar it's my responsibility to provide continuity. That means very detailed lesson plans of what ought to happen that day. As I've had advanced notice, teaching can be geared to student centred work, rather than teacher centred. I assume the relief teacher feels comfortable in the school situation but I can never assume that I will get a particular teacher. It can be a bit of a juggle. We have the same pool of relief. The idea is to follow the regular teacher's time table which may contain two free periods but in order to get value from the school's point of view, the relief teacher is given other classes too. I might say, 'I'd like Miss X', but the juggle doesn't work so I may end up getting Mr Y. I may have three different people coming to take my classes during the day. We have a basic policy of trying to cover with relief but teachers at school can expect to do two relief periods during the week. The AP keeps a record on a chart. It rarely happens that I do two. I teach for twenty four periods out of thirty five: an AST 1 would normally have 28; an AST 2 with responsibility, 26; and an AST 3 would have 24 [periods in class].
Q: Does it take long to prepare for a relief?
R: It need not take a long time to plan, as I structure it as part of the general plan. I am prepared for the relief teacher to play it by ear and 'bracket' what I've done. That's one aspect of being away; you are not expecting kids to show great improvement. I do get feedback from relief teachers in 90% of the cases.
Q: They give you feedback?
R: I write the topic, classroom, and then I write the lesson plan in a conversational sense and what I get back is little jottings in the corner of the sheet, saying, 'Fred has been a pain' ...You can see Fred shouldn't have ... and has taken advantage and I'll be particularly angry with the child. I find the conversational notes work. I don't know the relief teacher coming. If I were a relief teacher, reading a lesson in note form it doesn't mean much, I'd like someone to 'talk' to me on paper. I would like to speak to them beforehand but it's not usually possible.
Q: Do they get a class list?
R: That depends on the class teacher. They get a folder and map of the school. Class lists are available centrally. There is a time constraint when you come in. If you get a class list

you can jot notes next to names, it also avoids getting too many Mickey Mouse names and changing names.

Q: You are aware of that are you?

R: Oh yes. Names change, behaviour definitely changes. If kids are aware they are going to have a relief teacher they'll organise a bit amongst themselves. If they are not aware they use their knowledge of the relief teacher from the past. Their comments later are usually personal, 'That old bat', 'Big fat teacher'. They don't cope with names but they see that person's 'authority' or 'power' as a magic potion and wait to see how much authoritative power that person actually has. They know that person would actually be at the bottom of the heap, in the sense of power, just as they know the young teacher has flaws they'll pick out. Having fun with a relief teacher will be part of the deal ... as well as telling their regular teacher how horrible the relief teacher has been ... or things they have done, depending on their age. I get a lot of comments about relief teachers and I don't suggest they are all believable. I'm open with my kids. They tell me, 'This person is better than you and we want them all the time.'

We get some relief teachers who are wonderful entertainers as well as being very skilled teachers. My perception of a relief teacher would be one that was more highly skilled than a regular classroom teacher in relation to the breadth of their skills: going to cope in different schools, able to pick up a tradition of how the school works, and what's expected of them in the classroom. Basically 'what do I do?' 'Does the AP like them being sent to the office?'

Q: Do you have a behaviour management policy? Would a relief teacher have one in the folder?

R: It's unlikely.

Q: You mentioned 'highly skilled'. What training do you think a relief teacher would need?

R: I don't know. Training connected with schools, not teaching skills, but understanding what the staff is about ... networking two ways. If you are seen at a staff meeting and listening to all the drivel all the rest of us have to, all for good reason, it comes through that this is a 'real' person; you are accepted and are not seen flipping in and out of the school as if you don't care. There is a slight element of the perception that 'relief teachers are paid and they drift in and out leaving me with problems'. It only occurs if a relief teacher comes in and all they want to do is suck the energy out of people. They are not there to give. 'What do I do now?' 'What room do I go to? ' 'You've got to give me, give me, give me' and, 'Those kids were such --- !' 'This teacher didn't leave any work.' If you get a feeling of anger, that's mine ... I had one of those teachers the other day.

Q: I felt there was something that didn't go right.

R: I was told a relief teacher was taking my classes in the afternoon. There were reasons why I had not organised work for the class and I told him. He said, 'Why haven't you done anything for me? What am I going to do?' So I gave him some examples and he was going, 'I don't like this, and flipped that [suggestion] over his shoulder. I was going, 'Hey, come on ...' I'd made a wrong assumption that he would do 'Class Teacher', but it wasn't on his timetable. He left a bad taste I'd organised everything but that particular lesson. I didn't want to impose something on that lesson if the relief teacher had other skills.

Q: *What was the lesson?*

R: It was Personal Development and Health. I could have left a worksheet which would have been inappropriate, as the idea of these lessons is for social skills and so something I understand and felt happy, with would not translate to that particular person. There wasn't a video. I was trying to cooperate with that person and bring out of that person the sort of lesson we'd be happy with. I was willing to spend time ... the person was saying, 'I blame you for not ...'

Q: *I wonder if that person was insecure about that subject? 'Health' is an area in which relief teachers have not had any training.*

R: Nor have most teachers!

Q: *I feel comfortable with it, but I have heard of relief teachers, mostly men, who feel very ill-at-ease talking about sex or AIDS to teenagers.*

R: I've thought long and hard about collegiality. It's very important not to have disparate staff. A school must get over that problem before anything. If people know we are all trying to do the same thing, you can put anything over the top of them [students]. Whoever you are, relief teacher, .5, .2 [part time teachers] music teacher, science teacher. It's an appreciation of what other people do and how they fit into whole puzzle and that they are all heading in the same direction. That's where if a relief teacher is simply seen as an anonymous person to fill in the gaps, the school has lost the plot. The relief teacher won't do the job expected by the school. Relief teachers shouldn't be treated as babysitters and should be allowed to bring

their skills into the classroom rather than being expected to be Miss X or Mr Y for the day. Relief teachers like ordinary teachers need a professional armoury of tools at their disposal. They need to be treated as a member of staff and not, 'It's only another relief teacher!'

Q: *Is that the feeling?*

R: Yes, that's the feeling that relief teachers sometimes give over because they don't know what is going on in the school. A lot of the fault is that things are so rushed when they are given the folder. They are not being told till the morning of the lesson.

Q: *Have you ever been a relief teacher?*

R: No, not as such ... observation and I toyed with the idea of being part time and thought of the advantages and disadvantages. If you are sick the school gets on with it and you are left behind. When you return you wonder, 'What's happened there?' This is in a school I'm at the whole time. If I feel like that after being away for three days, I'm trying to put myself in the mind of a relief teacher going into the staffroom when nobody speaks to them, not knowing the routine and the kids.

Q: *Do you think relief teachers are well paid?*

R: I've got no problems. They don't get paid for holidays or sick leave. They are paid adequately, if you think a teacher is paid adequately; that's another question. That's how society values us at the moment. We are not valued as much as I'd like, but we are close to the salary range area, I'd expect. There are two scales of pay for a relief teacher, one is the lower scale when a person can come and babysit a class and not use teaching strategies for the student's welfare. The other means that the relief teacher is prepared either to teach, or if given time can plan a series of lessons, on paper or in their head, that would be appropriate for different classes.

Q: *If, as you say, relief teachers should come into the school for training, should they get paid or come in their own time?*

R: Anyone can come to improve their skills, I can't argue with the fact it's their own time. They are paid by the hour. In theory I'd like to see them paid; in reality it won't happen.

Q: *It's a tricky question.*

R: If you feel that in putting yourself out, it makes the situation better for you throughout the year in the fact that you are part of an elite ... not elite, but *select* group that is called in all the time for the school. You know that teachers have to do five extra days of professional development each year, it might be worth your while to link into some of that. From a personal level, I can't argue that they should do it for nothing, but maybe it's in their own interests to do it for nothing. If the school wants relief teachers to do something, they have to value them. I know it comes down to money in the end; it's the valuing people that really upsets me. The relief teacher has got to value the school and the school has got to value the relief teacher and what they do and how their job is different. It doesn't matter what anybody says, it's a different type of role. It's very different, but is it any less of a change [for the kids] if someone comes in for part time, a special education teacher or another teacher who may deal with things in a different way? The children and school are supposed to get used to it. If you used a Venn diagram ... here's the relief teacher ... and the circle of schools [demonstrates]; the relief teacher can connect with the whole three of them. Would most relief teachers have a block of schools they go to?

Q: *I think it's getting to be the general trend.*

[Bell for afternoon class]

Points for reflection

- 'What I would like to see is a core of people who work as relief teachers in a few schools.'
- 'For relief teachers to be used as teachers rather than babysitters, they have to be professionally ready.'
- 'I get angry when relief teachers expect the school to feed them with everything.'
- 'If I am unwell for a day, I like to be home, be unwell and get better, without having to worry about my class for that period of time.'

- 'I'd like Miss X' [as a relief teacher] but the juggle doesn't work so I may end up getting Mr Y. I may have three different people coming to take my classes during the day.'

- 'If kids are aware they are going to have a relief teacher they'll organise a bit amongst themselves.'

- 'They don't cope with names but they see that person's 'authority' or 'power' as a magic potion and wait to see how much authoritative power that person actually has.'

- 'We get some relief teachers who are wonderful entertainers as well as being very skilled teachers. My perception of a relief teacher would be one that was more highly skilled than a regular classroom teacher in relation to the breadth of their skills.'

- 'I've thought long and hard about collegiality. It's very important not to have disparate staff.'

- 'It's an appreciation of what other people do and how they fit into whole puzzle and that they are all heading in the same direction. That's where if a relief teacher is simply seen as an anonymous person to fill in the gaps, the school has lost the plot.'

- 'I'm trying to put myself in the mind of a relief teacher going into the staffroom when nobody speaks to them, not knowing the routine and the kids.'

- 'Relief teachers like ordinary teachers need a professional armoury of tools at their disposal. They need to be treated as a member of staff and not, 'It's only another relief teacher!'

- 'If the school wants relief teachers to do something, they have to value them.'

APPENDIX 10

The regular teachers' perspective: maths/ science teacher

This interview is one which questions the role and purpose of relief teachers in schools. The regular teacher had been a relief teacher for three years whilst studying and writing a book. His opinions, therefore, are based on his personal observations, reflections and experience, both as a relief teacher and as a regular teacher.

The relief teacher, like many others in the investigation, found that the flexibility of relief teaching enabled him to pursue other interests. Unlike many other relief teachers, however, he was not prepared to compromise his academic teaching role, and 'fit in'. He established his own professional and personal boundaries: he established when and where he would teach, and in return, expected the school staff to support him by providing a setting where students were ready and prepared to learn. As an established teacher, in Maths and Science, both hard-to-staff subjects, he was able to negotiate his terms in some schools, but it was not easy, either for himself or for the school staff. On one occasion when staff did not offer support, he contacted the Union who 'provided documents on relief teachers'.

Evidence from the investigation show that ten years after that incident, in the same schools, similar events are reported by interview respondents. The following interview, therefore, provides evidence of recurring problems, and identifying major issues in the investigation, such, as the lack of a clear role for relief teachers. The regular teacher comments:

> R: Relief teachers should be employed to teach the subjects that they were trained to teach then the discipline troubles might not come up. Some schools are very good. You find work prepared for you, and I think, as a trained teacher relieving in your area of expertise, you should not be expected to jump from a cooking lesson to science to woodwork. That's a hopeless situation. All they can do is see how to look after the kids in a classroom but I think schools should be using relief teachers in their areas of expertise, and it is true from grades 7-10. It doesn't make any difference. It's a fallacy to assume that because you are a relief teacher you should teach anything. That's ridiculous. The kids get a poor deal.
> *Q: What other factors apart from academic skills does a relief teacher have to do?*
> R: I guess the academic thing is your primary function. You are employed as an English or a Science teacher, you are not employed as a social worker or anything else. While it is true you interact as a human being, as an adult as with a child. That's where you bring your expertise in social relations; and the expected norms of society are what you teach that child. If you bring your own unique point of view on social behaviour to the school, and those are at odds with the conservative norms of society, you can be fired for doing that.
> *Q: Can you give me an example of that?*
> R: There are ways of doing things. If you were to teach 'the right of the strong is the right to rule' and as a result a child was manhandled at school, you 'd be brought to court.
> *Q: Does it reflect on what you find in school?*
> R: I was asked to take the job as a secondary science teacher. They didn't ask for discipline.
> *Q: When you were a relief teacher, what subjects did you take?*
> R: I only taught Maths and Science. I refused to do others.
> *Q: What was the reaction to that?*
> R: Sometimes they'd say, 'Go away. We don't want you today,' I'd say, 'That's okay', or 'We'll only have you half a day,' 'That's okay.' I'd told CES that I was not interested in areas such as cooking, because I had no expertise in those areas and I wanted to teach ... There was quite a difference in pay between qualified teachers and otherwise. Most schools said they were quite delighted to have someone who would teach properly and work in areas they were trained in, and I had as much work as I could handle. I was only teaching two days a week and I'd get full days.
> *Q: Did you get a variety of schools?*
> R: Some schools asked for me more than other schools.
> *Q: Did you have any problems?*
> R: You know them. Do you want me to spell them out? The most common things: ... by kids who weren't taught to behave, so there was poor behaviour; by work that was not prepared; by staff who were away; and poor support from deputy principals and CES. Some

staff support relief teachers, and the more often that relief teachers went to a school the kids would get used to them, and the relief teachers would not get mucked around so much.
Q: So it got a lot easier?
R: It got bearable. It was hard work. I was tired by the end of the day. The pay was [used to be] appalling but then they changed the pay and it was a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.
Q: How long were you a relief teacher?
R: Three years.
Q: Were you prepared to travel much?
R: [Names two schools, approximately fifty kilometres away]. I'd go to the further schools [F; G] after the pay went up. There were no travel claims. Before that I'd say, 'I can't afford to go out there unless you pay my travelling expenses.
Q: You stated what you wanted and it paid off.
R: H [high school] frequently wanted teachers in Science and Maths or someone who could do Computer Skills too. They were happier having someone they knew. If no work was prepared, I could teach. If someone was away for four or five weeks, I could do that block straight up. [talks about the range of schools] A and B called me most, I had only one day at C and D, and none at E.
Q: When you had a block of five or six weeks did you like that?
R: No, It didn't suit me because I was writing a novel, but the money was handy. They'd always done the right thing by me and they couldn't find anyone else. I refused to go to H and I didn't go back to F. because the kids were appalling, too.
Q: Are you implying that the kids were appalling at all these schools?
R: Yes. I told one AP exactly what I thought of them.
Q: What did he think of that?
R: He thought of me as pretty rude.
Q: Did he think of you as an equal?
R: I'd never thought of it like that. I don't care how people see me. I'm really surprised if people think I'm an arrogant liar. I'm interested apropos what you are doing. People in schools didn't have a clue about the stresses engendered by relief teacher status. In the schools I went to recently, the AP had thought about the problem. They [school staff] knew it was very difficult and they preferred someone who was going to be an ordinary teacher in a classroom and needed a lot of support, and had no compunction in calling on them, or walking out of class. They would come and set the class thing up and go off again from there. It never occurred to me that I would be seen as incompetent. It doesn't work for people who are trying to teach next door when a relief teacher is letting the class run riot. It's just hopeless. If people stand in front of the class and the kids make fun of them and don't go for help, it will mean that the kids see them as fools and AP's see them as destroying the discipline in school.
Q: Does it happen a lot?
R: Yes, with just about every relief teacher.
Q: What is the status of a relief teacher?
R: If you told the AP that you were having difficulties with a class, nine out of ten of them would be happy to help, because what they want is for the AP to maintain the discipline structure of the school. What the head of the subject wants is someone who will teach the subject you want in a civilised way. Different expectations are glazed areas where people are not sure how to get out. But most people don't use the Federation [Union] and the Federation has very strong concerns about how to use relief teachers and are very supportive. You can complain to the Union about the treatment you are getting, or if you go to school and the AP is outrageously rude to you; or you think that the school admin. is abusing you. The school can call you in, for example, to get you to teach seven periods and do morning break, lunch, bus duty and detention, and make a pig's ear out of it. When you look across you find you are not relieving for one teacher but for half a dozen, The AP is putting you under pressure to do it, but you are not supposed to do any yard duty because you are not a regular teacher in the school and it could be dangerous if you do not know names or rules.
Q: Have you used the Federation?
R: Yes.
Q: Did that work?
R: That worked well. I went to one school and the kids were climbing in and out of the window. I couldn't stop them. I asked the AP to help. He was very rude. So at break I told him I was leaving the school and I wouldn't be coming back. He was rude again; eventually I lost my temper with him ... two minutes after he was rude. So I rang up the Federation and

said I was *not* going back to the school. I had to tell someone as I was pretty brassed off. I told them , 'I have to tell someone before I return home and kick the dog!' Later they put out documents on relief teachers ... guidance for the administrators.

Q: How long ago would that be?

R; Seven or eight years [1986-1987]. The Department is hamstrung for two reasons, firstly because the Department will use anyone from the relief teachers service. When I was a relief teacher that was okay, except for the fact that most people want the money so badly they'll put up with anything rather than say, 'I'm getting paid for effectively supervising these children, how do I best go about it?' That's why relief teachers get a bad name, because the majority don't try to do anything. In the staffroom they put up with all the crud that kids give them. They don't ask for help, they tend to do the subject. They don't say, 'It's out of my area of expertise', they'll come in and say, 'Oh yes, we have experience here, there and everywhere'. They get the job. They don't understand that it's very dangerous in some areas, to say that. In cooking, science and woodwork, with some of the things the kids are doing they may injure themselves. I have come across ... administrators, who, to be fair to them, must have come across a whole lot of relief teachers who didn't know the time of day and got frustrated with it. In other [Australian] States, there are rules regarding relief teachers. There are differences. You can't just get a relief teaching job unless you have qualifications that are suitable.

Q; How did you find that out?

R: I used to be a relief teacher in South Australia.

Q: A while ago?

R: Yes. The rules for casual employment in teaching are different. Despite any other line stated, this is the only state that permanently employs teachers in senior positions with no qualifications.

Q: Amazing, isn't it?

R: The Union problem is that you're looking for a reasonable chance to do what you can do, and unless relief teachers have the support of the administration, then that's that! Relief teaching is incredibly hard work. To be a relief teacher and remain positive is extremely difficult.

Points for reflection

- 'It's a fallacy to assume that because you are a relief teacher you should teach anything. That's ridiculous. The kids get a poor deal.'
- 'I guess the academic thing is your primary function. You are employed as an English or a Science teacher, you are not employed as a social worker or anything else.'
- 'People in schools didn't have a clue about the stresses engendered by relief teacher status.'
- 'If people stand in front of the class and the kids make fun of them and don't go for help, it will mean that the kids see them as fools and AP's see them as destroying the discipline in school.'
- 'The school can call you in, for example, to get you to teach seven periods and do morning break, lunch, bus duty and detention, and make a pig's ear out of it. When you look across you find you are not relieving for one teacher but for half a dozen, The AP is putting you under pressure to do it, but you are not supposed to do any yard duty because you are not a regular teacher in the school and it could be dangerous if you do not know names or rules.'
- 'Relief teaching is incredibly hard work. To be a relief teacher and remain positive is extremely difficult.'

APPENDIX 11

The regular teachers' perspective: home economics teachers

After a day's relief teaching in a home economics department, the researcher and regular staff [A; R; C] began a discussion about student behaviour. The interview shows how the behaviour of students in a school can be a problem for the regular staff as well as for relief teachers. It shows, too, how what happens to a relief teacher can have broader implications for the whole school. By discussing student behaviour collectively, the three respondents built up a shared basis of knowledge and understanding which aligned and validated their strategies to counteract the problems:

> C: [teachers' aide] I've been in smaller schools where the behaviour definitely changes when relief teachers come. This [school] would have to be the worst. My brother is a relief teacher and he refused to come here after working in the MDT [Materials, Design and Technology] department for one day. He was not going to put up with the behaviour. The school is always trying to get relief. One ex-teacher here came as a relief but will not come back. In the practical areas I've witnessed appalling behaviour ... in animal mode. It must be a hard school, the permanent teachers have a battle. The kids have it in for relief, they are easy prey. We have bush lawyers here, little con artists ... it's very difficult.
> A: When a teacher is sick, you say, 'I am not coming in today.' The coordinator says, 'What have you got for period 1?' And after several minutes of explaining what to do and where everything is, you feel like dropping the phone and saying, 'Look, I'll come in anyway. I'm not that sick.' You think, 'How am I going to explain it?' You've lost your voice and you're on the phone for fifteen minutes saying what a relief teacher could do. It's such a lot of pressure for the other teachers in the block [building]. They have to pick up the bits and pieces and behaviour problems when the regular teachers are away. You can't blame relief teachers; they should be supported as all staff should be supported. If students in school haven't got their regular teachers, the problems go outside the classroom.
> *Q: Have you any ideas of how the problem could be managed better?*
> A: In a practical subject, it is easier to get them to cook because they feel resentful [if they do theory instead]. If they've got to do double theory instead of practical, there is a riot. It's better [doing] cooking because they are happy. We need regular Home Economics relief teachers, not just any old Joe to come in. We've had some wonderful relief days haven't we? [laughs].
> *Q: Can you tell me about some of the highlights? Have things ever gone very well?*
> R: We had one highly trained, on-the-ball relief teacher and we thought, 'Beauty! We've got a regular who knows the ropes and knows the kids.' But after one particular class, the boys were throwing frozen chips across the room. They were screaming and yelling. It took three of us to contain the situation. It was terrifying having them in that animal mode. They were on detention for four weeks afterwards ...There are classes themselves which are getting too difficult for the classroom teacher, let alone a complete stranger coming along. 'Who's the one throwing food?' 'Who's the one who should be separated?' and all the rest of it. If it's a plain supervision, [I'll advise,] 'Don't put these two together' ... If you are suddenly called in, all that type of background information is lost, and you have to be prepared. That stage of the program has to be written off. You carry on with your teaching with a sore throat because you drag yourself along. It's hard to pick up the pieces if you are not feeling well.
> *Q: What sorts of things would you find if you'd had a relief teacher?*
> R: If it's theory, the kids bludge. The work is not done that you've set. Kids'll con you next time that they gave their cooking money to the relief teacher ... so there are inconsistencies with the money [for cooking]. The room is in a mess; you have to give detentions because they haven't behaved ... It goes on and on. It's hard to take a day off. When professional development [a seminar] comes up it's ... 'Oh. no!'. You've got to be away. You can't go without planning for a relief teacher and dictating who's who and what's what. The video is our salvation. 'Round the Twist' takes periods 2, 3, 4 and 5. They all love it. It's by Paul Jennings and we've had 'Round the Twist' going for two terms. You have to hit on something they like. They think 'White Fang' the video is cool, too. You have to have those things up your sleeve. It sounds lazy but as long as they are educationally viable ... I've got a practical room to maintain. We have to have a certain amount of students out of the room to be prepared for the next class, as the rooms are used fairly constantly. It's time to recover or get

the rooms back to rights for the next class to go. People must recognise what the situation really is like.

C: It can be atrocious at times. Your heart really does go out to the poor relief teacher, standing up in the class. You can see them thinking, 'If I can get past this eighty-minute block I'll be all right. I'll be able to walk out of here.'

A: I get angry. One ex-teacher here, who knew the calibre of the regular teachers, came as a relief. She can control the class. She's a lovely teacher. She's a good teacher from my point of view. She was one I was hoping to train up to be our regular so kids could form a relationship with her and be pleasant. Instead the kids had a flour fight. The kitchen was covered. You just feel so helpless. She gave up the whole thing. Why should kids ruin a good teacher?

Q: Has she gone to other schools?

R: No. She has given up relief teaching. She was a good teacher ... strong but she's not going to put herself through that. [She said,] 'I'm not going to turn myself into a basket case ...'

C: It makes a difference, [male student teacher] being here. I'd love to see more males. In the last twenty years, four males have gone through the early childhood section and you could see the difference with the kids where there was a male there. It was the different things they do ... more male orientated, like building a billy-cart. It's good for those kids to see a man in the kitchen, wiping the sink out, carrying a dish towel and showing he can cook. Some of the kids come out, 'That's a woman's job!'

A: We get boys under the care of a single mother, who does a magnificent job under such circumstances, but kids never see a positive male role in the home area. It would be lovely to see a male teacher sitting sewing at a machine or ironing. Some male relief teachers we get, go all theatrical...

C: When the kids are not cooperating you feel like dirt ... dirt actually looks better.

A: Schools should have a pool of teachers who are well known relief, not a different one every time, so that children can relate to them. It should be in the school budget to have that amount of funds to cater for a band of relief teachers they've vetted ... You do need to be on the ball. You need to have physical stamina. Kids are angry ... they are anti ... You get good kids ... plenty of good kids in this school but generally the mood is angry, against change.

C: I was only here for two days when I heard the kids talking to a relief teacher. I swung round and said, 'Don't you dare speak to a relief teacher like that ...', right out of the top of my head. I had never heard a kid speak to a relief teacher using such language. It's the school.

A: If you had to check language and swearing you would not teach at all. You have to walk out and drop it at the door. You can't take it home.

Q: Have things changed in the last two years?

R: Yes definitely. It's true, it's a rough place. You have to become hard and tough.

When someone abuses you or you've had a run-in, you do take it home. I can't leave it. I worry, I stew. Most of the time I have to ignore bad language or behaviour. I can't take it to the principal every time or I would not get any work done. Kids say, 'You can't make me do that.' They are right up in the law aren't they?

Points for reflection

- 'It must be a hard school, the permanent teachers have a battle. The kids have it in for relief, they are easy prey.'
- 'You get good kids ... plenty of good kids in this school but generally the mood is angry, against change.'
- 'Schools should have a pool of teachers who are well known relief, not a different one every time.'
- 'If students in school haven't got their regular teachers, the problems go outside the classroom.'
- 'Why should kids ruin a good teacher?'
- 'People must recognise what the situation really is like.'

APPENDIX 12

The administrators' perspective: primary school administrator

This interview with an administrator from a primary school was chosen initially, to fill a 'gap' in the researcher's understanding of relief teaching as a phenomenon. In the course of interviewing relief teachers and school bursars from secondary schools, she encountered people who had worked in primary schools. Evidence from students, too, encompassed incidents which occurred in primary school settings. It seemed that an interview with an administrator from a 'feeder' school would provide the missing links. It would be possible, for example, to gain insights into anecdotal evidence from students who referred to the 'different' staff attitudes in their primary school.

One of the aims of the investigation is to build a base of information which reflected the reality of relief teaching in a number of settings, and which could be used as a starting point for more specific research, for example, a comparison of the administration of relief teaching in primary and secondary school settings. Of interest too, are examples of tacit knowledge (Polyani, 1967) arising from a sense of 'knowing' different classes, and theories in action (Argyris & Schön, 1974) which govern many of the decisions made by this interview respondent. A search for the complex and more subtle elements of relief teaching serves to establish deeper links, an aim of the investigation.

The following interview shows what it is like to be an administrator of relief teaching in a primary school, and how relief teachers are selected for the school. In addition, it provides interesting comparison with interview data from administrators in secondary and senior secondary contexts. The administrator explains the school's perspective on relief teaching:

> R: Without relief teachers, schools would find it extremely difficult to operate on any level other than a day-to-day basis; getting through from nine until three [o'clock]. We wouldn't be able to plan or cater for the unexpected. We don't nurture relief teachers as a whole. We don't provide them with support, unless they are ones who have been regulars with us. But again, they are very much left to operate independently once they are inside that classroom.
> I appreciate the difficulties relief teachers come up against, and when I employ relief teachers I look at the ones who can cope with difficult situations and still manage. It's not so much the quality of the program I worry about, it's more the relationships going on in the classroom. If a teacher can manage to keep the children calm, and provide support for them in that way, the actual work they do and the finished products, don't really matter to me. A calm class and a calm teacher at the end of the day is what I look for.
> Here we have a few relief teachers we try to deal with. We believe it has benefits primarily for the children. In our school the main thing we find, is that children find it very difficult to cope with change. They come from homes where change is continuous. It often leaves them wondering what is happening from one moment to the next. They like to look at the school as a place where things are fairly constant; perhaps the one constant thing in their life. Perhaps the teacher is the one constant person. When that teacher is away, for different circumstances, to have an unfamiliar face presented to them at the beginning of the day, can often set off this chain reaction. To avoid that, we try to keep to using the same [relief] teachers so the children can recognise familiar faces; so it's not such a problem for them. Likewise, in a 3/ 4 class, if a relief teacher has dealt with that class before, she comes a little more prepared; they have some idea of what they may encounter in the form of children's behaviour and work expectations. They know the routine ... the behaviour management policy ... who they can call to for help ... and when it's appropriate for them to do that. Primarily, the same relief teachers come in. We tend to find that they are predominantly female. Being male doesn't necessarily being more successful with difficult children, in fact it's probably women who manage difficult children better.
> *Q: Are the difficult children mainly boys?*
> R: 99.9 per cent of the difficult students here are boys, for whatever reason. It's not to say girls don't have their moments. They don't present problems in the same way as boys. We can say we've had more success with females dealing with difficult children than males.
> *Q: [Are those] younger or older relief teachers?*

R: We've got younger [relief teachers]. We have a couple who are a little older, they were mature-age education students, late thirties. We usually find we get varied comments from our relief teachers. 'I came to the school ten years ago, the children were not like that.'
Q: What do they mean? [pause] *Do they say that, in comparison, or more pointedly?*
R: It's meant to be that the situation has changed for the worst. The one I find is a real key to see if a relief teacher is coping or not, is when they say, '*When* I was at [another primary school] I had a lovely time, the children sat in their seats and ...'. The inference you draw here, is that it didn't happen in this school. I use that to key responses, using judgement. I find personally, I get very uncomfortable if a relief teacher is making a judgement about school. I believe I've asked for these services, and relief teachers have been paid. We're not pretending our school is the best in the world. We know we have difficult children, but we also assume that they have understood that by accepting to teach here, they know a bit about the school and that it will not be an easy one to come in to. Whether they get that information from CES or through the grapevine, I don't know ... I could understand if they came from a different [Australian] State. A lot of people don't seem to know they are coming to a difficult school.
I don't appreciate comments which lead to a comparison between our school and others ... you'll find relief teachers tend to do this. I've generalised. The majority let you know where they've had a good experience as a relief teacher. Often, they are very honest, 'I am finding it difficult ...', or, 'I'm not doing anything brilliant in there, but the kids seem to be going okay'. They are up-front about that. I make a point of saying, 'If I need you to come back, would you be prepared to?' Most of them will say, 'Yes', but I get the feeling from some of them, though, that they offer to come back, because they *need* the work, and not because they have enjoyed themselves or they'd had a rewarding day. Some days can get difficult for an experienced teacher, even one who is on the staff, never mind a relief teacher who has come in. Often, a teacher, returning from an absence, will say, 'Look, I don't know what happened in my room!'. If it has been a chaotic day the classroom tends to reflect that, the next day ... or the children come up with tales.
Q: Do you believe them?
R: No. We know that the teachers can get a general feel of the response the next day, as to what sort of day relief teachers have had. Our children are incredibly honest. They are also incredibly dishonest in a different way. They are very up-front about whether they like a teacher or not. Some relief teachers get votes of enthusiasm from children, 'We did good things', or when they hear their teacher is going to be away tomorrow, 'That's good'. The majority enjoy these experiences, and enjoy the relief teachers' visit. We have relief teachers back constantly, if they genuinely have had a good time and have taken the kids for what they are and have rolled with the flow of things.
We had a relief teacher here for three days who said that one thing that would really help, would be to have the class rules published and defined on the walls. Every class has class rules but not all classes have put them up. She felt more comfortable because she could point out the consequences of any behaviour. She had assumed that the rules were generally the same. They are, but in some classes there are specifics. We've had feedback, so in order to support relief teachers, we'll publish rules on the classroom wall so the children know exactly where they stand.
Q: What material or information do you give relief?
R: They get a relief folder. The classroom teachers are responsible for the folder which outlines the routines in their classroom. There are samples of work from children and general things on the class list, like classroom discipline ... not so much the policy, they haven't time to wade through that, but the steps you can take if you have a problem. If the child is interfering with your rights to teach, or the other children to learn, there are steps you can follow. Children may choose to sit quietly on a chair ... to go to a quiet area ... the child may even choose to be sent to the senior teacher/ principal. If children will not co-operate in terms of leaving the room, them we get immediate outside assistance to withdraw the child.
Usually, I make sure that I have contact with all relief teachers when they enter the school. I talk to them about classroom expectations ... if a child there needs a particular focus ... changes in classroom ... a general chat to let them know that if they need assistance, they can call on me. We don't expect them to struggle on by themselves; and difficult children need to be removed as soon as possible so the rest of the class is not sacrificed by their behaviour. That's easy to do. Sometimes we identify children *before* the relief teacher gets there and withdraw them beforehand to give them another workspace. There are some children who say, 'We are having a relief teacher today, can I work outside my room? They know they

don't cope well in those situations. Rather than be tempted, they ask to work in a quiet spot and we have some areas where they can do that.

Q: When a relief teacher comes do they bring their own work?

R: Always. Whatever work they bring along, it doesn't phase us. They may have brought some stencilled sheets, [although] our policy is that we try to limit stencilled sheets, but they've been asked to come in for a day, and care for a class for a day. To me the 'caring' part of that is more important. There is an understanding of calmness, purpose, feeling good about themselves by the end of the day. What happens in between that has been [left] much up to the relief teacher. We are getting qualified teachers and believe that the talking they do is valuable, regardless of the paper stuff. A lot of classroom teachers have the class routine outlined. Normally a teacher being replaced has duties or responsibilities that the relief teacher does, however here, I often do it. We have Line D for detention, I don't expect relief teachers to do any of that. The children are there for misdemeanours. It's often very difficult, depending on the day and what's going on in the school. If it is a very unsettled day, I would not throw relief teachers out in the yard at all, it could be horrendous for someone who has never been here, to go out on duty and then come in to face the class again. Generally, I've done duty if it has been possible, because it's too difficult when you don't know the names of different children, and difficult children would try to get away with something. I would only give it to a *regular* relief teacher.

There are some relief teachers whose preferred style, past background teaching experience, find this situation too difficult, and we have some who are tremendous. I don't know what training you could give a relief. I don't know how you could provide things to help. I don't know, personally, how people cope with the 'unexpectedness' of things. I know, from my position of senior person, how important it is have relationships with the children. I don't know how relief teachers do it, but they go into classes ... don't know names ... what they're capable of ... how they'll react in a small group situation or a larger one. Being able to cope with the unexpected is the makings of a good relief teacher. That's what they're faced with constantly and the ability to be really flexible, the ability to negotiate with the children, 'I have this work that you need to do, I know you're really keen to go on with that, but let's look at finishing this first, then maybe there's an opportunity.'

Q: What training do you provide for your regular staff?

R: Quite a bit in terms of conflict resolution or coping with change, because that is what this community is all about. The majority of staff here come from very different backgrounds from the children, and so we come with our values, beliefs etc. and when children don't conform to those we tend to worry and say, 'What is happening here?' So we have to spend a lot of time looking at values and beliefs and our position as teacher and facilitators. Then looking at our clientele and what is our responsibility to them. How do we work with them? There are a group of people with an ongoing commitment to the school. We've had to go through a whole lot of that, when a relief teacher walks in off the street, they also have to fit in with all of that . It's really that they have a knowledge of working in the area. Some relief teachers can just walk in and cope; and if I had an opportunity to employ that person, I would. There are others as soon as they walk through the door, I know it will be a difficult day. I really do. A lot of it is intuitive to start with ... a lot of things happen through the day which lead you to say, 'I knew this might happen ...'

We had one teacher ... the principal and I looked at each other and we thought, 'This is going to be a difficult day', and it was!

Q: How did you tell?

R: The children are up-front and call a spade, a spade. They are very verbal and talk about everything they think ... everything. You have to be able to accept the good and the bad, but the children accept a presence, someone who is confident, upright, seems to have a strength about them. Often people come to us who seem very withdrawn, quiet, unsure and lack confidence. That uncertainty, children sense in a person, and tend to play on that a bit. Some relief teachers come and look as if, 'I am not sure whether I should have said, "Yes", to come here today', if they'd been greeted by a kid who said, 'Who are you? What are you doing here?' with no, 'please', 'thank you', 'how are you?' They are very *loud* children. If you are not prepared for that, the children will think, 'Right we're going to have a fun day here' and they do! They are very aware of how to push people's buttons and how to play the game and how to stretch the boundaries. They'll try each and every time. Not just with a relief teacher. Any teacher in the school who might take that class responsibility for a while and they'll test it.

As a relief teacher, if you are not prepared for that testing ground or for that test going on, you'll probably have a very difficult session. Standing your ground is very important with these children. Carry through what you say. If you say something will happen as a consequence, of something happening in a room, if you don't follow it through the first time they'll play on it. Being really consistent. But we're asking a wealth of things to happen in one day and with one person who may never have been in our school before. Some [relief teachers] deliver and that's just terrific. That's why schools can continue to do Personal Development and cope with teachers not being there, because we've got a really skilled relief teacher out there. I believe they find it easier each time they come back to school.

Q: Which high schools do the children go to.

R: They go to [high schools].

Q: I was looking at the links between the primary, high schools and colleges ... whether a relief teacher might come here and find themselves in a high school situation.

R: We do have discussions and liaise with [high school]. Grade 6's go there already for a computer class.

Q: What instructions about relief teaching did you get from the previous person?

R: 'Here's a list of good relief teachers. Unfortunately the good ones have found employment. See what you can do with what's left'! I was at another school. I drew on a list of relief teachers that I worked with really well there and they were very happy to come here. Teachers have their network for relief teachers, 'Who do you get?' You draw on the same ones, but you are in competition with other schools.

Q: Do you use CES?

R: Yes when I can't get anyone. We've had our dismal failures. Generally we've had good ones.

Q: Did you give CES feedback?

R: Next time I rung them I said , 'Could you send X or Y ? If not, we need someone for a grade 1/ 2 ... preferably not these [names] for they did not have an enjoyable time last time.' I made it clear that there are ones we won't have if possible. Usually those relief teachers would say, 'No', even if they were offered a position.

Q: Has CES been in touch or visited the school?

R: No.

Q: Would you like to meet them or be provided with more assessment of relief teachers?

R: Not really. To me they are just the middle men, and I believe the only way you can find out about a good relief teacher is if s/he is coming to your school. I don't believe that reading about them or even sitting and talking with them, is the complete answer. I think I get everything I need to know about that person by the end of the day, anything else doesn't really count with me. They provide the service. I have a list of relief teachers at home. Usually, I'm at work by 7. 30 am to 7.45 am. Relief teachers are here by 9.00 am. They are usually fast on their feet. These relief teachers are super-organised. I imagine that those who have been around for a while would have certain piles of work for certain age groups. Grab a pile and off they go. They turn up very quickly, fly straight into the classroom and pick up from there. I don't know how they do it, I really don't. I did a horrendous thing to a relief teacher. I only asked her to do it, as she had been a regular here. [I asked her to] go on to three different classes during the day. Even in my teaching role during the day, I find it really difficult to change my thinking from 'early childhood', 'primary classes' and the 'library'. The only reason that I think I can do it with any degree of success is because I know the kids. I know how they are going to respond, and I asked this relief teacher in the morning to start with Prep and after recess do grades 3/ 4 and after lunch 5/ 6. I said, 'How did you go?' at the end of the day. 'Fine'. I could tell by the way she finished the day, it probably wasn't brilliant, but she felt she'd coped and the children were okay. It may not have been brilliant in terms of the work they'd produced but she felt satisfied she'd managed to get through what was a very difficult day. I certainly appreciated that. 'You *are* going to come back to us? I won't do this sort of thing to you again!' She said, 'No. That's fine. I got to know the children more and they got to know me.' She was identifying positives, in terms of working that way with different age groups, and I thought that was really a nice way to end the day by identifying the positives. All I could think of was, 'Gosh. Have I really blown it? Will this relief teacher come back to us again?' I would never do that to someone I hadn't had in the school before.

Q: That's interesting. There must be tremendous differences in primary school grades. Did she have material to cope with all that?

R: Yes, and because she had been here the previous day, she was able to say to the teachers, 'Is it okay if I bring in my own work? 'Yes that's fine, but there will be things to go on with in the group.' She said it was really nice to get up in the morning knowing 'where I was going to come to and what I was going to do.' She knew it was going to be a difficult day. We're nurturing that person as well as two or three others for relief.

Q: Do they want to go back to full time work?

R: A couple would, but one is happy to do relief teaching. She likes the independence it gives her. They can have days when they don't need to work. Still it's nice for them to have regular schools they go to. It's the key for effective relief teaching. Just [working in] a couple of schools minimises stress for them and for the children. It would be nice if there were some way you could employ four relief teachers between a few schools and they were the ones you constantly had in your schools. We will need relief teachers more and more in schools because there is a stress involved in working and regular teachers could be away unexpectedly through illness rather than for Personal Development. We want someone who is consistent. We would never plan to have more than one or two relief teachers in a school in a day. We would never plan to have five or six on class. It would be dynamite, it really would. We couldn't do anything with the whole group.

Q: Have you kept within your budget?

R: Yes. Major sickness with one of the staff ... I think we bought forty-five relief days, but we've exceeded those by ten days or more. We believe that if we need it we will buy relief.

Points for reflection

- 'Without relief teachers, schools would find it extremely difficult to operate on any level other than a day-to-day basis.'
- 'It's not so much the quality of the program I worry about, it's more the relationships going on in the classroom.'
- 'A calm class and a calm teacher at the end of the day is what I look for.'
- 'In our school the main thing we find, is that children find it very difficult to cope with change.'
- '[Students] are very aware of how to push people's buttons and how to play the game and how to stretch the boundaries. They'll try each and every time.'
- 'Standing your ground is very important with these children.'
- 'A lot of people [relief teachers] don't seem to know they are coming to a difficult school.'
- 'They get a relief folder. The classroom teachers are responsible for the folder which outlines the routines in their classroom. There are samples of work from children and general things on the class list, like classroom discipline ... not so much the policy, they haven't time to wade through that, but the steps you can take if you have a problem.'
- 'They turn up very quickly, fly straight into the classroom and pick up from there. I don't know how they do it, I really don't.'
- 'We're nurturing that person as well as two or three others for relief.'
- 'We will need relief teachers more and more in schools because there is a stress involved in working and regular teachers could be away unexpectedly through illness rather than for Personal Development.'

APPENDIX 13

The administrators' perspective: high school administrator

This interview shows the prevailing assumptions in many schools within the investigation, that relief teaching problems are largely 'inevitable'. Even a brief examination of the underlined sections of text illustrate a range of problems or ambiguities within the organisation and practice of relief teaching in a high school setting. It is possible to 'read between the lines' (Pease & Garner, 1985; Bolton, 1987) and see indications of frustration, wasted time and effort, and a general malaise in tackling the problems, perhaps, through lack of school leadership or comprehensive initiatives (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). As a result, problems are anticipated, but not dealt with effectively, and negative cycles of events recur (Senge, 1992).

An examination of the administrator's comments, shows the urgent need for restructuring the management of relief teaching within the school. By his own admission, the administrator 'does not like leaving things to the last moment', and does his best to arrive at school early to organise relief teaching. However, despite employing relief teachers on a daily basis, there are few consistent procedures in place to enable relief teachers, regular teachers or administrators to prepare for a change of teacher. Students appear to have gained too much power: they have a different agenda, and have caused teachers to leave the school (Waters & Crook, 1990). Again, the interview illustrates the waste of resources and the paucity of strategies to redress the problems.

The interview data could provide links to further research, an aim of the investigation, by posing the question, 'What are the barriers to relief teaching effectiveness in this school, and how could they be overcome?' The following comments from an administrator's perspective reflect some of the underlying themes which emerged in other school settings: for example, the lack of time; the need for compromise; and the gap between what should happen and what happens in practice (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Schön, 1983). The researcher, had not met the interview respondent previously and asked,

> *Q: How long have you been in charge of coordinating relief?*
> R: Just his year. AP's have done it in the past but this year it was one of the jobs for an [Advanced Skills Teacher] position.
> *Q: Could you describe what you do in the morning to organise relief?*
> R: I come to school at 7.00 am. People ring up from 7.00 am onwards. If you are using CES the earlier you can get in the better. It gives me a chance to get an idea of who is going to be away and what we'll need. If people don't ring early enough, it's difficult. It does happen that sometimes I don't hear about an absence until 8.30 am. I am spending easily half-an-hour or more, trying to get the timetables of staff who are not coming in ... see how many lessons are involved ... write up the timetable ... get details up to the office and collect relief teacher's forms. Up until three weeks ago [November], we had two days this year without a relief teacher to cover for sickness and people going on professional development. Unlike most schools, we get relief teachers in to cover absences rather cover them internally, up until the end of grade 10 classes [i.e. when grade 10 classes finish before the end of the school term]. Then we do our own supervisions. Even so, if it's three periods we have to cover that ourselves.
> *Q: Are you within your budget for relief?*
> R: We've overspent a little. <u>It's hard to tell.</u> We've got a budget for Professional Development. We use relief teachers to replace staff. We've just bought another four days of stickers because we've run out, but we may get that back through Professional Development [i.e. from other sources, such as the Department]. We [school] spend $35 000 on relief teaching ... the average teacher's wage for one year.
> *Q: When a relief teacher comes, what would you provide?*
> R: A timetable and school map. We do have courtesy students who are <u>supposed</u> to help. There are basic subjects lists but <u>we don't have printed options lists yet.</u> It was one of the things I was <u>trying to get organised.</u>
> *Q: What is a basic subject list?*

R: It is a list of students in the basic subjects classes. The option lists are for grades 9 and 10. We don't have lists for them all in the computer on hard copy. Relief teachers can't get lists for those classes but can get class lists for basic subjects.

Q: You said you were thinking about that. Do you see that as something that would help relief teachers?

R: I'm sure it would. It would be handy, but I can't get people in charge of computers to get hard copies made for me. The courses have been changing all year but it has been something we've battled for a while but given up now.

Q: What happens when the relief teacher comes in?

R: We have our own relief teacher [Mrs P.] who comes to [high school] all the time. I don't get her through CES. She's been available for us for twenty years. I ring her number first thing and she comes every time. She only comes here. She's very good. She knows the school and kids and it makes it very easy for her.

Q: So you have one stalwart teacher.

R: Yes. Whenever someone's away, I can ring her and that's first of all. After that I have lists of names ... people who have contacted the school and said they were available for relief teaching. I try to go through these names and then ring CES.

Q: So you grab who you can early ...

R: Often people you want have jobs anyway. [laughs].

Q: Oh yes. I think you've tried to get me about six times this year, and I been booked by another school each time. I still haven't taught here, certainly in the last year.

R: If ['stalwart' relief teacher] has two periods off during the day she can go home, as she lives locally.

Q: How about duty?

R: So far we haven't asked relief teachers to do duty. It's something we've talked about with the staff. Staff numbers are going down while duties remain constant. There's a feeling we ought to involve relief teachers who come to the school.

Q: Do you have feedback from relief teachers?

R: A couple have mentioned having a school map and the daily information sheet, so they knew what was going on. With Mrs P., she knows the school, knows the routine and fixes up the absentee sheet for the office. She always gets here for class teacher which we don't ask. We say, 'Here's the stuff for the Class Teacher period'. Mrs P. is part of the institution.

Q: That's great for her and for you, too. That's the ideal. She's established. So let's look at the others. What feedback do you get?

R: They talk about the kids' behaviour which we follow up. Unfortunately a few people say they will not come back again. So it's negative feedback.

Q: Do you find that worrying?

R: It's the behaviour of the students ...

Q: That's what I'd like to focus on. It's a problem?

R: It's a problem for us in the school.

Q: Do you find behaviour changes when a relief teacher comes to the school?

R: Of course it does.

Q: In what way?

R: The students think, 'It's a relief teacher and it's an opportunity to play up'. Not all students ... a nucleus will do so. They'll call out the wrong names. They see a relief teacher coming into class and they'll duck out of the way ... they pretend they are not in the class at all. Those sorts of problems. We should have overcome them by giving relief teachers a list of student names. The problem is that if you have a relief teacher who doesn't know who the kids are and the kids say they are someone else ...

Q: That's a problem you've identified and it's gone on all year?

R: Yes.

Q: You've had some aggro ...

R: Yes. We've had some relief teachers who are not coming back.

Q: Even for you, I mean you personally. You've had people saying, 'I'm not happy with this. I don't want to come back'.

R: It's a bit unfortunate. I apologise to them for the kids' behaviour but you can't do anything. It's not something you can cure.

Q: Have you any ideas of what could be done about it? What the school or relief teachers could do to cope?

R: I gather the students in this school are more difficult than the students in a lot of other schools at the moment. I've been here too long. I don't know what kids in other schools are

like. These kids don't accept change very well, when you've got to have changes in permanent staff. They'll accept a teacher at the beginning of the year, but even half way through the year they are very reluctant to accept new people. For example we had a permanent member of staff who had been here a week and left because of the way they had been treated. I am not putting kids down too much. It happens.

Q: It's something that needs to be faced. Everyone needs a chance to get established. It's great to have an opportunity to acknowledge the problem and to have everyone's comments.

R: AP's and the Principal are aware of the problem.

Q: What do they do ... what does the school do if you have a problem with discipline that affects relief teachers and regular teachers?

R: In our school we have a system of sub-schools. Prior to this year sub-school managers [SSM] used to be regular teachers and AST3's. This year we have had two AP's because of the kids' behaviour last year. That's how I got the co-ordinator's job, as they had to off-load something. It's the SSM who deals with problems.

Q: Problems arise through relief teaching go to the SSM and not to you?

R: Relief teachers talk about it and I see misbehaving kids ... they've nicked off or something ... and I make sure the SSM knows about it. It's my job just to organise the timetable.

Q: Do they give details of the behaviour management policy to relief teachers?

[pause]. *If relief teachers have a behaviour management problem do they know how to handle it?*

R: Most relief teachers who've been here before know they would send the kids to a SSM ... but they have nothing.

Q: Do you have folders or anything relief teachers can read about the policy?

R: The school discipline policy is in the handbook. It's in the staffroom. Maybe we should do something about giving that to a relief teacher too. When a relief teacher comes in, there is no time to read through six or seven pages of the discipline policy. What they need to know is what to do with kids. If they ask me, and sometimes they do, 'What do we do if we have a problem child?', I direct them to a SSM. The SSM is easily accessible and walks round the school, so they've got someone on hand. That's what happens.

Q: The behaviour changes. Some people don't want to come back; it's not for them ... others manage to cope. How can you get a 'good' relief teacher? By 'good' I mean someone that stays the course? Is that an assumption?

R: Some people settle in easily. I think it's the relief teacher's expectations that's the problem. Some relief teachers come in here and want kids to be sitting separately, not talking, and getting to work straight away. That doesn't happen. If a relief teacher has that expectation and gets rattled by it, they've lost it. I'm not saying it's their fault, but that's what happens I'm sure. Those people who get them organised without heavy discipline-type action, are more able to succeed. If you treat kids in a different way, instead of saying, 'Do this now!' 'Do that now!'. It depends on the person. Kids will accept our resident relief teacher. She's a strong disciplinarian but they know her. She's been here for twenty years. Kids have her several times during the year and they know what to expect. If a new person comes in they will want to try them out.

Q: You think there's a definite response to newcomers?

R: Of course. Even some of the better kids will do the same ... which is annoying.

Q: You've noticed? Is it in a group ...?

R: It starts as an individual and develops into a group. Everyone joins in with this great game.

Q: What about [the provision of] *work for relief teachers?*

R: If a teacher is away on professional development, it is easy. There has to be work left for classes. It's not a problem.

Q: Suppose someone is sick?

R: People phone in with work. If people haven't got work, I'll find the subject SM and we'll try and produce work for them. We don't expect the relief teacher to provide work.

Q: So work is always provided?

R: In theory ... yes. It falls down a bit. That's another problem I have in the morning. Someone rings up and says, 'I haven't got any work and I have to race around the SSM's and say, 'So-and-so's away'. On some mornings the phone starts ringing at 7.00 am. If teachers don't phone early enough and I've organised relief teaching and then I find other people away I have to go back and re organise. It's silly getting a relief teacher when we've only got four periods [to cover], but with four or five teachers, we can collapse their timetables. Having done that, I also have to sort out what is taught. Regular teachers have good intentions, 'Will

you get this out of my desk?' 'That out of the library?' 'This somewhere else ...'. I have to get those things organised and on a sheet of paper so that the relief teacher knows what to do, I've got the books out of the cupboard, the map from the back of the room, keys etc. Yep by 8.30 am, I hope I've got it all organised!

Q: You're ready for a cup of coffee by then.

R: Some mornings it could take one and a half hours, depending on what's asked of me. I don't mind. People don't understand, when they say, 'Could you get this out of my cupboard?' 'This is on top of my desk.' I've got to do all that and still get my own things ready. Some mornings it's flat chat. Some are better than others.

Q: Do teachers have work prepared for relief teachers?

R: No teachers have back-up work. Relief teachers who have completed work leave it in the office or in the staff pigeon holes. It goes back to teachers.

Q: Do staff have written instructions about relief teachers?

R: No. The Home Economics [HE] department name which relief teachers they want.

Q: In staff meetings do you say, 'This is what we'd like you to do', when a relief teacher comes in? Is there any organised policy?

R: No.

Q: Or when a relief teacher comes in, 'This is what we expect'? [pause] *For example, at the beginning of the year, when you have a staff meeting does anyone say, 'If you happen to be away, these are the instructions for the co-ordinator ... these are the instructions for relief teachers'? Is anything written down so that staff know what the procedures are when a relief teacher comes?*

R: *Not written down but told.* We asked them to ring early. In the Science department they asked the teachers to prepare at least a lesson for each class they teach. When a member of staff was away, I had access to that lesson. I grabbed that. It worked quite well in the first term. By the end of the first term it was used up and people have forgotten to do it again. Some other [sub] schools work on the same principle which is handy for SSM's.

Q: You said some people had preferred relief teachers?

R: Yes. The HE people have the same couple of relief teachers. They are specialists.

Q: Do you try to get specialists?

R: I try to get specialists for HE and Speech and Drama. Sometimes when you have several people away you have mixed loads so you try to get generalists. It's all over the place.

Q: What is the greatest number of relief teachers you've had in one day?

R: I remember eight in one day.

Q: Did you notice that behaviour in school was any different?

R: Yes, it was worse. Kids reacted to relief teachers. The school can become unstable. It's nothing to do with the teaching. I do an absentee check. We are supposed to fill in a form first thing in the morning and another in the afternoon to see which kids are out of their classes. We also have an absentee sheet during the day. There is an attendance return put in Class Teacher to publish a list of kids who are away. My job is to get the returns that come in the afternoon to say these kids are out of class. The returns are collated and given to the SSM. When I know a relief teacher is coming it means I am going round anyway to SSM and I can warn them to be mindful that a relief is coming and ask them to spend time wandering around the school. That's a bit of help for a relief teacher.

Q: How can a relief teacher fill in absentee forms if they have no class lists?

R: Some of them do if the teacher has provided them with class lists.

Q: I wondered if you had difficulties?

R: Of course we do. They forget about it or don't do it. It's also true of regular staff. They forget. It's not a perfect system. I mentioned talking to the SSM in the morning, as it helps if they are aware that a relief teacher is coming. I also put the names of absent staff on the white board in the staffroom.

Q: Do you put the names of relief teachers too?

R: No. I know some schools do. My wife is a relief teacher. It makes me more aware of relief teaching, having seen her point of view, too.

Q: Is it a job you would like to do?

R: I'd never be a relief teacher. No thank you! I think it would be very hard. She's in primary schools. It may be easier to organise because the teacher has a class. A teacher doesn't have a class here. It is easier to have a class list for primary schools as you are there for the whole day. This class list business is one of my hang-ups on the job. We're not doing enough for relief, when you can't even give them a list of the names of kids in the class. Most of them battle through.

Q: Most of the children battle? Most of the relief teachers battle? [long pause] *Who is going to take on your co-ordinator's job next year?*
R: We haven't decided.
Q: If someone asked you, would you back away?
R: It depends on what alternatives I have!
Q: [Laughs] *Wise comment. Do you think you've refined what you've done?*
R: I could refine it more.
Q: No. I mean have you streamlined things?
R: I don't like rushing through things. I don't like leaving things to the last minute. On a few occasions a part-time teacher who doesn't come until after recess, doesn't think of ringing up until just after recess. I found that quite difficult because I have a full load of teaching – twenty-two periods.
Q: That's a lot ...
R: A regular teacher takes twenty-six.
Q: ... with all the relief teaching organisation and running around.
R: It's part of my duty. It means for a lot of my teaching [commitments], I can't just go off and organise relief teaching. I find that pretty frustrating.
Q: Can I go back on that? Do people appreciate your job?
R: The AP does but very few other people would understand. I volunteered for the job. I had some experience when I was a SSM when I first started here. At that stage SSM did all their [sub] school's relief too. So I volunteered. The other AST3 has young children, it would be difficult for her to get here early. I like to get to school early. If I wasn't doing this job I'd be here at 7.30 am anyway. I get a lot of things done without interruption.

Points for reflection

- How do the underlined sections of text change the holistic balance of the interview?
- 'Up until three weeks ago, we had two days this year without a relief teacher: to cover for sickness and people going on professional development.'
- 'We [school] spend $35 000 on relief teaching ... the average teacher's wage for one year.'
- 'The problem is that if you have a relief teacher who doesn't know who the kids are and the kids say they are someone else ...'
- 'I apologise to them for the kids' behaviour but you can't do anything. It's not something you can cure.'
- 'I think it's the relief teacher's expectations that's the problem.'
- 'Sometimes when you have several people away you have mixed loads so you try to get generalists. It's all over the place.'
- 'We're not doing enough for relief, when you can't even give them a list of the names of kids in the class.'
- 'I don't like leaving things to the last minute.'

APPENDIX 14

The administrators' perspective: a principal with thirty years experience

This interview occurred when the researcher worked for a day as a relief teacher in a district school, and the principal volunteered to talk about his involvement as an administrator of relief teaching. The interview provided an opportunity to gather research from a rural school. Data from this interview could be viewed specifically, for example, in a comparison between relief teaching in isolated or centrally located schools, or as contributing an additional dimension to the underlying themes which emerged from analysis. Comments which reflect the gap between what the principal would like to happen, and what happens in practice are underlined. These show how the interviewer's experience as a relief teacher alerted her to the ambiguities within the interview, thus providing potentially deeper insights into relief teaching as a phenomenon.

The interview provides examples of the research approach used by the researcher. In this interview, she uses her experiences as a relief teacher in the school, to provide feedback about her positive experiences in the school. This is seen as a means to counteract any perception of 'judgement' when, both she and the principal knew that there was little written information available for relief teachers (Lee & Renzetti, 1993). As the interview progressed, so it was possible to understand the principal's assumptions behind his decisions: he saw the need to develop a caring school environment by developing positive relationships between members of the school community. He admitted that his staff felt that he spent 'far' too much time dealing with individual children. In this context, written information for relief teachers, despite his good intentions, had not materialised. The interview illustrates the effects of school leadership on relief teaching. The researcher begins the interview with an open question:

> *Q: When did you start organising relief teaching?*
> R: I left [high school in the investigation] in 1983. I had been organising relief teachers for eight years. If a regular teacher were ill, I'd have a list of relief teachers, and their special subject areas, the time, work left ... prescribed to them, and if there was no work we would talk about what sort of things would be appropriate. The AP is away today so a senior staff member has organised it.
> I get here from 7.00 am to 7.15 am. <u>What I'd like</u> *to* do is set up relief teaching folders to provide continuous work for the children. <u>I'd like</u> to get in touch with the person who is coming in, so they knew the type of work they would be doing. We have a good relationship with CES. <u>Unfortunately they send us teachers they can get, rather than teachers who fit the need</u> ... They may not be from the subject area but count themselves able to teach in any area. That's fine <u>if there is an outline of what they've got to do. What I'd like to happen</u> is that there is a team of relief teachers associated with each school who know the children. The children appreciate having good work, not hundreds of photocopied sheets that they have to work from. Some relief teaching can be a god-awful task. There's no question in my mind that kids take advantage. In a district high school we will get a relief teacher for a grade 2 and the next day the same one might take grade 9. The kids say to themselves, 'That's only an infant teacher' and immediately grasp onto that. I've had to bawl out several classes for their treatment of relief teachers. A lot of people may not have gone for that, but relief teachers do schools a service which is very often not recognised. Were they not here, and they were certainly not when I was a young teacher, the staff would have to do all of it. I can remember in those days, I'd be teaching forty-eight children French, and if I had a free period I'd still have to do relief on top of it. A relief teacher's lot is not an easy one. One of the things a relief teacher has to be conscious of, is that just as kids need to be accepting of them, so kids need to be accepted too. You will find different mentalities in the country from those in a city. You will find that children have different ways of expressing themselves. <u>I hope that relief teachers do understand.</u> I would say the vast majority do. There are some who still come to school from a teaching background of the late 50's and 60's which is terribly demoralising for children these days. What they need is someone who understands the world they have to be part of. You see so much going on. I don't mean 'old' in terms of age but 'old' in terms of attitude. They really create their own problems in the classroom.
> *Q: Can you elaborate?*
> R: Not only ladies, who left the system in 1965, had their families and came back ten years later into a system which had changed enormously. I venture to say that if you are not here

every day you do not know what is going on. The kids have different sorts of interests. You can see how things change by examining the different styles of handwriting that are used. I look at the generations of handwriting, I've had in this school. I have copperplate, most of my staff are cursive hand writers and in the last ten years we've been teaching basic handwriting, which is basically printing joined together. A relief teacher who is older will often come into the classroom and write on the blackboard in copperplate or cursive. None of the children will understand what has been written. Then there is an instruction, 'Do it!'. The children just do not have a clue.

Q: Fascinating. I've never thought of that.

R: It's a true fact. A lot of children say, 'I don't understand that', because they don't know the system. I did English and we always studied Dickens or Bronte. They are wonderful to me. Superb novels to teach. For children today, TV has the mastery of their minds and it's really very difficult to teach those novels unless you do a lot of background work. Therefore, a relief teacher has to come prepared for a lot of things. The material has to be appropriate for the children. It can never be busy work. That is the worst thing because they know it is busy work and they realise that no one will take any notice of it. I am really most impressed with modern relief teachers, especially now they are qualified. When we first started out with relief teachers they were mums, (back to my previous school time). Having qualified teachers makes an enormous amount of difference. We do have one or two who are unqualified but that is a desperate last-ditch stand to get someone in, we have to say, 'Yes'. Generally I get a relief teacher into school who is a good one and that person will be invited back much more frequently.

Q: It's in everybody's interests. With your comments about the handwriting, were you thinking more of primary or secondary classes?

R: Secondary, basically. If you are a going to be a relief teacher you have to be conscious of all the small changes that are going on around you ... The first thing a relief teacher should do when they come to a school is to find out as quickly as possible the number one hierarchical system for want of a better description. Not that I want people to come into my office and say, 'I'm here'. There are certain steps that need to be taken, like behaviour management patterns so that the relief teacher can be seen to respond appropriately. Here a relief teacher cannot send a child to the quiet room. It's only because our quiet room demands that a child remain there for the rest of that day when the relief teacher may not be here.

Q: How would a relief teacher find out the procedures?

R: That is one of the things that must be addressed. This is the second year of that behaviour management program and in future it will be in a folder for relief teachers. We want to make it work for them as for our teachers.

Q: Do you think of relief teachers as being of a separate category?

R: Yes, in terms of the quiet room only. It's all tied up with the negotiation process. If some child should be abusive and refuse to follow the classroom rules, which are up in each classroom, then the relief teacher will need to go and talk with a teacher who will decide what steps to take. Don't get the feeling that relief teachers are second class citizens. Schools would flounder without relief teachers.

Q: I was interested in your comment on the hierarchical structure. How do relief teachers find out about it in this school?

R: In this school it's easy because myself and four others form the senior staff. I like to think that a relief teacher who has been here for a day will just walk into the staffroom and make a cup of coffee, sit in the staffroom and natter. I like to think that happens and with the majority it does. I have one lady who comes in, [I say] 'Here again'. 'That's fine. Lovely to see you.' She grabs a cup of coffee and sits down in the staffroom and talks about kids. That's the advantage of a caring school.

Q: I had a warm welcome, and I've had a pleasant day.

R: It's been a very busy day. There have been three or four staff off; a budget committee of eight ... a little topsy-turvy. In the last twelve years this school has more than doubled in size. I was in the primary school here, I went away to high school and then came back as principal, thirty years later. There were still three teachers in school who had taught me. They were teaching in exactly the same way! The school is now 'conservatively progressive'. It is generally highly regarded in the educational community and with parents. We don't take on too many things at once, but rather proceed slowly and do one particular thing well. We've changed the community attitude and welcome people from outside the district. We have a bus load of students that come from Launceston each day from Kinder to Grade 10. I could overcrowd my classes without any trouble at all. Some parents don't want their children to go

to Launceston high schools ... not that there is anything wrong with them; it's the parents' perception of education ... Yesterday I got here at 6.30 am and left at 10.30 pm. It was a musical evening here and we showed a bit of wood work.

Q: Do you go to many meetings?

R: I go to District meetings, once a month. If I think the agenda is suitable for this school I go to the principals' meetings, every two to three months. I don't go to the primary principals' meetings because I have a secondary background and I've been part of the group. I am very selective. I do have to be. For example, professional development for me as well as for other staff comes out of the school's resource package. I went to a state wide principals' meeting in May. There was one in October, I didn't go to that. The school was spending too much money on my position, therefore, I was conscious of the budget in terms of my professional development. I insist I teach general classes.

Q: It's nice to find someone who is satisfied with what they are doing and is in control of it.

R: My first choice was to be a teacher. Had I had a second choice it would have been a minister. I spend 90% of my time dealing with individual children. Staff think I give up far too much of my time. If Johnny swears at a teacher and he will swear from time to time, there must be a reason. It may depend in some instances as to how a teacher has handled the situation. It's more likely to be that Johnny didn't have breakfast. A lot of these kids leave home at 7.00 am to get here. All sorts of pressures are on children Even teachers who are twenty-five to thirty don't understand. There are family units breaking up and in a place like this, which is fairly conservative, the number of single parent families would have doubled in the last five years. The number of children on loan issue has risen from 39 - 142 in the last three years. Loan issue is the old 'free list'. That is because the parent is out of work. All of these pressures impact so much on children and you always have to be aware of that sort of situation. If you blast into a child they will react as to how he or she is feeling at that particular moment.

Q: It's an interesting thing. That boy[A] who was initially uncooperative this afternoon ... we went through the stages from, 'Don't like this', ... 'Won't do that', to talking about his motor bike, and what he liked doing. Then, I 'caught' him being good and he got better and better ... I felt my approach was successful because the class group was stable enough [for me] to concentrate on one student. It's not often I can do that ... How could relief teachers be better prepared for school?

R: Older teachers need a refresher course. When I was trained like those older teachers we were trained in a particular discipline and a particular stage of education. Now education wants to look at the wider development of a child, so the child isn't held back year by year in his or her development. These people have to understand that's what we're about now, and a lot of them don't understand. If they're a prep teacher, they're a prep teacher. They have no concern about what happens in a kinder grade, or grade one.

Q: You've really seen this with relief teachers, have you?

R: Yes, I've seen it, but not so much in the last five years since we've had qualified teachers joining the ranks of relief teachers. Prior to that I had a real uneasiness when a relief teacher went into a certain class.

Q: Uneasiness?

R: From my point of view I was conscious of the fact I needed to be hovering around the place. I used to feel that.

Q: I was interested that you came into my class this afternoon. Do you make it your business to visit a relief teacher's class during the day?

R: I was just walking past. It was certainly not looking to see what you were doing.

Q: I saw it as school support ... Are you keeping within your budget for relief teachers this year?

R: No, we've spent a bit more. We've had a dreadful year. Last year, we had 180 sticker days, this year we've had 230. Of these 60% are for sickness and 40% for professional development. When we have a relief teacher for professional development, the class work is always there, so 40% time relief teachers know there will be work. For the remaining 60% <u>we will need those folders</u> [of prepared work]. Professional development is dependent on things which come through a flyer. We can have two or three staff away if it's concerned with priority areas. Intensive literacy skills, this year meant that the whole staff went through the process of how we could teach literacy across the curriculum. On several days this year the whole staff had to have relief. We were suddenly getting eight relief teachers for the day. They would get bits and pieces [of timetables] to fill gaps as 8-10 staff would go for one and

a half hours. People who came to do relief on these occasions would have to be jacks of all trades in order to cope with the diversity.

Q: I can see the practical problems. It's quite a complex bit of organisation. Do you give instructions to staff when relief staff come?

R: Staff are instructed at the beginning of the year. They are simply told that if they are going to be away, they phone me and if it's for professional development they must leave work.

Q: Do you expect relief teachers also to be prepared?

R: I do ... just in case.

Q: Are there prepared lessons to use in emergencies?

R: No. That too is going into folders. There'll be folders for each class.

Q: What about duties?

R: A relief teacher comes in to take a teacher's load. That ought to be sufficient. They need a break at lunch time equally as much as someone who is here constantly. It is more stressful to have seven teaching periods, duty at lunch time and bus duty after school, if they do not know the school. They need to get some of their energy back.

Q: It depends on what you want out of relief teachers.

R: And what the relief teacher wants from the school. I can always tell when a relief teacher comes to my school. If they are just here for the money.

Q: How?

R: You've got to look for the response, the excitement, wanting to find what the school is about, 'Who do I see?' 'What do I do?' Immediately I know that person is here for the children. If a person comes in and says, 'I was just rung up and I had this to do ... ', you know jolly well that person is here just for the money. It's dramatically obvious, sometimes.

Q: Be charitable ... Do you find relief teachers come looking enthusiastic?

R: Generally, yes.

Q: Do they leave enthusiastically?

R: More so. Though I can remember two relief teachers who will never come back again, and if you meet them around the traps, they'll frequently tell you. It was because the moment they walked in the classroom it was, 'Thou shalt not.' 'You get out of my class' [attitude to children]. They were the only relief teachers in the whole twelve years that I've been principal here. [He shows wooden tables, towel rails and cabinets designed and made by the students.] I have to admit surprises and I haven't had any disappointments. I have to be very careful not to instil into children that, 'near enough is good enough.' They must have a challenge but be able to take home some tangible result. I dislike courses which give you folk art, photo frames ... six months after they take them home no-one will be interested. My brother made a walnut hall stand, he is now middle aged, and that is still his most prized possession.

Points for reflection

- 'Unfortunately they send us teachers they can get, rather than teachers who fit the need.'
- 'Relief teachers do schools a service which is very often not recognised. Were they not here, and they were certainly not when I was a young teacher, the staff would have to do all of it.'
- 'The material has to be appropriate for the children. It can never be busy work. That is the worst thing because they know it is busy work and they realise that no one will take any notice of it.'
- 'If you are a going to be a relief teacher you have to be conscious of all the small changes that are going on around you.'
- 'Last year, we had 180 sticker days, this year we've had 230. Of these 60% are for sickness and 40% for professional development.'

APPENDIX 15

The administrators' perspective: senior secondary school [college] administrator

This interview shows the administration of relief teaching in a secondary school [college] which takes students in grades 11 and 12. Courses in colleges range from University entrance requirements to the less academic courses where students are attending a college as an alternative to unemployment. Many students are sixteen years or over. An administrator of a college works in a setting which is preparing students for further training or for the workforce. The timetable is arranged in 'lines' [i.e. blocks of subjects/ time]. Usually students have a line free for study or recreation, in between their classes. The students are varied. Some of them come from private or state schools, they may own their own car or live in a hostel. They may come from overseas, or are mature students who wish to update their qualifications. The curriculum in college, therefore, needs to be equally wide-ranging in order to provide a specialist approach in, say, in mathematics or science, or alternatively, interest students who would prefer to be in the workforce, but at present have no source of employment.

As can be seen from the interview, this administrator adopted a systems approach to management, in which he insisted that relief teachers were integrated into the school organisation and culture. He provided support and gained feedback, he followed up problems and took them seriously. The administrator shows how he minimised many of the difficulties of teacher absences by anticipating them and developing positive and committed staff culture where relief teachers were welcomed and respected as professionals.

The interview is interesting as it provides evidence of the comparative merits of providing internal and external cover [i.e. providing supervision from regular staff members or in engaging additional staff to cope with teacher absences]. The administrator explains the way he approached the organisation of relief teaching:

> *Q: How long have you been doing the organisation for relief?*
> R: This is my first year of providing *external* relief. I usually arrange with the relief teachers to contact them some time before they are teaching. It could be a number of days or the evening before. I find that is best for me as well as for the relief teacher. They like the extra notice. It is difficult for the admin. and for the relief teacher when they get a call early in the morning, the day they are required.
> *Q: How many relief teachers work here?*
> R: What I try to do is to develop a profile of specialities, and I've nominated certain areas within the college where there is a curriculum need. If there is an absence in that particular area, by one of our regular staff, then I'd call upon one of the team of relief teachers. The general areas I've looked at are, Maths/ Science; Humanities/ Social Science; hospitality area; design area. Humanities, Social Science and English, are the biggest part of that. There is a team of people who can actually do that. The team consists of a number of part-timers on our staff who have indicated that they are happy to do relief on certain occasions. Also, we have four people who come in from outside the college, who can pick up full days of relief that part-timers can't. Usually when I have a full day of relief, they don't like coming in for an hour or half a day. They like coming in for an extended period of time.
> *Q: Have you kept within the budget?*
> R: I'm well within the budget. This is our first year, so we had no idea how much we'd spend. Before we had 'excess hours', I spent somewhere in the order of $7 000 in a year. This year, with the new relief system which is supposed to be fairly efficient, I've spent $24 000 so it's cost me $24 000 to do what I could do in the past for $7 000.
> *Q: The money has clearly escalated. Do you feel the system is better?*
> R: The advantage of the system is that none of our existing permanent staff are asked to do supervisions, now relief teachers are employed. Whereas in the past with the excess hours approach, the regular staff owed us a certain number of hours each week and we'd ensure that everyone did a little bit of supervision.
> *Q: How did they feel about it?*
> R: They didn't particularly like taking the classes, but that little bit of extra money involved, human nature being what it is, was enough to placate them.
> *Q: Would you prefer to return to that?*

R: There is really a big advantage in that previous approach. Usually the people I would call on to do supervision would be partners and team members in a curriculum area. They would have a very good knowledge of the current work, so they would be able to step in, take over and keep the program going. At the end of last year, the approach we had to teaching was virtually decimated. We lost eleven staff members because of downsizing. Each of the remaining staff was given a heavier load from three lines to four. There was therefore less classroom time to make available for non-supervision. The new award specified what we should give them as a load and what they should be doing. There was no room within the award for additional duties. We had to change in that respect and the only people who were eligible, were people without a full load, or relief teachers. The Department acknowledged that and gave us some more funding. Last year no funding was given. That $7 000 came from another source. This year we have had $24 000 for the relief support program.

Q: Do you notice any difficulties with bringing people in?

R: At the end of last year, we acknowledged that there would have to be a change and we set priorities.

- All classes must continue.
- Classes must continue with their usual program.
- We must endeavour to get specialists who would teach rather than supervise.
- In order to achieve that, newcomers must have an induction process to be made aware of the day to day happenings.

We gave them a floor plan, time table, class list and some information on the nature of the kids that they will meet in that particular group. The only way for this to happen is to see our own staff were prepared. Therefore the next thing was for the staff to agree to it. There would be contingencies. It was in their interests to develop a number of stand-alone lessons, so that people with teaching skills in the area could take the lesson on and do something meaningful. Alternatively, if there was sufficient time before an absence, when a relief teacher was called there'd be quite clear instructions as to the nature of the work required for those particular classes. That's as far as it went.

Q: Are there written instructions?

R: We talked to our staff and acknowledged there'd be a lot of extra work for teachers, however for us to be able to give leave for professional development, or other activities, our existing program should not be jeopardised.

Q: How was that received?

R: Our teachers are very, very professional. They received it very well. They like to know students are continuing on. They also appreciate getting feedback and some of our relief teachers do that. The other advantage, I believe is that in this place our students don't see relief teacher's lessons as being play time. I do think the work, more often than not, goes on in the appropriate way.

Q: Is that comment based on an assumption that in other places relief teaching ...

R: I've talked to students. We had an incident this year when a relief teacher was treated very, very poorly by students. I investigated it and I suspended the boy who swore at the teacher. I talked to some of the other people in the class. They'd had this perception over a number of years, that relief teachers are 'fair game'. I certainly don't share that view that they would treat a relief teacher far worse, than a part-time teacher or a regular staff member. I think that's quite inappropriate.

Q: They admitted that?

R: No, everyone accepted that it's okay to do that as 's/he's only a relief teacher'!. That was the admission. I must admit that I took umbrage to that and I would suspect that the suspension from class may have also had some sort of impact as to how relief teachers should be treated.

Q: Was there any reaction to your comments?

R: I took the view that no-one in our community deserves to be treated so poorly ... certainly a person who is trying to do a job, trying to support student welfare, does not deserve that in return. It's their feeling that relief teachers are fair game. They've been *trained* over a number of years.

Q: Was that a surprise to you?

R: It was. I would have expected that someone of sixteen or seventeen would have realised that in any environment there is appropriate social discourse, and would have realised that something which would have been considered to be okay when they were thirteen, was not okay when they were sixteen or seventeen. I'm not saying that I even thought the behaviour was okay at thirteen. Relief teachers are being put through uncomfortable and unwelcome

situations. It seems in some schools, though I'm sure not in all schools, there is a philosophy that they should endure some sort of discomfort. I don't know whether our approach is different from other schools.

Q: Would you ever talk to anyone about relief in another school?

R: It's new to us. What I've endeavoured to do is simply transfer the situation. We had our staff expectations, for supervising classes continued to include relief teachers.

Q: You mentioned induction. Did that help?

R: People who have come to us, who I've spent time with, feel comfortable to come back. They've also got to know how we operate, a bit. They sit down with our staff and speak at morning tea and lunch time and develop relationships. I always try to let staff know who's here. I write relief teachers' names on the board, so they are identified. I encourage staff to go along and talk to them. Staff realise people are specialists in their own area.

Q: How did you encourage staff?

R: We said we will be getting relief teachers in, we are looking for specialists. They may be here; just make yourself known and chat to them.

Q: How about the stand-alone lessons?

R: In most cases we have been given plenty of warning, so the stand-alone lessons haven't been all that appropriate, but they've conveyed what was actually wanted and teachers were able to spell it out. Sometimes, I've had to take the relief, because someone is sick midday, and I've been able to grab a couple of worksheets. I get students to do the work and really get their heads down. The lessons have been used a few times.

Q: Is there anything you can improve on.?

R: Something that works well from one relief teacher is feedback. Other relief teachers don't see that as an issue, and we don't get as much. I usually get some verbal response when they come to pick up the stickers. I'll have a chat and see if there's either a problem or something the teacher should know. Feedback could be useful. When it does occur, I know our teachers appreciate it.

Q: Do you feel there is any training that goes on with your staff that would benefit relief teachers?

R: Yes. Relief teachers have to absorb new ideas by osmosis. We spend a lot of time with regular staff on staff development, looking at new issues, new trends, new methodologies for the delivery of our curriculum. Unfortunately relief teachers have not been privy to a lot of information nor afforded the opportunity to engage in that developmental work. They might feel that when some classes are working really well, it may appear chaotic for someone who comes in. A lot of the work is individually focused. Students are all doing their own thing in different locations, and not necessarily in a lock-step situation, which is a little easier to control. For that to happen a number of other things have to occur. There has to be the establishment of a relationship between the relief teacher and the students, with a degree of trust on both sides. There have to be clear directions and objectives. All these things don't exist when someone new walks in to the room. So I feel that relief teachers have one of the toughest assignments: not only do they have to get to know the kids, but they have to know what is happening in terms of the curriculum in the classroom, how those teachers operate and how they are delivering the new curriculum.

Q: I was thinking for the future training of relief teachers.

R: I don't know how it's going to happen, but some discussion of methodology and curriculum objectives [are necessary] so they are aware of an appropriate approach within the classroom.

Q: When part-timers come in, do you think it is one step easier than relief teachers, to have someone in the system?

R: It is. Going back to that incident with the young fellow. If he had seen a part-time teacher here all year, coming in to do relief in his class, the game wouldn't have been on. There wouldn't have been the goading; there wouldn't have the mind-set, that the lesson was play time. The students are here for a purpose. I hope their pastoral care system indicates what are their chief objectives, and we hope that at all times in a classroom situation there are cognitive objectives. I have had relief teacher complaints about students on about four or five occasions. I've followed up each complaint with the students; I would say in the main, firstly, they are surprised that I would follow up the complaint, I don't think complaints have been followed up at times, and secondly, they acknowledged that, perhaps, they were wrong.

Q: How do you operate your day-to-day organisation of relief teaching?

R: We have a simple system here. This corner of my desk is always kept for information for relief teachers. Teachers know where to leave things. I don't have to go chasing them. It

works because our teachers are very committed and responsible. They don't take for granted the fact they are given leave. They realise that it is their prime responsibility to teach their class.

Q: When I first came here as part of the induction you escorted me to the classroom. Is that part of the policy you use when each relief teacher comes?

R: I have done that for each of them. The only one I haven't done is for the relief teacher I had to get to drive the bus. He did that very well. I have a relief teacher who can take excursions by driving the bus. He is a pretty valuable resource. He does Health, Recreation and Woodwork. They are done off-site.

Q: How many subjects do you have here?

R: Our curriculum offering is 150 subjects, but we are not expecting our relief teachers to have the same specialist skills as our regular teachers. I acknowledge when one or two of our teachers are sick, there is absolutely no one else who can do their job. The best we can do is supervise. We did find that when one permanent teacher was away for an extended period. He taught Computer Assisted Design [CAD] and Drawing. We couldn't find anyone in the whole region to do what he was doing.

Q: By saying that, you are implying that a one-off teacher day can be covered, but if you have a teacher away for longer, you might have ...

R: We might have a difficulty covering some specialised areas. That's where a stand-alone lesson is useful because it means that someone with a background in a subject, can cope. The long term development of some of our courses is really, very specialist. Once that person leaves, there are few teachers throughout the state who are qualified to do it and certainly none available.

Is relief teaching here well organised? Sometimes I feel I am run off my feet to get things together and sometimes I feel that there are last minute 'patch' jobs. What happens is that the best laid plans ... A relief teacher set up a week or fortnight previously, becomes sick, a day before s/he is due to teach. On two occasions I've had to give up, and realise that I am not going to find someone. One lesson was Twentieth Century History. I had someone lined up and they withdrew. Virtually every relief teacher in the district was taken up. There was a Science expo. in Launceston. Class teachers were out of school and relief teachers were covering all their classes.

Q: Did you use CES?

R: They didn't have anyone either. I called CES on another occasion and didn't get a response.

Q: That's unusual.

R: That day I wanted to go to a Science session in town, so we missed out. On another occasion, we got desperate when a relief teacher didn't arrive. There'd been a message, saying they couldn't get here but I didn't get it. Sometimes our systems break down as well. The only thing you could improve on the system for relief teachers is if they knew more about the way we operate and *why* we operate.

When I walk into a classroom I know that I have an advantage on most of the staff here, the exception being the principal. Teachers, students, people in general, acknowledge the status or authority of a person. When I walk into a class that's considered to be fairly disruptive, they will settle quietly because they know I have the authority to hand out discipline without having to contact someone else or seek permission. It's something fairly automatic. In the pecking order, from the principal down to the senior teacher, full-time, part-time teachers and I would say at the very bottom is the relief teacher. The students accept this is the normal way to treat a relief teacher and they would not treat a permanent teacher in the same way.

Q: Do you think experienced teachers would cope if they went back to classes as relief teachers?

R: I heard about a superintendent who worked as a relief teacher. Simply, because he didn't have status he found it a very onerous task. He didn't enjoy it. He didn't get the respect he had always expected from students and other people. It was a passing comment but it did make an impact. I thought it would be a tough job to come in if students set about to make your life difficult for you ... and as a group they could.

Points for reflection

- 'It is difficult for the admin. and for the relief teacher when they get a call early in the morning, the day they are required.'

- 'It's cost me $24 000 to do what I could do in the past for $7 000.'

- 'At the end of last year, we acknowledged that there would have to be a change and we set priorities.'

- 'I believe is that in this place our students don't see relief teacher's lessons as being play time.'

- 'No, everyone accepted that it's okay to do that as 's/he's only a relief teacher'!. That was the admission. I must admit that I took umbrage to that and I would suspect that the suspension from class may have also had some sort of impact as to how relief teachers should be treated.'

- 'People who have come to us, who I've spent time with, feel comfortable to come back. They've also got to know how we operate, a bit. They sit down with our staff and speak at morning tea and lunch time and develop relationships. I always try to let staff know who's here. I write relief teachers' names on the board, so they are identified. I encourage staff to go along and talk to them. Staff realise people are specialists in their own area.'

- 'Relief teachers have to absorb new ideas by osmosis. We spend a lot of time with regular staff on staff development, looking at new issues, new trends, new methodologies for the delivery of our curriculum. Unfortunately relief teachers have not been privy to a lot of information nor afforded the opportunity to engage in that developmental work.'

- 'I have had relief teacher complaints about students on about four or five occasions. I've followed up each complaint with the students; I would say in the main, firstly, they are surprised that I would follow up the complaint, I don't think complaints have been followed up at times, and secondly, they acknowledged that, perhaps, they were wrong.'

- 'The only thing you could improve on the system for relief teachers is if they knew more about the way we operate and *why* we operate.'

- 'When I walk into a classroom I know that I have an advantage on most of the staff here, the exception being the principal. Teachers, students, people in general, acknowledge the status or authority of a person. When I walk into a class that's considered to be fairly disruptive, they will settle quietly because they know I have the authority to hand out discipline without having to contact someone else or seek permission. It's something fairly automatic. In the pecking order, from the principal down to the senior teacher, full-time, part-time teachers and I would say at the very bottom is the relief teacher. The students accept this is the normal way to treat a relief teacher and they would not treat a permanent teacher in the same way.'

- 'I heard about a superintendent who worked as a relief teacher. Simply, because he didn't have status he found it a very onerous task. He didn't enjoy it. He didn't get the respect he had always expected from students and other people.'

APPENDIX 16

The administrators' perspective: former high school principal

This interview shows an encompassing picture of relief teaching gained through personal knowledge, reflection, and experience. It was selected for the research because it conveys the 'essence' of relief teaching (van Manen, 1990, p.10). Not only does it show the various relationships between the students, regular staff, administrators, and relief teachers, but identifies some of the recurring problems which surrounded relief teaching in her school, and which form part of the phenomenon. For example, the principal's descriptions provide insights into the less tangible aspects of running a school, such as the deeper values implicit in providing a school culture and maintaining the reputation of the school. In doing so, she shows us the significance of her perspective on relief teaching.

The interview occurred at a Conference workshop, as the result of a spontaneous conversation on relief teaching between the researcher and a member of the workshop group. It illustrates that, informally, there are many people in Tasmania who have considerable personal knowledge about an aspect of relief teaching. As the principal commented in this interview, ' ... in the ten years I was principal, I was never wholly satisfied ... we were on the run ... crisis driven. In the final year I got it together.'

The principal describes her impressions of relief teaching:

> R: I was principal for ten years at [a large high school in Tasmania]. It was my job to follow up when things went wrong because relief teachers were not properly prepared by the school. A relief teacher comes in moments of great crisis. They had brief instructions and were expected to manage. In most cases that doesn't happen. They were met at the door by a harassed AP and pointed in the direction of the classroom. The school prepared a folder and map. The student management program indicated what the school did as far as discipline ... *if* the relief teacher had time to read the document. The folder provided information about the school routine.
> *Q: Was the relief teacher mentioned in, say, the behaviour management routines?*
> R: No there was little mention of relief teachers. They would have been told to contact the AP with any difficulty but the AP was probably there, crossing his fingers and hoping to god there won't be any more problems as he had enough of his own. I hoped the relief teacher's visit would be a happy experience, but there were always problems, mostly of our making and usually by omission rather than intention. Relief teachers were willing to do the best he or she could do. We, as a school failed to maximise the value of relief teachers as a resource.
> *Q: How?*
> R: Students took advantage of not knowing the expectations and behaved abominably ... even stable classes with a good reputation. In a flexible situation they were uncooperative, not necessarily aggressive and hostile, but they took advantage of doing nothing. It [behaviour] depended on the teacher being replaced, or if the class hadn't been briefed for relief; these were critical factors. If there had been forewarning and the teacher knew the students, it was easier. In an emergency, the AP would call the head of department, who provided work usually inappropriate ... busy work ... not productive. In the main, the experience with all the tasks was negative.
> The school tried to make up for the things that went wrong. I thought the relief teacher must feel very disconnected because of the cultural difficulties. I used to marvel that they came back. Some did want to establish a reputation and lead to more settled work, others wanted to keep working in the school. It was easier for the AP as familiarity meant less preparation for the relief teacher. I felt it was important to spend some time and effort to try and attach people to their subject choices ... a science teacher could work with technology, or with music. It was difficult to get relief teachers for specialist subject areas.
> [The high school] is in a relaxed affluent area. In the main, the students are responsible and the school could be said to have an advantage because of the good background. If the fault for a relief teacher's class lay with the regular teacher I would discuss that with the teacher and express disappointment; if with the student, I would appeal to his/ her better nature and express my dismay that the school's reputation had been affected and it would be his/her fault if the teacher didn't come back. They would have to take responsibility. What can you really do in the aftermath of disaster?

Q: Did you have work prepared in advance for relief teachers?
R: Something at the ready? Some teachers were responsible and had work prepared for a relief teacher, others less so.
Q: Can you say why? ... Did it relate just to preparation for a relief teacher's class?
R: No. It was typical of the way they operate, 'She'll be all right mate.' 'They'll cope if they are worth their salt!' A quarter might think the relief teacher was well paid and could manage but it was more their general expectations in school. They had a narrow perspective and thought that some new magic wand would be waved by the AP to make things okay. Through not understanding the AP's and Principal's holistic view, they had a narrow perspective of immediate experience. But it happened enough to cause concern with the AP and in the ten years I was principal, I was never wholly satisfied ... we were on the run ... crisis driven. In the final year I got it together. That may have depended on the skill of the AP. She was a woman, though that may have had nothing to do with it. She was much more demanding of the staff and made sure they left work ... if they were away ... in folders ready; so there is something to do with organisation.
Q: Was anything written to be passed on from one co-ordinator to the next?
R: There should have been policies ... as relief teachers are a significant part in any school. In any week in a school of 800 students we could have four or five relief teachers, and if something goes wrong with one relief teacher, two hundred children in one day can be affected. I think it's time principals faced up to that. It is a crisis situation that has not been dealt with. The Primary Principals Association and the Secondary Principals Association would welcome a talk from you to raise their level of awareness.
Q: It's not just the problem of dealing with students, but with the damage too, when students get out of hand.
R: AP's would crawl on ground glass to get hold of a good relief teacher in an emergency situation.

Points for reflection

- 'A relief teacher comes in moments of great crisis.'
- 'There were always problems, mostly of our making and usually by omission rather than intention.'
- 'We, as a school failed to maximise the value of relief teachers as a resource.'
- 'Students took advantage of not knowing the expectations and behaved abominably ... even stable classes with a good reputation. In a flexible situation they were uncooperative, not necessarily aggressive and hostile, but they took advantage of doing nothing.'
- 'In an emergency, the AP would call the head of department, who provided work usually inappropriate ... busy work... not productive . In the main, the experience with all the tasks was negative.'
- 'The school tried to make up for the things that went wrong.'
- 'What can you really do in the aftermath of disaster?'
- 'Through not understanding the AP's and Principal's holistic view, they [school staff] had a narrow perspective of immediate experience.'
- 'There should have been policies ... as relief teachers are a significant part in any school.'
- '... if something goes wrong with one relief teacher, two hundred children in one day can be affected. I think it's time principals faced up to that. It is a crisis situation that has not been dealt with.'
- 'AP's would crawl on ground glass to get hold of a good relief teacher in an emergency situation.'

APPENDIX 17

The systems perspective: an experienced psychologist/ guidance officer

The guidance officer and school psychologist had trained as a primary school teacher, worked in a 'country area' and overseas. She saw her present role within the educational community as, 'like a principal but without a school'.

This interview illustrates how a holistic approach to education and to management, based on deep personal understanding which had evolved from experience, can provide links between administrative, teaching and student perspectives. The guidance officer is familiar with the schools within the investigation, and understood the complexities of 'fitting in' to new settings, particularly within a Tasmanian context (Lee, 1993). In the course of her job she talked with students or relief teachers in schools, as well as being a consultant to senior management at systems level. She understood the conflicting needs and priorities which occurred from each perspective and her evidence suggested that she was a good listener and communicator at all levels (Cornelius & Faire, 1990). Her interview, for example, shows her ability to weigh varying aspects of organisational management from the administrative, human relations, political and cultural aspects of an organisation and the complex role of consultant and manager, within various settings (Kee, 1987; Bolman & Deal, 1991).

This interview respondent, while attempting to explain her own view of her role as a counsellor and guidance officer, provides many parallels between relief teaching and itinerancy. Although there was not time for more specific discussion, the interview serves to provide insights. It gives weight to the evidence that relief teaching is different from regular teaching and relief teachers need additional skills to cope.

> *Q: How would you describe your job, particularly in relation to the education system ?*
> R: I manage resources in terms of people and have to manage requisition and ordering of materials for their work, so it's more complex than people would realise. I am also a trouble-shooter which is similar to my manager's role. I was directly responsible to the district superintendent [education], so I am on various committees in the course of my roll. I supervise staff for registration purposes for a period of two years, many of whom are temporary, some of whom are relief [social workers/ guidance officers], some of whom are part-time. I also supervise the rest of the staff in a collegial way therefore I am constantly, through queries of parents etc., relating to people in all areas of the Department and outside the Department, including principals. I share the confidence of people from the Minister downwards. Often, I don't think that people I work with don't realise how complex the world is or that we hold those confidences and, sometimes, I feel we are a bit like the relief teacher because we are itinerant staff. Even our managers, because they haven't been trained or worked in this area, while very supportive and caring, don't understand the complexity of the world and the skills we have as consultants. So we are constantly fighting for some sort of recognition.
> *Q: How do you fight for recognition?*
> R: Through marketing, salesmanship and stressful lack of assertion: where we have to keep out peace and make sure of confidentiality like the parish priest, I suppose.
> *Q: That's a fascinating comment you've made.*
> R: It's stressful because you have to keep quiet: Marketing to gain recognition is something akin to diplomacy and negotiation. Of course the more experienced and familiar the people are with our sort of work, the more receptive the situation you find yourself in .... Sometimes, they can be. In high school settings, for example, they have to address the same sort of issues in behaviour management, and in primary schools [we find links] because of our assessment basis. That's where they want a lot of early assessment; but that's a stressful role because it means we have to come and pave our way. For example, in a college situation I don't believe I would be offending anyone, but in order to work well in the situation I will need to start next year to make the time, not only to get to as many meetings as I can, but to go to grade or subject meetings, too. I must try and encourage people to invite me to the various committees they hold and to really live and breathe and understand and listen. The listening is really important because everyone has their role already established and you are coming to try and make some sort of difference from your perspective. It's a lot of hard work. It's difficult coming into a job that's already been set up. People don't always want you to come in and

disturb their situation. There can be a lot of playing off and placing the blame ... *transferring* the blame on to the outsider because they don't have to face the consequences of doing that because you are not part of the inner circle. So it doesn't matter if you are affected by it. Having said that, there are a whole variety of people in schools. Many people are very accepting and very caring and it depends on the people you're dealing with but you only need one or two difficult parents, or difficult managers, to really make it very stressful. It doesn't have to be a whole school situation or the whole context but enough of those stressful incidents can make a real difference to your confidence and how well you work.

Q: Has this changed over time? In the last five years?

R: It's only changed ... since we have become school based. Usually, but not always, a base school has owned us more. Yes, certainly at [primary school] it's made a lot of difference to me. The staff owned me. They were very patient because in a senior position you are pulled away a lot so you are a bit like a relief teacher in a sense. You are not able to be as regular or as committed because things like Ministerials pull you out from the best of plans. The college system at [name] is very good and supportive; in some of the bigger colleges it's more difficult initially, a little less difficult in a high school and less so in a primary school where there is one teacher and one guidance officer. Also, in a smaller situation they can accommodate your needs more. The bigger the situation, it's nothing to do with the acceptance or competence of those institutions, the bigger the situation the more difficulty you have in forming an itinerant/ 'dependent' type relationship. It's a bit like living in Burnie. Social workers and guidance officers have a strong relationship. There are a small number who know each other personally. Launceston is not too bad and in Hobart it's not as good. Probably in Melbourne it's atrocious. It's a matter of a personal relationship being formed which makes a difference.

Q: It's difficult not to spin out away from relief teaching but in fact what you are saying makes sense. Can I rephrase what you've said, to check that I understand you? You are saying that because your job is open ended and not clearly defined, it has parallels to relief teaching. You are also speaking about key relationships, ... and what you are saying, and this is interpretative, is that you haven't got time to develop relationships in one place before you are dragged off somewhere else. Would you agree with that?

R: That's right. The longer we are in a school and that school is conducive to accepting you, the more chance you've got of being effective. The other thing is, we often think that the schools that are top of the pops are those which have a nice structure, so when you go in you can fit neatly in to it. On the other hand, they probably don't create as much imaginative work.

Q: Which would you like?

R: If personal relationships, understanding and awareness of our role are there, I don't really mind having a more complex job because I think you can offer a lot more to the system. In other words, it would be the same for relief teachers, you feel effective when people recognise your skills and your knowledge and allow you to use your imagination and develop a program for that day. Some people ... relief teachers ... who have banks of programs of different levels and are well organised, can create their day into one whole entity and complete something. There is a sense of success; or they may prefer, over time, to stay in one school. Over a number of years they will be able to understand the issues and programs and come at a moment's notice and be flexible. Going to different schools would make it very difficult. The other thing I notice would make a difference, and I think it would apply to with guidance officers too, is to do with the person as well. Some people would go to do relief teaching for several reasons: it may be to do with their married life; or some because it's too stressful as a regular teacher. They want to work less hours a whole array of reasons. Some enter school psychology because they want to meet their own needs. We have part time teachers working for a whole variety of reasons, as relief teachers would, but it requires a highly skilled person to be a relief teacher, because my daughter in grade 4 says, 'They don't understand us; they didn't know us like our teacher,' because the students have formed that personal relationship with their regular teacher. Children played up, probably not because they were just naughty kids, but because they felt the teacher was not really understanding where they were at ... so it's a very skilful job. I think that if people go with that role because of personal difficulties then they are less likely to succeed. That would be the same for entry into the school psychology services, whether you are part time or full time. I see a wide range of reasons and I've met many relief teachers who have shared their confidences with me at all these levels. They don't have the support, just as we don't. They have less materials, we have less materials, and there is no follow up to our work either. You may spend a lot of time ...

you may make really relevant and practical suggestions but you've got to have a school that owns what you do. I find that when we present programs unless we can achieve that, very often the report, for example, will sit in the drawer. We can be called into a school to do a whole day's work, where people insist that it is urgent; or you can be appointed to a school where they say they have a great need for you, and yet they don't take any responsibility in planning for that need. It's very frustrating when your work might be quite relevant and quite practical. I guess it would be the same for relief teachers especially when we enter a school and the school hasn't prepared for our coming and hasn't arranged for teachers to be available ... hasn't told us if there is a room available. We have to test [students] in a broom cupboard or have to run around finding your chair and desk just to work. You then lose half the time, the telephone might also be ringing. That's why I use the room next door for assessment. Even then the phone will ring for another teacher because it's a party line ... but less than this one. The same with relief teachers, if the school doesn't prepare for them, the class can be disorganised: the teacher hasn't left any material; or any idea of what her expectations or what the rules for the classroom are, or well recorded work, so it can be easily picked up on. There's no follow up on what you've done, and perhaps no feedback. It's very similar isn't it? It must be to do with itinerancy.

Q: This is the most saturated data. What you're saying is confirming ...

R: It's important to have to go into relationships and attitudes, from the psychological perspective. It is the only way you have to go. I've thought of an interesting thesis, but you are doing it really. It would be to extend that to do what you are doing, with people like ourselves to itinerant workers. People at Uni. cannot parallel what you've said. Deconstruction ..., you have to go back to reviewing your attitudes to start with ...your perception of your role of relief teacher. Unless people change their assumptions they are not going to be able to think of different paradigms.

Q: That's right. You've extended what I'm thinking. I am trying to grasp the ideas, but you've given them a very good base.

R: It's also got a lot to do with accountability. You say people have mentioned numbers. I don't obviously use numbers ... I use a human perspective not only as a psychologist, but as a mini-manager, numbers are important to me and costs. I find it incredible that we are accountable to students, and I'm talking about relief teachers or any others, and people who are responsible for seeing we are properly accountable, or who are accountable themselves to the Ministry, and who are paid considerable amounts of money, are not asked to account for the appropriate use of numbers. It might be debatable if they are held accountable in the present system. It would be interesting to know in a position description or in a school review if they were ever asked *how* did they use the resource, their relief teaching? How did they use itinerants? Did they get value for money? What were their aims, goals and outcomes? How did they support that service? What tends to happen, it tends to happen from the other perspective, 'What did you think of that Guidance officer?' 'Were they any good?' They give a subjective response, depending on their knowledge and they put the whole ownership on the itinerant coming in. I think it's misplaced and I believe in all forms of management there is a huge percentage of responsibility that lies with the manager; where that manager has the means to change things. The principal might say, 'I didn't know I had any responsibility' (or a guidance officer) that, 'It's out there with someone else'. I try to make it very clear to principals we have joint responsibility. I have the supervision and skilling only in so far that I act like a guidance officer to a school ... like their senior advisor. Instead of looking at the individual schools, I look at the wider group of schools and the needs that have been expressed by the clients ... the school's students, and so on. I try to skill my staff to meet those needs, and some of those things are expressed a systematic way by district office, some of them are very ad hoc. It's only that I am a good listener that I say I have got a fairly good understanding of how a principal will see things and what they want. Guidance officers, likewise, try to work in the same way and we try to get joint responsibility and ownership by clients and not take it from them, but it's very difficult to do that. I guess that's involved with political areas, more than political ... it's got a lot to do with the function, accountability and misplaced blame overload and avoiding-taking on those extra responsibilities. Like all problems, if you don't have all the resources, it's not just financial but personal, if you are in an overload situation you'll try and place the responsibility elsewhere, because it's a survival situation. In many cases, possibly in high school, maybe in primary schools, they are in survival mode. In many ways they only plan to do the things they do well and they can do relatively easily, but it's on the fringe areas which are more complex where they don't have

time to do it because of overload. So a lot of it is to do with stress and the wider levels of society.
We don't use resources well. That is some of the difficulty. It is not just to do with the cost. It is also a problem to do with reducing the complexity. It's not the day and age when people want to do that, but I bet in the next decade people will be looking towards cutting out, or having a narrower focus. Obviously the younger you are, the more specific the skills you need for a certain task, the less you can broaden it. We try to do that with reading and now they've gone the full circle They've kept some of the beautiful things about reading and the language arts process but they've had to go back teaching the finer skills that will apply throughout society. There is only so much that people can manage and do well at any one time and so it has to be simplified. I guess the economic rationalism which I hate so much, is an example of trying to simplify something at an economic level. I wonder whether there will be something like an economic rationalist approach to the management of human resources.

So we are constantly fighting for some sort of recognition.

Points for reflection

- 'I feel we are a bit like the relief teacher because we are itinerant staff.'
- 'The listening is really important because everyone has their role already established and you are coming to try and make some sort of difference from your perspective.'
- 'There can be a lot of playing off and placing the blame ... *transferring* the blame on to the outsider because they don't have to face the consequences of doing that because you are not part of the inner circle.'
- 'Children played up, probably not because they were just naughty kids, but because they felt the teacher was not really understanding where they were at ... so it's a very skilful job.'
- 'We can be called into a school to do a whole day's work, where people insist that it is urgent; or you can be appointed to a school where they say they have a great need for you, and yet they don't take any responsibility in planning for that need.'
- 'I believe in all forms of management there is a huge percentage of responsibility that lies with the manager; where that manager has the means to change things.'
- 'It would be interesting to know in a position description or in a school review if they [senior Departmental officers] were ever asked *how* did they use the resource, their relief teaching? How did they use itinerants? Did they get value for money? What were their aims, goals and outcomes? How did they support that service?'
- 'Deconstruction ..., you have to go back to reviewing your attitudes to start with ...your perception of your role of relief teacher. Unless people change their assumptions they are not going to be able to think of different paradigms.'
- 'We don't use resources well. That is some of the difficulty. It is not just to do with the cost. It is also a problem to do with reducing the complexity.'
- 'In many ways they only plan to do the things they do well and they can do relatively easily, but it's on the fringe areas which are more complex where they don't have time to do it because of overload. So a lot of it is to do with stress and the wider levels of society.'

APPENDIX 18

The systems perspective: overseas educational consultant

The following interview was arranged during the lunch break in a two-day workshop. From the start of the interview, the researcher found her view of relief teaching, based on experience, was very different from that of the educational consultant, who based his view on a cooperative paradigm (Bennett et al., 1991) in which relief teaching was integrated into the education system. His challenging questions were based on the assumption that the researcher had posed direct questions to the interview respondents about the issues which were important to them, whereas in her investigation, the issues emerged through an inductive process of analysis. The focus for the researcher and the consultant were different, too: while the consultant focused on outcomes, the researcher explored ways to understand some of the less clear-cut issues, such as the 'grey' areas and paradoxes, which were noted by researchers such as Galloway (1993) and Mullett (1994).

The consultant's question, 'What are the five things that relief teachers could do to be effective?' seemed simplistic and unrealistic to the researcher, who recognised from her experience, that relief teachers can only really be considered effective if there is a 'manageable' setting in which to teach, and positive attitudes of support, from other staff and students. In a broader framework, however, both the researcher and the consultant arrive at similar conclusions. In essence, their comments confirm that the present system of relief teaching is highly ineffective, and in order to break the present negative perceptions and experiences, it will be necessary to adopt a radically different way of conceptualising and restructuring relief teaching. The interview presents a powerful vision by showing that if relief teachers were seen as colleagues and of equal status to regular teachers, many of the problems could be reduced considerably.

In the following interview, the consultant's first interview question caught the researcher off-guard. She responds by supplying details of the Tasmanian relief teaching context, in order to understand the assumptions behind his questioning and to regain a sense of personal meaning:

> R: [to the researcher] Identify the major concerns of the majority of relief teachers you have interviewed. What are the major things that occur in school that prevent you from being an effective relief teacher?
> *Q: The situation is too big to handle.*
> R: Specific things, for a relief teacher who has just walked in.
> *Q: Not treated as a professional in lots of ways ... lack of respect ... and coming to terms with that! You are the first person who has thrown the question back at me.*
> R: In 1927, a researcher did a dissertation on what you are doing. He asked substitute teachers about their work, he collected data and did a frequency count. He found that the five most common concerns were:
>
> - relief teachers can't interpret the lesson plan that the regular teacher had left and found it really difficult to interpret what the regular teacher really wanted done;
> - they couldn't find the things that were supposed to be there;
> - classroom management;
> - being treated as a second class citizen in school;
> - being called late and not getting there in time.
>
> We did a follow-up study in 1987, with three hundred substitute teachers from public schools and asked those same questions. We collected the data. The results were in the same order as in 1927.
> *Q: Amazing. But how much does that say? My research has shown that relief teaching is dependent on a context, and the context in [the consultant's country] might be different from the context here. For example, although there are complaints about inadequate lesson plans, some relief teachers provide the work themselves. Getting to school too late? In Launceston there isn't much traffic and for some relief teachers, schools are only a few minutes away from home..*
> R: It's not getting there late, but being called late, say 8.30 am, and then they get there five, or ten minutes, or half an hour into the school day.

Q: The fact that a relief teacher may be waiting each day for a phone call [offering work] is a concern to many relief teachers. They may get one or two calls a month ... waiting and thinking, 'Am I going to work or not?'
R: That's your problem. You decided. You are going to be a substitute teacher; to me it's a separate issue.
Q: Absolutely, but that is part of the research I have done; that's part of the deal. Other people have said that it doesn't worry them about getting to school late. It's the indecisiveness, the fact they are ready to teach and no one phones. That worries them.
R: What prevents *you* from being an effective substitute teacher might be a concern. You can play around with all the other things you want. I am a practical person. The bottom line with me is, if you are going to make a change in the classroom; otherwise I'm not interested. The fact that, with a further five questions, the supply teacher could have control over the school culture. What would happen if the school dealt with, 'How we deal with guests in the school' ... parents, doctors, lawyers? When a teacher is sick, how do we deal with guests in the school? What does it mean? So we teach that and then we put it in place.
Let's just say you are going to be sick. You put yourself in a team of four or five. You are not going to be there tomorrow. I get there earlier, pick up the substitute teacher or make sure I am in class when the substitute teacher comes in. I talk to the class while the substitute is getting ready, trying to pick up the instructions or work. Once in the morning, I pop in. At lunch, I come down to make sure you get to the staffroom. In the afternoon, two people pop in. 'How are you doing?' 'Okay, thanks!' The administrator and the AP also, pop in once or twice in the day. We've now got three people sticking their heads round the door. They come in, but they are not coming in to watch. The kids know they will be popping by. You also know that if you have to ask a kid to do something, once twice or three times, you can give them a choice, 'You can do this or go to work with Mr Smith's class.' Good teachers support each other. The three teachers agree to take difficult children. Various teachers look after a couple of students. If he screws up, he goes to the office, he writes up things about what happened and what he is going to do about it. When he has talked it over, he has to go back to Mr Smith's class. You do not have to worry about him for the rest of the day. Someone takes care of him. What happens? It's an incredible procedure. There is an elegant solution you can put in place to make relief teachers more effective. When you get there [in school] a student greets you. She's printed you a name tag, with your name and *Guest of the School.* They also put your name on the Bulletin board. 'Anything you need, like photocopying? It's my job to get it for you.' Two kids take turns. You've recultured and restructured the school in its attitude to guests. It's also sectioning things in how we deal with class management. It happened in an elementary school that changed from one of the worst to one of the best places, for substitute teachers. They realised that inexperienced teachers were often given the hardest classes and substitute teachers had been given little support. They decided they needed to work as a team and work smarter not harder.
Q: In elementary schools a relief teacher takes one class in a day; in high schools there are lots of changes.
R: That's where you *have* to have a policy in the district, so you know lessons will be left for you. You can't go in willy-nilly obviously and be effective. If they [regular teachers] don't get to do lesson plans and you have to make lessons up, that's life in the fast lane. In a lot of cases it might not have anything to do with the lessons that ought to be taught, mainly because it's not your content area. You can do enrichment writing, reading, interesting stuff. If they have to work in another area, a substitute teacher should have a bag of tricks and repertoire of marvellous lessons for different grade levels and subjects to try and enrich the depths in an enjoyable way. The kids can get into a lesson full of variety. Some districts actually have looked at this, and a small number of crème de la crème teachers are hired as a hit squad. They come together at the beginning of the year. They work out rich, incredible lessons, so when schools need relief, they don't do any plans. This person is coming in to do enrichment. They are your best crème de la crème teachers. They become your principals and AP's. It is a recognised step in their career. They work in all the system to see what's going on. What happens now? He's away for the day. The crème de la crème teaches. When the regular teacher returns from being sick, he hears about this incredible teacher who has come in. He has to compete with this. That's going to force him to think twice about being sick. Children will say, 'I had a great day!' It's a flip, isn't it? It's an elegant solution.
Q: It certainly helps when people feel positively about relief teachers. Relief teachers are often not managing situations well and certainly not effectively. That's not to say they aren't trying hard in one direction and the administration trying equally hard ...

R: ...and never the twain shall meet!
Q: Exactly. It could be only a matter of bad communication.
R: That's how sixty or seventy substitute teachers came to demand a course on co-operative learning. They demanded it through the union and that's how I became involved. There are three thousand seven hundred teachers using it. They said, 'It is there, we want to use it, too.' Resources were supplied. Demand came from the substitute teachers and it happened. Substitute teachers need to have a framework for design that they can overlay on top of any lessons they see. So regardless of what teachers leave, they have an advanced organiser for any lesson. They can flip over and pull out the essence of the lesson and slap it into action. They, more than anyone, need to have very powerful skills in classroom management. We work hard at that. Why don't you run a course?
Q: There's not seen to be a need for it.
R: The two major issues, the lesson design framework and classroom management have an additional dimension, prevention, that you need to support people who are struggling. The average teacher is away 7-10 days a year. That's a lot of relief teachers. There was a workshop in Toronto ... If a substitute teacher did not come to the day of training, prior to the day of starting school, they were not allowed to come to any professional development throughout the year. I went to the day's course. At the end of it I was amazed, I said, 'Excuse me. I've spent two weeks a year for four years understanding this stuff. How are people going to understand it in one day?' He said, 'Many substitute teachers come back each year, so they actually have two or three days.'
Q: Here there is no induction or professional development for relief teachers.
R: Other teachers have to make a relief teacher an important person.
Q: How did substitute teachers like the course?
R: They just loved it. Even if it hadn't been a good course, for the first time somebody really cared.

Points for reflection

- 'What are the major things that occur in school that prevent you from being an effective relief teacher?'
- 'The fact that, with a further five questions, the supply teacher could have control over the school culture.'
- 'You can't go in willy-nilly obviously and be effective.'
- 'A small number of crème de la crème teachers are hired as a hit squad.'
- 'They are your best crème de la crème teachers. They become your principals and AP's. It is a recognised step in their career. They work in all the system to see what's going on.'
- 'The two major issues, the lesson design framework and classroom management have an additional dimension, prevention, that you need to support people who are struggling.'
- 'The average teacher is away 7-10 days a year. That's a lot of relief teachers.'
- 'Other teachers have to make a relief teacher an important person.'

APPENDIX 19

Communication on the internet: advice to a new substitute teacher

This communication from the internet between a regular classroom teacher and a new substitute teacher, was chosen to illustrate how one regular teacher presented a holistic description of the strategies she used to prepare her class for a change of teacher. It shows how she creates a structured setting in which her students could learn to cope with the changes brought about by her absence. Her expectations are clearly acknowledged: she expects work, and she expects her students to communicate about problems, as a way of learning how to deal with them. In doing this, she provides other tacit messages of her expectations: that a substitute teacher's class is situated in a larger framework and that learning to face 'change' is seen as a necessary part of education. In a deeper sense, her comments reflect her philosophy of education, in that the students are expected to take responsibility for their behaviour and remain accountable for their actions.

The passage was chosen as one of the few examples from the literature which: made an aspect of substitute teaching visible; provided a clear sense of the differing needs of regular teachers, substitute teachers, and students in a setting of change; provided insights into the patterns of behaviour; and demonstrated how potentially challenging behaviour from students could be redirected towards positive responses. For example, Mrs. K. structured the class so that students were kept busy and could earn 'rewards' for positive achievements, knowing that should problems arise there would be opportunities for discussion later, when she returned. The passage is written to provide indications to the substitute teacher, of the sorts of problems she might encounter and examples of tried and tested strategies that work. Her focus is on active management and problem-anticipation, rather than viewed in terms of 'survival'. 'Change' is seen as an opportunity to gain broader experiences within a secure framework.

Mrs K., the regular teacher, acknowledged the apprehension expressed by the new substitute teacher, and wrote that she had subbed for a year and 'didn't get a lot of support,'

> ... but as a regular teacher, I have been lucky the last two years. My husband is a substitute and whenever I'm gone, he works for me. A few times I have had other subs, but my classes were always pretty good. I try to let them [students] know when I will be gone and what I expect from them. I give class points (I teach in a junior high) and tell them that there is a double indemnity when a sub is present. If they are great, they get double points. If any names are written down I take points away. Anyone with names written down get [sic] an automatic half hour of detention. They know that. I also tell them that there are going to be times when a sub does something different. I talk about my experiences and let them know that all I ask of them is to just do what the sub asks and then talk to me about it later. Never argue with a sub, just leave it until I get back and I will deal with it.
>
> For the sub I leave impeccable seating charts. That is a MUST! They cannot be expected to deal with children if they do not know their names. I also leave about twice as much work as can be completed in a normal period. Kids tend to not take their work seriously when a sub is here. (It's true! I've noticed that, unless it is a test, grades are a good 10 % lower on assignments that a sub gives.) They tend to schlock through the assignment(I think) to get a social hour. So I have at least one or two extra assignments for the sub to pass out. Also, work done the day a sub is here is ALWAYS turned in and graded. Even if you don't plan to grade the work, have them turn it in. Even if it is a project that will take a couple of days, I tell the sub to have them turn it in so I can see they worked on it. You won't believe the number of kids that think a sub day is a free day. I never leave puzzles because kids recognize busy work when they see it and often refuse to do it.
>
> I also leave a print out list of things that I found were common questions and answers . For example, I do not allow kids to leave the classroom ...when a sub is present. Too easy to take advantage, so I have a line on my list [of 'timely tips'] that says,

STUDENTS ARE NOT TO LEAVE THE CLASS FOR ANY REASON, UNLESS THEY ARE BLEEDING FROM EVERY PORE (so, I'm a bit of a joker). THE PRINCIPAL DOES NOT WANT TO SEE THEM, NEITHER DOES THE COUNSELOR. THEY DO NOT NEED TO GET THEIR BOOK, THEIR HOMEWORK, THEIR FRIEND'S BOOK OR THEIR FRIEND'S HOMEWORK FROM THEIR LOCKER. NO ONE UNLESS INDICATED, HAS A SEVERE SKIN CONDITION THAT WORSENS IF THEY DO NOT CALL HOME EVERY FIVE MINUTES. IN OTHER WORDS THEY ARE TO STAY IN THEIR SEATS AND DO THEIR WORK. I KNOW YOU KNOW THIS, BUT THERE IS ALWAYS ONE THAT ASKS, SO YOU CAN SHOW THEM THIS IF THEY DON'T BELIEVE YOU. MRS K. SAYS NO!

Best defense, next time, is a good offense. Head them off at the pass. Your best class can, and will, be a sub's worst nightmare unless you foresee the problems and stop them before they happen.

Just my two cents. (22 June 1995. writer's emphasis)

Points for reflection

- 'I try to let them [students] know when I will be gone and what I expect from them.'
- 'I talk about my experiences and let them know that all I ask of them is to just do what the sub asks and then talk to me about it later.'
- 'For the sub I leave impeccable seating charts.'
- 'I also leave about twice as much work as can be completed in a normal period.'
- 'Also, work done the day a sub is here is ALWAYS turned in and graded.'
- 'I never leave puzzles because kids recognize busy work when they see it and often refuse to do it.'
- 'I also leave a print out list of things that I found were common questions and answers.'
- 'Best defense, next time, is a good offense.'

APPENDIX 20

Personal observations

The researcher kept a file of observations, coded sequentially, rather than thematically. They were used to record isolated incidents, or personal thoughts and experiences. Often, there was no way of verifying why events occurred, but by consistently watching and recording events, she maintained a close orientation to the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990, p, 31). Usually, the researcher allowed 'the situation to speak for itself' in what Eisner (1991) termed 'an emergent focus' (p. 176). For example, an observation of a regular teacher taking a class of students in the gymnasium, when recorded, triggered an increased awareness of the inherent dangers for a non-specialist relief teacher. In this way, initial observations invariably created insights which linked to other aspects of relief teaching. An observation of a regular teacher's lesson, extended the researcher's understanding of what *should* happen in the gymnasium, leading her to question the prevailing assumptions from many administrators, that relief teachers were 'paid to cope'. Clearly, if relief teachers were not familiar with students or equipment they could not, and should not provide duty of care, unless the settings were modified appropriately. Observations, therefore, enabled her to predict certain patterns of results, and provided potential links between policies and practice.

As Eisner (1991) commented, 'Seeing what appears obvious is not always easy' (p.71), and noted that the purpose of any description was to enable readers to 'participate vicariously in the events described' (p.89):

> To make vicarious participation possible ... is to create in the public world a structure or form whose features re-present what is experienced in private. The sense of discovery and excitement that pervades a classroom is not simply a set of words; it is a set of qualities, including a sense of energy that must somehow be made palpable through prose ... Its aim is to help the reader know. One source of knowing is visualization. Another is emotion. How a situation feels is no less important than how it looks. (pp. 89-90)

The following observations provide material which deepen and consolidate aspects of relief teaching, which, in general, have been overlooked or are inaccessible, through other methods of research, such as survey or questionnaire. Through observation, too, the researcher gained a series or portraits which showed the differences between some of the less tangible aspects of relief teaching, such as, the difference between teaching or supervising students in various relief teaching settings. Such an approach enabled her to cluster observations more readily, by 'maintaining a strong and orientated pedagogical relation to the phenomenon; [and by] balancing the research context by considering parts and whole' (van Manen, 1990, p.31).

These observations are representative of many others. They provide day-to-day glimpses of the various teaching and learning settings from a relief teaching perspective:

Observation 1: From the back of the class

Observation of grade 8 class:

> I was asked to 'sit in' on a second year student teacher taking a grade 8 high school class. It had been a confused start, not helped by me. The students had manoeuvred their own desks and chairs into blocks and lines. I anticipated restlessness from students, now packed in tight groups. They were restless, shuffling and fussing. I asked for them to move the furniture back before the student teacher started. There was inevitably a lot of change-on-change. The student took over, she was good, made her expectations known ... but what was my role? Did I turn a blind eye to the skirmishes? There were two boys wandering around. I 'pinned' one down and sat by him until he worked. He looked surprised by the results. He surprised me too, for previously, he had not seemed able to concentrate on one thing for more than two minutes. Under direction, he'd written a page about his family. There were few mistakes, it was fluent work and he was involved.
>
> As a relief teacher, I usually anticipated events, but as an observer from the back row of the class, I was following them. I could see students with packs of swap cards. It seemed that the

cards assumed a magical energy as they were passed from hand-to-hand, with furtive glances, quick movements, elaborate cover ups, or casual openness. Each movement seemed to reflect a part of the character or attitude of the nearest person; flowing in sequence like a film. My role as observer was unsettling. During this lesson there were times when I was uncertain of what to do. Was intervention or praise necessary? At the end of the lesson I gave the student teacher some positive feedback. She laughed, 'My mother was a relief teacher at my high school. It was difficult for me but I knew just what the class would get up to with student teachers or relief teachers!'

Just then the cleaner came in, 'Furniture removers again. I know when the relief teachers have been in, children always swap places!'

Although I was unlikely to see the student teacher again, the process of reflection and self awareness, provided further insights which allowed for an emergent focus. I noted, too, how different it was to observe the school or classroom from an unexpected angle, where the familiar aspects of the classroom took on new meanings, making the familiar, strangely unfamiliar (Brown & McIntyre, 1993).

Observation 2: Token challenges?

Observation of grade 10 class:

The group came in. I checked if they had work written down. They had not, so I had to write three tasks on the board, about six lines. When I turned round the boys had desks lined up in a row.

'Move them back, please.'

'They were like this.'

'I was here earlier ...' I did not wish to get into a power struggle and waited; knowing that a confident pause often produces the required effect.

Two boys move back; another does not. There are eight in a row now, broken into two and three's. I can deal with that later. I ask the boy to move. He does not but works well. I leave him.

Another group of boys is talking. I hover, wanting to move them apart but letting them take responsibility. I have the feeling from looking at their work, that they'll do extra work at home. They are not really disturbing others. There is such a fine balance between group dynamics, at times. Someone has taking the lid off a tin of varnish. He waves it around, inviting comment. The varnish is hard. I ask to see the boy's work at the end of the lesson.

Observation 3: rights and responsibilities

Observation of grade 10 class:

The group was working well though I noticed a paper plane sailing around the room. I ignored it ... then a couple whizzed by. Someone had 'lost' his photocopied instructions and wanted another page. 'I can return it at the end of the lesson.' I refused. 'Silly old ...' I heard muttered as he walked away. I had learnt that unlimited supplies of photocopy paper would escalate the aerial combatants. For some students, a double period seems too long without resorting to 'a bit of fun'. They blame each other. I ask, 'How about staying in at the end of the class to practise with the planes?' They are not sure if I am serious and one panics,

'It wasn't me. I have a meeting at recess; I can't be late.'

'I'm not interested in excuses. I'm interested in responsibility.'

Observation 4: Time to care?

Observation of grade 9 assembly:

The room was crammed with grade 9 students. They were shuffled on the floor. A few members of staff stood by the door and whenever another latecomer came in, the group of students nearest the door edged and shuffled to make space. The teacher in charge looked tired, with grey rings under her eyes. She spoke quietly but with great sincerity. The students,

initially inattentive and restless, became serious when she said, 'I don't want to speak in anger to someone who is not listening.' It was a philosophical, caring, give-yourself-a-chance message. The grade leader had a serious talk about the trends in UK and USA which were 'disturbing'. 'People had no time for anything except work.' She said, the teachers' attitudes seemed to indicate to some students that teachers did not care:

> They really do. They are just busy with marking and reports. They are ready to help, but need to be asked. Lots of children are smoking and drinking, on sex and drugs, so 'Don't care' has become a way of life. Even if you are not bright, you can keep busy as that gives structure and stops chaos. If you don't care now, by thirty you will probably suffer brain damage or memory loss. If you need help to stop, ASK! We are very concerned. It's the same with school uniform. I do not personally agree with it, but if a decision is made, then it has to go through the system. If parents want to change the system then they need to go to the P and F and do something about it. There is chaos if decisions are made and then broken.

Finally, when the students were asked to leave quietly, they discovered that they could not get their bags, because another assembly was taking place nearby. A male teacher said, 'Go out the other way,' without explaining why. He did not listen to their requests or to their concerns about the unguarded bags. To them, he did not seem to care. Again, the boys, panicked and anxious tried to slip past him, their insecurity adding to the general chaos, argument and confrontation. The sense of caring and trust was shattered. Eventually, the teacher shouted and pointed and, resentfully, they went the way he wanted.

Observation 5: The value of relief teachers?

Whole school assembly:

The Principal was talking to the school about a day last week when regular staff were involved in the Rock Eisteddfod rehearsals and had employed extra relief teachers for the day. He was angry with the students, 'Unfortunately, many students decided not to come to school, I had five students in one class, and the school *wasted* $1000 on relief teachers for the day!'

Observation 6: Potential resources?

Relief teachers in the staffroom:

I saw a crowd of relief teachers in the staffroom. I had not seen one for two years. Another was a new relief teacher. I felt good. The regular teachers sitting in their circle felt there was a change of dominance in the staffroom culture. One teacher later joined our group. We had a fascinating talk. It centred around the teacher from China, who was a relief teacher. Since I'd seen him last, he had taught Maths in Hobart, completed a university course and was granted residency. He had been teaching two adult education courses in Chinese and was examining methods of teaching Chinese to students and doing research on linguistics. He was confident of an established future in Australia, yet for many people he was seen as 'just a relief teacher'.

APPENDIX 21

Union information for relief teachers

After an interview with a senior officer in the Union, the researcher queried why there were no references to relief teachers in the Union diary/ handbook (1995) although there were members of the Union who were relief teachers. The following excerpts are taken from 1996 and 1997 Handbooks. From evidence in the investigation, the Union's examples of the pay that relief teachers 'should' receive does not represent what generally happens in practice (eg. appendix 5). Both handbooks contain the same clause on legal responsibilities:

> Because of the various experiences reported by our relief teacher members, we strongly recommend that you read the section in this Diary on *Legal Responsibility*. If you are not provided with a copy of the school or college's Discipline Policy when you first arrive at a workplace, ask the office for a copy and familiarise yourself with it *before* you need it. (AEU, 1996, p.61, emphasis in original)

SALARY AND HOURS OF DUTY

Relief teachers may be required to be on-site for up to 7 hours on any one day at any one workplace.

Maximum instructional time for a full day's pay is 5 hours.

2.5 hours on site is equivalent to one-half day's pay.

The daily rate of pay is calculated by finding your correct placement on the salary scale according to your qualifications and experience, and then dividing the annual salary by 200.

INCREMENTS

Relief teachers are entitled to increments on completion of 200 full-time days of work, including any temporary work. Although the employer should make this adjustment automatically, it is recommended that you keep your own records and notify the DEA once you have completed 200 days.

(Keeping a copy of <u>everything</u> relating to your employment is a good habit because, inevitably, some things will go astray. Your own good record keeping may one day save you from financial loss.)

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

You must be paid for a minimum of 2 hours for any one appointment, even if you are required on site for less than two hours. You must be paid to the nearest half an hour beyond the time you are there. This may occasionally result in your being paid for 10 or 15 minutes extra but, as it would be illegal for the school or college to underpay you by 10 or 15 minutes, this is the way it is calculated.

Always find out the total period for which you will be required and therefore the total number of hours, eg if you are required to be in attendance from 12:30pm to 3:30pm because the school needs you to do lunch-time yard duty and after school bus duty, you should be paid 3/5 of a day's pay, even though only 1½ hours of this may be actual teaching time. However, if you work a full day at one school and receive 5/5 of your salary, you can be required to be in attendance for 7 hours (excluding lunch time without duty) as can any other teacher. Occasionally, you may work at one place in the morning and be needed at a different one for the afternoon. In these circumstances it is possible (and perfectly legal) to earn more than one day's pay.

The award requires that all teachers have a minimum of half an hour for a lunch break, free of duty. No teacher is paid for this time and it does not form part of the hours on site. Relief Teachers who start work in the morning must take this compulsory half hour break for lunch and cannot be paid for that time. If you start work in the morning and have an hour for lunch with no duty, you will not be paid for that hour. Relief Teachers who are required to work only in the afternoon should arrive 30 minutes before they are required to teach in order to meet their obligations under the award. (This does not apply in colleges.) In these circumstances, this is not regarded as a lunch break and is paid, on-site time.

The award states that a teacher in a school *shall be in attendance ... at least one half hour before beginning lessons.* (This does not apply in colleges.) This is a legal obligation and you should endeavour to comply with it, unless of course you receive a late or urgent call in which case it may not always be possible to do so. **Relief Teachers must be paid for the time for which they are required to be in attendance, not just the time for which they actually teach.**
Fill in the claim form at the school office. (Make sure you have your payroll number with you.) You will be paid fortnightly on the same Wednesday as regular teachers. The payment you receive will cover the days of work which you included on your claim form and lodged with DECCD by the preceding Thursday.

APPENDIX 22

Administrators' instructions from the Human Resources Handbook

The following excerpts were taken from the School Resources Handbook (DEA, 1993; DEA, 1996), a loose-leaf file of information for school administrators, written by the Department. The section on relief teaching is only a few pages in length, but even such a brief glimpse of the instructions for administrators illustrates its complexity. For example, the reasons for teachers' absences, the payment of relief teachers, and the management of relief teaching show that the costs of relief teaching are differentiated and diffused. Changes in payment structures have occurred, too, in the last three years. Each factor would be likely to result in a complex blend of information, which masks areas of responsibility or accountability.

The Department offers no guidelines for administrators to help them 'contribute substantially.' The excerpts demonstrate that:

- there are many reasons for staff absence;
- payment for relief teachers is complex and comes from a number of sources;
- the system of managing relief teachers has changed over a three year period;
- relief teaching is seen largely in terms of financial costs;
- it would be difficult to provide consistent or detailed information on the costs involved;
- there are indications of budgetary considerations, such as schools using up stickers;
- the tone of the written information shows evidence of the relationship between the school and Department.

An examination of the administrators' perspective on relief teaching (chapter 4) or of interview data, such as, appendix 5, will substantiate one or more of the above issues.

From Human Resources Handbook, 1993, 2.2

> ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR RELIEF FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF (SCHOOL-BASED EMPLOYEES ONLY)
>
> The minimum payment time for each relief teacher engagement is half a day, that is three and a half hours and for other employees three hours. Stickers for these amounts **must** be attached (even if the actual hours worked are less).
>
> Morning and afternoon tea breaks are included in the cost of the relief for one day (or half a day), however, stickers are not required to cover lunch breaks
>
> For payment of one relief day, the school or college shall contribute ten existing stickers (a strip of stickers) and, for the purposes of half a day, that is three and a half hours, the equivalent of five existing stickers. Schools and colleges are only required to make a total contribution that is a multiple of 0.5 of a day rounded in their favour. Refer to the ready reckoner at the end of this appendix.
>
> Consistent with this arrangement, for the balance of the 1993 school year, school support for relief is as follows:
>
> - For days **one to three** of the absence, the school meets the **full** cost of the absence, that is, ten stickers for each day and five stickers for each half day for teaching staff and one sticker for each hour worked by administrative/clerical relief;
>
> - For days, **four to five** of the absence, the school meets half the cost of the absence; and
>
> - For days **six to twenty** of the absence, the school meets a **quarter** of the absence.
>
> Refer to ready reckoner for examples.

Relief stickers are not required when relief has been engaged to replace a teacher or administrative officer who is absent for one or more of the following reasons:

- workers compensation;
- approved leave without pay;
- teacher union executive meetings;
- representation in State teams;
- participation in authorised sporting carnivals;
- particular cases determined by the Director (Human Resources);
- approved Defence Force leave;
- male employees taking leave for the birth of their child (one day per annum);
- where the employee is a hearing interpreter;
- a kindergarten teacher or kindergarten aide (but not for professional or curriculum development);
- where the employee is a social trainer, utility officer or aide or teacher aide who provides essential physical assistance to a student or students whose degree of disability is severe and profound to an extent necessitating adult management for basic self help tasks such as toileting, feeding and wheel chair positioning and is located in one of the District Special schools; and
- for the whole period when an employee is absent for more than twenty days.

REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL STICKERS

In cases where a school exhausts this allocation additional stickers can be purchased from Central Office ... using School Resource Package funds.

Once all stickers are exhausted, unless the Principal is prepared to use school funds to support relief employees, such employees **must not** be engaged.

Beyond these arrangements additional stickers at no cost to the school (non refundable) will only be allocated in exceptional circumstances. A request for additional stickers must be in writing and mailed or faxed to Director (Human Resources).

The request must indicate the total number of relief days (including stickers purchased from the SRP) expended, the total number of days of employees absences (by the type of absence e.g. sick leave, seminars etc.) and the number of days that have been covered (internally) by the redeployment of employees. In summary, Principals are required to demonstrate that they have contributed substantially to the coverage of absences by internal management means and that their current predicament is the result of events well outside their control.

Principals must also ensure that any leave absences notified as part of their submission have been covered by a leave application. If not, applications should be forwarded with the submission or an explanation provided why applications have not been submitted. Principals should note this process is subject to spot checks and audits. (emphasis in original)

From Human Resources Handbook (1996, 2.2.1):

RELIEF TEACHER SERVICE

Prior to Term 3 1996, the CES provided a Relief Teacher Service for the Department. The service ceased at the end of Term 2 1996. Advice on the provider of a new service will be available soon.

Relief is only available for periods **up to twenty working days**. Principals must utilise the Temporary Employment Registers managed by the Department for vacancies that are over twenty working days in duration or vacancies anticipated to extend beyond twenty days.

Relief teachers **must** be employed for a minimum of **two** hours. (emphasis in original)

APPENDIX 23

The wide range of curriculum subjects in schools

The list is a copy of one issued by the Department for applicants who wish to become temporary teachers in Tasmania. It is highly likely that administrators have to find suitable relief teachers to cover these subjects when their regular teaching staff are absent:

Aboriginal studies
Accounting
Ancient civilisations
Art (general)
Art (specialist)
Asia and Pacific studies
Asian studies
Audio technician
Automotive
Behavioural studies
Biology
Business
CAD
Ceramics
Chemistry
Child studies
Commerce
Computer studies
Consumer studies
Craft design
Dance
Drama
Economics
Electronics
English
English literature
Enterprise
Environmental studies
ESL
Food studies
French
Geography
Geology
German
Health education
History
Home economics
Hospitality
Humanities
Indonesian
Italian
Japanese
Keyboarding
Legal studies
Librarian
LOTE
Marine studies
Maths
MDT
Media studies
Music (general)
Music (instrumental)
Music (specialist)
Outdoor ed
Photography
Phys ed
Phys ed
Physical sciences
Physics
Religion
Remedial maths
Retail
Rural science
Science
Shorthand
Social psychology
Sociology
SOSE
Spanish
Special ed (general)
Special ed (specialist)
Speech and drama
Textiles and design
Tourism
Visual art
Work studies

APPENDIX 24

A relief teacher's timetable

The timetable represents the basic nature of information given to relief teachers in some high schools: there is no evidence of the location of the classroom, the work requirements, or indeed, what 'Hu', 'MS', or 'Admin', entailed. In this particular school the administrator had no additional information for relief teachers. He expected relief teachers to cope and bring work in an emergency, 'because that's what they are paid for' (27). As these expectations were rarely clarified *before* the relief teacher arrived at the school, there were many on-going problems and the administrator was described by his staff as 'always putting out fires'.

HIGH SCHOOL

TEACHER RELIEF FORM

DATE:.....

NAME:..... TEACHER ABSENT:...R. Fleming.....

PERIOD	TIMES	CLASS	TEACHING AREA	WORK SET
1	9.00 - 9.40			
2	9.40 - 10.20	8 HU		
3	10.20 - 11.00	↓		
RECESS	11.00 - 11.20			
4	11.20 - 12.00	10 MS		
5	12.00 - 12.40	↓		
LUNCH	12.40 - 1.30			
ADMINS	1.30 - 1.50	G 10 Admin		
6	1.50 - 2.30	8 MS ↓		
7	2.30 - 3.10	↓		

DUTY:

RELIEF TEACHER COMMENTS:

THIS FORM TO BE RETURNED TO THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL AT THE END OF THE DAY, WHEN RELIEF FORMS ETC. WILL BE COMPLETED.

APPENDIX 25

Salary claim

The following halves of two salary claim forms provide an example of how the lack of clear policies or guidelines for relief teaching creates an ambiguous situation which leads to local interpretation. They were chosen to represent a problem which has continued for many years. The investigation has shown how the lack of clear directives from the Department can lead to discriminatory work practices, or even exploitation. The researcher has widespread evidence of other anomalies which have arisen from the ad hoc approach to the management of relief teaching. For example, interview data from one new relief teacher (appendix 5) showed how what should have been a straightforward salary claim led to on-going difficulties in receiving payment for the work she had completed.

On 26 June 1998, the researcher worked in a high school from 10.30 am-3.00 pm. The administrator calculated payment for 4.5 hours.

In a nearby high school on 8 July 1998, for similar work and duties, the researcher worked from 11.00 am- 3.00 pm. The administrator calculated payment for 3 hours.

On each occasion the researcher arrived half an hour earlier, and stayed after school.

Education and the Arts — RELIEF EMPLOYEES CLAIM FORM

116 Bathurst Street, Hobart
G.P.O. Box 169B Hobart
Tasmania Australia 7001
☎ (002) 337101 Fax No. (002) 312327

All new employees: Please attach a completed DEA Relief Employment Personal Details Form and a Tax Declaration form.

	Date	Start am pm	Finish am pm	Hrs claimed	Person relieved	Reason	Location Cost Centre	Authorised by	Funding State	Funding SRP
Thur										
Fri										
Mon										
Tue										
Wed	8/7/98	11.00	3.00	3	M. [illegible]	P.D	0051	RB		✓
Thur										
Fri	26/6	10.30	3	4½	A. Conrick	Illness	DOSS	[illegible]		✓
Mon										
Tue										
Wed										

TOTAL HOURS CLAIMED ☐ Employee's Signature: _____

Note: Admin/Clerical and Operational Staff only: Has (or will) this period of relief continue over 5 days? ☐Yes ☐No

P1 TIMESHEET — OFFICE USE ONLY

Desc.	Code	Hrs	I/R	Amount	Costing	Pos No	From	To	Pay Period
Addit.	0627								
Addit.	0627								
Addit.	0627								
Addit.	0627								
120%	0551								
120%	0551								
15%	6311								

Calculation:

Prepared by: _____ Checked by: _____

Relief Category: (please tick)

- Teacher ☐
- Cleaner ☐
- Groundsperson ☐
- Office / Clerical Assistant ☐
- Teacher Aide ☐
- Librarian ☐
- Library Assistant ☐
- Bus Attendant ☐
- Cook / Kitchen hand ☐
- Admin / Clerical Assist. ☐
- Word Processor Operator ☐
- Laboratory Technician ☐
- Instrumental musician ☐
- Other ☐

Important: All Timesheets must be received by 11.00 am on the Thursday prior to the Wednesday pay day.

Please attach relief stickers on reverse side

SJM 13/9/95