Teacher Reflection Among Professional Seminary Faculty in the Seminaries and Institutes Department of the Church Educational System

Ryan S. Gardner
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TEACHER REFLECTION AMONG PROFESSIONAL SEMINARY FACULTY
IN THE SEMINARIES AND INSTITUTES DEPARTMENT OF THE
CHURCH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

by

Ryan S. Gardner

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Education
(Curriculum and Instruction)

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2011
ABSTRACT

Teacher Reflection Among Professional Seminary Faculty in the Seminaries
and Institutes Department of the Church Educational System

by

Ryan S. Gardner, Doctor of Philosophy
Utah State University, 2011

Major Professor: Michael K. Freeman, Ph.D.
Program: Curriculum and Instruction

This qualitative study aimed at exploring and explaining the practices and processes of teacher reflection among a group of professional secondary-level religious educators in the Church Educational System of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as well as seeking to understand the perceived impact of those reflective practices on the professional development of these teachers. The researcher described, analyzed, and interpreted the data to develop a mid-range grounded theory for explaining the process of teacher reflection in a way that could lead to the improvement of teacher reflection among these teachers as an integrated function of professional development. This study found that the institutional operational tools for reflection provided means for professional religious educators to engage in various kinds of reflection, but that the relationship between the various levels of reflection and the way these functioned in their professional development was not well understood or utilized by these teachers. This
study concluded by offering an integrated model of teacher reflection that can help teachers and supervisors understand the process of reflection as an integral part of the teacher’s professional development.

(280 pages)
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I give special thanks to Mike Cottle for his collegial support and sincere friendship. Most of all, I express my utmost love and appreciation to my wife, Kathryn, and to our children—Jordan, Abigail, Hannah, Sadie, Seth, and Elise—for their willingness to make sacrifices and support me over the last 5 years of study, research, presentations, and writing. I could not have done any of this without all of you.

Ryan S. Gardner
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CHAPTER 1
BACKGROUND, PURPOSE, RESEARCH QUESTIONS,
AND SIGNIFICANCE

In late June of 2009, the researcher for this study made an intriguing discovery in the eighth floor library of the Church Office Building of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah. To commemorate the centennial celebration of the creation of the Department of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (S&I) in the Church Educational System, one of the researcher’s colleagues in the Curriculum Services Division had been commissioned as general editor to oversee a substantial project on the history of S&I, which began in 1912. The encyclopedic project has entries on just about everything imaginable having to do with the Church Educational System, so the researcher approached the editor with some specific questions about the history of S&I history germane to the subject of this study. In the course of the conversation, the editor referred to some of the newsletters and periodicals that had been published and distributed by S&I over the last century of its existence. In the eighth floor S&I library—a room about 20’ x 40’—one can find the very first newsletters (all originals), bound and filed. And that’s where the interesting discovery was made. The first issue of the first volume of *The Growing Edge* (1969) had a supplement attached to it, “Reflective thinking and teaching: A comparison of views of various contemporary authors on a technique of problem-solving and decision-making” by Frank W. Hirschi, Montpelier, Idaho, area district coordinator. Hirschi would later become co-author with William Berrett on the first attempt to write a history of S&I entitled, *A miracle in weekday*
While Hirschi’s article referred briefly to the importance of teachers being
reflective on their pedagogical practice, it focused more on teaching students to practice
reflection in the classroom. It did not discuss teacher reflection as a function of sustained
professional development. Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2004) proposed that
“the long-term goal of developmental supervision is teacher development toward a point
at which teachers, facilitated by supervisors, can assume full responsibility for
instructional improvement” (p. 208). A fundamental premise of this study, supported by
many during the last 20 years of professional development research in education (Blase
& Blase, 2004; Glickman et al., 2004; Janssen, Hullu, & Tigelaar, 2008), is that teacher
reflection needs to be a major component of attaining this vision of sustained professional
development for all educators, including religious educators. However, despite the
emphasis on professional reflection in education, professional reflection has not
experienced the same overt emphasis in professional development for religious educators,
nor for professional seminary teachers in S&I.

**Problem Statement**

While the seminary program for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
began in 1912, professional development of faculty was not a main concern until more
recent decades. Since the entire CES program was restructured into its modern form
under CES Commissioner Neal Maxwell beginning in 1971 (Hafen, 2002), system-wide
professional development efforts have become more codified at times—yet these efforts
remain somewhat erratic for inservice teachers. For example, the Teacher Support Program (Tippetts, 1984), which began in 1981, was eventually replaced by the Professional Development Program (Haws, 1998), which has since been replaced by the current Apprenticeship Program (Page, 2000), which was begun in 1999. In 2003, a renewed focus on teacher effectiveness and attaining specific student objectives emerged with the teaching and learning emphasis (its current nomenclature; hereafter referred to as TLE), but it has not been accompanied by a specific professional development program for professional seminary faculty. From collegial conversations with many teachers and lower-level administrators (seminary principals) in S&I, this has led to some anxiety among inservice teachers regarding their effectiveness in the classroom (see also Hilton, 2009; Rau, 2009; Sweat, 2009). A recent conversation with a full-time S&I teacher in the United States who has been teaching more than 30 years, in which he described his feelings of anxiety over the TLE confirm that this morale issue has not entirely disappeared.

In *Teaching, No Greater Call, A Resource Guide for Gospel Teaching* (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999), the teacher training manual for teachers in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one reads the following statement as the final main concept for the final lesson on how to improve as a teacher, “We should continually reflect on our effectiveness as teachers” (p. 236). This final lesson offers specific suggestions, including a simple self-assessment and goal-setting chart for teachers to consider ways to improve (see p. 25). Teacher reflection, however, has not been a primary focus in official system-wide S&I training or professional development programs
in a codified or specified mode. No form of the word “reflect” occurred in the *Teaching the Gospel, A Handbook for CES Teachers and Leaders* (CES, 2001), the primary training document for S&I personnel. The *S&I Policy Manual* (CES, 2009) likewise contained no uses of the word reflection in the sense of teacher development or training. In only one lesson in the *Teaching the Gospel, A CES Training Resource for Teacher Improvement* (CES, 2000) did the word reflect occur when teachers are asked to reflect upon how their example in living the principles of their faith affects their effectiveness as a teacher (see p. 21). Although this is critical for religious educators, it is not evidence of a prevalent emphasis on reflection in S&I teacher training or professional development. The *Administering Appropriately, A Handbook for CES Leaders and Teachers* (CES, 2003) contains two references suggesting that “personal development results from learning and applying gospel principles, acquiring desired skills, reflecting on current assignments, and trying new ideas” (p. 15) and that leaders who have a habit of “reflecting on related past experiences” (p. 23) will have greater success in their assignments. None of these instances provide a thorough description of the process of reflection or offer any kind of training on how to develop reflective skills or practices. Thus, the landscape of teacher reflectivity in S&I at the time of this study was quite atheoretical. The central problem under examination in this study is that there is a lack of description, understanding, interpretation, or explicitly articulated theory of teacher reflection as an integrated function of professional development in S&I.

This problem is not limited solely to S&I faculty. For example, on July 6, 2009, a search of the Wilson Web database (which includes ERIC) for the words “teacher
reflection” turned up 1624 hits in the titles of articles—there were 104 in 2008, and there were 21 as of July 2009. However, when the words “religious education” were added to that same search, only one article was found (Heil & Ziebertz, 2004). When the search was broadened to search the abstracts of articles, instead of just the titles, Wilson Web returned 88 hits for the words “teacher reflection religious education.” Most of these articles, however, focused on teaching about religion in public schools, not specifically on religious education in its own context and setting. (This distinction will be clarified in the section on definitions.) Eleven of these 88 articles seemed to be generally related to the research focus of this study.

A search of ProQuest (digital dissertations and theses) resulted in similar findings. A search of citations and abstracts for “teacher reflection” returned 297 hits. As expected, most of these research studies were related to nuanced areas of educational research. Some were focused specifically on teacher reflection for various types of courses or curriculum, such as mathematics, science, art, language arts, and so forth. Others were more focused on teacher reflection for social justice purposes—such as gender sensitivity, diversity, race issues, democracy in the classroom, and so forth. However, 71 of these studies were tagged for a closer examination, either because they have similar research questions, methodologies, or theoretical lenses that may be related to the topic of research for this dissertation study. Adding the words “religious education” to a search in ProQuest limited the overall field of 297 to 70 dissertation studies, 11 of which seemed to be related generally to my focus on teacher reflection for religious educators in religious education settings. However, the most recent of these studies, Eric Johnson’s (2008)
dissertation from Utah State University on S&I seminary principals, mentions the words “teacher” and “reflection” but does not address the subject as a major focus of his study. Because some educational writers and researchers prefer “reflectivity” to “reflection,” another search was conducted in Wilson Web and ProQuest for “reflectivity religious education,” which yielded zero hits in the former and only five in the latter, and only two of those seemed potentially related to the research interests and questions of this dissertation.

**Purpose Statement**

Therefore, this study seemed justified by at least two major points. First, while there has been a significant amount of study and research done on teacher reflection and reflective practices in education in general, not much has been done in the specific realm of religious education. Even less has been done in S&I. From a review of a bibliography of 524 dissertations and theses done on S&I related topics and programs (Rogers, 2009), it was noted that 22 focused primarily on various aspects of professional development. While these studies focused on various aspects of professional development and training—such as preservice training, evaluation, assessment, supervision, inservice training, and so forth—none focused specifically on teacher reflection, or reflectivity. Several of them referred to various activities and practices often associated with teacher reflection, such as observation, journal writing, videotaping—even “self-assessment” (Zollinger, 1981)—but professional reflection was not discussed as a critical aspect of a cohesive professional development program or theory in S&I. This supports the notion
that S&I lacks a coherent theory of teacher reflection and only focuses on it partially in other professional development programs or training.

In other words, there are multiple institutional tools in place to allow for teacher reflection—including the preservice program; the Apprenticeship Program; local inservice meetings; larger area inservice meetings; the Employee Professional Growth Plan (Alignment, Accountability, Development), with its counterpart, the Employee Professional Growth Plan (Regular Results Discussion); and observation by local principals, area directors, and other teachers. Having been an employee of S&I for 12 years, the researcher has observed that when these happen (which may or may not be consistent practice in some cases), they happen in a disjointed and noncorrelated way. Possible reflection tools are in place, but they are not integrated in such a way that teachers and administrators view and utilize them as tools for professional reflection as part of a sustained and systematic program of professional development that will consistently sustain increasing self-directed teacher effectiveness, as proposed by Glickman and colleagues (2004). I believe this is due in part to the lack of an explicitly stated and understood “theory in use” (Argyris & Schön, 1974) or “theory in action” (Blase & Blase, 2004).

Second, while more was being expected of seminary faculty in light of the TLE (CES, 2009), some felt that more support had not been provided for them in the realm of professional development. While it is not unusual for institutions involved in religious education to issue guiding documents such as the TLE—the Church of Sweden issued a similar document in 2000 called “Learning and Teaching” (see Larsson, 2010, p. 528)—
there seems to have been some confusion among some teachers in the field over whether the TLE was a “first-order” or “second-order” change (see Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, pp. 112-116). As mentioned earlier, this left some teachers feeling frustrated, uncertain, demoralized, and lacking a sense of support they felt they needed during a time of transition as they reevaluated and tried to recondition their teaching. During the researcher’s employment with S&I, he spent four years in two different administrative positions. In conversations with several teachers and other administrators during that time, some of them wondered what was expected of them, how they can know whether or not they are “doing a good job,” and/or whether or not they are being effective in the classroom at accomplishing the goals of the new TLE. Teacher reflection has been a key aspect of professional development in other areas of education, but S&I lacks a clear descriptive/interpretive theory of professional reflectivity for its seminary faculty. Thus, this study sought to describe current reflective practices of seminary teachers, analyze and interpret those practices through the theoretical lenses of teacher reflection put forth by Hatton and Smith (1995) and Korthagen (2004), and generate a “theory in use” (Argyris & Schön, 1974) that describes the present state of teacher reflection as a function of professional development in S&I. This will hopefully encourage further research in this critical aspect of sustained professional development for professional religious educators in S&I, as well as in other religious education contexts.

This mixed methods study utilized a primarily qualitative approach to generate a grounded theory to answer the following research questions.

1. What are some of the reflective practices among professional S&I seminary
instructors?

2. How do these teachers engage in reflective practices and activities?

3. How do they perceive these reflective practices and activities as having an impact on their professional development?

Some general answers to the first and second questions were found by a survey of a sample of professional S&I seminary teachers ($N = 48$). While semistructured interview questions were formulated in advance, data obtained from this survey influenced the modification or adaptation of those interview questions to find more complete answers to the second and third questions. Part of the rationale behind the second and third questions was that the researcher suspected that teachers were engaging in teacher reflection practices, whether they identified them as such or not, and thus classroom observations and documents collected from teachers helped describe and explain those individual reflective activities that were happening apart from the institutionalized methods and programs mentioned earlier. One aim of this study was to find substantive answers to these questions and generate a pragmatic theory for the process of teacher reflectivity among seminary teachers in S&I that would help administrators and teachers to work together toward a higher level of professional development that would be more meaningful for faculty and yield greater results in the classroom for students.

**Definitions and Context**

This study focused on teacher reflection related to pedagogy, not content. The researcher focused on how teachers in this study reflected about how they taught or how
they proceeded with their professional development, not on the content of what they were teaching. In this sense, one of the most frequently used definitions of “teacher reflection” in recent years was provided by Hatton and Smith (1995), attributed to John Dewey, “deliberate thinking about action with a view to its improvement” (p. 40). This definition is useful in that it is succinct. However, their more expansive definition of reflection and the process of reflection seemed to raise some of the more essential aspects of teacher reflection, “Reflection may be seen as an active and deliberative cognitive process, involving sequences of interconnected ideas which take account of underlying beliefs and knowledge. Reflective thinking generally addresses practical problems, allowing for doubt and perplexity before possible solutions are reached” (p. 34). Hatton and Smith’s definition was the most useful for this study for several reasons. First of all, this study focused primarily on active and deliberate reflective practices. While this study also considered the affective and spiritual dimensions of reflection, the primary focus in this study was on the cognition of teachers as they engage in reflection—what they think about in regards to their practice and professional development. This study aimed at describing, analyzing, and interpreting the interconnected ideas, underlying beliefs, and knowledge that S&I seminary teachers draw upon and think about as they address practical problems and seek professional growth. This definition was also helpful because it not only allows for, but encourages, a certain amount of doubt and perplexity as teachers try to generate solutions.

The professional seminary teachers in this study were full-time employees of the Church Educational System operated by the LDS Church. Most of them had been hired
through a “preservice center,” which is described in more detail in Chapter 4. They taught a full load of classes in Church-owned seminary buildings owned by the Church in a program called “released-time seminary.” Their classroom settings are similar to the settings of public education teachers in the schools from which their students come.

In the US, the seminary program is available for students in grades 9-12 who are released from their public (or private) school to go to the seminary building and participate in religious education—without receiving public school credit for doing so. As of 2010, approximately 116,000 students enrolled in released-time seminary programs—mostly in Utah, Idaho, Arizona, and Wyoming. Enrollment in each area where released-time seminary is available varies, ranging between 60% to as high as 95% in some areas.

During their four years of seminary, students spend one year on each of the following books considered scripture by the LDS Church: Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants. These books constitute the core curriculum for seminary teachers and students. Teachers are also provided with a “Teacher Resource Manual” for each course of study, which they can use as a guide for their instruction. There are no annual or comprehensive exams for students, and graduation is based on attendance percentage (80% minimum).

It is necessary at this point to define “religious education” in the context of this study and the seminary program. Lee (1973) posited that there are three types of general religious education. The first is the “intellectual position” which proposes that “the primary proximate purpose of religious instruction lies in the intellectual development of the learner in matters pertaining to religion” (p. 10). This is the type of education about
religion that might be found in public schools or public university-level religious studies programs. The second is the “moralist position,” which is a kind of “religious instruction [that] consists in making the student more virtuous. Religious knowledge in this view is decidedly secondary and ancillary to religious virtue; knowledge and understanding are brought into the teaching situation only to the extent that they promote virtue” (p. 11). This is the kind of religious education that might be found in religion, such as in Sunday School or Bible Study classes supported by and held in conjunction with worship services in many denominations. Lee calls the third type of religious education the “integralist position.” This type of religious instruction

…aims at enabling the learner to actualize in a harmonious, integrated, developmental, and self-fulfilling way all five dimensions which have typically been identified as comprising religious behavior: the ideological dimension, that is religious belief; the ritualistic dimension, that is religious practice; the affective dimension, that is religious feeling; the intellectual dimension, that is religious knowledge and understanding; and the consequential dimension, that is religious effects. (pp. 10-11)

This last position best describes the intent and objectives of religious education in the seminary program in CES, which might be explained as happening within the larger structure of the LDS Church, because faculty are under the direction of ecclesiastical authority but do not hold ecclesiastical office over their students by virtue of their professional assignment.

Understanding these definitions in context of the objective and purposes of S&I will increase the understanding of those interested in this study and the process of teacher reflection in a religious education setting. The stated objective of S&I (CES, 2009) declared:
Our purpose is to help youth and young adults understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ, qualify for the blessings of the temple, and prepare themselves, their families, and others for eternal life with their Father in Heaven.

The objective of S&I (CES, 2009) contained three subsequent paragraphs on how teachers are to live, teach, and administer in order to be effective teachers. The paragraph on teaching read,

We teach students the doctrines and principles of the gospel as found in the scriptures and the words of the prophets. These doctrines and principles are taught in a way that leads to understanding and edification. We help students fulfill their role in the learning process and prepare them to teach the gospel to others.

Furthermore, teachers have also been instructed to incorporate principles of effective teaching, known as the TLE (CES, 2009), which read:

To help us achieve our objective, teachers and students should: Teach and learn by the Spirit.

Cultivate a learning environment of love, respect, and purpose. Study the scriptures daily and read the text for the course.

Understand the context and content of the scriptures and the words of the prophets.

Identify, understand, and apply gospel doctrines and principles.

Explain, share, and testify of gospel doctrines and principles.

Master key scripture passages and basic doctrines.

Table 1.1 illustrates how Lee’s definition of religious education, the accepted definition for this study, is paralleled in the S&I Objective and TLE.
Table 1.1

**Religious Education in Seminaries and Institutes of the Church Educational System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of religious education (Lee, 1973)</th>
<th>Correlating statements in S&amp;I Objective</th>
<th>Correlating statements in S&amp;I teaching and learning emphasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideological dimension (religious belief)</td>
<td>“Rely on the teachings and atonement of Jesus Christ”</td>
<td>“Teach and learn by the spirit”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Teach and learn by the spirit”</td>
<td>“Testify of gospel doctrines and principles”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritualistic dimension (religious practice)</td>
<td>“Qualify for the blessings of the temple”</td>
<td>“Apply gospel doctrines and principles”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective dimension (religious feeling)</td>
<td>“Doctrines and principles are taught in a way that leads to…edification”</td>
<td>“Cultivate a learning environment of love, respect, and purpose”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Share…gospel doctrines and principles”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual dimension (religious knowledge and understanding)</td>
<td>“Understand…the teachings and atonement of Jesus Christ”</td>
<td>“Study the scriptures daily and read the text for the course”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We teach students the doctrines and principles of the gospel as found in the scriptures and the words of the prophets”</td>
<td>“Understand the context and content of the scriptures and the words of the prophets”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Doctrines and principles are taught in a way that leads to understanding”</td>
<td>“Identify, understand…gospel doctrines and principles”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We help students fulfill their role in the learning process”</td>
<td>“Explain…gospel doctrines and principles”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequential dimension (religious effects)</td>
<td>“Prepare themselves, their families, and others for eternal life with their father in heaven”</td>
<td>“Share…gospel doctrines and principles”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We…prepare [students] to teach the gospel to others”</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Implications and Significance**

By adhering to the overall research paradigm set forth in this chapter in general terms (and explained more thoroughly in Chapter 3), following the criteria of the qualitative research tradition, choosing participants according to sound sampling
procedures, and adhering to the methods of data collection, description, analysis, and interpretation described in this proposal, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the development of a grounded theory of teacher reflection as a function of professional development that will be useful for S&I faculty and administrators. Primarily, it is hoped that a more detailed description and explanation of teacher reflection in S&I will encourage more frequent and effective systematic teacher reflection in S&I. This will result in more effective teachers who will then be more effective in the classroom with their students. It is also hoped that this study will contribute to the body of research and knowledge for the improvement of teacher reflection in religious education in general.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will first focus on general ideas of professional reflection, move into more specific notions of teacher reflection, and then outline what has already been done in the more nuanced field of teacher reflection in religious education (including S&I), with a preliminary rationale and “guiding hypothesis” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) for studying reflection in the specific context of S&I. The second part of this literature review will bridge from the rationale for this study to the methodology for finding answers to the specific research questions put forth in Chapter 1.

Foundations of Teacher Reflection in Education

Discussions about teacher reflection might be considered a persistent staple of professional development fodder in education. John Dewey may rightly be called the “father of teacher reflection in education” (after all, he seems to be notable patriarch of many other educational research topics). Hatton and Smith (1995) referenced Dewey in their discussion of the definition and purpose of reflection. Blase and Blase (2004) also cite Dewey when they borrowed his definition of reflection as “deliberate thinking about action with a view to its improvement” (p. 88). Educational researchers recognize that Dewey presented an initial concept of teacher reflection that continues to provide a foundation for reflection and reflective practices and research regarding reflection today (see Koubek, 2002; Whipp, Wesson, & Wiley, 1997).

However, recent approaches to research on teacher reflection also rely heavily on
the work of Donald Schön. In *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983), Schön explained how a crisis of confidence in professionalism and professional knowledge during the 1960s—perhaps part of the cultural crisis of confidence in most forms of institutionalized authority—led researchers in organizational behavior, leadership, education, psychology, and other social science fields to explore ways to enhance and increase the effectiveness of professionals in society. He explains how reflection began to replace “Technical Rationality,” a system of corporate effectiveness by rote memorization of institutional rules and procedures. In 1974, Argyris and Schön had published *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness*, in which they explicated their new model of professional training whereby professionals in their specific context had to learn to identify both their “espoused theories”—the set of values, skills, and procedures that they professed to employ—and their “theories in action”—their actual behavior patterns and the rationales behind them. They posited that the failure of professionalism in most instances resulted from trained and intelligent people who continued “speaking in the language of one theory, acting in the language of another, and maintaining the illusion of congruence through systematic self-deception” (p. 33). Unfortunately, as pointed out by the Arbinger Institute (2002), “There’s nothing more common in organizations than self-deception” (p. 15). One pair of organizational behavior researchers and authors called problems of this sort “the curse of cluelessness” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, pp. 6-8). Haws (1998) confirmed that this was a problem in S&I when he found that teachers could recite the “principles of edification” from their Professional Development Program training, but noted that these principles did not often lead to methodological decisions in the
classroom. While Korthagen (2004) may be right that this kind of alignment between a teacher’s mission, identity, beliefs, competencies, and behaviors may “take a lifetime to attain” (p. 87), the process of striving for it has great potential to improve teaching effectiveness.

Argyris and Schön (1974) claimed that one effective way to fix this problem was to lead professionals through a process by which they could create and examine case studies and other professional dilemmas in such a way to uncover these incongruencies. They accomplished this through a series of seminars and classes that focused on case studies, dialogue, discussion, and, of course, personal and group reflection. While they acknowledged that this process often brought about feelings of discouragement and psychological, mental, and emotional pain for participants in its initial stages, they also suggested that “the foundation for future professional competence seems to be the capacity to learn how to learn” (p. 157). They proposed that only through this process of diagnosis and reflection could professionals break through their “self-sealing” behavior and defense mechanisms so that “espoused technical theories [could be] confronted with theories-in-use so that [professionals] may be helped to develop their own hybrid theories of practice” (p. 195).

In 1987, Schön published *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*, in which he detailed strategies he developed at MIT in cooperation with an array of experts from the fields of psychology, organizational behavior, and other social sciences by which professionals could become more effective through professional reflection. He also presented his learning theory for
how this takes place in the professional realm. It is not the purpose of this study to trace the entrance of Schön’s work into the educational field *ab ovo*. However, as early as 1989, Spellman referenced Schön and proposed in the abstract for her dissertation on reflection among elementary teachers that “teacher reflectivity…may well be the key to all that happens in the classroom, including curricular decisions, teacher classroom behavior, and ultimately student learning.” Her study claimed that higher levels of teacher reflection produced teachers who had a higher level of “richness and innovativeness of the curriculum, adapted the curriculum to individual and group needs and background of the students, developed and refined the routines which organized classroom life, and provided a strong base for the many decisions made during instruction.” By 1991, Schön had edited and published an entire volume, entitled *The Reflective Turn: Case studies in and on educational practice*, on how his theory of professional reflection could be applied to a wide array of educational settings. (Notably, the volume was published through Teachers College Press at the Teachers College of Columbia University, the final career stop for the patriarchal John Dewey.)

In the *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*, Sprinthall, Reiman, and Thies-Sprinthall (1996) pointed out that “few studies exist in the Schön genre. Only MacKinnon…developed a set of criteria for detecting Schön’s reflection-in-action during student teachers’ supervisory conferences” (p. 689). While few research studies have been done specifically on Schön’s theories and models in education, they concede that Schön’s work has “had a significant effect on mainstream educator thinking about reflection” (p. 688). Thus, Schön remains a key influence in the field of reflection in
teacher training and development.

With the foundation of teacher reflection in the work of John Dewey and an added impetus from the well-developed models of Donald Schön, educational researchers have produced a plethora of research studies and articles aimed at enhancing professional development through teacher reflection. As mentioned earlier, a search of Wilson Web returned over 1,600 articles on teacher reflection in education-related fields; many of these were research studies. ProQuest also contains nearly 300 doctoral and master’s level studies on the subject of teacher reflection in education-related fields.

Some educational researchers have written about teacher reflection as an important element of instructional or developmental supervision. Although Weiss (1998) doesn’t refer much to the actual practice of teacher reflection in her book *Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies*, she does say that one of the primary purposes of program evaluation is to “come to understand the reality rather than the rhetoric of the program” (p. 322). This idea echoes Argyris and Schön’s (1974) challenge that professionals need to compare their espoused theories, both institutionally and individually, with their theories-in-use. Part of the evaluative process, she asserts, can help practitioners to “to make implicit assumptions explicit” which “encourages them to think harder and deeper about the programs they design” (p. 67). Thinking “harder and deeper” is the core of teacher reflection (see Barth, 2003).

In developing their four approaches to instructional supervision, Glickman and colleagues (2004) confirmed the centrality of teachers thinking deeply about their practice when they wrote that,
Teachers in successful schools do continue to think and are challenged to extend the use of their mental abilities. If a supervisor could promote thinking among the school staff, school success might not be far behind. Thinking improves when people interact with each other, when they break routine by experimenting, when they observe others at work, and when they assess and revise their own actions. (p. 79)

Whatever the level or apparatus of reflection under examination in this study, one of the primary purposes was to try to understand the cognitive and affective processes of religious educators in their reflective practices, not just to observe the actions and activities they engage in. While their reflective practices may be similar to other educators, their thinking and feeling about those activities may be where the key distinctions lie between religious educators and other educators. Mayes’ (2001a, 2001b, 2001c) research on spiritual reflectivity, whereby teachers discuss the beliefs, morals, and motives that inform their teaching practices, influenced the analysis and interpretation of this kind of data.

To develop their own model of instructional supervision, which they called “academic leadership,” Blase and Blase (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of several hundred studies on leadership in education. They challenged educational administrators to “capture alternative ways to help teachers reflect critically on their actions, clarify their thinking, make explicit their theories-in-action, engage in critical analysis of self, and genuinely share” (p. 16). These examples from developers of instructional leadership models demonstrate the important place of teacher reflection in educational practice and development. This has not yet been effectively researched in religious education or in S&I; hence, the need for this study.

While some have studied reflection in the context of instructional supervision (see
Marzano et al., 2005; Netzer, 1993), educational researchers also recognize that the implementation of sustained, successful teacher reflection must be supported by coherent models and theories. Korthagen (2004) argued that the most useful theories of reflection do more than encourage teachers to reflect, they help teachers understand what to reflect on. Thus, some have attempted to build on the work of Dewey and Schön to develop their own models of teacher reflection specifically for the educational field. Twenty years ago, Biermann (1990) proposed a model of teacher reflection that posited three levels of general teacher reflectivity: Level 1—reflection on basic skills of teaching and conveying knowledge; Level 2—in-depth analysis of teaching problems and generating solutions; and Level 3—reflection on values, ethics, and moral principles as they relate to classroom teaching and school culture. This is an example of a simple, traditional, hierarchical model of teacher reflection from simple to more complicated levels of teacher reflection.

Ayers (1993) proposed an affective model of teacher reflection based on the writings of Nel Noddings, Alfie Kohn, Martin Buber, Paulo Freire, Rita Brock, David Purpel, and Walter Brueggemann that focused on interpersonal relationships and cultivating values of cherishing, spirituality, love, justice, mercy, and compassion. Her study focused on a more philosophical approach to teacher reflection that outlined basic assumptions for an approach to teacher reflection, which would then effect how reflective activities would be practiced.

Colton and Sparks-Langer (1993) offered a conceptual framework for teacher reflection that focused on the cognitive, critical, and personal characteristics of teachers
within a collegial environment to foster teacher reflection. This concept of approaching teacher reflection from the perspective of looking at the whole teacher has influenced several other studies (see Fettig, 1999; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Newell, 1996). In a qualitative study of their CITE (Collaboration for the Improvement of Teacher Education) program at Eastern Michigan University, Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) demonstrated that of the 16 student teachers in their program ranked “average” or “above average” 10 of them were functioning at the highest or next to highest levels of teacher reflection in their model, while only one of the eight “below average” students could reflect at higher levels. In her 10-week study of ten elementary school teachers, Fettig confirmed that following the Colton and Sparks-Langer model of teacher reflection led teachers to participate more enthusiastically in the construction of knowledge, meaning, and action in areas such as student achievement in the classroom and student morality and citizenship.

At the University of Sydney in Australia, Hatton and Smith (1995) studied teacher reflection in their own preservice courses and subsequently developed a model of teacher reflection that proposed four levels of teacher reflection—technical, descriptive, dialogic, and critical. Ideally, helping teachers to reflect from within “multiple viewpoints” simultaneously increases their capacity for “reflection-in-action” in the classroom. As this was the primary theoretical framework for this study, more attention will be given to this model later on.

Garcia (1996) developed a model of teacher reflection based on hierarchical, problem-solving and compared it to teacher development as measured by Ammon and
Hutcheson’s theoretical conceptualizations of pedagogy. In the eight case studies she evaluated, her findings demonstrated that higher levels of teacher reflection in her model could also be correlated with higher levels of teacher development. This study further solidified the value of teacher reflection in relation to sustained professional development.

Taking a much broader approach to teacher reflection, Golubich (1997) suggested that the most efficient teacher reflection must take place in four domains of a “reflective landscape” that considers teaching in the larger context of schooling and education in a democratic society. Such models of teacher reflection suggest a much more expansive role for the professional act of teaching and the impact teachers can have on the present and future state of society.

Other research suggests that encouraging reflection over time can have positive effects on teachers’ professional development. One research project in an urban Florida school district showed that a full third of 150 teachers who participated in a three-year program that emphasized reflective practices reported feeling a significant “degree of success” in achieving higher levels of collegiality, experimentation and risk taking, multicultural sensitivity, decision making, ongoing inquiry, and commitment to teaching as a result of their experience in the program (Fountain, Drummond, & Senterfitt, 2000).

Another example of this kind of teacher reflection model was organized by Milner (2003). He proposed a complex model of teacher reflection whereby the teacher reflects on content knowledge and pedagogical practices in relation to “cultural comprehensive knowledge,” including race, gender, culture, and traditions of both teacher and students.
This model of teacher reflection suggests that in some cases, such as the case study of an African American urban school in which this model was developed, there are specific aspects of teacher reflection that must be contextually understood and operationalized in order to facilitate effective teacher reflection in specific settings.

In Korthagen’s (2004) “onion model” of teacher reflection, he presents several layers of a teacher’s professional and personal role: sense of mission, identity, beliefs, competencies, behaviors, and the environment. To improve their teaching, teachers must learn how to harmoniously integrate the various layers, which interact with and affect each other, until their behaviors in each teaching environment are completely aligned with their core beliefs.

These various models of teacher reflection provide sufficient evidence of the potentially positive impact of teacher reflection on professional development. However, Hatton and Smith’s (1995) model was selected as the chief interpretive and analytic lens for this study. As part of this initial attempt to develop a simple model of teacher reflection for professional religious educators in S&I, this framework was chosen for its simplicity and the various levels of reflection that the researcher felt could be identified among professional seminary teachers in S&I. While the models proposed by Colton and Sparks-Langer (2003), Mayes (2001c), Korthagen (2004) informed the researcher’s thinking about teacher reflection in various ways, further research using each of these models as a specific lens would further clarify our understanding of teacher reflection in S&I and among religious educators in general.

Much of what has been done in the field of teacher reflection research has been to
examine specific processes of teacher reflection, such as practical inquiry (Newell, 1996); case writing and collaborative reflections (Whipp et al., 1997); narrative generation and analysis (Baverstock-Angelus, 1999); peer learning partnerships (Eisen, 1999); teacher portfolios (Doty, 2001); lesson planning strategy (Ayers, 2002); collaborative staff development (Haines, 2002); and visual recording and feedback (King, 2008; Song & Catapano, 2008). There have also been a significant number of studies conducted to try to capture “alternate” ways of promoting teacher reflection, such as a faculty research program conducted in Turkey for teachers of English as a foreign language (Atay, 2008); web-based professional development focusing on authentic case studies (Barnett, 2008); web discussions for nursing students (Hulkari & Mahlamäki-Kultanen, 2008); and teacher reflection via blogs (Yang, 2009). These studies have also shown a positive impact overall of teacher reflection on professional development. All of these studies helped to form the survey and interview questions for this study, so that the researcher could take a broader approach to investigating the various professional reflective practices that were occurring among professional seminary teachers in S&I.

Teacher reflection has also been studied in many specific contexts. For example, Taylor (1995) reported the specific challenges of his own action research study regarding the role of teacher reflection in the implementation of the goals of “global education” in his own “local milieu.” Whipp and colleagues (1997) reported the specific challenges and dilemmas experienced by urban school teachers in the Howard Project. They hoped that by identifying and discussing obstacles and potential challenges in this specific context that teacher reflection could be enhanced for other teachers in similar settings (see also
Milner, 2003). Koubek (2002) examined teacher reflection practices for German foreign language teachers in an online reflection forum and the specific challenges and nuances faced by foreign language teachers with teacher reflection. Her research confirmed the idea promoted by Argyris and Schön (1974), namely that discrepancies exist between teacher beliefs and practices and she suggested that foreign language teaching has specific challenges and specific context-based solutions to solve that dilemma.

Following this line of contextualization for teacher reflection, Mayes (2001a, 2001b, 2001c) and Cutri (2009) have explored a specific aspect of teacher reflection that is especially pertinent to this study: spiritual reflectivity. They assert that the decision to enter the teaching field for many teachers, not just religious educators, comes from deeply held moral and spiritual values, and to ignore these personal foundations and beliefs regarding the act of teaching is to ignore one of the most fundamental aspects of teacher reflection. Their work offers some support for the contextual specificity of this study and looking at teacher reflection for religious educators in greater depth.

**Teacher Reflection in Religious Education**

This leads to the value of studying teacher reflection in a religious education context. Thomas Groome, director of the Institute of Religious Education at Boston College, has written on the importance of studying religious education endeavors in their own context. After reviewing general definitions of education by Lawrence Cremin and Alfred North Whitehead, Groome (1980) proposed the following definition of religious education:
A deliberate attending to the transcendent dimension of life by which a conscious relationship to an ultimate ground of being is promoted and enabled to come to expression. Religious education focuses specific attention on empowering people in their quest for a transcendent and ultimate ground of being. It leads people to consciousness of what is found, relationship with it, and expression of that relationship. (p. 22)

Groome (1980) continued:

Religious education is a rich term. By its adjective it points to its specificity, and by its noun it retains its commonality with all education, an important bond to maintain…Religious educators share with other educators a common responsibility for the quality of all education taking place in our society…naming our activity as education provides us a rich tradition with an enormous body of literature and research. (p. 23)

However, Groome (1980) also acknowledged:

When in practice…a community educates out of a particular tradition of religious faith, that tradition and community will alter the educational dynamic in both its process and its content. If religious education is done on behalf of, or…”from within” a particular community of religious faith, it and its tradition will lend its own specificity to the educational enterprise and distinguish it further within the activity of religious education in general. (p. 23)

Groome’s (1980) statements imply at least some degree of applicability of educational research and learning models to religious education without sacrificing the specific contextuality of religious education. Thus, while the significant body of teacher reflection alluded to here in this literature review provides this study with a solid research background, only by a rigorous study of teacher reflection in religious education can it be determined to what extent such models of reflection are helpful for describing and analyzing the theory and processes of reflection in religious education. An understanding of the broader field of educational research, however, provides substantial background for the study of that research in religious education settings so that new theories can be
developed or new dimensions of reflection added to previous models and theories to explain the practice of teacher reflection within this particular context.

Glickman and colleagues (2004) wrote, “In the final analysis, what constitutes instructional improvement and successful teaching can be defined only within the context of particular instructional goals, local learning environments, and individual students. This means that the search for a single instructional model—effective for all learning content, students, and situations—is futile” (p. 112). Shee, Ji, and Boyatt (2002) found this to be the case when examining Bolman and Deal’s (1997) model of leadership in their study of religiosity in Christian leadership among 206 K-12 school leaders affiliated with a Protestant church in the United States. Their study makes the point that certain cultures, religious or otherwise, will have certain theoretical and programmatic idiosyncrasies that will not be valued or analyzed for improvement unless studied in their own context. While the researcher approached this study with knowledge gleaned from previous studies on the models, practices, and processes of teacher reflection from other educational contexts, to more fully understand teacher reflection in S&I in a way that would enhance and improve that practice, a study must be done of teacher reflection within S&I.

**Methodology Literature**

Having justified the research problem, purpose, and questions for this study, this section will present a review of the literature that supports the research design for this study. Creswell and Miller (2000) suggested that there are three basic qualitative paradigms: postpositivist, constructivist, and critical (pp. 125-126). Postpositivist
researchers retain a belief in an objective reality, but also hold that even the most rigorous research methods can only, at best, help us apprehend that reality imperfectly and probabilistically (see Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 193). Postpositivists, sometimes called critical realists, adhere to a critical tradition of research and investigation by which they employ rigorous quasi-scientific methods to yield findings that they believe are probably true, or at least an accurate reflection of a portion of that reality (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24). Postpositivism represents the core of the qualitative research paradigm of the researcher in this study.

However, portions of the constructivist paradigm also resonate with my “personal view of seeing and understanding the world.” “Constructivists believe in pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended, and contextualized (e.g., sensitive to place and situation) perspectives toward reality” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125). Klanderman (2001) asserted that there are different gradations of constructivism and that one need not accept the idea of perceived multiple realities as exclusionary of an ultimate objective reality (see also Barrett & Klanderman, 2006; Carson, 2006; Cho & Squier, 2008; Rodriguez & Berryman, 2002). In specifically religious education contexts, Rymarz (2007) also proposed that constructivism could be a valuable “pedagogical principle” even if one does not accept the epistemological assumptions of the more radical constructivist paradigms.

The research proposed in this study among professional seminary teachers in S&I demands a certain amount of contextualization. Because human beings are not omniscient, it was the position of the researcher that multiple perspectives from open-ended research questions and pluralistic, interpretive data analysis helped approximate a
clearer picture of reality. This proved to be critical as the researcher examined the process of teacher reflection in S&I and endeavored to present an accurate account of the phenomenon of reflection as a function of professional development among this niche of religious educators.

While reading Brent Davis’ book *Inventions of Teaching* (2004), the researcher found that some of his “bifurcations” were too dichotomous for the researcher’s personal views regarding the nature of reality and how people come to know it. Guba and Lincoln (2005) pointed out that “two theorists previously thought to be in irreconcilable conflict may now appear, under a different theoretical rubric, to be informing one another’s arguments” (p. 192). They also argued that “at the paradigmatic, or philosophical, level, commensurability between positivist and postpositivist worldviews is not possible, but that within each paradigm, mixed methodologies (strategies) may make perfectly good sense” (p. 200).

In preparing for this study, the researcher became, in a sense, what Guba and Lincoln (2005) called a “new paradigm inquirer,” and proposed a new paradigm called “religious constructivism” which holds to the basic ontological, epistemological, and methodological research tenets of postpositivism, but also blends with some of the methodological academic and research practices of constructivism, specifically that “human beings construct their perceptions of the world, that no one perception is ‘right’ or more ‘real’ [of a perception] than another, and that these realities must be seen as wholes rather than divided into discrete variables that are analyzed separately” (Glesne, 2006, p. 7).

Having set forth the overall research paradigm for this study, the following
discussion locates the qualitative portion of this research design in a way that justifies the use of qualitative research methods to answer the second and third proposed researcher questions. Marshall and Rossman (1999) wrote that research in general is “a process of trying to gain a better understanding of the complexities of human experience” (p. 21). In trying to capture those complexities, Creswell (2005, p. 43) proposed that qualitative research holds to three main premises: multiple realities, naturalistic inquiry, and political context. The major portion of this research on teacher reflection focused on multiple perspectives gained from multiple teachers in their own professional work environments with the intent to use that knowledge “for change and bettering the lives of individuals” (Creswell, 2005, p. 43). Significant focus was “on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 10). This research emphasized the process of teacher reflection in the hopes that the knowledge presented from such a study would “lead to reflection [in S&I] on how it might improve its [professional development] operations” (Weiss, 1998, p. 181). This qualitative research may lead to a more defined and efficient “program theory” for S&I regarding the process of teacher reflection (see Weiss, 1998, pp. 265-270). By so doing, this research may also provide useful knowledge for other religious educators and religious education programs seeking to enhance their professional development through teacher reflection.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODS

This study focused on two of the four main objectives of research in its overall strategy: to add to the knowledge of the subject, issue, or problem (of which there has been very little written); and to suggest improvements for practice (Creswell, 2005, pp. 5-6). The research design that best fit this intent and the questions proposed for this study was a mixed methods approach—a field survey for obtaining some quantitative descriptive data combined with interviews and observations to obtain qualitative data. The emphasis in this study was to employ “systematic, qualitative procedures…to generate a general explanation (called a grounded theory) that explains a process, action, or interaction among people” (pp. 52-53). The survey was designed to gather general information that would: (a) provide some general contextual information for the central phenomenon of teacher reflection in the sample selected for this study; (b) provide some criteria for the selection of interview and observation participants; and (c) provide some basic understanding of current reflective practices of the respondents that would inform the interview and observation process. This chapter will begin with an explanation of the theoretical framework, instruments and protocols, and threats to validity for the survey phase of the study. Following the rationale and procedures for the survey phase of the study, this chapter will also outline the theoretical framework, instruments and protocols, and threats to validity for the interview and observation phase of the study.

During the literature review for this study, three major theoretical frameworks began to shape the thinking behind the research problem, questions, and design. Deeming
it best to make the overall theoretical framework for this study accessible at the earliest possible stage of the discussion on research design, the following table illustrates how each of three theoretical framework influenced the descriptive, analytical, and interpretive phases (Wolcott, 1996, 2001) of the development of this grounded theory of teacher reflection among professional seminary teachers in S&I: Employing the additional theoretical lenses offered by Argyris and Schön (1974), Korthagen (2004), and Mayes (2001a, 2001b, 2001c) in later phases of the study is in harmony with Charmaz’s (2008; see also Wolcott, 2001, p. 81) recommendations that using multiple interpretive lenses adds to the understanding of the multiple facets of the phenomenon being studied. As Wolcott (1996, 2001, p. 81) pointed out, the three phases of this study in Table 3.1 should not be considered mutually exclusive of one another. This conglomerate theoretical framework guided the implementation of this research design and will aid interested parties in understanding the reported findings.

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical framework</th>
<th>Descriptive</th>
<th>Analytical</th>
<th>Interpretive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hatton and Smith (1995): Technical, descriptive, dialogic, critical levels of reflection</td>
<td>Survey results; interviews, observations, documents</td>
<td>Survey results; interviews, observations, documents</td>
<td>Interview, observations, documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korthagen (2004): The “onion model”—alignment of inner core with behavior</td>
<td>Interview, observations, documents</td>
<td>Interview, observations, documents</td>
<td>Interview, observations, documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyris and Schön (1974): Espoused theories, theories in use, hybrid theories of practice; also Mayes (2001a, 2001b, 2001c): spiritual reflectivity</td>
<td>Interview, observations, documents</td>
<td>Interview, observations, documents</td>
<td>Interview, observations, documents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Theoretical Framework

Because Hatton and Smith’s model of teacher reflection (1995) is a broader and deeper approach than Beirmann (1990) and because their framework for discussing teacher reflection was influenced by Colton and Sparks-Langer (1993), it was chosen as the basis for forming the research instruments and protocols for this study. This will be better understood in the ensuing section that discusses how this theoretical framework was employed, with its four levels of reflection, to gather and organize data during the survey phase of this study.

Survey Instruments and Protocols

Standards for helping to identify appropriate instruments and protocols are found in *The Program Evaluation Standards* (Joint Committee on Standards for Education, 1994), Weiss (1998), Creswell (2000), and the 2002 *User Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluations* (Westat, 2002). The first stage of the data collection portion of this study was to apply these standards to develop, disperse, collect, and analyze a survey that aimed at discovering and describing some of the practices of teacher reflection that were taking place among a sample of professional seminary teachers in S&I in 2010. Three surveys provided the impetus for the format and formulation of survey questions for this study: the 6-page Self Reflection Tool on the Ten Wisconsin Teaching Standards (Appendix A), the 14-page Teacher Self-Evaluation Handbook for the Seventh-day Adventist School System (Appendix B), and the 2-page Religion Teacher Self-Evaluation Form from the Catholic School Religion Coordinator’s Manual (Appendix C). The questions found in
these surveys were evaluated and screened through Hatton and Smith’s (1995) model of
teacher reflection and then modified into questions specific to the experience and
activities of professional S&I seminary teachers that would identify “active and
deliberative cognitive process, involving sequences of interconnected ideas which take
account of underlying beliefs and knowledge…thinking [which] generally addresses
practical problems, allowing for doubt and perplexity before possible solutions are
reached” (p. 34).

Hatton and Smith (1995) posited four different levels of teacher reflection. While
these levels are generally viewed as hierarchical, teachers can—and usually do—engage
in all of them, or combinations of them, in a variety of different circumstances. The first
level, technical reflection, involves “decision-making about immediate behaviours or
skills…but always interpreted in light of personal worries and previous experiences” (p.
45). This level of reflection involves an examination of one’s use of teaching skills or
general competencies (whether content-based or methodological) in a controlled, small
setting—such as the teacher’s own classroom. This usually takes place in a “reporting”
fashion, whereby the teacher simply recounts what he/she did without providing reasons
or justification for a decision or course of action. An example of an evaluative statement
that measures a teacher’s level of technical reflection would be this one from the
Wisconsin Self-Reflection Tool, “I create learning experiences that are based on
principles of effective instruction.” An evaluative survey statement like this one would
need only minor modification to transfer over to a survey for religious educators. This
question asks teachers to report on their effective use of “principles of effective
instruction” without asking them to justify or explain their usage.
The next level of reflection in Hatton and Smith’s (1995) model is descriptive reflection, which is “not only a description of events but some attempt to provide reason [or] justification for events or actions” while taking into account “multiple factors and perspectives” (p. 45). An example of an evaluative statement that invites teachers to engage in descriptive reflection might be this one from the Catholic Religion Teacher Self-Evaluation Form, “[I] make the classroom a loving Christian community so that children can experience and understand its importance.” Although this question is a bit vague, the words “so that” imply that the teacher understands why they are engaging in classroom practices that create a sense of a caring religious community.

The third level of teacher reflection proposed by Hatton and Smith (1995) is dialogic reflection. When teachers engage in dialogic reflection, they are “weighing competing claims and viewpoints, and then exploring alternative solutions” (p. 45). For example, the researcher classified the following evaluative statement from the Self-Reflection Tool on the Ten Wisconsin Teaching Standards as a dialogic item on their survey, “I keep abreast of new research and development in my discipline.” This is dialogic because teachers who search out this kind of professional literature are hearing their own voice in competition with other voices (even if only in print) in “exploring… experience, events, and actions using qualities of judgements and possible alternatives for explaining and hypothesizing” (p. 48) about problems and potential solutions to those problems in their own practice. To make this question more relevant to full-time seminary teachers and get more specific information from them about their dialogic reflective practices in engaging with relevant professional literature, the researcher formulated the following questions, “I subscribe to The Religious Educator”; “I subscribe
to *BYU Studies*”; “I subscribe to other professional religious education journals.” These questions preceded a set of follow-up questions that ask professional seminary teachers how often they use these journals that aim at helping them “keep abreast of new research and developments” in their discipline and how they use these journals in their own personal professional development and teaching improvement. Teachers who subscribed to and studied these journals were likely to be engaging in a more deliberate form of dialogic teacher reflection with a view to improving their professional practice.

As another example, one survey question from the Catholic School Religion Coordinator’s Manual asked participants if they “Participate in various workshops and courses to further knowledge about the Catholic faith.” To help us understand the extent to which professional seminary teachers engage in training meetings that potentially influence their own professional reflection, the above survey question was changed into a series of questions such as, “How often do you attend local inservice meetings? How do you feel these meetings affect your own professional development as a teacher?” Because these meetings encourage discussion and dialogue between colleagues as they explore possible alternatives for handling challenges in their classrooms and personal professional development, these questions would fall into Hatton and Smith’s category of dialogic reflection.

Hatton and Smith (1995) call their final level of teacher reflection “critical reflection,” because it is manifest in teachers who are willing to engage the problematic areas of their practice and profession, especially as it relates to “the effects upon others of one’s actions” (p. 45). Teachers engaging in critical reflection “[demonstrate] an awareness that actions and events are not only located in, and explicable by, reference to
multiple perspectives but are located in, and influenced by multiple historical, and socio-political contexts” (p. 49). Hatton and Smith offer the following statement as an example of a teacher engaging in critical reflection:

What must be recognised, however, is that the issues of student management experienced with this class can only be understood within the wider structural locations of power relationships established between teachers and students in schools as social institution based upon the principle of control. (p. 49)

One simple example of this might be what the researcher’s first seminary principal said to him when the researcher had vented some frustrations to him one day about a class of students, “If we could see what these kids went through last night and before they left for school this morning, we’d probably teach a lot differently.” In other words, teachers need to consider the impact of their teaching in a much larger context than just what happens in the classroom; and they need to consider the impact of their students’ lived context on the classroom experience as well.

This evaluative statement from the Seventh-Day Adventist Teacher Self-Evaluation Handbook might also capture, to some extent, the critical reflection of a teacher, “[I] endeavor to enhance the dignity and status of the teaching profession.” A teacher who answers affirmatively understands that his/her actions in the classroom and in their educational environment have an impact upon the entire educational field, as well as upon students’ attitudes toward education in general and perhaps upon the respect of parents and community leaders in the area where he/she lives and works. There is evidence that some LDS professional religious educators engage in critical reflection, such as Ryan Jenkins’ recent article “‘Peaceable followers of Christ’ in days of war and contention” (2009) and Eastmond’s (2008) article on the Church’s “doctrine of inclusion”
and keeping our teaching “grounded in reality” (p. 95) when faced with multicultural issues in some teaching environments. Roydon Olsen’s (2006) article, “Transcultural considerations in teaching the gospel” in *The Religious Educator* (a professional journal for S&I faculty published by the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University) also indicates that some teachers ponder their craft at a critical level as defined by Hatton and Smith.

Through a process of studying, evaluating, and modifying survey questions and classifying them into the levels of reflection within the theoretical framework for this study, the researcher designed an initial survey protocol. Once the initial survey had been designed in March 2010, the researcher piloted the survey with six teachers in an urban seminary setting in the Salt Lake Valley and five teachers in another seminary in a rural part of Utah. Eight participants responded to this survey (72%). This pilot survey resulted in several minor adjustments to the final survey. First, questions related to whether or not seminary teachers presently or previously possessed professional teaching credentials were dropped. Until 1978, released-time seminary teachers were required to have a current teaching certificate in order for biblical classes to be accepted by school districts for elective credit. However, when the decision was handed down in the case of Lanner v. Wimmer (ACLU v. Logan Board of Education, 1981) that released-time seminary classes would no longer be accepted for credit, the need for seminary teachers to have a teaching certificate no longer existed and the requirement was dropped. Thus, asking about professional teaching credentials among seminary teachers in 2010 was moot.

Another issue considered during the pilot phase of the survey was whether to make questions “required” in the online survey format. In the end, participants were
given the option to choose whether or not they would respond to any question, because it was felt that teachers would be more likely to finish the survey if they were not forced to respond to questions to which they did not want to respond. After the results were gathered, this appeared to have no effect on the overall results of the survey.

There were also some minor adjustments in the interval ranges for some of the questions to make them consistent within each question. Multiple participants in the pilot survey also noticed the same grammatical errors and confusing wording of some questions that led to some minor adjustments that clarified the intent of those questions. While some respondents took a little longer with the survey than anticipated, a majority of participants reported that the length of the survey (10-15 minutes) was in harmony with the agreement obtained from the S&I research office.

Appendix D lists the survey questions which were used in this study. Survey Monkey was deemed the most convenient (and inexpensive) way to distribute the survey and collect responses. The survey was designed with the intent that each of the main pages would contain questions for each of the respective levels of teacher reflection as just outlined, although they were not submitted to the participants with that jargon attached to them. However, as will be shown in Chapter 4, the questions on the survey (as well as the questions in the interviews) often elicited responses from teachers that showed how various reflective practices often involve more than one level of reflection.

Survey Threats to Validity

With many survey studies, the primary concern is obtaining enough responses to validate the findings or conclusions of the study. However, the primary purpose of this
The study was not to establish generalizable conclusions regarding teacher reflection and its effectiveness in S&I. As of February 2010, there were approximately 553 ($N = 553$) full-time seminary instructors in North America. S&I administration approved a potential list of 219 possible survey participants for this study, from which 70 were selected ($n = 70$). The list showed only e-mail addresses and the location of their assignment. All 10 full-time seminary instructors in Idaho and Arizona on the list were selected to participate in order to give the survey the potential for a wider range of responses. The remaining 60 participants were selected from a variety of different assignments from throughout the state of Utah. This was not random sampling. And while the researcher did not know whether or not he knew any of the teachers on the list, an effort was made to select a sample of teachers from a variety of urban and rural settings—30 participants were selected from seminaries along the more urban Wasatch Front while 30 participants were selected from seminaries from other parts of Utah considered more rural. Age, years of experience, education level, previous administrative experience, and previous teaching experience were not factors in the selection process, because that information was not provided on the list when selecting the sample. The final sample size represented slightly more than only 12% of the total population of professional seminary teachers in S&I.

Participants were invited to participate in the survey from March to April 2010. Forty-eight teachers responded to the survey, representing a return rate of 68.6%. The sample provided a sufficient amount of data to make valid descriptive statements about some of the reflective practices among seminary teachers so that the process of teacher reflection could be described among the teachers in this sample. The results of this survey also provided important data for selecting the participants for the qualitative portion of
this study, as will be explained section of this chapter on the interviews and observations protocol and data gathering process. This information was also useful for refining the observation/interview questions to be used with the participants in the qualitative portion of this study.

Although the margin of error for the sample was 7.99%, because this sample was not selected randomly, the findings of this study are not generalizable to the entire population of seminary teachers. They are applicable in the sense that they helped to provide a context for this study, and they may be useful as a preliminary pilot study for further research on teacher reflection among religious educators in broader contexts and larger samples. No statistical tests were done to correlate demographic data with reflective practices or reported perceptions of these practices on professional development. The results of the survey will be reported as descriptive statistics only in the next chapter with any additional findings reported through qualitative means, such as follow up questions asking for additional information on particular questions in the survey.

**Interviews and Observations Theoretical Framework**

Hatton and Smith’s (1995) theoretical framework continued to be a major guiding model for the formulation of the interview and observation protocols for this study, as will be explained in the next section. However, Korthagen’s (2004) model of reflection and alignment also came to be a major interpretive tool during the analysis and interpretive phases of this study. Argyris and Schön’s (1974) theories of reflection, concerning the gaps between espoused theories and theories in use and the formulation of
hybrid theories in practice, as well as their notion of reflection-on-action were also part of the theoretical framework during the interpretive phase of this process (see Table 3.1). All three of these frameworks encouraged a multi-faceted look at the data to encourage a more thorough understanding of the process of teacher reflection in S&I that led to a more accurate grounded theory of this process. These frameworks directly impacted the process of data collection as well.

A fourth theoretical framework on spiritual reflectivity (Mayes, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c) was not part of the original research design for this study, but it was necessary for the analysis as a lens for describing, analyzing, and interpreting data that would inevitably arise, given the nature of the field of religious education. As an S&I educator, the researcher knew that it would be important to have a theoretical framework for interpreting the anticipated comments that teachers would inevitably make about their religious, spiritual, and ontological stances and approaches to their profession. Mayes has “argued that both formal and idiosyncratic spiritual commitments are psychologically, socially, and ontologically primary for most people. Hence, those commitments must be part of many teachers’ reflectivity in order for that reflectivity to be existentially valid” (Mayes, 2001a, p. 18). To ignore this data would be a violation of Korthagen’s (2004) model of reflection, which posits a necessary relationship between a teacher’s core values and their professional behaviors in order for effective professional development. Therefore, the researcher chose Mayes’ framework on spiritual reflectivity wherein he proposes that we must be willing to “penetrate the existential bedrock of fundamental beliefs, hopes and fears about oneself and others” (Mayes, 2001c, p. 478). Because this framework was not a major component in the research design for this study, it is
mentioned here only to explain its presence as a background framework that informed interpretation, which will be explained briefly in Chapter 4.

In addition to these general theoretical frameworks (or lenses), the overall qualitative approach to data collection as posited by Charmaz (2008) also played a major role in the methodological approach in this study. She insists that grounded theory relies on the simultaneous collection and analysis of data. During data analysis, she also suggests that a grounded theory can only emerge as researchers minimize preconceived ideas about the problem and the data, remain open to varied explanations and/or understandings of the data, and focus data analysis on mid-range theories. This is an important point. The purpose of this study was not to create a comprehensive program theory of professional development in S&I. Such would require more extensive quantitative and qualitative data than this study could obtain. But the grounded theory on teacher reflection generated as a result of this study will hopefully be considered a “mid-range theory” that will increase awareness and understanding in a presently atheoretical arena of professional development within S&I. The novice researcher who conducted this study worked diligently to follow these guiding principles in the collection, description, analysis, and interpretation of the data, as outlined in this statement:

> Qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping to always get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand. It is understood, however, that each practice [or piece of data] makes the world visible in a different way. Hence, there is frequently a commitment to using more than one interpretive practice in any study. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 4)

Using all three of the main theoretical frameworks mentioned above helped the researcher maintain the “constructivist” aspects of the religious constructivist paradigm
proposed for this study.

**Interviews and Observations Instruments and Protocol**

There are multiple qualitative research approaches, including grounded theory, ethnography, narrative, mixed methods, and action research (see Creswell, 2005, p. 52-53). While there may be some ethnographic elements to the design of this study because of the focus on a specific, rather narrow, cultural group, grounded theory is a more fitting approach given that the purpose of the research is to “develop or modify a theory, explain a process, and develop a general abstraction of the interaction and action of people” (Creswell, 2005, p. 411).

In 2008, Charmaz wrote that grounded theory must adhere to four basic research and analysis principles: (a) minimizing preconceived ideas about the research problem and the data; (b) using simultaneous data collection and analysis to inform each other; (c) remaining open to varied explanations and/or understandings of the data; and (d) focusing data analysis to construct middle-range theories (p. 155). Grounded theory can only emerge in a cycle of interview, analysis, reflection, and recreation of hypotheses. The research questions proposed for this study served as a “guiding hypothesis…merely tools used to generate questions and to search for patterns and may be discarded when the researcher gets into the field and finds other exciting patterns of phenomena” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 53). The original research questions remained the focus of this study, although other interesting facets of the central phenomenon will be discussed in the next two chapters.

When a researcher surveys the general field of study, one of the first questions
that must be resolved is where he should go to collect the data that will answer the questions he has posed. Thus, the issue of sampling must first be resolved. Creswell (2005) suggested that there are nine different kinds, or aspects, of “purposeful sampling” in qualitative research (see pp. 204-207). The sample for the interviews and observations in this study was selected via a combination of four of these sampling strategies.

The issue of sample size was addressed concurrently with the sampling strategies. While neither Creswell (2005) nor Glesne (2006) suggested any specific criteria for sample size, the primary concern in sample size for qualitative research studies such as this one is to select enough participants to be able to describe and understand the central phenomenon. The researcher must strive to collect a sufficient amount of data up to the point of redundancy, or saturation. Once the researcher begins to see significant data duplication, the sample size can be deemed to have been sufficient. In the process of selecting participants based on the following four sampling strategies, the committee chair and the researcher determined that this balance had been achieved in the six participants that were selected.

First, homogeneous sampling was employed, which is defined by Creswell (2005) as selecting “individuals…based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics” (p. 206). As of the end of 2009, there were approximately 45,835 S&I faculty around the world—including called (i.e., volunteer), part-, and full-time seminary and institute faculty. Narrowing that field down to part- and full-time personnel reduced the field to approximately 3,233 seminary and institute faculty. However, the focus of this study was on full-time seminary instructors who were not currently serving as administrators in the seminary system. This limited the potential respondents to 553. As
already explained, approval was received from S&I to send a survey to only 70 of these possible participants, but they all fit within this homogenous sample with the following characteristics in common: full-time, seminary instructor, not a current administrator. Having been selected from the 70 survey candidates, the proposed six interview participants are all justified by this sampling method.

Maximal variation sampling served as the second sampling strategy for the qualitative portion of this study in an attempt to gain a broader understanding of teacher reflection among “individuals that differ on some characteristic or trait” (Creswell, 2005, p. 204). Participants were selected for interviews and observations based on six criteria: Age, Years of Experience, Bachelor’s Degree in Education, Graduate Degree, Administrative Experience, and Rural/Urban. The following table represents how each participant (each of whom has been assigned a pseudonym for this study) fit within each of these criteria. Table 3.2 shows an explanation of how participants were chosen based on each criterion within this sampling strategy.

Fifty percent of the 48 survey respondents were from the 31-40 age group, so it seemed rational that an equivalent percentage of interview participants were from the same age group. To represent the complexities of the phenomenon of teacher reflection in S&I, it seemed reasonable to select one representative from each of the additional age groups. None of the respondents for the survey were in the 61+ age category.

Regarding Years of Experience, 31.3% of the 48 survey respondents (highest percentage in the sample) had 6-10 years of professional seminary teaching experience, so it again seemed rational to have an equivalent percentage of interview participants from the same category. Likewise, 22.9% of the survey respondents (the 2nd highest
percentage in the sample) had 1-5 years of seminary teaching experience, so it seemed rational to also give them a higher representation among the interview respondents. While 16.7% percent of the survey respondents had 11-15 years of experience, there was only one respondent in that category who volunteered for the interviews. While he was a close choice to be selected for the interview phase, he was eliminated when comparing his evaluation in certain categories of reflection with other teachers in different age groups; he was also in the 31-40 age group, which was already well represented. The researcher wanted to get at least one representative from the next highest levels of years of experience, so one teacher was chosen from the 16-20 years of experience category and one teacher was chosen from the 21-25 years of experience category. No survey respondents reported having 26-30 years of experience, and only respondent to the survey was in the 31+ category—but that person did not volunteer for the interview phase of the study.

One of the interesting findings in the survey was how few teachers in seminary have a bachelor’s degree in an education-related field. For most professional teachers in

Table 3.2

*Survey Responses That Provided Selection Criteria for Maximal Variation Sampling*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years Exp.</th>
<th>BA in ED</th>
<th>Grad degree</th>
<th>Admin. experience</th>
<th>Rural/urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Adm/I.L.</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>24-30</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I.L.</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I.L.</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Adm/I.L.</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
other secondary level institutions, this is a requirement. Only seven respondents to the survey (14.6%) had bachelor’s degrees in education. However, four of the seven volunteered for the next phase of the study. Thus, this group was overrepresented in the field of possible participants for interviews and observations. This was not initially one of the particular criterion for the selection process. They were chosen for interviews based on their evaluations in the four levels of reflection (see Table 3.3 discussed and shown later in this chapter), independent of the field in which they had received a bachelor’s degree. However, their unusually high representation in the interview and observation sample seemed unusual enough that it seemed there would be some value in exploring how seminary teachers with a bachelor’s degree in education might approach reflection differently from their colleagues without a bachelor’s degree in education. Thus, this became a descriptive factor in the maximal variation sampling strategy that seemed important to identify.

Surprisingly, 85.4% of survey respondents \((n = 41)\) reported having graduate degrees. Of the 16 volunteers for the interview and observation phase of this study, 14 had at least one post-graduate degree (87.5%). So this seemed like a consistent percentage to maintain in the interview and observation sample, but the researcher did want to have the perspective of at least one teacher who did not have a graduate degree. For this reason—in conjunction with others—Evan was chosen. However, when the researcher arrived to interview Evan, he discovered that just a few days prior to the interview Evan had been awarded a master’s degree in education. Despite the researcher’s efforts to get a different perspective on that criterion, it turns out that all of
the interview participants had post-graduate degrees. It is also important to note at this point that while only 14.6% of the 48 survey respondents had bachelor’s degree in education fields, 50% \( (n = 24) \) reported having at least one post-graduate degree in education or an education-related field. Four of the six participants in the interviews and observations had post-graduate degrees in education-related fields.

Having different experiences with various levels of administrative responsibilities related to religious education can often change a teacher’s perspectives of professional development. To get multiple perspectives on professional reflection from those with various levels of experience in instructional leadership (not a term used often in S&I), two participants were selected who had no administrative experience. Two teachers were selected who had only minor experience with instructional leadership as “inservice leaders”—a position on a local faculty (usually consisting of 2-8 teachers) where the “inservice leader” has the primary responsibility for planning and carrying out regular (usually weekly) inservice training meetings. Two other teachers who seemed to have more substantial administrative experience as “inservice leaders” and as principals and/or coordinators were also selected. It is fairly common for teachers in S&I to be appointed to an administrative position for a time and then to be assigned to a regular teaching position later.

The larger cultural environment in which a teacher works cannot be treated lightly or disregarded as a reciprocally influential factor in teacher reflection—especially in a study that attempts to look at “critical reflection” which looks at how a teacher reflects within larger cultural circles and arenas. So three teachers were chosen who represented
each side of the Rural/Urban dichotomy. It should be remembered that the largest urban area within the sample of teachers for the survey was the greater Salt Lake City area, also known as “the Wasatch Front.” All urban teachers were selected from this general region. The rural teachers were selected from north-central Utah, southern Utah, and south-central Idaho.

Extreme case sampling was the third strategy used in this study. By focusing on teachers who engaged in notably higher degrees of the different levels of teacher reflection, the researcher anticipated obtaining data that would prove useful for better understanding the phenomenon of teacher reflection and for making suggestions for the improvement of teacher reflection for other religious educators in S&I—and perhaps for other professional educators in the field of religious education.

To accomplish this sampling strategy, the researcher evaluated the individual survey reports for each of the 16 survey participants who had volunteered for the interview and observation phase of the study. Then the researcher carefully reviewed Hatton and Smith’s (1995) “Reflection in teacher education: Towards definition and implementation,” in which they identify the four levels of reflection referred to already in this study numerous times: technical, descriptive, dialogic, and critical. The researcher endeavored to become as familiar as possible with the definitions they provided for each level of reflection (p. 45) and studied how they evaluated the written samples they used in their study according to the four levels of reflection. Hatton and Smith suggested that each level of reflection could be further identified by the “possible content” of teacher comments, evaluations, descriptions of their teaching, explanations of their decisions, and so forth, shown in Table 3.3. The researcher then carefully reviewed each of the 16
Table 3.3

Possible Content for Levels of Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of reflection</th>
<th>Possible content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical reflection</td>
<td>Beginning to examine one’s use of essential skills or generic competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive reflection</td>
<td>Analyzing one’s performance in the professional role (probably alone), giving reasons for actions taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogic reflection</td>
<td>Hearing one’s own voice (along or with others) exploring alternative ways to solve problems in a professional situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical reflection</td>
<td>Thinking about the effects upon others of one’s actions, taking into account of social, political and/or cultural forces (can be shared)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from a table by Hatton and Smith (1995), p. 45.

surveys again before beginning the evaluation process, trying to understand the answers each respondent provided. The researcher determined that the most efficient way to report each of these evaluations was to give each survey participant a simple rating of “low” (not very active in the reflective activities described in the survey), “medium” (fairly active in the reflective activities described in the survey), or “high” (very active in the reflective activities described in the survey) for each level of reflection represented by the individual pages of the survey. The survey had been designed with the intention that survey items for each level of reflection were on the same page, thus simplifying the analysis process at this stage of the study. While the researcher was the sole lens for this analysis, later analysis of the interviews and observations seemed to bear that the analysis of the survey results was a sufficient approximation to identify teachers who represented the three degrees of reflection in each of the levels, with only a few notable exceptions. Table 3.4 shows each of the six participants who were selected for the next phase of this study and their rating for each level of reflection. It must be remembered at the beginning
Table 3.4

*Survey Response Ratings for Hatton and Smith’s Levels of Reflection by Teacher*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Descriptive</th>
<th>Dialogic</th>
<th>Critical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium/low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low/medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>Medium/high</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium/high</td>
<td>Low/medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low/medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium/high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium/high</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of the explanation of this sampling strategy that the researcher was executing several sampling strategies simultaneously in an attempt to collect the best data for the description and explanation of the teacher reflection phenomenon in S&I. While the sampling strategies are being explained here in an artificial order, participants were being considered based on all four sampling strategies concurrently.

The first extreme case listed above was Alan, who was chosen as one of two teachers who scored “high” in technical reflection. The fact that he was ranked “low” in the other categories made him an attractive subject to understand the perspective of a teacher who seems highly engaged in one level of reflection but not in others. The researcher felt that this participant might provide useful data about the level of technical reflection in relative isolation from other levels of reflection.

Bruce’s survey responses were viewed as a sort of baseline in the extreme case sampling strategy. His responses were also fairly representative of the other 10 participants who volunteered for the interview and observation phase of the study but who were not selected. The researcher felt that having a “middle of the road” participant
in the extreme case sampling strategy would provide additional context as more of a seemingly “average” reflective teacher.

Carl was chosen because his “medium/high” rating in descriptive reflection was unusual given his “low” ranking in technical reflection. Because descriptive reflection usually builds upon technical reflection, this was an interesting “outlier” that merited exploration in greater depth through observation and interview to understand this unusual relationship better.

Dave was chosen as the only teacher rated “medium/high” in the dialogic category of teacher reflection, a category in which nine of the remaining teachers in this phase were rated “low,” five teachers were rated “medium,” and one teacher was rated “medium/low.” Overall, his ratings in each of the levels of reflection were considered above average, and the researcher anticipated that Dave would be one of the more active reflecting teachers in the study.

One of the most compelling extreme cases in the survey was Evan for his low survey rating in each of the levels of reflection. This was unusual. Only one other respondent had similar ratings but Evan was selected because he fit other criteria in the maximal variation sampling strategy. Because of the researcher’s bias that reflection usually leads to positive outcomes, it seemed that this teacher might have a perspective that would be helpful for the researcher to consider when looking at the overall phenomenon of teacher reflection among seminary teachers in S&I.

Gary was chosen as the only teacher who was rated “medium/high” in the critical reflection level. Of the remaining 15 teachers in this phase of the study, seven were rated
in the “medium” to “low” range and the other eight scored in the “low” range. Although it will be shown in more detail in the next chapter, responses to questions in the critical reflection portion of the survey indicated that teachers did not generally engage in a specific set of practices that might be classified as “critical reflection practices.” Thus, it seemed critical to include the survey respondent who scored the highest in this category in the interview and observation phase of the study to better understand teacher reflection at this level among seminary teachers.

Finally, because the hope of this study was to build a grounded theory concerning the practice of teacher reflection among seminary teachers in S&I, theory or concept sampling seemed an apropos strategy for selecting participants for the interviews and observations. In this sampling strategy, “the researcher samples individuals…because they can help the researcher generate or discover a theory or specific concepts within the theory” (Creswell, 2005, p. 205)—specific to this study, that meant individuals whom the researcher hoped would provide compelling data regarding the various levels of reflection posited by Hatton and Smith (1995).

Based on this rationale, interview and observation participants were chosen based on their engagement in various teacher reflection activities (i.e., local faculty inservice, area inservice, studying professional journals, personal evaluation, being observed by others, observing other teachers, etc.) and how they felt those activities contributed to their professional development. This would help develop a grounded theory of teacher reflection among professional seminary faculty in S&I. While there is some overlap with other sampling strategies, it is appropriate and necessary to include a brief explanation regarding the inclusion of each participant based on this sampling strategy.
For this reason, Alan was chosen because of his attitude toward having his lesson plans reviewed (he reported doing this weekly) and finding that activity so beneficial for his professional development (he reported it was “very impactful”). This was an unexpected finding from the survey with many respondents and the researcher felt that this finding needed further exploration in an interview.

Bruce was chosen in this sampling method, because he seemed to provide a middle of the road approach to reflection typical of most teachers from the survey. It seemed necessary to get his perspective on reflection in order to understand teacher reflection from the perspective of a teacher who represented the levels of reflection for the presumably “average” teacher and make suggestions for improvement for practice that would appeal to a prevalent number of teachers who potentially share his perspective on reflection.

Carl had an interesting spike in his reflection rating. His “medium/high” rating in descriptive reflection (which has to do with his reporting on the impact of observing other teachers and engaging in reflective writing activities on his professional development) was worthy of further investigation, especially given his seeming lack of enthusiasm for and engagement with other levels of reflection. The researcher suspected that this reflected the current emphasis on such reflective activities in S&I in general; thus, it seemed important to explore this further in an interview.

Dave was chosen to help the researcher better understand the relationship between technical, descriptive, and dialogic reflection from a teacher who was rated relatively high in each of those categories. However, his “low/medium” ranking in critical reflection is also worth exploring because it seems that this teacher dipped below his
typical level of reflection in this category and it would be important to a grounded theory of teacher reflection in S&I to better understand why teachers, even those who are fairly reflective in other levels of reflection, may tend not to be very active in “critical reflection” (see rationale for Gary in the “extreme case sampling” explanation). This was a phenomenon that the researcher needed to better understand in order to develop a grounded theory of the present state of reflection in S&I.

Evan was chosen primarily to help the researcher understand the complex phenomenon of teacher reflection from the perspective of a teacher who didn’t seem to respond as favorably toward the current operational tools of reflection in place in S&I. As mentioned earlier, the researcher felt his perspective would be especially important for balancing the researcher’s bias concerning the positive nature and benefits of professional reflection.

As already mentioned, Gary was chosen primarily because of his high score in the critical reflection category. Although he was not rated markedly higher in other levels of reflection, the considerable spike in his critical reflection rating was deserving of further attention and investigation in attempting to understand teacher reflection and generate a grounded theory of the practice and its implementation in S&I.

The rationales for each of these sampling strategies was submitted to the dissertation committee chairman for this study and discussed with him. Only when the chairman’s critical (meaning both thoughtful and important) and searching questions had been satisfactorily answered, and he gave his approval of the sampling strategies as well as the rationale for including each participant based on these strategies did the researcher proceed to contact the potential respondents and invite them to participate in the next
phase of the study.

The chairman for this study also approved the interview and observation protocols, the design of which also relied heavily on the model of reflection proposed by Hatton and Smith (1995) in conjunction with the data obtained from the survey. Their four categories provided a concrete format for the construction of interview questions and observation criteria that allowed the researcher to connect the survey data with the interview and observation experience in a way that facilitated deeper exploration and understanding of the initial survey data. Standards for identifying appropriate instruments and protocols were found in The Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994), Creswell (2000), Weiss (1998), and the 2002 User Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluations (Westat, 2002). These were carefully considered by the researcher.

The interview questions in Appendix F follow a similar format as the survey—questions are labeled according to the level of reflection to which it was felt they most closely corresponded. These questions were formulated through a process similar to the process of creating the survey questions—reviewing the same instruments (see Appendices A-C), identifying potential interview questions, and then adapting them to an S&I context. I chose to focus on reflective practices that dealt specifically with professional development and training in a more theoretical arena, as opposed to other areas of teacher development, such as classroom management skills, assessment tactics and methods, and so forth. In other words, this study focused more on “reflection-on-action” (Argyris & Schön, 1974) in the observation and interview stage. By categorizing these questions, both in the survey and in the interviews and observations, according to
these levels of teacher reflection, the researcher was better able to analyze the responses and describe teacher reflection practices among seminary teachers in this sample. It was anticipated that this would make the description and explanation of reflective practices in each category clearer to others who are interested in the results of this study.

Finding and developing a protocol for observing teacher reflection through classroom observation was difficult. A search of Wilson Web, ProQuest, and the internet via the Google search engine in the fall of 2009 for observation protocols specifically designed for teacher reflection returned several instruments designed for helping teachers learn to reflect through conducting their own observations, but no instruments for helping researchers identify reflective behaviors of teachers during preobservation, observation, and post-observation procedures. Most instruments involve conducting observations that evaluate the *quality* of teaching, not the *process* of teacher reflection. Therefore, all of the instruments and models referred to regarding observation instruments and protocols from the sources cited here had to be adapted to the research questions and purpose of this study.

An example of this is the Instructional Quality Assessment developed by Junker and colleagues (2006) under the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing. Although this instrument is not specifically suited for the purposes of this study, it is helpful in that it identifies four areas of evaluation for classroom observations: academic rigor, clear expectations, self-management of learning, and accountable talk. While this assessment was created for the purpose of summative evaluations, Crosson and colleagues (2006) demonstrated that it could also be used as a formative tool in helping teachers to reflect on their teaching and facilitate professional
development. Thus, it was deemed an appropriate instrument that could provide some guidance in creating an observation protocol for this study, especially in regards to formulating questions for the pre-observation and post-observation discussion questions. This observation tool relates primarily to the technical and descriptive levels of reflection of Hatton and Smith (1995). If the teacher being observed and the supervisor or colleague doing the observation conducted an effective post-observation conference, this protocol could lead to some effective dialogic reflection as well.

Another instrument that was helpful in constructing the observation protocol for this study was Kim Marshall’s (2009) “Teacher Evaluation Rubrics.” She suggested six areas that observers can focus on in classroom observations: planning and preparation for learning; classroom management; delivery of instruction; monitoring, assessment, and follow-up; family and community outreach; and professional responsibilities. The first four areas of this observation protocol also related primarily to the technical and descriptive forms of reflection suggested by Hatton and Smith (1995). The fifth and sixth areas, however, encourage the teacher and the observer to address issues related to critical reflection also. The sixth area also encourages a great deal of professional action that would be considered part of the dialogic and critical reflection levels, such as the following rubric descriptions under the “expert” level for various aspects of this domain, “Is an important member of teacher teams and committees and frequently attends after-school activities”; “Frequently contributes valuable ideas and expertise that further the school’s mission”; “Actively seeks out feedback and suggestions and uses them to improve performance”; and “Devours best practices from fellow professionals, workshops, reading, study groups, the Internet, and other sources” (Marshall, 2009, p. 7).
This observation instrument provided valuable criteria for what to look for in the observations and what to ask the participants about in the post-observation interview.

Blase and Blase (2004), Glickman (2002), and Glickman and colleagues (2004) all discussed various models of supervisory or collegial observations, or conferences, that can be helpful for classroom observation cycles focused on improving professional practice. These sources contributed to the basic approach for developing the instrument and conducting the observation in this study. Glickman (2002) pointed out that the most fundamental element of any successful observation is that “both parties understand what the purpose of the observation is” (p. 24). This simple, yet profound, reminder helped make the pre-observation conference visits successful and focused on the process of collecting data regarding teacher reflection from the participants. I made these expectations clear to the participant so that the teacher knew that the quality of their teaching was not being judged, but rather they were being consulted to share their experiences, opinions, and feelings regarding teacher reflection in connection with their professional development and the many professional decisions they made in preparation for and during that particular class session.

Blase and Blase (2004) pointed out that recent models for conducting “instructional conferences” tend to be focused on encouraging teacher reflection. Thus, two of the five strategies they suggest for conducting these conferences were particularly helpful for guiding both the formulation of the observation protocol as well as the post-observation questions, “Holding up the mirror: Giving feedback” (p. 37-43) and “Using inquiry” (p. 44). Their suggestions for specific types of language and dialogue patterns helped the researcher assume a “record and report” attitude during the observation phase
and an inquisitive stance during the interviews that invited the teacher to evaluate their own actions, decisions, and behaviors rather than recording the researcher’s analysis and interpretation of what they had done.

Glickman and colleagues (2004) provided a section on “Qualitative Observations” (pp. 270-275) that was especially helpful for the qualitative design of this portion of the study. After reviewing several strategies in this section, the researcher determined to follow mostly the “selected verbatim” strategy, in which “the observer records only those interactions that relate to a particular focus agreed to by the observer and teacher prior to the observation” (p. 270). As Wolcott astutely observed, “Anyone who claims that an unbiased observer ought to record ‘everything’ has never thought seriously about the difference between formal and casual observation, let alone attempted a few moments of actually doing it” (p. 407). Being selective in the observation process helped provide the researcher with carefully selected data to “hold up” (see Blase & Blase, 2004) to the teacher for them to reflect on and about during the post-observation conference. This also helped the researcher to focus on gathering data that would contribute to an understanding of the process of teacher reflection.

Glasgow and Hicks’ (2003) *What successful teachers do: 91 research-based classroom strategies for new and veteran teachers* was the final resource noted here that was particularly helpful in forming the observation protocol for this study. In their section on “Enhancing teacher self-assessment and reflection,” they suggest several strategies that contributed directly to the preobservation and postobservation questions. Strategy 76 states, “Look behind the scenes when assessing the teaching styles of others. Use first impressions as triggers to learn more about the rationale and philosophy behind the
teaching styles you observe” (p. 165). The next strategy recommends, “Reflect on how your personal organizational and management lifestyle can affect your teaching performance and student achievement in your classes” (p. 167). Part of strategy 78 reads, “Don’t let everyday activities obscure class goals and long-term objectives” (p. 169). Strategy 79 encourages teachers to, “Explore and discover the natural teaching styles within yourself. Teaching style is something you find within yourself and not something that supervising teachers or college or university education programs give you” (p. 171). And finally, strategy 80, “Reflect upon teaching components that reach beyond lesson delivery and assessment. Constant reflection about teaching practice is what effective veteran teachers do” (p. 173). These strategies also contributed heavily to the development of the post-observation interview questions in the interview protocol. In developing the observation protocol for this study, the researcher sought to incorporate the theoretical models and practical strategies of these various sources on classroom observation (see Appendix F).

In early May 2010, the researcher contacted each of the six participants and arranged the preobservation interview, classroom observation, and postobservation interview with each of them. All of the teachers seemed willing to participate and desirous to do what they could to accommodate this study.

At each interview, each teacher reviewed the letter of information (see Appendix E) and was given an opportunity to ask questions. Each teacher then participated in a brief (10-15 minutes) preobservation interview, was observed for at least one class (Alan, Evan, and Gary were all observed for two consecutive classes because of scheduling), and participated in the post-observation interview, which lasted for 45 minutes to slightly
more than an hour, depending on the teacher. In each interview, the researcher followed closely the prepared protocol—although not all questions were asked of every teacher in every interview (see Appendix F).

During each of these interviews and observations, the researcher attempted to collect qualitative data from the three major sources mentioned by Creswell (2005, p. 209): interviews with seminary faculty, classroom observations, and documents (such as copies of Professional Growth Plans, observation & feedback forms, and other forms of reflective writing—such as journals, self-evaluations, or other personal studies). Collecting all of this data simultaneously, or at least in fairly concurrent steps, was critical for meeting the simultaneous data collection and analysis criterion proposed by Charmaz for a true “grounded theory” research design.

The data from these three sources of data was also important for the purposes of triangulation. The theoretical framework proposed by Hatton and Smith (1995) regarding the four levels of reflection (technical, descriptive, dialogic, and critical) was the main lens through which this data was analyzed. During the course of the interviews and during data analysis, it became apparent that some of the data, which could not be categorized in the levels of reflection prescribed by the Hatton and Smith framework, would need to be categorized into another category: spiritual reflection. Mayes and Blackwell-Mayes (2002) suggested that spiritual reflection has to do with the way teachers consider their “commitment to ‘a trans-personal and trans-temporal reality that serves as the ontological ground for an ethic of compassion and service’” (p. 131) and how teachers operationalize that commitment in their professional lives. The interview protocol questions were not designed to draw out this particular category of data, but
given that the study was conducted among religious educators, the emergence of such data was inevitable, and thus a theoretical lens for analyzing and interpreting this data was necessary.

Once the qualitative data had been collected, the researcher began the formal analysis stage by listening to the digital recordings of the interviews again. While listening, the researcher made notes on the main ideas and key points from the participants that might lead to “codes” for the coding process of data analysis. Because the objective of this study was to generate a grounded theory of reflection for seminary teachers in S&I, this preliminary data was organized according to the four levels of reflection outlined by Hatton and Smith (1995). But to be consistent with grounded theory methodology, the specific codes had to emerge from the data—the words and ideas of the teachers formulated the themes. After listening to all of the interviews, the researcher created an Excel spreadsheet page for each of the levels of reflection and then took the chunks of data and organized them under a column for each teacher and in rows that indicated similar ideas from the different teachers. Only after the chunks of data had been recorded and sorted did the researcher attempt to generate codes that captured the fundamental ideas of each row of data that emerged from the interviews and observations.

Coding, wrote Charmaz (2006a), is the “first part of the adventure that enables you to make the leap from concrete events and descriptions of them to theoretical insight and theoretical possibilities” (p. 71). During the initial coding stages, Charmaz also recommended that it is important to remain open and alert to all possible significant data, keep close to the data, use short and simple codes that preserve the actions of participants
(i.e., use gerunds), and move quickly through the data so that you can compare data between sources. During this phase of data analysis, Hatton and Smith’s (1995) theoretical framework continued to be the primary influence as the researcher looked for evidence of their four levels of teacher reflection—technical, descriptive, dialogic, or critical. They suggested specific forms of language that would indicate certain types of reflection. While their suggestions and guidelines during the coding process were helpful, teachers’ “lack of ability to use particular genre constructions” (p. 42) did not limit the coding process. Following these suggestions for coding helped guide the development of a grounded theory of teacher reflection for seminary teachers in S&I that was ‘grounded’ in data.

After the preliminary codes and notes were written and organized in this way, the researcher wondered if the data collected actually related to the research questions. The data was reexamined, and this time each code or interview note was highlighted with a color that represented each research question. By doing this, it seemed apparent that the preliminary codes best answered the first research question: What are some of the reflective practices among professional S&I seminary instructors? These codes described what these six seminary teachers actually did by way of reflection. The interview notes and chunks of data in the columns corresponded more closely to the second and third research questions: How do these teachers engage in reflective practices and activities, and how do they perceive these reflective practices and activities as having an impact on their professional development? Most of the data from the technical and descriptive levels of reflection related to the second research question, while the data from the dialogic and critical levels of reflection seemed more evenly split between the second and
third research questions.

The Excel spreadsheet with the interview notes, data chunks, and preliminary codes was submitted to the dissertation chair and the qualitative methods committee member for an external audit. Both members of the committee returned a favorable report and commendation to continue. This same spreadsheet was also shared with another doctoral candidate, who is also an S&I employee, for peer review. He reviewed the preliminary codes along with the chunks of data, made a few suggestions about recoding a couple of data segments (which were mostly followed), and gave a favorable review of the process thus far. External audit and peer review methods for checking validity strengthened the process of data analysis and provided a sense of accountability to a reader as the process continued.

Initially, arrangements were made to have the interviews transcribed by a third party. However, when that arrangement fell through, the interviews were mostly transcribed by the researcher. While this resulted in a great amount of work, this process sharpened the analysis and interpretation because of the careful scrutiny that this process required. Having to review nearly every word of the interviews and reflect upon meanings and patterns within and across interviews helped the researcher to think more analytically and cohesively about the reflection process for these religious educators and the impact it has had (or not had; or could have) on their professional development.

During the coding process of data analysis, Korthagen’s (2004) model of teacher reflection also informed the theoretical framework for analyzing teacher reflection. Korthagen proposes that reflection has the most impact when teachers focus their reflection on their “core” mission, identity, and beliefs—the inner layers of his “onion
model.” He suggests that teachers who focus their reflection primarily on the outer layers of their professional identity and development (i.e., their competencies, behaviors, and environmental factors) without reflecting on the deeper levels (i.e., professional mission, identity, and beliefs) “stagnate” in their professional development. Korthagen’s model was constantly in the background during the analytical process as the researcher tried to determine the “layer” that the seminary teachers in the study were reflecting on and how they reflect in accordance with Korthagen’s proposed model. This was a valuable second perspective during the analytical process.

Classroom observation notes, documents, and interview transcripts were all coded with these frameworks in mind. To check the validity of the coding process, the researcher submitted codes copies of three separate post-observation interviews to the committee chairman, a member of the dissertation committee, and a doctoral candidate colleague. Each reviewer confirmed that the coding process seemed logical and there were no glaring errors in the coding process that they could identify.

These codes were then analyzed in three primary ways. First, a “Summary of Codes” for each teacher was created which brought together all coded data for each interview participant with a separate section for each level of reflection (technical, descriptive, dialogic, critical, and spiritual), divided by sub-headings for the type of data under which it was collected (classroom observation, documents, and interviews). For each participant, a chart was created that summarized the results of analyzing the data in this way. These charts summarize the data in a way that shows the relationship between the various types of reflection, as well as patterns and trends of the different types of reflection, for each individual teacher. Each chart also showed a mean score for each
level of reflection across the various qualitative sources. Some of this data is represented
in subsequent analysis charts in Chapter 4 (for example, see Table 4.1 shown and
discussed later in this chapter).

The second way the data was analyzed was to organize and examine the coded
data by each level of reflection. The first step in this process was to create a summary of
each level of reflection by interview participants. In this document, all coded data for
each level of reflection was collected and organized with major headers for each teacher
and sub-headings for the source of the data (classroom observation, documents, and
interviews). This document proved to be an important intermediary document that made
the next steps of analyzing the data by code more manageable. But it was also a useful
summary document for each level of reflection that made information easy to locate by
teacher.

The next step in this process was to create a summary document for each level of
reflection by code. This was done by taking the coded data and organizing it
alphabetically according to each code under that level of reflection. Underneath each
individual code, the data was organized by source once again (classroom observation,
documents, and interviews) followed by each interview participants identification
number. In doing this, I was able to see more clearly how much of the data actually fell
into each code. One reason this step was so critical was that it helped identify codes that
were more prominent than others. Once these summary documents for each level of
reflection was completed, another table was created that summarized each level of
reflection by interview participant and by code. This table also included the survey rating
for each participant from their survey and the individual mean from all qualitative
sources. This table also showed the percentage for each code in the total body of collected data for that level of reflection. These tables are provided in Chapter 4 (see Tables 4.5, 4.6, 4.11, and 4.14) along with a more detailed analysis and discussion of the results of the data.

Doing the transcription, coding, and analysis this way took perhaps more time than using a modern software program, but it required that the researcher look carefully at each segment of data. Staying close to the data in this way helped this beginning qualitative researcher become thoroughly familiar with the data and notice patterns and trends that actually emerged from the data. Each step of analysis required a reexamination of the data through a new rubric that invited the researcher to reexamine what he thought he had seen and heard and reevaluate assumptions about what the data meant. The theoretical lenses chosen for this study provided guidance, but this personal immersion in the data and careful analysis of each segment tied the researcher closely to the data so that answers to the research questions really emerged from the data.

The next step of data analysis was memo-writing, which is the process by which a researcher starts to look at the various codes in a deeper analytical way and discover the meaning of what the researcher has seen, heard, and observed (see Charmaz, 2006b, pp. 72-82). The clustering process recommended by Charmaz (2006b, pp. 86-91) was implemented when the outline for Chapter 4 was written. Through this process, the researcher began to synthesize the various memos and codes that had been created (see Charmaz, 2006b, pp. 86-91) into ideas that provided a theoretical explanation to answer the research questions for this study. Since the memo-writing process is the step which bridges from data to interpretation, a more in-depth discussion of the analysis after this
stage will be found in Chapter 4.

All of this data analysis was critical because, as Denzin wrote, “We know a thing only through its representation” (2005, p. 5). And the validity of that representation depends on “how accurately the account represents participants’ realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 124-125). That is why the analysis focused not only on what the participants in the study said, or did, or wrote, but also on how they felt about the impact of those actions and activities (Zembylas, 2005). This may be difficult to ascertain, but a rigorous attempt at doing so provided this study with a cognitive and affective scope that was essential for promoting improvement in teacher reflection, since “Emotions are the very site of the capacity to affect change” (Zembylas, 2005, p. 470).

As the analysis moved further into the interpretation phase, from which the resultant grounded theory emerged—which was the primary aim of this study—Argyris and Schön’s (1974) theories regarding espoused theories, theories in use, and hybrid theories of practice were also a major guiding influence. Data collected from the survey, interviews and observations, and documents were analyzed to look for congruence between theory and practice via the various processes of reflection. Korthagen’s model of reflection (2004) was seen as a conceptually congruent theoretical model. The researcher looked for how the various reflective activities of professional seminary teachers helped them align their beliefs about teaching with their behaviors in their quest for professional improvement.
Interviews and Observations Threats to Validity

There are threats to the validity, or reliability, of a qualitative study that must be addressed (see Bryant, 2004, pp. 100-101). In an effort to be true to aspects of both the postpositivist and constructivist data analysis and interpretation methods, the researcher drew upon both research paradigms during all phases of the study. Four postpositivist validity procedures were employed in this study: triangulation, member checking, external audit, and peer review. “Triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). For this study, this was accomplished by gathering data of three different kinds: classroom observations, documents, and interviews. These data sources provided a fuller picture of the wide variation of practices of teacher reflection. Triangulation through these three types of data helped to present a “simultaneous display of multiple, refracted realities” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 6) both within data collected from individuals and between data collected from one teacher in comparison with data collected from other teachers.

Concerns regarding transcription accuracy were addressed primarily through member checking. After the interviews were transcribed, the “bare” transcripts (that is, without any codes or researcher notes) were sent to each interview participant. Three of the six participants read their entire transcripts and reported back that they felt the transcripts were accurate and that they also felt the interviews had captured their most prominent thoughts and ideas about their reflective practices and how they felt about them. Member checking was the primary method used to confirm the veracity of the
interview data.

Originally, the researcher had planned to submit portions of coding analysis to participants to let them respond to perhaps make suggestions or corrections. However, in consultation with the dissertation committee chairman, it was decided that the analysis should be the domain of the researcher and participants’ input would be most valuable for checking the validity of the transcript material.

Dissertation committee members were the primary source of external audit throughout the study, checking my data and my analysis for logical and sound interpretation and justifiable conclusions. The researcher also regularly requested the input of members of the dissertation committee, especially the committee chairman on matters of what to do—and sometimes what not to do—next. The research methods member of this committee also offered guidance on sources for how to collect and analyze qualitative data that helped guide the researcher in the gathering of worthwhile data and being alert to potential biases and being willing to reexamine data in a way that challenged some of the original assumptions about the interpretation of the data. Members of the dissertation committee evaluated the coding schemes, as previously mentioned. Coded transcripts were also submitted to two members of the committee for their evaluation. And, of course, the analysis, conclusions, and recommendations were all eventually reviewed, evaluated, and approved by the entire dissertation committee.

Another opportunity for an external audit that had not been planned prior to the study being conceived and planned came when the researcher submitted a proposal and was selected to discuss a portion of this research at a colloquium at the annual meeting of the Religious Education Association in November 2010. The presentation focused
primarily on the critical reflection data. Portions of the data along with some preliminary analysis were presented to professional religious educators at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary level. Some asked critical questions about the sampling of the participants; these questions were answered to the satisfaction of the group. Many suggested that the study was a much needed beginning to a relatively unexamined area of professional development among many segments of professional religious educators. They commended the study and several expressed interest in seeing the results when it was finished. Some of these were professors at seminaries that trained ministers and other religious educators for various religious denominations.

The final postpositivist data analysis procedure employed was peer review, as suggested by Glesne (2006, p. 36). An S&I colleague in the same doctoral program with the researcher was also studying professional development for his dissertation, so some of the literature and research for both projects has overlapped. This background gave him a lens that was valuable for peer review of my coding schemes and usage of the coding schemes in transcript analysis.

There are two other principles of constructivism that guided and benefited the collection of data—as well as the subsequent description, analysis, and interpretation for this research project. The first was being familiar enough with the cultural context of the study in order to understand the data that was collected. As an S&I educator, the researcher had the benefit of being familiar with “official documents” and the “dailiness of program life.” He also had a “close knowledge of the program” so that he could be more “responsive to the real issues facing the program” (see Weiss, 1998, p. 321). While this can pose some potential challenges (see Weiss, 1998), the external audit from both
the dissertation committee and the presentation at the Religious Education Association confirmed that researcher bias was not significant enough to invalidate the collection of the data or to invalidate the findings of the study. Court (2008) pointed out how critical an insider perspective can be in qualitative research in her study of five qualitative researchers in religious education. She demonstrated how researchers who have spent sufficient time in a culture can more adequately understand the culture they are studying and not only “ask good questions, but truly understand the answers” (p. 414). As mentioned earlier, this study focused on understanding the “process” of teacher reflection in S&I (Weiss, 1998, p. 5) in an effort to “come to understand the reality rather than the rhetoric of the program” (p. 322). Being part of the program was a benefit for this research strategy because the researcher had a “shared lived experience” with the participants who contributed the data for the study. He had fluency in the “language of the group’s culture” so that I could be sensitive to the “nuances in how language is expressed and the meaning it may hold beyond the mere words” (Westat, 2002, p. 70, 71).

A second key principle and great benefit of the constructivist methodology is providing a “thick, rich description” of the data for others (Eisner, 1979, 1991, 1993, 2002; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Glesne, 2006). This is important in developing a grounded theory, because those who read the study need to feel that they not only know what is happening, but that they also understand the phenomenon being studied, analyzed, and presented to them. With a B.A. in English (University of Wyoming, 1998), an M.A. in Religious Education (Brigham Young University, 2002), and given his current assignment as an instructional designer in S&I Curriculum Services, the researcher had
the writing experience to enable him to provide a description of the data and a rigorous analysis and interpretation of the process that will be informative and useful for those who read it. Zinsser’s (2006) work was particularly helpful in refining the researcher’s writing skills and abilities.

Even more important than writing ability, however, in providing a reliable “thick, rich description” of the data in a qualitative study is the ability to analyze qualitative data. The research paradigm for qualitative research posits that the researcher is the lens through which the data is gathered, analyzed, and reported. Therefore, the development of the researcher throughout the process of the study should have some bearing on the validity of the study. In light of this paradigmatic concept in qualitative research, the researcher had two professional experiences while working on this dissertation that have shaped the collection, analysis, and reporting of this data, which it is hoped will add to the reliability of this study and its findings.

The first came when the researcher had the opportunity in February of 2010 to take a professional trip to another part of the United States to conduct field surveys and interviews with 20-30 “called teachers” (unpaid teachers who fulfill their teaching assignments at the request of local Church leaders) at both the seminary and institute level in S&I regarding their experience using the prepared curriculum in their classrooms. While the subject of these interviews was not directly related to the subject of this study, this experience provided incredibly valuable background experience for conducting the interviews for this study. The researcher learned how to listen more carefully to interview participants to probe their experiences without jumping too quickly to analysis; how to not lead a participant too much but to encourage them to share germane information and
stay on the subject of the interview; how to ask good follow-up questions that would probe for deeper understanding where necessary; and how to assume the “learner” posture in an interview that would invite interview participants to share personal and candid thoughts and feelings.

The second experience has been a series of encounters with various research personnel in the researcher’s professional assignment from June 2009 to December 2010. Those interactions provided exposure to a wide array of quantitative and qualitative research projects during that time. To put it succinctly, one of the most critical things the researcher learned from listening to various “qualitative” research reports was the importance of coding, memo writing, and clustering in the analysis of qualitative data. Without these crucial analytical steps, qualitative data risks devolving into little more than a collection of anecdotal sound bites. Thus, these experiences encouraged the researcher to spend a significant amount of time carefully reviewing the analytical strategies for this study and striving to immerse himself sufficiently in the data in order to be as thorough as possible in looking at the data from several different analytical “angles” to get a clearer picture of what the data actually represented.

As mentioned earlier, while there are some benefits to the researcher having been a member of the population in this study (before his current assignment writing curriculum for S&I, the researcher was a professional seminary and institute teacher for 11 years with various administrative responsibilities), there was concern about potential biases that needed to be discovered, vetted, and explained prior to engaging in the interview process with participants. For example, one of these biases was exposed during the mock proposal of this defense—namely, the assumption and bias that teacher
reflection is ultimately always a positive experience. As pointed out by Argyris and Schön (1974) sometimes reflection can be so emotionally, mentally, and psychologically challenging that some people might prefer not to engage in deeper forms of teacher reflection. Recognizing this bias was helpful for this study because it forced the researcher to formulate questions for both the survey and interview that asked participants to also identify and share their perceptions regarding negative experiences they may have had with reflective practices. Glesne (2006) suggested that researchers reflect on “your own subjectivity and how you will use and monitor it in your research” (p. 37). In qualitative research, the researcher is “the screen through which most qualitative data flows” (Bryant, 2004, p. 101), so such reflection helps the researcher and those who receive the research to have a clearer view of that research instrument. Although it was suggested during the mock proposal defense for this study that the researcher participate in a “bracketing interview” (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004) to further examine these biases, in consultation with members of my committee, it was decided that the researcher could forego a bracketing interview in lieu of statements already made regarding my assumptions and background coming into this study.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

This study was restricted by several limitations. A limitation is a restriction created by the methodology of the study (Bryant, 2004, p. 58-59). This study is not an experimental or even quasi-experimental study. There was no preliminary evaluation of a teacher’s reflective ability, no intervention, and no post-test that measured improvement of their reflective ability. The researcher was not seeking for “best practices of teacher
reflection” in S&I, or among religious educators at large. This is also not an evaluative study. Seminary teachers’ reflective practices and abilities were not measured against a standard of reflection in order to determine their capacity or competence for reflection. This study is also not a broad, completely comprehensive study of all the forms of reflection in which a teacher may engage. The primary focus of this study was on the “at work” types of reflection that teachers engage in. It is readily acknowledged by the researcher that other less formal, perhaps more private, forms and methods of reflection—such as dialogue with a spouse—may also be a significant part of the reflection process for seminary teachers. Some of these did arise during the study, but they were not a primary focus of the research design.

There were also several delimitations of this study—factors that prevent the findings of this study from being true at all times and for all people in all places (Bryant, 2004, p. 57-58). One major delimitation of the study is that the researcher chose only to survey, interview, and observe professional seminary teachers in S&I. This excludes “called” and part-time teachers. Further studies would also be required for these “called teachers” in S&I—formerly known as “volunteer teachers,” who make up over 90% of all S&I teachers worldwide. This study also excludes institute (post-secondary, or college level) teachers in S&I. Further studies would be required to study teacher reflection for institute faculty. Another serious delimitation of this study was the potential sample size that had been approved by S&I. S&I administration only allowed the researcher to survey 70 random teachers that were selected on the basis of assignment location only. This means that it was impossible to determine how many participants were male or female. While some demographic information was obtained from the teachers who took the
survey, it was known whether any were female. None of the interview participants were female, which was a regrettable delimitation of the study. This was also not a longitudinal study that measured changes in reflective behavior over time or in connection with other institutional changes that will undoubtedly occur after the publication of this study. Future studies should make conscious attempts to make sure this gap is filled.

The quantitative portion of this study was not designed to reveal correlations that might be descriptive of teacher reflection as a function of age, years of service, prior administrative experience, and so forth, among professional seminary teachers in S&I. Another delimitation of this study is that no attempt was made (although it was considered in the early stages of planning this study) to compare reflective practices of S&I teachers with the reflective practices of other religious educators in other contexts. For example, one recommendation for future research would be to study the reflective practices of other religious educators at some of the private or charter institutions within the state of Utah, both within the Latter-day Saint community (such as at the American Heritage School in American Fork) and outside the Latter-day Saint community (such as at the Catholic Juan Diego High School in Draper). Then a comparison could be made between these various communities to further deepen our understanding of reflective practices for religious educators. This would also provide a body of collaborative knowledge that all religious educators could benefit from and use to further their professional development efforts within their own spheres of religious education. Through his recent association with professional religious educators in the Religious Education Association, it is the researcher’s strong opinion that such a collaborative study would be welcomed and mutually beneficial for everyone involved. Regarding the
limitations and delimitations of this study, Marshall and Rossman (1999) remind us:

Although no qualitative studies are generalizable in the statistical sense, their findings may be transferable. A discussion of these considerations reminds the reader that the study is bounded and situated in a specific context. The reader, then, can make decisions about its usefulness for other settings. (p. 43)
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

As with most studies, the data collected from survey, interviews, observations, and documents often uncovered interesting and surprising results and nuances about the practices and impact of teacher reflection among professional LDS seminary teachers in S&I. Some of these serendipitous findings will be reported in this chapter, but only as they relate to the main research questions for this study, which are:

1. What are some of the reflective practices among professional S&I seminary instructors?
2. How do these teachers engage in these technical reflective practices?
3. How do they perceive these reflective practices and activities as having an impact on their professional development?

In this chapter, the researcher endeavored to follow the approach to qualitative reporting as recommended by Wolcott (2001) and present the data from this study in a way that describes the central phenomenon of teacher reflection in S&I, analyzes the data so teacher reflection can be seen as it occurs in the perceived reality of professional seminary teachers, and interprets that data to present a grounded theory—a mid-range descriptive explanation—of teacher reflection in S&I that will help teachers and instructional supervisors better understand the process of teacher reflection as a function of sustained professional development. Description, analysis, and interpretation are not discreet elements that can be studied or reported separately, but they can be helpful frames through which the researcher can present data to make sense of the practice and
impact of teacher reflection.

While this chapter will contain some interpretation, most interpretation will come in Chapter 5, “Conclusions and Recommendations.” The primary focus of this chapter will be description and analysis. To do this, the researcher has woven together data from all sources in an attempt to accurately reflect the participants’ realities of professional seminary teacher reflection practices and the impact thereof (see Creswell & Miller, 2000). Respondents’ answers to the survey questions provided the foundation for many of the interview questions; and in turn, data collected from the participants via observations, interviews, and documents contributed to a more complete understanding of much of the data collected in the survey.

The description in this chapter will begin with an overview of basic demographic data from the survey of 48 teachers concerning teacher reflection in seminary and an overview description of each of the seminary teachers involved in the interview portion of the study. More description and analysis will continue with subsequent sections that focus on the four major levels of reflection that constitute the theoretical framework for this study: technical, descriptive, dialogic, and critical. Using the research questions for this study, each section will focus on the reflective practices, processes, and the impact of those practices on the professional development of seminary teachers in S&I. At the end of each section, there will be a brief analytical summary of what the data from this study may tell us about teacher reflection among the professional seminary teachers in this study within that particular level of reflection.

After reporting on each of the major levels of reflection in the theoretical framework of this study, there will also be a minor section that reports on the spiritual
reflection of the teachers in this study. Given Korthagen’s (2004) model of teacher reflection which includes the teacher’s sense of professional mission, identity, and beliefs as the core of their professional identity and development, the report of these findings would be incomplete without this data. Finally, this chapter will conclude with some final analytical thoughts on the relationships between the various reflective practices among the seminary teachers in this study and how the various reflective tools in S&I promote and/or discourage the various levels of teacher reflection in S&I.

**Overview of Study Participants**

When the survey for this study was distributed and the data gathered in March-April 2010, there were approximately 553 professional seminary teachers employed within S&I in the United States. While 48 of the 70 teachers selected as the sample for this survey returned their surveys, no statistical analysis was done that would make the results of this survey generalizable to the entire body of 553 professional seminary teachers in S&I. However, to understand the potential impact of this study, it is important to have an understanding of the demographics of the participants in the survey as well as in the qualitative portion of the study.

Most of the respondents to this survey were in the early years of their careers. Roughly two thirds of these teachers were under 40 years old, had less than 15 years of experience, and had less than four different assignments during their time as professional religious educators.

In addition, a slightly higher percentage of these teachers (68.8%) had never held an administrative position, such as principal or coordinator (a supervisor that oversees
called seminary and institute teachers in areas of the country that do not have released-time seminary or full-time institute programs). A slightly smaller number of respondents (56.3%) had never had an assignment as an inservice leader—a faculty position in S&I that has some instructional supervisory responsibilities, primarily the planning of local inservice meetings.

As far as their training goes, only one of the teachers in this survey was not hired through a formal “preservice center”—a program based in a full-time institute that trains and hires full-time S&I personnel. All of the six teachers interviewed during this study were hired through a preservice center. This program requires two semester-long courses on religious education in S&I, usually followed by a minimum of one year of student teaching in a released-time seminary setting. However, this may be all of the formal religious education training most teachers get before being hired as a full-time seminary teacher. Only 7 of the 48 respondents (14.7%) reported having a bachelor’s degree in education. Thus, many professional seminary teachers in S&I are not trained in educational theories or research-based practices as are most public education secondary-level teachers in their neighboring high schools.

However, the educational background and training of professional seminary teachers changes significantly when they are asked about their post-graduate degrees. Due to the supportive and accommodating tuition reimbursement and professional development leave program of S&I, many S&I personnel go on to receive post-graduate degrees. Teachers are encouraged to get at least a master’s degree and S&I is very supportive of those who decide to pursue doctorate degrees. Of the 48 respondents in this survey, 41 reported having at least a master’s degree. However, this turned out to be 42
as explained in Chapter 3 with the selection of Evan as an interview participant (see p. 46). And, as mentioned earlier, 24 of these teachers had post-graduate degrees in education-related fields. This would suggest that teachers take their professional development seriously and are willing to spend a significant amount of time and effort—and sometimes much of their own money—to improve in their field and strive for high levels of efficiency and competency.

In addition to formally pursuing advanced degrees, often in education-related fields, only slightly less than half (45.8%) reported that they have also participated in various other professional religious education training activities or courses during their career. When asked to list some of these activities or courses, one of the most common responses was the CES Conference, which has since been discontinued. This summer symposium-like gathering brought together professional and called teachers from all over the world on the campus of BYU for one week to attend classes on content mastery and pedagogical practice. Due to the limited accessibility of this experience for an increasingly global teaching force, these conferences were cancelled in 2003. Another common response was the Professional Development Program (PDP), which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Other teachers reported attending various lectures, seminars, and enrichment courses that they considered pertinent to their religious education training. One teacher even reported that he was a chaplain in the U.S. military, which requires numerous college-level theological and ministerial courses. Again, this notable effort to continue to pursue professional training after having been hired indicates that a significant portion of the teachers sampled in this study feel strongly about continuing their professional development once they are hired to teach.
Overall, the data for this survey confirmed some of the assumptions of the researcher. Many teachers coming into S&I do not have the educational training background that many public school teachers have. However, one of the early surprises in this study was the number of teachers who have post-graduate degrees in education-related fields. Without an in-depth study of the curriculum of these degrees, it is not possible to determine the depth of theoretical or pedagogical training these teachers received in these degrees. However, it does seem to manifest a generally impressive effort to seek professional development among the seminary teachers in this study, even in the early stages of their career.

While much has already been said about the six teachers who were selected for the observation and interview portion of this study, the rest of this section contains descriptive statements about the pertinent aspects of each teacher’s professional demeanor and general attitude toward teacher reflection of each of these teachers. This description will hopefully provide increased depth to the understanding of the nature of professional reflection among this small sample of teachers in S&I. It should be remembered that the researcher spent only about 1-2 hours with each participant. However, the researcher also had access to documents from almost every teacher (Evan being the only exception), and there were also several e-mail and phone conversations that contributed to the researcher’s perspective of these teachers’ attitudes toward reflection and professional development.

Before giving a specific description of each teacher, it would seem economical to point out two commonalities of the six teachers interviewed in this study. First and foremost, they all seemed to care deeply about their students. They talked regularly and
sincerely about their students and their relationship with their students in a way that left little room for doubt that these teachers were sincerely dedicated to helping youth.

Second, all six teachers seemed genuinely concerned about and interested in their personal professional development. The intensity with which some of them approached certain professional development practices regularly astonished and impressed the researcher. Given these two fundamental similarities, however, each teacher approached teacher reflection differently, as evidenced in Table 4.1, which will be referred to throughout the remainder of this section.

The first teacher to be interviewed was Alan, who had been teaching for 6-10 years, had not yet been an administrator or an inservice leader, and had received bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education-related fields. Alan seemed eager to participate in the observation and interview process, and he seemed open and willing to share candid thoughts and opinions during the interview process. Throughout our interactions, Alan struck the researcher as a teacher who was fully vested in religious education as his life’s work—not just a job or a career, but his contribution to the

Table 4.1

*Percentages of Reflection Data from All Qualitative Sources (Observations, Interviews, and Documents)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Descriptive</th>
<th>Dialogic</th>
<th>Critical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
betterment of individual lives and the community of which he was a part. Consistent with
the data from all qualitative sources, which showed Alan as having a higher propensity
toward dialogic forms of reflection (see Table 4.1), Alan seemed most enthusiastic about
dialogic forms of reflection and less enthusiastic about personal writing activities as
forms of teacher reflection. However, Alan also felt especially strong about reading as an
important part of his professional reflection—whether it was reading the scripture text for
the course of study, the curriculum, or other supplemental material. He also expressed
strong opinions that his life experiences—from his own experiences as a high school
student to being a father and a local leader in his congregation—shaped him as a teacher
and had a great deal to do with his professional development. In our interview, Alan was
one of the teachers who expressed multiple “a-ha” moments—he felt that the interview
process was “challenging” and helped him see some things about his own reflective
processes and his approach to professional development.

When Bruce was interviewed for this study, he had been teaching 21-25 years and
had served as both a seminary principal and an inservice leader. While his bachelor’s
degree was not in an education-related field, like most seminary teachers pursuing
advanced degrees, his master’s degree was. Bruce seemed comfortable with his career as
a professional religious educator. He had a grasp of the field from the perspective of a
previous administrator and instructional leader. As one of the teachers with the highest
levels of descriptive reflection from all qualitative sources of data (see Table 4.1), he
seemed to have a clear understanding of the rationale behind the decisions he made in the
classroom and in his professional development. Having said that, he also admitted several
times that he was not as diligent as he once had been about his professional reflection, but
he knew the value of the various reflective activities that he had once participated in and were currently available to him. Bruce seemed most enthusiastic about private forms of professional reflection—recording audio comments about his lessons, reviewing past lesson plans to find things that worked and ways to improve, and so forth—and less enthusiastic about dialogic forms of critical reflection, such as group preparation periods with other faculty members or observing other teachers. Bruce admitted to being hesitant to participate in the interview process, but admitted afterwards that it was “much more enjoyable and enlightening” than he thought it would be. It seemed that the questions and his responses revived previous energetic attitudes about reflection and professional development that had been somewhat latent.

When Carl was interviewed for this study, he had been teaching for 1-5 years, had not yet served in an administrative position, but had served as an inservice leader on a local faculty. He had earned bachelor’s and master’s degree in education-related fields, and he seemed genuinely interested in participating in the interview process. Carl was one of the more enigmatic teachers to interview. He was much more reserved about sharing candid comments and thoughts, as if he was concerned that they might come across as too negative or that he did not want to incriminate himself somehow. He did share some very pointed insights about reflection and professional development, but he would regularly pull himself up short if he felt that he was crossing some sort of proprietary boundary that he should not traverse. The more we talked about reflection, the more enthusiastic he became about the subject, even insisting that a teacher’s ability to successfully reflect would impact not only his teaching, but every aspect of his life in a positive way. He had a very holistic approach to reflection, which was chiefly manifested
Carl seemed firmly set on pursuing a career in religious education, but seemed somewhat unsure about the course he should follow in that pursuit. He seemed most interested in dialogic forms of reflection, but at the same time he indicated that this was a source of frustration for him since he did not feel that his present faculty shared the same yearning for professional reflection and development that he desired. This frustration and reticence to discuss it may be seen in his relatively low percentage of dialogically reflective material from all qualitative data sources (see Table 4.1). He told the researcher that he did not feel like he was “a very reflective teacher,” and he specifically pointed out that he didn’t think much about certain aspects of critical reflection (such as aligning his lesson objectives with the S&I Objective or the Teaching and Learning Emphasis), and that he felt he should improve in those areas.

Like Carl, Dave had also been teaching 1-5 years, had not served as an administrator, but had been an inservice leader on a local faculty. While Dave did not have a bachelor’s degree in an education-related field, he had recently finished a master’s degree program in an education-related field. Professionally, Dave showed an intense interest in receiving feedback from others and being willing to implement that professional criticism in improving his teaching techniques. This may explain why Dave was the source of the highest percentage of technical reflection data from qualitative sources, even though the percentage of dialogic reflection data from the same sources was somewhat low (see Table 4.1). Like Alan, Dave had frequent “a-ha” moments during the interview process, pausing regularly to jot down a thought he had or take notes that he said he would transfer later into a professional journal.

Evan had been teaching full-time seminary for 6-10 years and had never served as
an administrator or as an inservice leader. He had received both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education-related fields. As mentioned in Chapter III, Evan was the only participant selected for an interview who has been rated “low” in all categories of reflection from the survey. Evan seemed very uneasy and appeared to lack confidence during the interview. He seemed hesitant about his answers throughout the interview. He seemed more unsure and uncertain about a career in S&I than the other five teachers interviewed for this study. That is not to say that he did not want to be a full-time seminary teacher—he seemed to want that very much. But he seemed less secure about it, for some reason, than the other five teachers. One possible reason for this, which came out during the interview, was having had what he perceived were negative experiences with previous S&I administrators, particularly an area director that he felt was particularly harsh with him. While he was the second-highest source of technical reflection data and the highest source for descriptive reflection data, those percentages must not be misunderstood (see Table 4.1). Evan spent a significant portion of the interview describing logistical teaching problems he was facing and not seeming to be able to come to any conclusions about what to do about them. In similar fashion, when it came to descriptive reflection—as with dialogic reflection—he spent more time talking about problems with those concepts and processes rather than how he did it or how it was successful for him. Evan’s low critical reflection rating is indicative of his unwillingness or lack of interest in pursuing deeper professional issues, even when the researcher tried to probe for deeper rationale and understanding from this teacher. One of the most difficult things for the researcher to see in this entire study was how one negative relationship between a teacher and an administrator could have such potentially long-
term damaging effects on a teacher’s professional development.

On the other hand, Gary’s interview was entirely different. Gary had come to S&I as a second-career and had earned bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in education-related fields before being hired to teach seminary professionally. Gary had been teaching seminary full-time for 16-20 years and had served as both an administrator and an inservice leader prior to the interview for this study. Gary’s overall approach to professional development was deliberate and methodical. For example, as part of an area training council, he had helped develop a systematic study program for teachers that would encourage content mastery and discussion of the material with other teachers. He reported reading more professional literature than the other teachers; he was the only teacher who mentioned reading *The Religious Educator*, and confessed that he read every issue cover to cover. He frequently used anecdotes and metaphors in his responses to interview questions and spoke about reflection as a process of “becoming” more than “doing.” While he had the highest percentage of qualitative critical reflection data (see Table 4.1), like Bruce he also had a relatively high percentage of descriptive reflection data. Since this pattern emerged from the two teachers with the most experience, this ability to frame decisions in the classroom and choices pertaining to professional development within a background of critical reflection may be something that comes with professional maturity in S&I.

As has been shown, while the teachers in this study had a few similarities, they also offered a wide variety of perspectives on teacher reflection that proved useful and valuable for this study. Each teacher had a unique combination of reflective approaches and practices, but some important patterns and trends emerged from the data concerning
the practices and processes of teacher reflection and how those activities impact the professional development of professional seminary teachers in S&I.

**Technical Reflection: Practices, Processes, and Impact**

Hatton and Smith (1995) defined technical reflection as “decision-making about immediate behaviours or skills…always interpreted in light of personal worries and previous experience” (p. 45). Teachers who are examining their “use of essential skills or generic competencies as often applied in controlled, small scale settings” (p. 45) are engaging in technical reflection. The most common codes for technical reflection in the qualitative data were: evaluating student participation in seminary, thinking about the need for classroom discipline, thinking about lesson pacing, and “lesson correction reflection.” Gary used the phrase “lesson correction reflection” to describe the kind of technical reflection seminary teachers engage in when thinking about how they could improve skills, competencies, and behaviors to make the lesson more effective. Here’s how Alan described this kind of reflective experience, “If someone were to evaluate…Did I mechanically—talking about a baseball pitch—did I get the mechanics right?” This section focuses on describing what this kind of reflection looks like in S&I and analyzing how teachers perceive this kind of reflection as having an impact on their professional development.

One of the most common practices in S&I that promotes technical reflection is when a teacher is observed by another professional religious educator. While it was unusual for teachers to report being observed more than weekly or monthly by a colleague or supervisor, about 56% of the teachers in this study reported being observed
by a colleague 1-4 times each year and approximately 73% of these teachers reported being observed by a supervisor—most likely a principal or area director—1-4 times each year.

While there is no accessible data to quantify that being observed by others has increased among seminary teachers in recent years, some full-time S&I personnel feel that such an increase has occurred. A comment from Alan typifies that perspective within the professional culture of S&I in recent years:

I’ve been observed…a minimum of three times a month [sometimes]. I like that. I used to, in my early career, think, ‘Why are they watching me? What’s going on? Am I in trouble?’ And now it’s like, hopefully I’ve gotten rid of my own pride on that. It’s, ‘Help me see what I can do better.’

Alan’s comment indicated that being observed in S&I with considerable regularity is viewed as normative and he demonstrates what some feel is a general shift in attitude about being observed.

The process of being observed in S&I usually involves the teacher being observed by a colleague or supervisor for one class period and then participating in a review session after the class. Pre-observation meetings, as recommended by Glickman (2002), were never experienced by the researcher in twelve years of teaching in S&I. None of the teachers interviewed in this study mentioned meeting with a colleague or principal prior to the observation to discuss lesson objectives or teaching goals the teacher was trying to accomplish during the class. Only one teacher, Dave, reported that his principal asked him for a lesson plan before every class that the principal would observe. Alan summarized what most of the interviewed teachers in this study felt about the general purpose of these observations, whether by colleagues or supervisors, “it’s always good to
get that extra pair of eyes… I don’t have a problem with someone coming in and saying, ‘You know, here’s what I saw.’ I think it’s great.”

There are several things to report as far as the how teachers perceive the impact of this reflective practice on their professional development. Table 4.2 shows how teachers in the survey reported the impact of being observed by colleagues and supervisors. Overall, teachers seemed to have a positive view of the impact of being observed on their professional development. Here’s how two teachers reported that impact during the interviews:

Alan: As I am learning to see my blind spots in teaching I am grateful for colleagues and supervisors that are willing to be kind and candid with me, I cannot improve my teaching and overall effectiveness in the classroom without that help.

Carl: There is value, that’s all I’m saying, there’s value to that. There’s value to that reflecting as to ‘how I can become better. What are the things I can do to become better? Please come in and look at some things that I can be better. I want to think about that.’

As alluded to by Alan with the words “kind and candid,” Evan reported that the relationship between the observer and the teacher being observed is a key to the success of this activity—whether the observer is a colleague or a supervisor.

Researcher: Tell me about being observed in a classroom. When somebody comes in and observes you… how effective is that? Is that very helpful for you as a teacher?

Table 4.2

Perceived Impact of Being Observed by Others on Professional Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observer</th>
<th>Very impactful</th>
<th>Somewhat impactful</th>
<th>Not very impactful</th>
<th>Not impactful at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evan: Depends on how I feel about the person giving me the feedback.

Researcher: What do you mean?

Evan: If you respect the person, trust him and like him, then the feedback can be awesome. If you don’t like the person, if you don’t trust the person, then you just ignore it. (laughter) Generally, right? At least for me, and I don’t think I am that odd in that area. I think, generally, if we respect the person and if we trust them, then the feedback is very beneficial. I don’t think I am the only one that if I don’t like the person—either if I don’t like them which…I guess that is my personality you know—I should like everybody. But, you know, if you don’t like them, or trust them, or respect them then…

Evan trailed off with a shrug. His implication was that without a positive, trusting relationship between the observer and the teacher, the impact of this reflective activity would fall in the “not impactful at all” category. In other words, it is critical for observers and teachers to understand that the success of observation as a reflective exercise depends on more than just following a format for the process—the relationship between the observer and the teacher can be fundamental to the impact of this reflective activity.

Dave reported one thing that he does to try to maximize his experience of being observed and receiving feedback from others:

I have a file on my computer that whenever I’ve gotten feedback from someone I just try and keep it there in a place where I can jump back to it and see….I look at kind of the feedback on my [teaching]; four people have come and observed me and they’ve all said the same thing, so obviously I need to work harder. Or, if it’s like, maybe it’s the same topic, but is it going deeper? So am I progressing? But it’s learning. So that’s one of the big things for me.

This kind of deliberate thinking about teaching with a view to its improvement represents one way that teachers could get the most out of being observed and getting feedback as part of their professional development efforts.

Another reflective practice that seemed to be focused on eliciting technical
reflection was having lesson plans reviewed. This would consist of a teacher having another person review and give feedback on lesson plans. As a teacher who had never had a colleague or supervisor ask to see his lesson plans in 12 years of teaching seminary, the researcher was surprised by the results in the Tables 4.3 and 4.4 that show both the frequency and perceived impact of this practice as reported by the 48 teachers in the survey. When compared with results from Table 4.2, the data from these two tables seemed to suggest that teachers actually had their lesson plans reviewed more regularly and felt that it had a greater impact on their professional development than being observed by the same type of individuals. While this could have indicated a major shift in evaluative and reflective practice among seminary teachers, the data gathered from the interviews did not support this conclusion. As mentioned earlier, Dave was essentially the only teacher among the six interview participants who reported how the process of

Table 4.3

*Frequency of Lesson Plans Being Reviewed*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewer</th>
<th>At least weekly</th>
<th>2-3 times/month</th>
<th>At least monthly</th>
<th>At least quarterly</th>
<th>1-2 times/year</th>
<th>Less than once per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4

*Perceived Impact of Lesson Plans Being Reviewed on Professional Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewer</th>
<th>Very impactful</th>
<th>Somewhat impactful</th>
<th>Not very impactful</th>
<th>Not impactful at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
having one’s lesson plans reviewed could be helpful for promoting reflection and impacting professional development.

To see how this could be done, here’s how Dave recounted his experience working with his principal to review his lesson plans, which shows how reviewing lesson plans could have a significant impact on professional development:

When he observes me, he’ll always ask for my lesson outline. It’s just little messages that he sends. He’ll always ask for my lesson outline. And there was one time that I didn’t have it. And it was a little embarrassing, but he didn’t go, “Oh, that’s OK; no problem” and go off, which is easy to do in that situation because you want to make the person feel comfortable. He just looked at me and he said, “Will you just make sure that you always have a lesson outline? I know that you know what to teach, but I promise it will bless you.” And then he taught me why. And so I’ve always made sure that I have one like that.

Notice how Dave’s principal used the lesson plan review in conjunction with the observation. Next, note how this process helped Dave see the importance of having a lesson plan:

Researcher: When you give your lesson plan to your principal and he looks over it, how is that helpful for you?

Dave: It makes my crystallize what I’m teaching in the sense that I have to sit there and say, if there’s anything that I could have [the students] walk away with, this is it. It forces me to say, this is the principle that I want to bring out. If they bring out a different one, that’s perfectly fine. But this is the one that I’m trying to get to that I feel the Lord wants me to get to, as opposed to walking in there and just saying, “I know it, but I can’t say it.” If I can say it, and write it down and refine it a couple times, and that’s really good to have someone else look at. But it also does something where you have to hand it to someone else and say, Am I right doctrinally? Where if they look at it and say, Are you sure about this? You might go, I don’t know. Am I? So I think that’s really beneficial to make sure the lesson goes better, and the students experience with it goes better.

Finally, notice how this approach helped Dave see the tandem relationship between the lesson plan and the observation as having an impact on his professional development:
I think when your classroom is observed, it does a lot of the same things, but it helps you then know how to take that lesson plan and more efficiently allow the students to learn it. Or learn what they need to learn. So if the lesson plan is a tool, the classroom observation is basically someone helping you better ways to learn how to use that tool—how to hold the hammer, if you will, so you don’t get kind of rattled as you hit the wrong part, or smack your finger. But having them in there is really nice because if you have that lesson outline reviewed and stuff, you go in there more confident….But it also allows whoever’s observing to look at something specific and give you specific feedback. So I think it’s [i.e., being observed] a refining process, whereas the first one [i.e., having lesson plans reviewed] is foundational.

In contrast, Alan, Carl, and Bruce all reported that they did not feel that having someone review their lessons plans would be very impactful on their professional development because there was usually not a close correspondence between what was written on the lesson plan and what actually happened in the classroom. It would be interesting to see if an experience like Dave’s would make any difference on their perception of the value of having lessons plans reviewed.

So why did the survey data concerning having lesson plans reviewed differ so drastically from what was reported in the interviews? After all, Gary reported that he had never had anyone ask to review his lesson plans in all of his years of teaching seminary. Bruce commented that while he thought this process might be helpful, it was not something that he had ever seen done regularly on any faculty he had been a part of. Evan also reported that no one ever, or “hardly ever,” asked to see his lesson plans. He surmised that he would feel “insecure” and “uncomfortable” about doing that.

After carefully reviewing all the data, it would seem that most of the teachers in the interview viewed collaborative lesson planning with colleagues and principals as the same thing as having their lessons reviewed. Collaborative lesson planning usually occurs when teachers get together during lunch, during a common preparation period, or after
school to prepare lessons together. Alan reported another way that this might be done. His principal does a preparation period once a month with each teacher on their faculty where they prepare a lesson together. Alan, Bruce, Carl, and Dave all reported being involved with—or having the opportunity to be involved with—faculty-wide collaborative lesson planning. Gary reported that he would frequently get together informally with members of his faculty and compare their lesson plans, or notes, with each other to get new ideas for teaching. This practice and its impact as a reflective activity on professional development will be discussed in greater detail in the section on dialogic reflection. In this case, the qualitative data helped to clarify the survey results and prevent the researcher from coming to false conclusions about the data concerning having lesson plans reviewed.

The final major practice regarding technical reflection to be discussed in this section emerged from the qualitative data collected for this study. As mentioned earlier, this code came from Gary, “lesson correction reflection.” Lesson correction reflection described the way teachers thought about how they should do the lesson differently the next time they taught the lesson to another class, or how they could improve generally on teaching skills that they had used in the class they just taught. It may have had to do with changing an activity, asking a different question, reorganizing time management, or pursuing a different topic in the lesson. This kind of technical reflection was thoughtful and usually led to other kinds of reflection. In other words, a very good question for an instructional leader to ask a teacher in S&I to get them to think about the technical aspects of what they did would be, “What would you do differently next time?” This question encourages them not just to report about “how things went,” but it encourages
them to evaluate whether they thought what they did was effective or if it could be done more effectively somehow in the future.

When the seminary teachers interviewed for this study engaged in “lesson correction reflection,” the four most common codes that described what they reflected about were: evaluating student participation in seminary, thinking about the need for classroom discipline, thinking about lesson pacing, and evaluating student acquisition of religious education learning skills. When teachers evaluated student participation in seminary within the frame of technical reflection, they most often just talked about whether or not students participated during the lesson without any explanation as to why the students should participate in class or what their participation should or might have accomplished. It is no surprise that the most common code for technical reflection was “evaluating student participation in seminary.” Since the TLE was introduced in 2003, teachers and administrators at every level have emphasized the importance of student participation and involvement in the classroom. However, the implied assumption behind the data for this code seemed to be that student participation was inherently good or desirable or indicated a successful class—regardless of the substance of the participation.

When asked after observations to evaluate their own classes, one of the first comments teachers made would be something like these from two of the interviewed teachers in this study:

Teacher #1: But that class likes to share – they will just talk to each other. And so that is a good challenge…

Teacher #2: There was so much class discussion, I barely said anything….The participation was what I was hoping for…. Class participation was really good.

This assumption can also be seen in the following statement where another teacher talks
about increasing student participation as if increasing the quantity of students who vocally participate is a key indicator of a successful lesson:

Teacher #3: I’d always like to hear from more individual students. I probably had, I don’t know, somewhere around 40% of my class that vocally shared something. But you know, you’d always like to get that higher.

That is not to say that teachers reflected only about the number of students that participated in class. Carl demonstrated how some teachers also reflect about which students are participating in class:

The discussion I felt was a good discussion, but even having said that, sometimes the problem is that it’s the same hitters. It’s the same five or even ten that are making the comments while there are others who are less prone to make those comments.

Still, all of these comments focused on what was perceived to be the inherent value of student participation in and of itself. This was technical reflection because teachers did not reflect about the quality or purpose of the participation. More will be said about this when discussing the same issue of student participation in the section on descriptive reflection.

That “classroom discipline” would be the second most frequent code within the framework of “lesson correction reflection” is also no surprise. One factor that may contribute to the frequency of this code might be the TLE, in which teachers have been charged with the responsibility to “create a learning environment of love, respect, and purpose.” Teachers talked about various aspects of classroom discipline such as tardiness, not participating in the lesson, being disruptive, not being “on task” during activities or assignments, or “going off on tangents” during the lesson—i.e., not being focused on the subject matter. They talked about how they handled these challenges in various ways
such as raising their voice, calling the students to attention, moving closer to students, talking to them about their disruptive behavior, or even ignoring the behavior in the hopes that it would go away or not escalate into a larger problem. At the level of technical reflection, all of this was discussed with a “classroom management” mentality.

But there were three teachers who occasionally took their discussions about classroom discipline to the critical reflection level and considered the purpose and effect of classroom discipline on students. (Because this is only a minor code in the critical reflection data, it will be discussed here.) One teacher said that the “whole goal” of his approach to discipline with students was “to help them be aware of the problem…and then usually people want to come back [i.e., pay attention].” There seem to be two assumptions here about students: (a) students want to focus in class, but sometimes get distracted; and (b) students will respond reasonably when approached reasonably and respectfully. A teacher who approaches discipline issues with these assumptions will approach those classroom challenges differently than someone who does not have these assumptions.

Another teacher spoke about the effect of classroom discipline on students by discussing the impact of his approach with students in discipline situations:

I think sometimes we’re harsh when we don’t have the spirit of love. I can be direct; I can be, if I have to, you know, sharp. But I can still do it with love and kindness and with a smile. And maybe in the last two and a half years, maybe that’s one of the best things I’ve developed is a way to do that in a way that is kind and Christlike. And that has a wonderful carry-over.

This teacher is looking beyond the immediate purpose of classroom discipline to the long-term impact of that discipline on the student. Another teacher looked at how a
teacher’s overall approach to discipline can affect the environment of the classroom:

There’s a fine line between—you know, you can intervene, but if you focus on it so much, the teacher almost becomes a distraction and an irritant to the Spirit, especially if I get irritated by it. And the students can sense that. But on the other extreme, you can’t just let it go.

In all three of these statements, teachers reflect about not just the immediate impact of classroom discipline on the level of technical reflection (i.e., get the students to follow the rules or expectations), but they also engage in thinking about the long-term ethical, social, and possibly spiritual effects of their behavior on their students.

Another area of “lesson correction reflection” that teachers brought up in almost every interview was their management of classroom time. They were concerned about whether they had spent too much time on announcements at the beginning of class, or on one part of the lesson over another part of the lesson. They wondered if they had given students enough time to participate or to think or to reflect in class. This seems like a typical concern for all educators—not just religious educators. There never seems to be enough time to teach everything or do everything that one would like to do in class. The one finding from the study that was of interest to the researcher was that this was something that every teacher (except Carl) brought up in their post-observation interview, and usually very early on in the interview when asked to reflect generally about the lesson they had just taught. And all of them talked about how they did not feel like it was something they handled very well. It almost seemed as if this was something safe that they could criticize themselves about to begin the evaluation session.

Finally, the last significant segment of data related to “lesson correction reflection” was whether or not teachers felt like their students had acquired religious
education learning skills during the lesson. Bruce and Carl tended to use their professional growth plans or other goal-setting mediums to set goals about students acquiring scripture study skills or other religious education learning habits—such as being able to memorize scriptures or be able to identify doctrines or principles within a text. Bruce commented that at the end of every year, he generally came away wishing he had “trained them better,” possibly implying that he hoped that he was equipping with the necessary skills and aptitudes to continue learning in religious education contexts outside of his classroom. However, teachers never mentioned any formal means for evaluating whether they had accomplished this objective. The S&I Information Services division had just begun to introduce such assessment tools to the field in 2010, but none of these teachers mentioned using these newly developed tools. The researcher observed only one instance of what might be called a “skill focused evaluation”—Dave’s instructional leader’s diagram of his classroom participation by student.

In summary, the survey and qualitative data tell us several useful things about technical reflection among seminary teachers in S&I. From the survey data, we can see that teachers are observed regularly and have an overall positive attitude about the impact of this practice on their professional development—if they have a positive relationship with the person observing them. Because of the clarifying evidence from the qualitative data on lessons being reviewed, we can also surmise that many teachers are not having their lesson plans formally reviewed, but we did see one possible way—in the example of Dave and his principal—that this was done that could be impactful for many teachers. Both of these practices, being observed and having lesson plans reviewed, can lead
teachers to valuable forms of technical reflection whereby teachers reflect the happenings within their classrooms.

Table 4.5 summarizes some of the qualitative data from observations, documents, and interviews that help us better understand technical reflection practices and processes among the teachers in this study. The survey rating is the rating they were given by the researcher based on preliminary data on technical reflection collected from the survey. The individual mean from qualitative sources represents the percentage of the total data from each interviewed teacher for this level of reflection. For example, 7% of all the qualitative data (observations, interviews, and documents) gathered from Alan was coded as technical reflection. And the subsequent lines represent some of the significant codes that emerged from the data concerning technical reflection.

Table 4.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Alan</th>
<th>Bruce</th>
<th>Carl</th>
<th>Dave</th>
<th>Evan</th>
<th>Gary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey rating</td>
<td>High Med</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Med/High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual mean from qualitative sources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating student participation in seminary</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about the need for classroom discipline</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about lesson pacing</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Lesson correction reflection”</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating student acquisition of religious education learning skills</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 4.5, and the previous discussion, we can see that when the seminary teachers interviewed in this study engaged in technical reflection, student participation was the event or occurrence with which they were most concerned or had the greatest interest. When teachers talked about student participation as an end in itself without any explanation as to why the participation was important or evaluating whether or not the participation was necessarily substantive, this represented evaluating student participation at the level of technical reflection. (Remember, more will be said about this in the next section on descriptive reflection.) Various facets of “lesson correction reflection,” including evaluating classroom discipline, use of classroom time, and whether or not teachers felt that students demonstrated or seemed to be acquiring religious education learning skills, were also key components of the technical reflection of teachers in this study.

Overall, technical reflection actually represented the least amount of qualitative data in this study, only approximately 16% of the total data. Technical reflection codes were also the least diverse, meaning that technical reflection among the seminary teachers in this study seemed fairly homogeneous—they all tended to reflect on the same types of issues or problems. This should probably come as no surprise since technical reflection is the least complicated form of teacher reflection; as the levels of reflection become more complex, the diversity of practice within that code increases—i.e., the number of codes that occur in the data increase (Techical-9; Descriptive-17; Dialogic-20; and Critical-27).

Finally, when the researcher began this study, he surmised that technical
reflection would most often lead into descriptive reflection. It seemed to be a logical assumption that as teachers reported what happened, they would naturally move on to discuss why they thought it had happened or to offer an explanation for a decision they made in the classroom. However, the data indicates that progression from technical to descriptive reflection is not a “natural” occurrence in the reflective processes of most teachers. By just examining the pre-observation interviews, the researcher identified 14 segments of technical reflection in the six interviews. Surprisingly, eight of these segments were followed by segments coded as critical reflection; two more were followed by segments of descriptive reflection; one more was followed by a segment of dialogic reflection; and the remaining three segments of technical reflection were terminal, meaning they were not followed immediately by any other level of reflection.

Generally, the teachers jumped from technical reflection to whatever kind of reflection they seemed to favor next. So Bruce and Gary were most likely to go from technical reflection to critical reflection. Evan’s technical reflection segments in his pre-observation interview were all terminal (as were 12 of 14 technical reflection segments in his post-observation interview), indicating a general unwillingness to engage in deeper levels of reflection, as mentioned earlier. However, the fact that teachers only went from technical reflection to descriptive reflection twice may suggest that these professional religious educators were not adept at or inclined to connect their “theories in use” (Argyris & Schön, 1974) with a particular rationale. Descriptive reflection, as will be discussed in the next section, is the level of reflection where teachers are most likely to close the gap between “theories in use” and “espoused theories”—and these teachers
were not as inclined to follow that pattern.

The fact that they generally engaged in some other level of reflection after technical reflection could possibly indicate that these teachers were willing to or trying to consider connections between classroom behaviors and decisions with larger issues, but these generally came as a result of prompts from the interviewer, and it cannot be determined from this study whether teachers would have independently gone from technical reflection to other levels of reflection entirely on their own. However, it can be surmised that teachers who are “stuck” in technical reflection that never leads to other levels of reflection will stagnate in their professional development, as posited by Korthagen (2004). Without any inclination to consider the rationale behind their actions, teachers cannot evaluate whether their behaviors are effective or ineffective, good or bad, successful or unsuccessful—or if there is any way they might do things differently or better. Fortunately, none of the teachers interviewed in this study seemed to fit that description.

**Descriptive Reflection: Practices, Processes, and Impact**

Hatton and Smith (1995) defined descriptive reflection as “analyzing one’s performance in the professional role (probably alone) [and] giving reasons for actions taken” (p. 45). Teachers who engage in descriptive reflection are evaluating their own decision and actions and then actively “seeking what is seen as ‘best possible’ practice” (p. 45) in their field. The most common codes for descriptive reflection were: writing as teacher reflection practice, evaluating student participation in seminary, reconsidering emphasis on students over content, and planning for student analysis/reflection. This
section focuses on demonstrating what descriptive reflection looks like in S&I and analyzing how teachers perceive this kind of reflection as having an impact on their professional development. However, before proceeding to a discussion of each of these codes and the practices, processes, and impact of those reflective activities, this section will first borrow a phrase from the technical reflection section, “lesson correction reflection,” and consider how teachers engage in this same practice but to accomplish different purposes under descriptive reflection.

When teachers engage in “lesson correction reflection” at the level of descriptive reflection, they are doing more than just reporting on their decisions and actions in the classroom, they are connecting what they did with why. This kind of reflection could only come out in the qualitative data sources for this study since the survey did not ask these kinds of open-ended questions due to time restraints imposed by the S&I Executive Research Council on the length of the survey.

The overall practice of descriptive “lesson correction reflection” occurs in much the same way that it does in the technical reflection level—the teacher thinks about and evaluates his decisions and actions during class. A teacher might do this between classes, during a lunch break, during a preparation period, on the drive home, or whenever he has time to reflect on a particular classroom experience. Because writing will be discussed as a separate practice with its own process and perceived impact, “lesson correction reflection” focuses on when teachers in the study thought or pondered about their teaching experiences.

Regarding the process of “lesson correction reflection” in the descriptive level of reflection, one of the ways teachers do this is by evaluating their classroom performance
against personal teaching goals. For most of the teachers in this study, these goals are not
directly or explicitly correlated with the general instructional objectives of S&I, such as
the Objective or the TLE. Sometimes these personal goals are fairly vague. For example,
Alan said that he had a goal to “teach the Atonement more this year,” but after the
observation all he could say about whether he had accomplished that goal was, “I didn’t
mention that today. I don’t know why it didn’t come up in either lesson.”

However, some teachers had much more concrete goals they planned to use to
evaluate their teaching performance—even if they were sometimes a bit unmanageable.
Carl had a list of 22 “Questions for Lesson Evaluation” that he shared with me. The
questions covered every level of teacher reflection and were well thought out, but the
number of questions was probably unwieldy for Carl, along with three other teachers in
this study, who all lamented that they simply needed more time to reflect (which will be
discussed in a little more detail in the section on critical reflection).

Evan actually had one of the most reasonable approaches to evaluating his
performance in the classroom against personal teaching goals. He had five goals that he
tried to accomplish with every lesson: (a) “two really good, high quality questions”; (b)
“at least one Scripture Mastery cross-referenced” (Scripture Mastery is a seminary
program that aims at helping students find, memorize, and understand a list of specified
scripture passages); (c) “at least one quote from an apostle”; (d) “one strong journal
entry”; and e) “something fun.” As Evan walked through a quick evaluation of the lesson
he had just taught and evaluated whether he had accomplished each goal, it was apparent
that this was a process that gave him an opportunity to honestly evaluate himself and feel
a sense of success and identify ways to improve. This kind of descriptive reflection
certainly encourages positive professional development, but runs the risk of planning lessons that accomplish teacher goals instead of student learning outcomes or institutional objectives.

Another way that teachers engage in descriptive “lesson correction reflection” is by evaluating student acquisition of religious education learning skills during a lesson. In technical reflection, the teacher only comments on whether or not a student was learning to “make a list in the scriptures” or “use the study aids.” However, in descriptive reflection, a teacher actually considers the reason that it would be desirable for a student to acquire a particular religious education learning skill. For example, after Evan described the Scripture Mastery program at his seminary, he said, “It is very much driven with the idea of helping [the students] become effective at and confident in their ability to discover principles of truth. Scripture Mastery provides excellent opportunities for them to practice that skill.” This kind of reflection can be as simple as one of Alan’s goals in one of his Professional Growth Plans, “I will teach students scripture study skills that will expand their vision of what the scriptures can do for us” (emphasis added). While the outcome in this statement could possibly be made more specific, this teacher is demonstrating that he has a vision of what he is trying to accomplish. Being able to articulate that vision, Korthagen suggested, is one factor that makes it less likely that unexpected “gestalts” (regressive behaviors based on previous experiences that nullify a teacher’s professional preparation or otherwise interfere with the application of espoused theories—see Korthagen, 2004, p. 81) will interfere with or prevent the teacher from connecting his mission with his classroom behavior. That could lead to teachers developing “hybrid theories of practice” that bridge the frequent chasm between
“espoused theories” and “theories in use” (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

One other aspect of their teaching that professional seminary teachers in this study considered when engaging in descriptive “lesson correction reflection” was whether or not they felt like they had sufficiently taught the context of the scripture text they were teaching that day in the classroom. Context could consist of historical background, authorial intent, or other information that helps students better understand the text. Although this was not a major code in the descriptive reflection data, it was significant in that five of the six teachers brought this up in a descriptively reflective way. It was important to them because, as Dave put it, they believe that “more power comes when you teach within context.” It is also significant that teachers mentioned this because it is one of the seven fundamentals of the TLE. Thus, it is an indicator that teachers do think about whether or not they are accomplishing institutional goals and objectives during their classroom teaching.

One final example of how teachers in this study engaged in the process of descriptive “lesson correction reflection” was by thinking about whether they were in harmony with the curriculum produced by S&I for the course. Only half of the teachers mentioned this in their descriptive reflection. But Bruce, one of the more experienced teachers in the study, felt that he actually turned to the curriculum more and more the longer he taught, “…a lot of times I’ll actually use something right out of there. Or it’ll at least springboard my mind in the direction I want to go, which is great.” Gary, the other teacher with the most years of experience in this study, also felt that being in harmony with the curriculum was helpful for giving him ideas and direction in his lessons. But it was Dave who articulated the most clearly why he felt that teachers needed to be in
harmony with the curriculum.

So I read the scriptures, read the lesson materials from curriculum, read the student manual, read as much as I can get to—read even the institute student manual. Just anything that is correlated material on it, because I think that a lot of times the revelation has already been given for what lesson needs to be taught, I just need to find it…. Because sometimes you just read the scriptures, honestly. And then I like to use the curriculum as a touchstone to make sure I’m in line.

Dave explained how the decisions he made during preparation time, which obviously influences what he teaches in the classroom, relates to his use of the curriculum as a tool to be “in line” with the teaching objectives that he believes are important for his students. This is classic descriptive reflection, because Dave is not only saying what he does, but why he does it.

One of the ways that this could impact a teacher’s professional development is by increasing his “professional trustworthiness” (see Skinner, 2008, pp. 99-100). Understanding his own rationale improves a teacher’s “professional trustworthiness” with his students because it assures them, whether consciously or sub-consciously, that their guide in the learning journey knows where he is leading them and has a rationale for what he is doing in the classroom. Taken all together, three teachers also seemed to feel that one of the major results of “lesson correction reflection” was to improve students’ understanding of the content, as Evan explained, students need to be taught “basic stuff that you would think they would know by now…you teach them something that is pretty basic doctrine and they’re all, ‘Oh really?’ So I guess I do see the need of teaching doctrine.” This is one of the major goals of S&I as expressed in the Objective and the TLE, and teachers seem to have at least related personal goals. They believe that teaching the context of scriptural texts and being aligned with the curriculum, for example, will
help them accomplish that objective.

There is one other possible way that teachers could see this kind of descriptive “lesson correction reflection” as having an impact on their teaching. If teachers consider preparing students to teach others as a major purpose of their teaching, as indicated in the Objective (“prepare them to teach the gospel to others”) and in the TLE (“students should…teach…explain, share, and testify”), then Dave’s description below could indicate how evaluating students’ acquisition of religious education learning skills, finding harmony with the curriculum, and teaching context could impact a teacher’s effectiveness in preparing students to teach others.

I think along with just adhering and literally trusting basically the Objective as going into the teach portion of it—just teaching students in a way that prepares them to teach the gospel to others. I don’t necessarily have anything in here…where they teach. I debated on whether to do that, but I felt it might be good to actually give them an example [of someone in the scriptures] who knew their crowd, their audience so well, and taught the way that the Lord wants. So kind of looking at it almost as “here’s how Mormon taught”…and teaching that way, picking out the good things that he did, and why he did what he did. So I’m hoping, because there’s so much in it—if there’s any tangents that happen, that connection might be made.

A second descriptive reflection practice that promotes teacher thinking about why they do what they do is writing activities. The survey addressed a couple of practices in which teachers might engage in the course of their professional development. When 48 teachers were asked how often they “write reflectively about what they have gained from” observing other teachers, 25% reported doing this quarterly, and another 35% reported doing this at least once or twice each year. However, 25% reported that they never did this. Thus, one out of four teachers in this study who observers other teachers never writes down anything about what they have learned from that experience. It is not likely
that these teachers will retain much from this experience.

The survey also asked teachers whether they “write about [their] own teaching experiences, such as in a personal journal.” While seven of the 48 teachers surveyed (almost 15%) reported doing this weekly, 10 teachers (almost 21%) reported that they “never” did this. The most common answer for this question on the survey was 1-2 times per year, with 15 teachers (about 31%) responding this way. Again, this indicates that teachers do not have a systematic approach for recording any kind of personal evaluation of their teaching experiences.

But some of the teachers interviewed in this study did present some other ways that teachers engage in the process of reflective writing activities. Writing can be considered a prime way to encourage descriptive reflection because it often invites teachers to evaluate or examine their objectives, goals, teaching experiences, etc. Various types of writing activities can engage teachers in reflection. Teachers can also have different attitudes about these activities. While one teacher noted that he thought some of the writing activities assigned to their area by their area director were “dumb,” the analysis of these documents did indicate that he had done some good reflection at various levels within them—perhaps the largest portion of which was critical reflection. Teachers interviewed in this study had a wide array of ways that they engaged in descriptive reflection in writing:

- Some wrote things down in their scriptures to preserve doctrinal or application insights for personal or professional use.
- Some took notes in “Graduate Scripture Study” courses, area inservices, or other training conferences or meetings of ways they saw they could improve
in their teaching.

- Some kept personal journals in which they recounted lessons that went poorly or well and why they thought those results had occurred.
- Some wrote evaluative notes on their lesson plans.
- Some kept binders with titles like, “The Basics,” in which they collected teaching ideas, feedback from observations, talks from Church leaders on teaching, etc.
- Some also wrote down goals that they wanted to accomplish and tried to review them regularly. (Carl demonstrated how a teacher might amplify the possibility for descriptive reflection in goal setting by writing down “why” he wanted to accomplish each goal he set.)

While this was the highest descriptive reflection code in the qualitative portion of this study, comprising 15% of all descriptive reflection data, all six teachers reported that they didn’t write as much as they would like to and they felt that they could improve in this area—if they had more time to regularly reflect, a constant concern for these teachers.

Improvement in this area of descriptive reflection could yield positive results. Teachers already reported a fairly positive view of the impact of writing as a form of reflection. On the survey, 29 of 47 teachers reported feeling that writing reflectively about what they gained from observing other teachers was either very or somewhat impactful. When it comes to writing reflectively about their own teaching experiences, such as in a personal journal, 28 out of 46 teachers reported that they thought this was very or somewhat impactful on their professional development. Alan reported that he felt writing made him more open to inspiring thoughts and ideas in his teaching. Bruce
reported that writing, and then reviewing what he has written, “kind of gets my mind going” or gives him “a little jump start” with lesson preparation. He also felt that his written (and audio) records of his evaluations of past lessons was “one of my most valuable resources.” Dave reported the often conventional wisdom about writing, “When I write something down…I feel more committed to it, and I remember it.”

The second most prevalent descriptive reflection code in the qualitative data, and one of the most potentially intriguing findings in this study, was the code for evaluating student participation in seminary. Once again, the distinguishing feature of this code from its counterpart in the technical reflection data is that segments of qualitative data were given this code in the level of descriptive reflection only when teachers mentioned why they felt student participation was a positive activity or discussed why it failed to promote their desired outcome for student participation. Admittedly, the findings concerning this code in the level of descriptive reflection are most interesting when compared to material from this code in the technical reflection level, so that is how it will primarily be discussed here.

The code of “evaluating student participation in seminary” is firmly rooted in the TLE, so even if the teachers didn’t mention the TLE when talking about this code, it shows that they have taken this teaching value in S&I seriously and are thinking about its implementation in their classrooms. However, remember that in the technical reflection code analysis table (see Table 4.5), evaluating student participation in seminary led all other codes by accounting for approximately 34% of the technical reflection data in the interviews—double the amount of data from the next highest code. In most of the interviews, it seemed apparent that teachers often talked about student participation as if
its mere presence was an indication of successful teaching, which may lead to errors like Popkewitz (1998) warned about. When evaluating a national teacher education program, Popkewitz claimed that a “teacher educator’s focus rendered the intellectual content (substance) of the lessons inconsequential. Substance was subordinated to pedagogic form and style” (p. 85). He said that this was most likely to happen “when enjoyment became one of the primary objects of instruction.” If “success was indicated by the degree to which students ‘felt good’ about the lesson, and whether they ‘participated’ actively in the lesson and its attendant discussion,” then pupil involvement would replace student understanding of the substance of the lesson (p. 90). Some contemporary researchers have argued that this has taken place in religious education in America, leading to a shallow understanding of the basic beliefs and religious practices among teenagers in America (see Dean, 2010; Smith, 2005). Rymarz (2007) warned about this danger specifically in religious education settings when he argued that “one important reason behind the lack of religious knowledge [among students] is the reluctance of teachers to move beyond the experiential world of students” (p. 62). The philosophy of religious education in S&I, as outlined in the Objective and the TLE, proposes that effective religious learning occurs when teachers strike an appropriate balance between teaching content and engaging students in the learning process.

By engaging in descriptive reflection, teachers may be more likely to ensure that student participation in seminary is accomplishing the purposes of religious education in S&I—for example, giving students opportunities to practice articulating their beliefs so they can share them with others. It should be noted here that the learning objectives of student participation in LDS seminary classes is often different from the student learning
outcomes of student participation in other religious education settings. This can be seen by comparing Brookfield’s reasons and objectives for classroom discussion (see Brookfield, 2008, p. 33) with the rationale behind classroom discussion as found in S&I’s Teaching the Gospel Handbook (CES, 2001, p. 37).

Unfortunately, this code in the descriptive reflection level only accounted for about 14% of the data. While this was high enough to make it the second highest code in this level of reflection level, it was still not nearly as frequent as the same code in the technical reflection level. Thus, teachers are more likely to talk about student participation as an inherently desirable or positive outcome of their teaching, but not as likely to talk about why they want it or what they hope to accomplish with it. Or in other words, teachers may be prone to talking about student participation as the end goal, rather than as a means to other religious education objectives.

But even at that, some of the data demonstrates that even when teachers explain “why” they want student participation, it may not be focused on the highest ideals for student learning. For example, one teacher talked about student participation as a means to merely keep students from being distracted by other things, “they are tired, they’re hungry, they’re there, they want out of here. And so as I am prepping it is like, okay, what is going to get them involved.” Or they might just be getting student participation for the sake of variety, as explained by this teacher, “I also look at how the previous lesson was done. If it was really a ‘read-question-discuss’ type lesson, that we all got into. If the next lesson’s meant to be taught that way, then I do. But a lot of times I’ll look for a little different variety, or if we just, maybe, some different group activity— something to kind of change it up, to keep that going…give them something new.”
Sometimes, though, teachers planned student participation with much loftier pedagogical ambitions. Alan said that he hoped that encouraging students to participate in class would mean “they have to work, and from the work they’ll get something that will help them to be a better person, and help them understand the gospel a little bit more.” Bruce spoke about student participation as a way to help his students improve in an area where he perceived they had a weakness.

I anticipate once they get up there that, as usual, they will…not do it as well as I would like them to do it. I think they’ll struggle, because I’m going to ask for an example, “Can you give me an example of this?” They seem to struggle giving an example of certain principles. And, you know, thinking how that applies. And they tend to oversimplify things sometimes.

Furthermore, Dave explained simply how he thinks student participation has the potential to help students retain what they learn, “if they would have turned around and testified of it, they would have learned to a deeper level, and then I think it’s solidified a little more.” He also gave a great example of how he felt student participation can contribute to the faith identity formation of his students.

[When] students return and report…[and say] “I really had this great experience. We talked about prayer last time and praying more sincerely—here’s the experience I had.” I’ve found that those moments are what inspire [less interested or motivated students] to step up and go, “I want that.” It’s not my experience, because they look at me as the seminary teacher—I’m supposed to have experiences like that. But they look at their friends and say, “You struggle like me—you had that experience.” You know, and then they want to do it.

Finally, Dave also expressed the hope that student participation would lead to students talking about what they had learned outside of class, which would also contribute to their faith identity development, “hopefully students do that as they go and they start talking about it with people. It becomes real to them.” Two of the most prevalent ways that teachers seemed to think that student participation would make a difference for their
students was by helping prepare students to teach others (a descriptive reflection code that comprised about 5% of the descriptive reflection qualitative data) or by promoting the spiritual growth and development of their students (which was the highest critical reflection code, accounting for about 20% of the critical reflection data). Thus, encouraging teachers to descriptively reflect about student participation has the potential to have a significant impact on a teacher’s professional development by helping them to accomplish religious education objectives that are consistent with both their institutional and personal goals.

However, encouraging teachers to reflect descriptively about student participation can be challenging for instructional leaders. This is because certain tools or activities for reflection that encourage descriptive reflection may not necessarily prompt teachers to consider student participation in a descriptive way. For example, while Carl’s “Questions for Lesson Evaluation” document has a high degree of valuable descriptive reflection material, it did not have any data coded as evaluating student participation in seminary. This was also true for Bruce’s first two Professional Growth Plans. Even though these documents had relatively high amounts of descriptive reflection data in them, they did not have anything related to evaluating student participation in seminary at that level of reflection. In other words, just because a mode of reflection—such as a personal goals or evaluation document—might encourage descriptive reflection, it might not encourage reflection in this particular area without more specific direction from an instructional leader.

The two final major codes for descriptive reflection in this study were: reconsidering emphasis on students over content, and planning for student analysis and
reflection. Reconsidering emphasis on students over content reflects a common S&I mantra, “We teach students, not lessons.” Teachers seem to have internalized this in ways that encourage them to genuinely focus on whether or not their students are engaged in the learning process—or at least appear to be—and whether they are striving to pay attention to the needs of their students in the classroom. An example of this was Dave’s comment about being “student-led, Spirit-driven,” which indicates that he wants the ideas, questions, and comments of students to function as a central driving force in the classroom. This code relates to other critical reflection codes such as:

- Promoting spiritual growth and development of students
- Knowing the students’ backgrounds/circumstances
- Considering the purpose and effect of classroom discipline
- Teaching has a positive impact on immediate community
- Being a role model for students
- Evaluating personal feelings for students

Because this code will get more, albeit indirect, attention in the later section on critical reflection via a discussion of these codes, no more will be said about it here other than the fact that this was another descriptive reflection code that all teachers demonstrated in their observations, interviews, or documents. This data also supports one of the two common characteristics of the teachers in this study mentioned near the beginning of this chapter — specifically, their focus on students.

“Planning for student analysis/reflection” was something that every teacher seemed to feel was an important reason behind some of their classroom choices. This is also likely connected to the TLE. Teachers’ comments indicated that this may be one way
that they can help students to understand, explain, and—in a way—testify of doctrines and principles that they are learning in class. If it is not directly explaining, sharing, or testifying (i.e., with another person), it is at least a step in that direction. Alan pointed this out when he talked about a young girl in his class who didn’t talk much in class, but he felt that she was having a successful seminary experience because of how much she wrote in her classroom journal. Their comments indicate that they believed students needed time in the classroom to do this. Over the last few years in S&I, “student journals” have become a widespread teaching methodology. While several teachers reported struggling with finding time to allow for journal writing in class, students are encouraged to take notes, respond to questions, and write personal thoughts and feelings about what they are learning in these journals. So the appearance of this code as a “why” for teacher decision-making in the classroom was really no surprise. Overall, teachers seem to view giving students time to reflect, whether in journal-writing or pondering, as necessary to effective teaching and to student learning, as indicated in this comment from one of Bruce’s Professional Growth Plans.

I will simplify my lessons to allow students more time to develop these skills and implement Elder Widtsoe’s counsel: If you would just take 10 minutes to focus and study on any specific subject; AND THEN (and this is the important part!) spend another 10 minutes pondering that principle and digesting it, you can master that subject or have a good-enough understanding to be competent in that subject.

Gross’ (2010) recent study supported the notion that planning for, or allowing, time for students to reflect may also be related to the critical reflection codes of promoting spiritual growth and development of students (as seen in Bruce’s comment above) or to a less prevalent critical reflection code: allowing room for faithful struggle. More will be
said about these codes in the section on critical reflection.

To begin to summarize what can be learned about descriptive reflection among professional seminary teachers in this study, Table 4.6 presents a summary of the dominant codes for descriptive reflection from the qualitative data in observations, interviews, and documents. From this table and the preceding discussion, it can be seen

Table 4.6

*Descriptive Reflection Code Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Alan</th>
<th>Bruce</th>
<th>Carl</th>
<th>Dave</th>
<th>Evan</th>
<th>Gary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey rating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low Low/Med Low/Med Med/High High Low Low/Med</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual mean from qualitative sources</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing as teacher reflection practice</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating student participation in seminary</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconsidering emphasis on students over content</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for student analysis/reflection</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating student acquisition of religious education learning skills</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating teaching performance against teaching goals</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving students' understanding of doctrine</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering whether students are being prepared to teach others</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating teaching of context in the classroom</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding harmony/unity with the curriculum</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
how “lesson correction reflection” can often lead teachers to descriptively reflect about such things as evaluating students’ acquisition of religious education learning skills, evaluating the teaching of context in the classroom, and how a teacher seeks to implement S&I-produced curriculum in their teaching. This practice can also help teachers to evaluate their performance in the classroom against their personal teaching goals. All of this can impact professional development by encouraging teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses in their teaching and think about how they might improve.

It can also be said that one of the most common descriptive reflective practices among the professional seminary teachers in this study was reflective writing. While teachers engaged in a wide variety of methods for doing so, most viewed this as having an overall positive impact on their professional development and could articulate specific reasons for why they felt that way.

By comparing the technical and descriptive data for how the seminary teachers in this study evaluate student participation in seminary, we can also see that these teachers were less likely to think about the outcomes or impact of student participation than they were to think about the immediate goal of whether they were able to get students to participate in class. This may indicate that some teachers in S&I view student participation as an end in itself rather than as a means to more meaningful student learning objectives in religious education.

Overall, descriptive reflection accounted for approximately 21% of the total qualitative data in this study, making it third out of the four levels of reflection. The 17 descriptive reflection codes were almost double the number of technical reflection codes,
indicating that teachers exhibit more diverse ways of engaging in descriptive reflective practices than in technical reflection practices. However, descriptive reflection codes did not have one code which was particularly dominant—there was only a range of only six points among the top four codes. As with technical reflection, this tendency seems to indicate a more homogeneous approach to descriptive reflection.

The data in Table 4.6 representing Evan’s descriptive reflection merits some explanation. This data seems to indicate that Evan was one of the more descriptively reflective teachers interviewed for this study. However, Evan’s descriptive reflection data accounted for barely more than 10% of all qualitative descriptive reflection data in this study. Evan submitted no documents and had the shortest interview transcripts among all interview participants. Although he contributed to every major descriptive reflection code—except, and this may be significant, the code for evaluating student participation in seminary—the bulk of his descriptive reflection data tended toward the more minor codes regarding descriptive reflection, with only major sections in evaluating students’ acquisition of religious education learning skills, reconsidering emphasis on students over content, and evaluating teaching performance against teaching goals. Thus, Bruce and Dave were the teachers most inclined to descriptive reflection in this study.

When the researcher began this study, he saw descriptive reflection as merely “technical reflection + explanation.” However, closer analysis and interpretation of the data show that descriptive reflection has the potential to play a much more vital role in the professional development of professional religious educators. More than any of the other levels of reflection in Hatton and Smith’s (1995) framework for teacher reflection as a function of professional development, descriptive reflection may have the greatest
potential for linking “espoused theories” with “theories in use” (Argyris & Schön, 1974) and for helping teachers to make clear and effective connections between their beliefs, identity, and sense of mission and their acquisition of skills and competencies (Korthagen, 2004) that will affect their decisions and actions in the classroom. Teachers who find ways to consistently practice descriptive reflection may also have a greater chance for sustained, self-directed professional development because this level of reflection invites them to regularly set, evaluate, modify, and re-commit to professional goals while at the same time challenging them to remember why they are seeking to accomplish those goals.

**Dialogic Reflection: Practices, Processes, and Impact**

Hatton and Smith (1995) defined dialogic reflection as “weighing competing claims and viewpoints, and then exploring alternative solutions” (p. 45). For the purpose of this study, dialogic reflection was seen as the practices and processes by which teachers dialogued with others in “exploring ways to solve problems in a professional situation” (p. 45). This section will begin with an analysis of the reflective practices teachers were asked about on the survey. Following that presentation, there will be a discussion of the most common codes for dialogic reflection in this study, which were: working with the principal; seeking, receiving, and giving feedback to and from others; and being empowered by education, which has to do with how a teacher feels that their educational experience empowers them as a teacher and informs their teaching practice. This section focuses on describing what this dialogic reflection looks like in S&I and analyzing how teachers perceive this kind of reflection as having an impact on their
professional development.

The first dialogic practice teachers were asked about on the survey was how often they “discussed [their] use of teaching practices, skills, techniques, etc. with another person”—a deliberately vague question that just asked teachers to think about how often they felt like they had any kind of conversation about teaching with others. Of the 48 teachers who responded to this question, 35 reported that they did this weekly and 10 more reported that they did this 2-3 times per month. Because these discussions could have included conversations during inservice meetings, participating in an observation (either being observed or observing another teacher), or in much less formal settings, this practice was described by several teachers when they talked about “seeking, receiving, and giving feedback” and “collaborating with faculty to solve problems.” Alan gives an example of the latter in the following extract.

When I go and ask Teacher A a question, then Teacher B will come by and then Teacher C, and Teacher C will come in and pretty soon we’re all discussing whatever question is before us and I feel totally secure that everyone has my best interests at heart. That to me is a massive part of what the Teaching Emphasis should be, and that has helped me be a better teacher.

The vast major of teachers in the survey agreed with Alan’s perspective on the impact of this practice on their professional development. Out of the 48 teachers in the survey, 30 reported that this was very impactful and an additional 16 teachers reported that this was somewhat impactful. Two reported that this was not very impactful on their professional development; there weren’t any teachers who reported that this practice had no impact on their professional development. This data corroborates McConkie’s (1973) conclusion from his study of S&I personnel that informal professional developments experiences
often “did more to improve teaching than the formal activities” (p. 100).

The second dialogic practice that teachers were asked about on the survey was how often they observed other teachers and gave them feedback. The second part of this question was viewed as an important part of “dialogic” reflection—otherwise, a teacher might go in and observe another teacher, and turn around and walk out without any kind of meaningful dialogue occurring between the teachers. Teachers engaged in this practice much less frequently than the first dialogic practice on the survey. Only two teachers reported doing this weekly while another 14 teachers reported doing this 1-3 times per month. The largest portion of teachers, nineteen, reported doing this only 1-2 times per year. Teachers discussed this in greater detail in the interviews when they discussed “seeking, receiving, and giving feedback.”

Most teachers, however, did not talk specifically about the process of carrying out this practice during the interviews. However, in a section of the S&I Policy Manual entitled, “Teachers Visiting Other Teachers” (CES, 2009, pp. 11-78), S&I encourages teachers to observe other teachers as a means of improving teaching. Dave reported how this policy was carried out for him during his first year of teaching.

S&I did the thing where they allowed me to get a sub my entire first year and every month, I didn’t realize this until the last semester, but every month I was able to go for a whole day and observe other teachers. And it wasn’t just to get ideas, it was just to go better understand the process. And I was specifically told by [someone], “Go and give them feedback.” And so it made me actually have to know what to give feedback on. So that was huge.

Considering what the results of this study showed about lesson plans being reviewed, it is not likely that teachers were reviewing each other’s lesson plans as part of this process. It is more likely that teachers were writing about their experience observing other teachers.
While 26 teachers reported that they were observing other teachers at least once a month, 19 teachers also reported that they were writing reflectively about what they learned from their experience observing others once a month. Bruce explained why he thought the practice of observing other teachers was important for all teachers.

Nothing is more effective than, and that’s why I think it’s a great idea, what they are having us do where we go out and look at other teachers. I really do, because, as you well know, even if you don’t do what they do, even if that’s not your style, it just gets your mind going and you see how they do things and sometimes, I mean, it sparks, in many ways I think as, or more productive than a lesson where they sit down and teach a list of principles of teaching—I know those are important, but somehow visually seeing it [helps].

Forty-three out of 48 teachers on the survey agreed with Dave and Bruce that the practice of observing other teachers was very impactful or somewhat impactful on their professional development. This practice may have also contributed to the development of professional unity among faculty and may have also been a way that teachers felt they could collaborate with other teachers to solve professional problems.

The third dialogic practice that teachers were asked to evaluate on the survey and in the interviews was their experience with inservice training. Inservice training in S&I occurs at three general levels: local, area, and global. Local inservices are held by smaller faculty groups that may involve one faculty of a seminary that teaches students from grades 9-12. Or local inservice groups could consist of faculties that combine teachers from a senior high seminary and the junior high seminaries that matriculate into the senior seminary program. Area inservice meetings are held on a larger scale and usually involve seminary teachers from many seminaries in a certain region and any institute teachers in the same region. These groups usually range from about 60-80 teachers in an area. Global faculty meetings are usually provided via satellite or webcasts broadcast
from S&I headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, for all seminary and institute faculty—full-time, part-time, and called teachers. Global faculty meetings were not part of this study—primarily because the nature of these programs does not provide for dialogue between professional religious educators.

Full-time seminary faculties are encouraged to meet weekly for faculty inservice meetings. The frequency of area inservice meetings is generally left up to the area director for each area. Table 4.7 shows how frequently the teachers in the survey reported being involved in local and area inservice meetings where the focus was on improving teaching. Teachers were not asked specifically about local or area inservice meetings in the interviews. None of the interviewed teachers talked substantially about local inservice meetings. Evan and Gary were the only two interviewed teachers who talked about area inservice and its impact. Evan mentioned how much he liked being taught or trained by general level administrators at area inservice meetings. Gary was one of the teachers who reported being involved in monthly area inservice meetings where teachers were encouraged to study assigned material in advance and come prepared to participate in a discussion of that material, most of which was content mastery material covering doctrinal concepts teachers were expected to teach in class. Gary also talked about the

Table 4.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training meeting</th>
<th>At least weekly</th>
<th>2-3 times/month</th>
<th>At least monthly</th>
<th>At least quarterly</th>
<th>1-2 times/year</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local inservice</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area inservice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“summer retreats” in this area where the full-time faculty would meet for a week at a Church-owned camp where they would read, ponder, and “write a lot!” Gary actually spent a couple of years on the training council that would plan these area inservices and retreats.

The vast majority of teachers had an overall positive perception of the impact of both local and area inservice training on their professional development, as indicated in Table 4.8. Evan reported that one of the most valuable functions of area inservice meetings was that it kept the principles of the TLE “in the fore front of our mind and not allowing it to be shelved, so to say: ‘[this] is still something we are working on, we are trying to promote and achieve.’” Gary felt that one of the helpful aspects of area inservice was that it was a time for area leaders to remind teachers of their goals they had set for the year. Of course, this would be most effective in an area, like Gary’s, where the area director held inservice meetings monthly. Speaking specifically of the area retreats each summer, Gary said that it was an experience where “you end up with this something that ends up being…just a great combination of experiences where people walk away going, ‘Wow! It was good that I was away from my family for four days and had this experience.’”

Table 4.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training meeting</th>
<th>Very impactful</th>
<th>Somewhat impactful</th>
<th>Not very impactful</th>
<th>Not impactful at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local inservice</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area inservice</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While most teachers in the survey, as well as the comments from Evan and Gary, confirm the overall positive impressions of local and area inservice meetings as a dialogically reflective experience, four teachers (including Evan, but not Gary) reported a concern about the “fleeting impact of area training.” One teacher, who had experience as a member of the area training council, reported, “I don’t mean this disrespectfully, but I was on training council and I know how hard we worked to make it helpful…all those activities are nice, but hardly any of them, with all due respect, translate into the classroom.” Another teacher confirmed these impressions about the long-term impact of area inservice, “We have our area inservices…As far as reflecting, though, if that’s what you’re looking for, the reflection takes place during that meeting and there is reflection that takes place. But then it stops there.” Thus, while teachers on the survey and in the interviews reported that they felt local and area inservice training had a substantial positive impact on their professional development, some teachers in the interview expressed concerns about the permanence of that impact.

Another activity that has the potential for significant dialogic reflection is the simple act of teachers reading materials of various kinds related to their profession. The survey asked several questions about this practice. The first set of questions asked teachers to report how often they read from materials that promoted, encouraged, or discussed specific pedagogical practices in seminary teaching. Teaching the Gospel Handbook is the official training handbook for all S&I teachers worldwide. “Talks for Teachers,” as it was then called, was a collection of talks from ecclesiastical Church leaders as well as S&I administrators on religious education in the Church. The Teaching Seminary resource is collection of readings on LDS religious education for preservice
teachers that is available for all faculty on the S&I web site. Charge to Religious Educators is a collection of readings on LDS religious education that has been used for both preservice and inservice training, and this is also available on the S&I web site.

Finally, The Religious Educator is a professional journal for both professional and non-professional religious educators published three times each year through Brigham Young University’s Religious Studies Center. Teachers reported how often they read from these sources, as shown in Table 4.9.

Several teachers in the interviews mentioned turning to the Teaching the Gospel handbook as a resource when they wanted to improve in an area of their teaching. Among interviewed teachers, only Gary reported reading The Religious Educator, and he reported that he read every issue “cover to cover.” He reported, “[The] TRE really applies to what I’m doing here. So it’s probably the most helpful.” No teachers reported that they

| Table 4.9 |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| **Frequency that Teachers Reported Reading Material Pertinent to Seminary Teaching Practices** | At least weekly | 2-3 times/month | At least monthly | At least quarterly | 1-2 times/year | Less than once per year |
| Teaching the Gospel handbook | 3 | 8 | 7 | 12 | 14 | 4 |
| “Talks for Teachers” (website) | 0 | 10 | 14 | 12 | 5 | 7 |
| Teaching Seminary readings | 2 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 15 |
| Charge to Religious Educators | 0 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 32 | 7 |
| The Religious Educator | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 17 | 20 |
| Other professional education journals | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 |
| Other professional religious education journals | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 15 |
regularly read other professional education journals—such as *Teacher Education Quarterly*, or any of a multitude of other teacher journals. Only 10 teachers in this survey reported regularly reading other professional religious education journals—most of these were *BYU Studies*, a journal published by BYU on a wide range of academics topics deemed of special interest for Latter-day Saints, but not specifically focused on religious education in any way. Teachers would be reading this journal for content enrichment primarily, not pedagogical improvement.

In addition to reading S&I produced material for improvement in professional practice, teachers also reported that they read some books about the content they were to teach to help them better understand doctrine and the context of what they were teaching in the classroom. Most of the books they reported reading were by well known LDS leaders and scholars. Most teachers were convinced that what they read impacted their teaching. Alan was particularly adamant about how important reading was to the teaching process when he reported his reaction to a colleague who was less enthusiastic about reading as an important part of his professional development.

I’ve got a guy on my faculty who does not read books. Just flat out doesn’t read. And I’m going, “You what?” He says, “I don’t read books. I hate reading.” And I’m thinking, “You are in the wrong profession.” But that’s my personal prejudice, I know. But I’m thinking, “You’re what?” I don’t know if that’s a newer generation thing in CES, but, man, you know what’s that old phrase, “With all my money I buy books, and if I have any leftover I buy food.”

Even Carl, who reported that he did not read very much, felt that reading “cause[s] you to think in ways that you haven’t thought before…reading does impact the way I think. Reading impacts the way I teach.” Carl’s comment shows how reading is a dialogic reflection practice that challenges teachers to examine and evaluate what they do or think
and then adjust their beliefs or actions to accommodate or conform to what they have read. Most teachers felt that reading had a significant impact on their professional development, as reported in Table 4.10. For example, it is worth noting that even though 27 of 48 teachers felt that reading the *Teaching the Gospel* Handbook was “very impactful” on their professional development, only a little more than a quarter of them read from it at least monthly. This may be because teachers were more likely to consult this resource when they are looking for help, and they then find the instruction it contains very helpful. Overall, when teachers read from these materials, they feel that it has a somewhat or very impactful effect on their professional development. However, teachers did not feel that reading other professional education journals or other professional religious education journals was very impactful on their professional development.

Not all teachers felt that most of their professional reading was helpful, however. When Evan was asked about his professional reading habits, he reported:

### Table 4.10

*Perceived Impact of Reading on Professional Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Very impactful</th>
<th>Somewhat impactful</th>
<th>Not very impactful</th>
<th>Not impactful at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Teaching the Gospel</em> handbook</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Talks for Teachers” (website)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Teaching Seminary</em> readings</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Charge to Religious Educators</em></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Religious Educator</em></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professional education journals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professional religious education journals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You notice I don’t have books in my office (laughter). Of course, I argue that most of the books in most offices haven’t been read anyway. They are mainly there for appearance - that would be my argument. I don’t get around to reading a whole lot, I’m not going to lie, other than my scriptures, the Ensign [an official Church magazine], I just don’t have time.

Most of the interviewed teachers felt that reading was an activity with sufficient impact on their professional development that they were willing to make time for it on a somewhat regular basis. Alan and Gary spoke of the importance of reading as a necessary “reservoir” of both content mastery and pedagogical practice material that teachers could draw from when it would be most beneficial for them and their students.

In the qualitative data for this study, the most common code for dialogic reflection dealt with how the teachers worked with their principal. Although collaborating with faculty to prepare lessons, consulting with colleagues to solve problems, and developing professional unity with faculty also seemed to be important to these teachers, the seminary principal seemed to be the key figure in dialogic reflection for the majority of teachers. Both positive and negative examples from the data support this finding.

There was a considerable variety of positive practices that teachers engaged in with their principal as part of this dialogically reflective practice. The most fundamental seemed to be having the principal observe them and give them feedback on their teaching. One of the most impressive examples of this among the teachers interviewed in this study was the example already given in the previous section on descriptive reflection with Dave and his principal. Of all the teachers in this study, Dave’s description of his principal seemed to most closely fit the description of an effective instructional leader, according to criteria that might be used from Glickman (2004), Blase and Blase (2004), or Marzano et al. (2005). However, Alan summarized well what most teachers seemed to
feel about the role of a principal in observing and giving feedback, “A good principal will help you see your teaching and pick it apart in a good way. And will be positive…. Help me fix it. Help me be better. And a good principal will help you be better.” That kind of dialogue helps teachers “see blind spots,” as Bruce put it, so that teachers can see areas where they may be doing well and areas where they may need to improve.

Bruce also talked about how one of the important roles of a principal is to follow through with teachers on their teaching goals. Speaking of how a principal could help him remember the goals from his Professional Growth Plan, Bruce explained:

I think it probably [would] be better to meet [and discuss] it—I hate to say it—at least four times, maybe even monthly. At least a reminder…if you don’t keep it in front of you, it kind of just…I think if I took a moment to think about it, I could tell you most of what’s on there. But that’s not good enough.

Alan reported an intriguing practice that seemed uncommon to the researcher. He reported that once a month the principal at his seminary met with each teacher in his building to prepare a lesson together. He genuinely appreciated the time it took for his principal to do this with him. This practice likely contributed to Alan’s feeling that his principal was “a peer, a friend…a resource.”

While Gary reported that his principal did not do much formal observing or planning and reviewing lesson plans, he appreciated the “open-door” style of his principal, “I know that I can go and sit down in [his] office anytime and reflect about a disruptive student, a lesson that was flat and why, you know, or good things. But he’s a great, great listener.” Gary felt that his principal had created this atmosphere where people wanted to talk and “felt safe” to talk about challenges and problems, as well as to seek ideas from the principal as a trusted instructional leader, not a “boss.”
While some of the teachers in this study felt that working with their principal was a positive dialogic reflection experience, other teachers longed for this kind of dialogic reflection that they felt would be a benefit for them. Evan specifically talked about how he felt the principal could play a more influential role in the use of the Professional Growth Plan with teachers.

Evan: I have worked for CES for 10 years and for most of the time the professional growth plan has been a joke. If it gets done—which is a big ‘if’—it gets done, you normally do it and then no one ever has you follow up on it again. So it’s…

Researcher: So, how impactful has that been for you?

Evan: It hasn’t been.

Researcher: Do you think it is possible that it could be and if you look at that instrument, do you think the instrument is designed well?

Evan: Absolutely. Yeah. But principals have to do a better job. And they don’t—generally speaking. They don’t do a good job either starting the process or following up on it. I am not being critical. They have a lot to do. I had one principal…who was really good at it. We would start at the beginning of the year, he would call you in for follow ups, at the end of the year he would ask you how you thought you did and he would give his opinion on how well you’ve been doing. But you know, that is one out of seven principals. It hasn’t been impactful.

Evan recognized that dialogic reflection with his principal could be a valuable contributing factor to his development through his use of the Professional Growth Plan, but struggles with knowing what to do when he has a principal who seems uninterested, unwilling, or incapable of leading a teacher through that process.

Carl also felt that a principal could be a key contributor to the professional development of teachers and a key figure in their professional reflection, and that he sensed a real loss to his professional development without a principal who was engaged with him in that endeavor.
Carl: …from the principal level [long pause, sighs]—here it’s non-existent. [Another pause] Whereas in the past, at a former location of mine, it was constant.

Researcher: Talk about that difference a little bit.

Carl: The difference was this: My principal was in my room observing on a regular basis. And so I was constantly thinking about how I could become a better teacher. So now that’s…now, you asked about the principal—so that’s what the principal did to help me reflect.

I think that principal here has done it in such a way that he’s left that to us. He say, “you know, you’re grown men, and you can evaluate yourselves and you can try to determine within yourselves as to how you can become a better teacher. You don’t need me to do that.”

Researcher: How do you feel about that?

Carl: You know, it’s sixes. I’ve appreciated it, but at the same time I’ve wanted some direction from an outside source. I was a brand new teacher [at the former location], and that’s a variable you’d might want to consider. I was a brand new teacher at my former location, and so my principal was in there observing me, saying, “Look, you did awesome here. This could use some work”….Whereas now, I’ve been in a little bit longer, and I have a better idea as to what I’m doing. Having said that, it’d be nice to receive some ideas as far as how I’m doing, which would cause me to reflect.

Carl clearly felt that the role of a principal was to help him in a dialogically reflective way to engage in an examination of his own teaching practice, but felt that, like Evan, his principal was unable, unwilling, or uninterested in filling this role for some reason.

Since enough has already been said about the second largest qualitative code regarding seeking, receiving, and giving feedback, further comments on this subject will be reserved until the conclusion of this section. The third largest portion of qualitative data for dialogic reflection is seen in the way teachers discussed how their educational experience helped them develop as teachers and be “empowered,” as Carl put it, in some ways in the classroom. As already mentioned in this chapter, only 7 of the 48 respondents
to the survey (14.7%) reported having a bachelor’s degree in education. However, 42 of
these teachers had gone on to receive master’s degrees, with 24 of these having these
degrees in education-related fields. Educational experience can effectively be argued as a
dialogically reflective experience because education inherently challenges individuals to
modify, adjust, adapt, and change ideas, values, knowledge, and behavior as they interact
with professors, other students, textbooks, and other resources that present new ideas and
differing perspectives.

For example, Alan shared how he felt that one of the classes in his master’s
program on “multiple intelligences” helped him become a better teacher “because I tried
different techniques. I learn differently than the kid that, you know. So it helped me focus
and use a little more variety in my teaching. So that was great.” Alan reflected on
decisions he made in preparation and in the classroom based on principles for seeking
different teaching methods that he had learned in his master’s program. Similarly, Dave
talked about a specific class on adolescent development that talked about the brain
development of teenagers and reported, “Ever since, then, I’m like OK, I teach better
because of that, because I know kind of what to expect, and what not to get annoyed by
[things students do].” Dave’s experience in his master’s degree helped him to reflect
differently about the behavior of his students and alter his disciplinary approach with
students.

Dave also reported how the researching and writing processes of doing an
advanced degree has changed the way he prepared lessons.

I’ve realized if a paper can’t fly if you’re just saying, “Well, I think someone
once said…”—lessons shouldn’t be taught that way either. So it’s helped me to
go back and just have the confidence to research through and find quotes and
make sure everything that I’m teaching is based on and can be tied to something that has been taught. So the research has been really huge.

This illustrates how dialogic reflection occurs when a teacher has an educational experience that causes him to reflect on and change how he makes decisions about what to teach and how he supports that teaching in the classroom.

Evan specifically reported how the “different theories, teaching different ideas, lesson planning, behavioral management” courses made him “a much better teacher.” Evan’s specific program “used a lot of reflection pieces, you know, a lot of reflection writing. I liked it because they give you an assignment that you had to implement in class and then you had to come and reflect upon how it went and how you can improve and benefit. It really was a great program.” Such dialogically reflectively exercises were viewed as having a large impact on his professional development.

Gary, one of only two of the 48 respondents to the survey with a doctoral degree, reported that his educational background had regularly influenced the way he taught. He talked in some detail about he was able to use some educational theories and training in specific teaching situations in the classroom. Overall, teachers felt that education had been a key dialogically reflective experience in their professional development as teachers.

However, Carl articulated one possible concern with the impact of some educational experiences. He reported that right after he had received his master’s degree, he felt a profound impact on his teaching but as time went on, he felt that impact waning considerably, “it’s been pushed further and further into the background and into the distance, less and less—if any at all anymore.” The alarming thing about Carl’s
comments was that it had only been two years since he had received his master’s degree.

Bruce and Gary, who had received their degrees many years before, did not seem to feel this way about their experience. They talked positively about the impact of their educational experiences many years after having received their degrees. Further research would be required to determine if the rigor and intensity of the program, as well as the teacher’s personal investment in the particular educational program, would play into the perceived lasting impact of a teacher’s educational experience on professional development.

Table 4.11 contributes to our understanding of dialogic reflection among the teachers in this study through some of the codes for dialogic reflection among these teachers.

### Table 4.11

**Dialogic Reflection Code Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Alan</th>
<th>Bruce</th>
<th>Carl</th>
<th>Dave</th>
<th>Evan</th>
<th>Gary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey rating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low 18%</td>
<td>Med 16%</td>
<td>Low 9%</td>
<td>Med 9%</td>
<td>Low 12%</td>
<td>Med 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual mean from qualitative sources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with the principal</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking, receiving, and giving feedback</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being empowered by education (teacher)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with faculty to prepare lessons</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading fills the reservoir</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting with colleagues to solve problems</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from area inservice</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing other teachers teach</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
teachers. The data from these selected dialogic reflection codes show that the professional seminary teachers in this study felt that their principal was the key figure in their dialogic reflective practices. Many S&I administrators would probably be pleased that “working with the principal” came in as the highest dialogic reflection code. As the person considered the chief instructional leader in every seminary building, the principal is in the best position to influence the improvement of teaching among seminary faculties. He oversees inservice meetings for his faculty, observes the faculty teaching in the classroom, and has the responsibility to work with teachers on their Professional Growth Plans. He has more direct instructional leadership interface time with teachers than any other individual. Teachers in the study had fairly strong opinions about the difference that a principal could make in their professional development. Working with the principal obviously overlaps with the practice of seminary teachers in seeking, receiving, and giving feedback, which also contributed significantly to their professional development as a dialogically reflective practice. Seeking, giving, and receiving feedback also overlaps with collaborating with faculty to prepare lessons and consulting with colleagues to solve problems. Taken together, the data from these codes comprised 42% of the dialogic reflective data in this study. The seminary teachers in this study recognized that dialogic reflection with an instructional leader and with immediate colleagues on faculty could have a positive impact on their professional development. This correlates with another suggestion by McConkie (1973) that teacher training needed to be “decentralized” in order to be more effective.

The coalescence of these codes helps us understand that while dialogic reflection had a wide variety of minor codes (there were 20 total codes for this level of reflection),
most of the codes showed that teachers felt the strongest positive impact on their professional development relating to dialogic reflection had to do with reflective practices involving their principal and faculty colleagues. And since dialogic reflection comprised roughly 26% of all reflection, the teachers in this study saw practices related to this level of reflection as having a significant impact on their professional development. From the perspective of the researcher, who is familiar with the recent emphasis on observing and being observed, as well as on giving and receiving feedback, this heightened focus on dialogic reflection among the teachers in this study may be a corollary of that emphasis in the professional culture of S&I.

While Alan was rated fairly low in his dialogic reflection on the survey, this may be because much of his dialogic reflection did not correspond directly with dialogic questions on the survey. Alan was the only teacher who reported that his principal would plan lessons with him. He also had a significant amount of data in interviews documents that demonstrated how he felt strong mentoring relationships with other teachers, but this was not something that other teachers talked much about. While other teachers also mentioned collaborating with colleagues to write lesson plans, Alan was one of only a couple of teachers who talked about consulting with colleagues to solve problems in some detail. So once again, the qualitative data was important in that it revealed some nuances about reflective practices that would not have been known by the survey alone.

Evan’s consistent propensity to score low on the reflection survey and then have more data for any given level of reflection during the interviews tended to be because he would spend a significant amount of time during the interviews discussing his views of those practices and explaining either why he did not engage in them or why he did not
see them as having an impact on his professional development. Thus, Evan—who did not
view himself as a very reflective teacher—showed that he certainly had the capacity to be
reflective, but perhaps lacked some kind of impetus in his professional experience that
would impel him toward engaging in reflection or having positive experiences with
reflection. This was especially evident when Evan discussed his experiences reflecting
with the area director—a minor dialogic reflection code—in which he shared some
negative experiences that seemed to have had a lasting negative impact on his
professional development efforts throughout his career.

Professional reading was something that the researcher was particularly interested
in prior to conducting this study. He wanted to know what kind of professional reading
teachers did and how they perceived it as having an impact on their teaching. Teachers
varied widely in how they interpreted questions pertaining to reading in their professional
context. Some teachers considered reading the scriptures and the curriculum as the extent
of their professional reading. Alan, however, read biographies, history, and devotional
literature that he seemed to glean from for teaching. Unfortunately, Gary was the only
teacher in the interviews who talked much about reading in any kind of professional
literature. Most of the other teachers did not do much professional reading; and if they
did, it was mostly for content mastery of some kind. They hardly ever engaged in any
professional reading that investigated larger critical issues, professional research, or
encouraged them to critically examine and analyze their own practice. One teacher
seemed to openly reject reading as a worthwhile or necessary part of his professional
development. However, given the explanation he gave for not reading, his lack of
involvement with this practice had more to do with personal issues than a professional
aversion to reading per se.

Whether it was working with the principal, participating in observations (either observing or being observed), or discussing teaching practices with colleagues in other ways, the teachers in this study certainly felt that dialogic reflection was a way to get “more eyes” on their teaching. Teachers seemed generally willing to admit that they needed help to see areas of their teaching where they could improve in the classroom, but were less likely to have their preparation scrutinized through activities such as having lesson plans reviewed. The teachers in this study certainly saw dialogic reflection between instructional leaders and colleagues as having a major influence on their professional development—or, at the very least, as having the potential have a significant influence on their professional development. More will be said in Chapter V about the value of having “more eyes” on one’s teaching practices as opposed to having a set of “enlightened eyes” (Eisner, 1991) upon one’s teaching practices.

Critical Reflection: Practices, Processes, and Impact

Hatton and Smith (1995) wrote that there are several aspects of critical reflection in which professional educators might engage: (a) “seeing as problematic, according to ethical criteria, the goals and practices of one’s profession”; (b) “thinking about the effects upon others of one’s actions”; and (c) “taking account of social, political and/or cultural forces” (p. 45). They pointed out that teachers might engage in this kind of reflection on their own or with others. The seminary teachers in this study engaged in all of these aspects of critical reflection to some degree. The data also points to the conclusion that S&I teachers have a propensity toward the second of these three aspects
of critical reflection, and that this is a function of the nature of integralist religious education (Lee, 1973, pp. 10-11) and the institutional aims and objectives of S&I.

Due to the nature of critical reflection, it is more difficult to talk about discrete practices and processes of critical reflection. The critical reflection data codes were the most diverse of any group of codes in this study, with 27 different codes. It seems that the more complex the level of reflection, the more nuanced were individual teacher practices within that level of reflection—technical reflection had only 9 codes, descriptive reflection had 17 codes, dialogic reflection had 20 codes, and critical reflection—as mentioned—had 27. So this section will focus on only one specific institutional practice that pertains to critical reflection and then talk about one broad practice—which is more like a general framework—in which seminary teachers engage in professional critical reflection.

The first practice is professional training programs sponsored, organized, and conducted by S&I. Institutional training programs provide the most blatant opportunity for organizations to enculturate its employees into the mission, objectives, and goals of the organization. This practice engages teachers in activities that encourage them to think about their role in the organization, the organization’s role in the larger community, and the impact of the organization and their work in it on individuals and the community. This study only asked teachers about their involvement in three of these programs: Teacher Support Consultants, Professional Development Program, and the current Apprentice Program. The Teacher Support Consultants were a group of “teaching coaches,” appointed by S&I administration, from the early 1980s to the early 1990s who were available as a resource to teachers and administrators for individual consultation.
with teachers. Teachers could contact TSC’s on their own or principals or area directors could refer TSC’s to specific teachers. However, the TSC’s had no line authority reporting to any administrators. Their work was strictly formative assessment and development without any summative strings attached (see Tippetts, 1984). They did not report their work with teachers to any direct line supervisors in any way.

The Professional Development Program functioned throughout the 1990s, and involved a three-year course of professional development training beginning with a week-long course on the campus of then Ricks College (now BYU-Idaho) during the first year and weekend courses during the next two years. The core values of the training were the “principles of edification” and encouraged teachers to incorporate these principles into their personal and professional lives. All seminary and institute teachers employed and hired during this time period were required to complete the PDP training until it began to fade out in the late 1990s (see Haws, 1998).

The Apprentice Program, which began in 1999 and continues to the present, is a 4-year program for newly hired teachers. It consists of several training seminars, lesson preparation practice, peer evaluation groups, and other organized study projects. Each year focuses on giving the teacher practical assignments pertaining to that year’s course of study and providing opportunities to practice and evaluate their performance on their own and with others. Study groups in each area during the summer are usually organized into small cluster groups and led by an experienced teacher from within the area assigned by the area director, rather than someone from the preservice program or the central training services division (see Page, 2000).

Only 30 teachers on the survey responded to the question that asked about their
participation in the Teacher Support Consultants program. Of those who responded, only seven had any actual experience with this program. Two reported that their experience was “very impactful;” four reported that it was “somewhat impactful”; and one reported that it was “not very impactful.” In informal conversations with other colleagues, the overall feeling towards the TSC program seemed positive. However, only Bruce and Gary had been employed with S&I long enough to have had contact with TSC’s and neither one of them had anything substantial to report about the process of this program or its impact on their professional development.

When asked about the Professional Development Program on the survey, 36 out of 48 teachers responded, with 26 (over 70%) reporting that they felt PDP was very or somewhat impactful on their professional development. They reported that it helped them learn “overriding principles” of religious education to get the “vision” of S&I. However, as mentioned in Chapter 2, Haws (1998) found that even though teachers felt that their experience with PDP and the “principles of edification” was positive, he did not see overwhelming evidence that their understanding of these “overriding principles” impacted methodological decisions in the classroom. Only Gary discussed PDP in his interview. He reported feeling that his PDP experience affected him not only professionally, but in his family and in his ecclesiastical responsibilities as well. In fact, he liked it so much that he voluntarily took it twice. However, he did not discuss in much detail how he felt this program impacted him professionally because it had been several years since he had gone through it. He just felt that it helped him incorporate values of religious education that made him more effective in the classroom and made him “a better person.”
When teachers on the survey were asked about their participation in the current Apprentice Program, 21 out of 48 reported that they had participated in this program. Thus, there were some teachers who overlapped and apparently participated in both PDP and the Apprentice program. Seventeen of these teachers reported that this was a very impactful or somewhat impactful experience on their professional development. However, one teacher reported that this experience was not impactful at all. Only Dave reported in detail about his experience with the Apprentice program during the interview phase of this study. He felt that the experience was “life-changing, honestly.” However, he also reported that a couple of problems with the program were some lack of organization at the area level with getting the summer seminars started and also that sometimes a lack of direction, or authority, in the apprentice gatherings led to some contention and confusion among the participants. But overall, he still reported that the experience was very positive and worthwhile.

In general, teachers in this study felt positive about S&I training and professional development programs of this kind. They felt that these programs had a positive impact on their professional development as religious educators—despite occasional challenges or shortcomings. While Alan shared in the overall positive feelings about S&I’s approach to professional development, he also offered one of the most intriguing comments about S&I training programs.

Alan: At the same time, I get the idea that they don’t know what they want yet—totally. I sense it’s still evolving.

Researcher: Why do you get that sense? What gives you that feeling?

Alan: Because it keeps changing.
Researcher: How? Explain. Can you give me some specifics, or examples, or something?

Alan: The Apprentice Program was here, then it’s gone. Now it’s back. Graduate Scripture [content enrichment courses for teachers] was gone, but now they’re talking about bringing it back. And, OK, we tried this, but that didn’t work, so now we need to bring this back. We need to stop doing that.

Alan felt that this instability, as he viewed it, made it problematic for teachers to feel like they had a firm footing on the pathway that S&I was headed. Just when teachers felt like they knew where they were going and what they were supposed to be focused on, Alan felt like changes would come along that would disrupt the continuity of professional development efforts. However, he and all of the other teachers in the interviews spoke gratefully about the time and efforts of S&I leaders to put so much effort into the professional development of their faculty through professional training programs. These professional training programs engage teachers in activities that bring them into contact with institutional objectives and goals, which requires teachers to decide how they will engage with those goals. However, the data from this study was inconclusive as to the actual impact of these programs on the professional development of the teachers in this study.

The second critically reflective practice, or framework, to be discussed in this section is how professional seminary teachers in this study view themselves as professional educators. The discussion of this framework focuses on six elements—or activities, processes, viewpoints, and attitudes—to be discussed in this section, including: literature engagement/immersion; attending professional conferences; professional learning communities (although this is not a term used frequently in S&I); seeking professional growth; organizational alignment; and developing, having, and evaluating
one’s relationship with students and the community. As mentioned earlier, critical reflection is a more complex level of reflection in which teachers seemed to engage in more diverse and individually nuanced ways. This also meant that critical reflection also tied in with the practices of other levels of reflection. The process and impact of these various aspects of this critical reflection framework will now be presented.

The first element having to do with how teachers viewed themselves as professional religious educators dealt with how they approached the professional literature for their field. How teachers engaged with literature related to their profession involved critical reflection as well as dialogic reflection, as mentioned earlier. When a teacher reads, as Carl pointed out, “it changes the way you think.” This kind of reflection as one reads professional literature can challenge a teacher to think critically about institutional goals, about his effects upon his students, and about the relationship of religious education to the larger community. For example, the fact that more than half of the teachers who responded to the survey reported reading from the *Teaching the Gospel* handbook quarterly or less often suggests that they may not feel particularly close to the primary institutionally directive literature. Most teachers in the interview who talked about using this resource talked about using it to get help with methodological practices or problems. They rarely talked about turning to this resource as a way to keep themselves connected with the larger institutional mission and objectives of S&I. This may be due, in part at least, to the fact that the mission, objective, and philosophy of religious education have been articulated in the Objective and TLE documents. Therefore, teachers may not feel as bound to the *Teaching the Gospel* handbook.

Likewise, most professional seminary teachers in this study did not engage
regularly with professional literature, even *The Religious Educator* published by BYU. In many other educational fields, professional literature is a venue where teachers can stay abreast of “best practices” and learn of research that can inform practice and professional decision-making. The professional seminary teachers in this study did not seem to see the value for such literature in their practice.

The literature that teachers tended to engage in the most involved messages from Church leaders that would most likely relate to the most frequent code from the critical reflection qualitative data in this study: promoting spiritual growth and development in students. Teachers who engaged in this form of literature immersion may be focusing a great deal on “thinking about the effects upon others of one’s [professional] actions.” However, teachers who engaged in reading this kind of material and not the kind of literature that might discuss, evaluate, or inform actual practice may only be thinking about promoting the spiritual growth and development of students at a philosophical level without making connections to their actual classroom competencies, skills, behaviors, and actions (see Korthagen, 2004). Thus, teachers may be engaged in a level of critical reflection that involves their “espoused theories” without making connections to their “theories in use” (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

On the other hand, Alan, Carl, and Gary all talked about “reading to fill the reservoir” in very utilitarian ways. They reported reading books, magazines, the curriculum, and so forth with the idea that they were building a database of sorts (in Carl’s case he produced a literal database of stories he could use in class) that would be a fund of knowledge they could draw from to help illustrate or explain concepts to students when needed. This was one way teachers attempted to use reading to have a positive
impact on those they taught, a component of critical reflection. However, it is possible that this kind of reading could be more of a “what works” to keep the attention of students, devoid of a substantive connection to larger professional goals and objectives.

The second element that affects how professional seminary teachers in this study viewed themselves as professional religious educators had to do with attending professional conferences. Up until 2003, professional seminary teachers (along with all S&I faculty and volunteers) had an annual opportunity to attend a week-long conference full of a wide array of classes and seminars on methodology to content mastery to devotionals and other sessions that would have promoted more critical reflection among teachers. With the discontinuance of this conference, professional seminary teachers are usually now limited to 3-5 days of area inservice training during the summer and one global broadcast meeting (usually 2 hours) in the late summer to fall of each year—with the possible addition of one to three shorter global webcasts throughout each year. When teachers were asked on the survey what other professional conferences they attended, they reported that they sometimes attended Education Week (an annual LDS conference at BYU for all members of the Church on a wide array of topics of interest to Latter-day Saints, but not focused at all on religious education) or Sperry Symposium (an annual conference at BYU sponsored by the College of Religious Education, which focuses almost exclusively on content mastery topics).

Gary was the only interviewee to discuss the challenges with attending conferences and the potential impact of attending these conferences. Although he did not have all of the policies exactly correct during the interview (which he later corrected in an e-mail to the researcher), Gary certainly felt that S&I did not encourage or support his
attendance at or participation in professional conferences. He felt that they made it so
difficult to attend that it was virtually impossible for a regular teacher to get to these
conferences, even the BYU conferences mentioned previously—to say nothing of
conferences like those sponsored by the American Academy of Religion, Society of
Biblical Literature, or Religious Education Association. He contrasted this with his
previous experience in another educational field where he was encouraged to attend
conferences and the organization he worked for would pay for him to go to them. Gary
articulated clearly why he felt attendance at professional conferences would be valuable
for professional seminary teachers.

It is difficult to quantify the benefits of attendance at professional conferences,
but some of the benefits to a seminary/institute teacher might include an increase in:
understanding of scriptural content, desire to share insights with colleagues
and students, desire to read more to further understanding and teaching ability,
feelings of professionalism, feelings of refreshment.

Professional seminary teachers in S&I who have never had the experience of attending
professional conferences might not share Gary’s perspective on the value of attending
professional conferences simply because they had not been to any.

The third element of a critically reflective nature that had to do with how teachers
in this study viewed themselves as professionals had to do with developing and
participating in professional learning communities. Regarding professional learning
communities, previous sections on dialogic reflection have already reported on teachers’
perspective concerning inservice meetings and working with their local faculty to prepare
lessons, solve dilemmas, and so forth. However, the survey also asked about a relatively
recent technological attempt at a professional learning community in S&I: the Teaching
and Learning Emphasis Wiki. Of the 44 teachers who responded to a question asking
how often they had looked at the Wiki, almost half reported that they never had looked at it. Five teachers reported looking at it approximately once a month and another five teachers reported looking at it once a quarter. Just over 93% of those who were asked if they had ever contributed to the Wiki said that they had not. It appears from this data that this kind of a professional learning community was not having much impact on the professional development of the professional seminary teachers in this study.

However, teachers did feel that developing professional unity with their immediate faculty had a positive impact on their professional development and helped them to be more effective within the immediate community that they were a part of. Alan shared the following experience that he felt was foundational for the development of a professional learning community.

Faculty togetherness is a massive thing, in my opinion not emphasized enough in [S&I]. I know that when we did the ropes course and took a canoe ride together that really helped me to become more unified and trust my faculty more, which made me want to share more, which helped me to learn more as we shared and learned about the art of teaching, not just being a teacher.

Just as Evan reported that the nature of the relationship between the observed and the person being observed contributed to the impact of the feedback given, Alan reported that the relationship between faculty members was key to having a successful professional learning community. Carl also reported, “I think you teach with greater confidence, with greater understanding, with deeper understanding when you have that unity.” In Carl’s mind, the nature of the professional community of which a teacher is a part has a direct impact on a teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom, probably as it relates back to what Alan was saying about the importance of these relationships for engendering confidence and security that fosters a professional learning environment that can be safe, yet
Within the specific context of religious education, Ramsey (2008) wrote the following about the importance of faculty unity as a factor in the effectiveness of professional learning communities, “each small step breaking down systemic anxiety [perhaps what Alan referred to as a “feeling of competition in S&I”] and toward embracing the stranger in each other is an act of potential transformation, a living participation in God’s plan for humankind.” They continued, “We would all agree that true community, when it occurs, is a delightful gift…. Our seminary families, like our nuclear families, will not thrive without this process” (p. 137).

The fourth element that teachers in this study engaged in when viewing themselves as professional religious educators had to do with how they sought for professional development and growth. The data in this study revealed interesting details about one formal and one informal way that teachers sought for professional development. The formal way that the researcher was particularly interested in was the use of the Professional Growth Plan. This practice has to do with critical reflection in two ways. First, teachers are encouraged to use the PGP in S&I to set personal professional goals that are grounded in the institutional goals of S&I. When teachers use the PGP, they are examining and coordinating institutional goals and personal goals and considering how the implementation of those goals will have an impact on those they teach. Second, when teachers talked about the use of the PGP in their professional development, they discussed the problematic nature of this tool and the approach to using it.

Of the 45 teachers who responded to a survey question asking how often they
used the PGP, 26 reported using it “consistently (every year),” 14 reported using it “pretty consistently (almost every year),” and only 5 reported that they used it “hardly ever, if at all.” Figure 4.1 shows how often the responding teachers in the survey reported that they reviewed their PGP throughout the year. Although most teachers reported using the PGP pretty consistently, most teachers reported that they rarely looked at the PGP after they had set those goals—33% reported that they looked at it only quarterly, and the modal response of “1-2 times/year” was reported by 40% of teachers. Thus, how teachers felt about the impact of the PGP on their professional development is shown in Figure 4.2.

It may be viewed as surprising that even with the infrequent reviewing of the PGP, a large portion of teachers in this study (about 62%) still felt that the PGP was somewhat impactful on their professional development.

Figure 4.1. How often teachers reviewed their Professional Growth Plans throughout the year.
However, teachers who were interviewed during this study seemed to mitigate those results when they described the use of the PGP as much less effective. Gary offered his evaluation of the PGP and its use.

What hasn’t been really all that valuable is that Professional Growth Plan…because again it tends to get filed away and not looked at a lot. Not thought of in every single day’s preparation. What am I doing to really meet these goals today? It could be better. It needs to be, not only used more, but redesigned. And I’m not sure if I have specific suggestions for the redesign. But the instrument, I think, needs to be improved as well as the frequency of use.

Gary followed that up by saying that his principal goes over his PGP with him at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year, and that he rarely, if ever, reviews it throughout the year. When asked how impactful that process was on his professional development, he replied,

I’ve actually had years past where I’ve pulled it out at the end of the year and go, “Whoa. I totally forgot I even wrote that down.” I’ve not gotten any better in that area. Sometimes I don’t even remember making that goal. So I don’t use it very well. I don’t use it often enough. And I think that if there’s something you could share—it would be that area directors, inservice leaders, principals [could be] encouraging the revisiting of that more often.

Figure 4.2. Impact of using the Professional Growth Plan on professional development.
Carl also reported that no one ever reviews his PGP with him throughout the year in his seminary. When asked if he would like them to, he responded that he would like them to review it with him at least monthly, and he explained why.

Because then I’ve got more eyes on it. I’ve got more eyes on me. It holds me to it. With as much as I’d like to say that I can just do it, it’s nice to have somebody to have somebody just—well, you know how it goes with goal setting. If somebody’s there helping you along the way, you’re more likely to accomplish and succeed. But I also understand that a lot of guys don’t want that, so that’s something that our principal struggles with.

This is one of the problematic issues with the PGP that makes this operationalization a part of critical reflection among professional seminary teachers in this study. Carl knows that even if he would like to have a more regular review of his PGP with his principal, he senses that the disunity among his faculty regarding professional development puts the principal in an awkward predicament of not being able to carry out a consistent, unified professional development plan among his faculty without meeting with significant resistance from some members of his faculty.

Evan’s comments about the PGP usage are also relevant here. Though he felt it was “a joke,” he believed that this operationalization had the potential “absolutely” to have an impact on his professional development if used effectively. So while Evan felt that the PGP had the potential to be a useful tool for professional development, he was critically reflective enough to identify the problem with its implementation and suggested ways that it could have greater impact on the professional development of teachers.

On the other hand, there was one teacher who felt that his principal had found a way to make the PGP more impactful for the teachers at the seminary where he worked. Dave reported that his principal had made reduced-size copies of the PGP form and
laminated them so that teachers could make goals and change them from time to time as they felt it was necessary to do so. He reported that the principal reviewed these goals with him quarterly and that he looked at his goals on the PGP “usually every day.” This seemed to be a bit of an anomalous experience among the teachers in this study, but it showed that the PGP could be used effectively by a principal and a faculty who agreed to its use and followed through with their implementation of their plan for its use.

While the PGP represents one way that S&I encourages teachers to formally reflect on personal professional goals and seek for professional development, another informal way that teachers seek professional growth and reflect on their own development as teachers emerged in this study. As the data emerged, it was coded under the heading, “learning from mentors.” These were not officially assigned mentors, but they were other professional educators that the teachers in the study admired and looked to as role models or examples of effective professional religious educators whom they wanted to emulate. These could be administrators or other teachers, and not necessarily religious educators.

Alan reported that early in his career, he had been influenced by several teachers on his faculty who had to “break me in and teach me the basics of being a good CES [now S&I] employee.” This was an element of critical reflection because it involved more than just helping with teaching, but with helping him adjust to the culture of S&I—including the workplace environment, understanding work benefits, and so forth. He also reported that he particularly admired several high-level administrators in S&I because “those guys can teach!” Alan explained how he thought these informal mentoring relationships played into the professional development of teachers, “good teachers in
CES are made. I think they hire potential and what they see, and then it’s ‘shape you;’ it’s the clay. And [after that] it depends on who’s on your faculty and the experience” you choose to have with them. This is an example of critical reflection in two directions. First, Alan is considering how he has been affected by other professionals within the organization. Second, Alan’s perspective on the importance of these relationships will possibly lead him to consider the impact that he has on other teachers throughout his professional experience in S&I.

Bruce mentioned a wide variety of individuals throughout his career whom he felt had been mentors for him including two now-retired, well-known S&I teachers, a current S&I administrator, and a now-retired BYU philosophy professor. He surmised that his development as a professional religious educator was profoundly influenced by the insights and thoughts that they introduced him to in regards to both content mastery and pedagogical practice.

This data showed how these teachers reflected about these mentoring relationships in a way that takes account of “cultural forces” in S&I that have influenced their professional development. They believe these other professionals have had a positive impact on their professional development, and that may encourage them to reflect more actively on the professional development that may come through other relationships that they form throughout their career and even consider how their relationships with other teachers may impact the professional development of others. Another way that teachers might do this is by reading the biographies of other educators or religious educators. Of the 15 teachers who reported that they had read a biography of a professional educator, all 15 reported that this experience had been very or somewhat
impactful on their professional development. Of the 17 teachers who reported that they had read a biography of a professional religious educator, all 17 reported that this experience had been very or somewhat impactful. This may have been one practice in the study with the greatest consensus regarding its impact on a teacher’s professional development, through which they have an opportunity to learn from a professional mentor, even if it was not an intimate one.

The fifth element of how teachers in this study viewed themselves as professional religious educators related to how they sought to align themselves with the leadership of S&I and its institutional objectives. The two major codes in the qualitative data that pertained to this aspect of critical reflection were “aligning with S&I leadership” and “coordinating teaching with the S&I Objective and TLE.”

Teachers felt that there were three levels of S&I leadership that they needed to align with. Starting with the highest level of S&I leadership, the professional seminary teachers interviewed in this study felt a need to be aligned with the ecclesiastical leaders of the Church in implementing what they believed were the directions they received from them through various addresses and training messages from those leaders. Teachers had quotations and definitions from these Church leaders pertaining to seminary and its purposes and processes all over the walls of their classrooms and in their offices. All of the six classrooms observed by the researcher had some message about the purpose or process of religious education from a current Church leader somewhere in the classroom for students to see. Teachers seemed to believe that not only did they need to be aligned with the Church leaders’ objectives of religious education, but they had to have the students aligned with those objectives as well. One evidence that teachers felt strongly
about this alignment with Church leaders as their direction relates to S&I is evidenced by the fact that ¾ of the teachers in the survey reported that they visited the “Talks for Teachers” web site at least quarterly, which contains messages directly addressed to or applicable for LDS religious educators. This resource was reportedly used more than any other single source of readable material available to teachers. Dave reported that he made a special pocket-sized notebook with some of these talks that he felt strongly about as a type of quick review resource for himself. On the survey, the “Talks for Teachers” web site was reported as the second most impactful reading resource for teachers, only slightly behind the Teaching the Gospel Handbook.

However, Bruce reported that one of the problematic issues of this aspect of viewing oneself as a professional religious educator was that

…too often in CES we try to be so obedient that when they come out with something where they say, “Hey we want you to, you know, the Brethren would like you to do this.” You get these guys that want, it is almost as if it’s a…I know that they don’t do this intentionally, consciously, but it’s almost this contest to see who can be the most obedient….And they are clear over here. And of course, everyone hates the pendulum, I shouldn’t say everyone—the leaders seem to hate the pendulum and now, but, with all due respect, there is something there. I don’t think the leaders are trying to do that but it happens…but it does happen down on, in the trenches here. And you get these guys that are way over here and saying, “I don’t ever tell any stories, I don’t ever…” and you think, [hmmm].

Thus, Bruce’s reflection shows that while he, along with most teachers, agree that being aligned with Church leadership in one’s profession as a religious educator is important, there is a potential danger of getting hyper-focused on some principle or directive to the exclusion of other sound counsel and directives from Church leadership.

Teachers also felt that they needed to be aligned with the general administrators of S&I. All of the teachers interviewed in this study seemed to have a favorable attitude
toward the current administration and wanted to follow the directives and training they received from them. However, they also felt that there were some minor problematic areas that teachers had to occasionally work through. Alan and Bruce both acknowledged that while there were some who complained about certain S&I policies or procedures, mostly S&I employees should be grateful and acknowledge that S&I administration did have their best interests and the interests of the organization in mind—even if that meant that not everyone got everything they wanted all the time. Evan recounted how he had dealt with some of these institutional challenges.

You have to be careful you don’t get a spirit of negativity in CES. Sometimes you can feel like you were mistreated or that something didn’t work out like it should have and you get this negative spirit about you…. So I have down here, “I’ll never say anything bad about CES.” So you can tell when I wrote it. “I will stand up for it when others are being critical of it.” I had to put that down because I felt like after those first four years I’d kind of been left with a little bitter taste. Maybe that spirit of negativity was starting to try to creep its way in…. So I try to say that to myself every day. And I think I have been pretty loyal to that statement; I think I stand up for S&I when others are being critical of it or saying things that are negative about it.

The third level of leadership that the teachers in this study felt they needed to be aligned with was their local leadership, including both area directors and principals. Given what has already been said about “working with the principal” in the dialogic reflection section above, this section will focus on the relationship with area administrators. Again, most teachers—even Evan who had reported a previous negative experience with an area director—felt positively about their relationships with their area administrators, even though they recognized that there were sometimes problematic concerns to address.

Bruce reported how he resolved a conflict between a mandatory area inservice
meeting and a Church activity with his local congregation.

I just think that, for example, you know, my stake really needs me to go on this pioneer trek. I’ve been called and charged with a certain thing. It happens to be the week of our inservice—you know, the required week. And, you know, [the area director] and I have a great relationship. But he doesn’t want to give that time off. And I’ve never really asked for time off. I’m not bitter or anything. I understand where he’s coming from.

This didn’t seem to be a major problem for Bruce. However, this is critically reflective because it shows how he was able to resolve a problematic aspect of his profession by having a positive relationship with his area director.

However, Bruce also reported that he sometimes feels that there is some tension between the direction he receives from the general S&I administration and the direction he receives from his area leadership. After talking about how he feels some difference in the way that the general S&I leadership talks about the TLE and the way that his area leadership talks about the TLE, he said:

If I knew that [area director]—and again he is a man that I trust and respect very much—but if I knew he was coming to watch my class tomorrow, I know what he wants. And so I would gear my lesson that way.

Researcher: Because of what you now understand his vision of the TLE is?

Bruce: Yes. Yes! And that’s not meant to be…I just know that at the end of class, I would be kind of like…I just want him to know that I understand what it is he’s…and I use that…I think a lot of those things, don’t misunderstand. I might not have to change my lesson much.

Thus, professional seminary teachers seem to engage in critical reflection when thinking about how they respond to S&I leadership and seem to feel positively about how they negotiate problematic areas of conflict with S&I leadership at various levels.

Aside from feeling an imperative need to be aligned with S&I leaders,
professional seminary teachers interviewed for this study were willing to consider how closely their classroom teaching was coordinated with the S&I Objective and the TLE. Alan wrote frequently in documents about how important it was that he tried to align his teaching with the Objective and the TLE. Dave had the words “Understand and Rely on the Teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ” (from the Objective) in large red letters on the right wall of his classroom. Several teachers had copies of the Objective and the TLE, either in whole or in part, somewhere in their classroom and in their offices. So they seemed to have a commitment to accomplish these institutional aims in their teaching.

However, some evidence from the interviews suggests that this may be a case of “espoused theories” being incongruent with “theories in use” (Argyris & Schön, 1974). For example, when Carl was asked how he thought his classroom objectives for a specific lesson related to the Objective and the TLE, he responded:

Carl: That’s a good question. Certainly. I can see how they can relate. Did they impact my decision? [Some hesitation] Off the cuff, I’d say no.

Researcher: We want you to be completely honest.

Carl: Well, and I would say that generally, I mean I’ve got the Objective right here. I keep this here and everything I do I try to make sure that we follow this Objective. Having said that, was the Objective on my mind at the time that I prepared this lesson? No.

Bruce also indicated that the Objective had not been foremost in his mind while preparing the lesson observed by the researcher. When asked how his lesson accomplished the S&I Objective, he responded:

I think it…I’m trying to think of the Objective—which I did memorize, but the other day they had us repeat it and I mumbled through it [laughter]. I know it. I think it does directly, because it’s helping them to do exactly what the Objective talks about. Maybe not completely, but elements of that Objective. If I were to take out which one right off the top of my head, I don’t know. But as I look at it, I
know that’s…and I read that. Whenever we read that, I think, “Ok—yes, yes; oh, I need to do a little better with that.”

Gary likewise reported that he did not usually consider the Objective and the TLE while he was preparing lessons or making decisions in the classroom.

Maybe this is a valuable comment for you. But this interview is teaching me some things. I honestly, when I prepare a lesson, don’t think, “Is this going to help me satisfy the goals that I have set? Is this going to really meet the overall objectives of CES?”… I probably ought to have this [pointing to the TLE and Objective] and some other things staring me in the face more and then ask myself, you know, “Is this lesson reaching those objectives? Is it doing better than others?”

Carl, Bruce, and Gary all admitted that the Objective and the TLE were not primary driving forces behind the selection of lesson objectives in their lesson preparation, nor did they feel that such a connection had to be explicitly articulated in order to make their teaching effective in the classroom.

However, Dave reported that he frequently looked at the words on the wall, as mentioned earlier, and asked himself if what he was teaching was accomplishing that part of the Objective. As mentioned in the section on descriptive reflection, Evan identified the connection between the Objective and their seminary’s scripture mastery program. And when probed to identify how their lesson accomplished the Objective and the TLE, all teachers could explain how they felt what they had done in the classroom had included elements of these two guiding statements in S&I.

It should also be noted again that “promoting the spiritual growth and development of students” was the most frequent code for critical reflection in the qualitative sources for this study. This certainly corresponds with the core concepts of the S&I Objective and the TLE as examples of the aims of an integralist religious education
program (Lee, 1973). In other words, just because teachers weren’t specifically articulating connections between the explicit language of the Objective and the TLE does not mean that they were not seeking congruence with the basic principles of those statements in their teaching. For example, Alan frequently talked about preparing his students for “successful marriages” (nearly synonymous with helping students to “qualify for the blessings of the temple” in the objective) and “missionary service” (closely related to helping students to “prepare…others for eternal life” in the objective). Dave, and most of the other teachers, likewise talked frequently about helping students to “feel the Spirit” (certainly connected to helping students to “learn by the Spirit” as stated in the TLE). Thus, while teachers may not have felt that they were specifically focusing on the Objective or the TLE as they prepared lessons, they did have a sense of the common values that S&I was trying to promote and they seemed to be earnestly striving to accomplish these measures in their teaching. And they felt that these aims would have a highly positive impact on their students.

In the sixth and final element of how teachers in this study viewed themselves as professional religious educators, teachers shared their viewpoint of their relationship to their students and the larger community of which they were a part. They discussed the impact that they felt they had on students and the community as well as how they were impacted by the dynamics and relationships within that community.

The most immediate relationship that teachers were concerned about, and where they talked about having the most important impact, was with their students. “Promoting the spiritual growth and development of their students” was the most frequent of any
code in any level of reflection in this study. This was not an unexpected result of this study, given the integralist nature of S&I’s religious education program. The questions teachers asked in class—such as, “How is what we’re talking about going to make a difference in the life of a teenager?”—and the moral invitations that they extended to students during class to incorporate the things students were learning in class were strong evidence of the teachers’ intent in this regard.

Whether teachers talked about it in explicit Objective or TLE language or not, as pointed out previously, they were focused on helping students understand scriptural texts in the context of making their religious education a transformative experience that would lead to sustained faith identity development and eventual transition into an adult faith life. Dave said it succinctly, “I’m hoping that there’s enough things throughout [the lesson], that [at] one point something hits the students that they want to actually live better.”

To do this, many teachers felt that it was important to know the students’ backgrounds and lives to help the classroom experience be more meaningful for students. Alan and Gary talked extensively about their efforts to know their students and understand their life situations so they could relate what they were teaching to their students in more personal ways. Alan had an extensive knowledge about the individual lives and family backgrounds of his students and reported that for him it simply meant that, “I need to be a little bit more patient and a lot nicer and a little bit more understanding.”

Gary also reported that his understanding of his students’ backgrounds affected
the way he prepared lessons. As he prepared, he would focus on the content, but he would also think about the background of his students and their current life situations. Then as he planned each lesson, he would ask himself:

Now when I say that, is this going to sting too much? Should I say it a different way? Or maybe, do I need to say it? How can I help the student? Is this going to sting or is this going to help? So I think I’m simultaneously thinking about those things as I’m preparing, you know. And that’s what hopefully prompts which principles, which methods.

Other teachers in this study also reflected on the backgrounds and needs of their students, but Alan and Gary did so in the most explicit ways in their interviews. Professional seminary teachers showed that this type of critical reflection had a profound impact on the decisions they made in the classroom and how they attempted to increase the relevance of their teaching based on what they knew about their students.

There were some other minor ways that teachers considered the relationship between their professional endeavors and the larger community of which they were a part. Teachers in a religious education setting talked about the importance of being a role model for their students. Carl stated this viewpoint clearly, “You take who you are from outside of the classroom, you take that in, you take it in. And the students learn not just from what you say, but what you do, from who you are. And they see that.” Thus, teachers seemed to understand that as religious educators, they had to strive to exemplify what they taught if they were to have an impact on students.

Teachers also thought about the role of parents and ecclesiastical leaders in the process of religious education. Some of the teachers in this study, like Carl, may have had an assignment as a “stake representative,” which gives him the specific assignment as a
liaison between the seminary and local Church leaders. In one of his documents, Carl set specific goals for how he could effectively carry out that responsibility and why he felt accomplishing those goals was important to solving problems at the seminary and helping to increase enrollment and completion at the seminary.

Interestingly, the data in this study seemed to indicate that teachers viewed their relationship with parents and local Church leaders as an almost strictly administrative, or logistical, relationship. They did not talk very much about how the relationship between the seminary faculty and parents and Church leaders could combine to “promote the spiritual growth and development of students.” Only Bruce talked about an instance where the local ecclesiastical leaders had communicated a concern about the moral behavior of local youth to the seminary and asked the seminary teachers to address it in their classes. It would seem, therefore, that seminary teachers want to have an impact in the lives of their students, but they view their role as separate from the role of Church leaders and parents—supportive, perhaps, but separate nonetheless.

However, in some of Evan’s comments about how he felt his work as a professional religious educator could have a positive impact on the larger community, he did say that,

I think most of these kids are so good; they just need that additional witness. They are getting it from home, they are getting it from their priesthood leaders; maybe I can act as just an additional witness of probably what they are already receiving and receiving so well. Maybe I can act as that additional witness.

Alan also felt that one of the compelling reasons he chose to be a religious educator was a personal desire to “make a difference” in the community, “I want to use whatever skills I have or will be given to help others. By teaching, I help others but I also help myself, and
also influence my family and the others around me.”

This discussion of these six elements of how teachers view themselves as professional religious educators shows that the teachers in this study are less inclined to engage in professional literature that could have a positive impact on their professional development—even when they feel that such literature has had a positive impact on their professional development in the past. While most teachers did not think about the impact that attending professional conferences could have on their professional development—most likely because they had not had the experience—it may be “an idea worth exploring,” as Gary put it. When it comes to professional learning communities, most seminary teachers had an overall positive view of face-to-face interactions—such as local and area inservice meetings—but were not enthusiastic about the potential of technological attempts at such communities—like the S&I Wiki. Teachers also reported that while the Professional Growth Plan had the potential to have a positive impact on their professional development and encourage greater reflection, they did not feel that its use was being optimized in S&I. As another way of seeking professional growth and development, some of the teachers in this study reported feeling a strong impact on their professional development from informal mentors in S&I. Teachers also felt that while navigating some challenges and difficulties with leadership in S&I at various levels, their overall alignment with S&I leadership was critical to their professional development and had a positive impact on their professional growth. And even though teachers did not always necessarily seek to make explicit connections between their classroom teaching and the S&I Objective and TLE, they were more focused on “promoting the spiritual
growth and development of their students” than anything else in their profession. However, they often saw their role in accomplishing that goal as isolated from parents and other Church leaders, adults who might be valuable assets in accomplishing the aims of religious education in S&I.

There are likely several reasons that contribute to the “mixed bag” responses to some of these elements of critical reflection in S&I. This report will focus on three of these reasons. First, teachers offered a couple of insights as to their (mis)understanding of S&I’s overall approach to professional development that may contribute to a better understanding of the process of reflection among professional seminary teachers in S&I. During the interview, Alan made the following unsolicited, spontaneous comment to the researcher.

Alan: I’ve never made all this…it’s, it’s like a puzzle. I’m taking all these fragments and putting them together. It’s kind of helpful. Thank you.

Researcher: What do you mean by that?

Alan: Well, I think everyone has their own philosophy of teaching, don’t they? Don’t you have yours? Did you wonder what it was before you went into this program?

Alan’s comments indicated that he was reflecting on the overall system of reflection and professional development in S&I in new ways that he had not considered before. He also seemed to be indicating that it might be helpful to have an institutionally and personally articulated philosophy of professional development that would help him put all these “pieces” (understood by the researcher to mean the various operational tools pertaining to professional development) together into a cohesive approach that would foster greater professional development.
Carl offered a similar comment when asked about S&I’s overall approach to professional development:

Carl: Well, it’s kind of…it’s kind of a “half-fast” approach.

Researcher: What do you mean?

Carl: We’re just going half-way. It’s a round-about way, instead of allowing and encouraging the personnel to really consider who they are, who they want to become, and how they’re going to get there. And then to follow up with that. It’s a round-about way. I’m not saying it’s unsuccessful, because I see teachers all around me who are very, very, very, very successful. And, yeah, we could improve there. I feel like we could improve there.

Carl’s comments were directed specifically at features of professional development in S&I such as the Professional Growth Plan and being observed by others and given feedback. His comments indicate the same sentiment that there is a lack of understanding on the part of some teachers concerning S&I’s overall plan or approach to professional development, which may benefit from some clarification.

The second possible reason that teachers reported mixed success with various elements of practices and process that could lead to valuable critical reflection was a lack of time to reflect. Four of the six teachers in the interviews reported feeling that the demanding regular rigorous schedule of teaching did not allow them much time to reflect. They reported some of the following factors as being a restriction on their available time to adequately reflection about their professional development: having to teach six out of eight classes on the block schedule; communicating with parents and priesthood leaders about student absences; dealing with demands in personal life; satisfy requests for other Church service; perform other S&I administrative responsibilities; and having area study assignments that infringed on preparation time during the summers.
The third possible factor that complicates the process of critical reflection—as well as other levels of reflection—is a teacher’s capacity to balance the need to feel secure with the need to improve. This code was articulated well in the following extract from near the end of Evan’s interview.

I think we all need to have the need to feel secure and I think part of the reason why maybe feedback and observation and professional growth plan, I think part of the reason why sometimes it’s hard and sometimes why people don’t respond as well to it is because it causes insecurity. Maybe insecurity in job security but maybe insecurity just in confidence, insecurity in the way we feel in front of a class, you know. So I think we all need to feel secure but at the same time, you know, I understand that we all need to improve and so there is that fine balance that you all walk where…how do you help a man to improve but still allow him to feel secure and not threatened. And I know that once anybody begins to feel threatened, then I think we close up, you know. So I think we all have the need to feel secure.

Alan offered the following metaphor to articulate his feelings about the tension between these two needs to his area director.

I will never be as effective as I could be, I always need to have and also to develop more “divine discontent” with my performance. I can make it to plateaus, and I guess I can stop for a moment and enjoy the view from where I was before, but to be truly effective, I must climb. And I must enjoy the trip.

Dave talked about having to overcome some of this tension, the origins of which he attributed to his experience in the preservice program.

There was a stark contrast between my—well, near the end—between my preservice observations and inservice observations, if that makes sense. When [the preservice director] comes in, the fear sometimes hits you, because you’re like, “Oh, shoot, I’ve got to teach well or I’m not going to have this job!” He always hated that, because that’s not what he was trying to do.

According to Dave, his principal successfully helped him to overcome those feelings of trepidation that come from more summative evaluations to the more formative process that is expected to occur with professional seminary teachers in S&I. Administrators and
instructional leaders should be aware of the need to help teachers balance the need to feel secure with the need to improve.

To conclude this section on critical reflection among professional seminary teachers in S&I, Table 4.12 summarizes the critical reflection data from all qualitative data sources for this study. While the researcher found certain other codes from the critical reflection data—such as “considering the paradigmatic impact of the teacher,” “allowing room for faithful struggle,” and “considering gender differences in the

Table 4.12

*Critical Reflection Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Alan</th>
<th>Bruce</th>
<th>Carl</th>
<th>Dave</th>
<th>Evan</th>
<th>Gary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey rating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Med/Low</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low/Med</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Med/High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual mean from qualitative sources</td>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting spiritual growth and development in students</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating teaching with the S&amp;I objective and TLE</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting professional reflection and personal life</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aligning with S&amp;I leadership</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mis)understanding S&amp;I’s direction regarding professional development</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing the students’ backgrounds/circumstances</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needing time to reflect</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing the need to feel secure with the need to improve</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching has a positive impact on immediate community</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending professional conferences</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating personal feelings for students</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting parents and ecclesiastical leaders involved</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a role model for students</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
classroom”—interesting and compelling, they were not part of the trends or patterns that developed in the analysis of the data. Though this table does not show all of the codes for critical reflection and some of the codes may seem to reflect only a miniscule percentage of the data, critical elements of the data for that code were connected to an understanding of other codes and often overlapped with data from other codes. Also, not all codes in the table were specifically reported on in this section by name, but the table includes codes from which data was taken during the presentation of critical reflection data in this section. Thus, they were included in this table. Noticeable conflicts between the survey rating received by participants in this category and the amount of qualitative data they contributed for critical reflection in this study (such as with Alan and Carl) may be attributable to the difficulty of designing questions that asked teachers about critical reflection practices on the survey in comparison to the deliberate focus on critical reflection in the interview protocol to compensate for this perceived shortcoming by the researcher.

There are several general observations to be made about critical reflection among professional seminary teachers in S&I. First, critical reflection strongly dominated the qualitative data in this study, comprising over 36% of all qualitative data. As already mentioned, this may have been a function of the interview protocol design, but teachers regularly engaged in critical reflection codes, even when the questions from the interview protocol were aimed at searching for other forms of reflective data. This may also have been a function of the perspective a teacher has in being interviewed for a doctoral degree research program. That is not to say that teachers in any way fabricated their responses. It
is only to say that they may have been more likely to talk about issues they perceived as
being of a higher reflective order as a selected participant in such a study.

It does not appear from the data that there are any particularly strong trends
between critical reflection and other levels of reflection (see Table 4.1). Nor does having
had an administrative position seemed to have had a significant impact on a teacher’s
critical reflection—since Carl (55%) and Bruce (26%) were the only two teachers with
administrative experience in the interview sample. Age and years of experience among
the interviewed teachers also do not seem to have a significant impact on a teacher’s
engagement with critical reflection.

As the researcher proceeded throughout the interviews and analyzed the data, it
became apparent that of the three aspects of critical reflection defined by Hatton and
Smith (1995) S&I professional seminary teachers seemed most engaged in “thinking
about the effect upon others of one’s actions.” While they were willing to explore the
problematic aspects of their profession, and they seriously reflected on organizational
goals and objectives—albeit indirectly much of the time—”promoting the spiritual
growth and development of students” was the primary way that teachers reflected about
their role as a professional religious educator. However, as Table 4.1 shows, the teachers
with the highest levels of critical reflection also had the lowest levels of technical
reflection. This indicates that there is a possibility that the professional seminary teachers
in this study reflect a great deal about promoting the spiritual growth and development of
their students, consistent with an integralist religious education program, but they do not
think as much about whether their skills, behaviors, and actions in the classroom are
accomplishing those objectives and aims.

This analysis leads to the question: Why do professionally seminary teachers need to be critically reflective? At the bare minimum, this kind of reflection is important for helping teachers to align what they do in the classroom with the larger institutional goals and objectives of S&I. As Glickman and colleagues (2004) wrote, “Please remember that competence without clear purpose results in directionless change, and purpose without competence provides inefficiency and frustration” (p. 476). In addition, without any critical reflection, each classroom experience is its own isolated vacuous learning experience, disconnected from the outside lives of the students and what is really going on in their lives. This is not conducive to helping students connect their religious education experience in seminary with spiritually transformative learning or faith identity development. Such teachers would not be accomplishing the objective of S&I and would be engaging in religious education that is not the kind of “integralist” religious education as defined by Lee (1973) that seems to fit the objective of religious education in S&I.

**Spiritual Reflection: A Brief Summary**

As has already been mentioned, gathering data having to do with spiritual reflection was not a primary objective of this study. However, as Mayes pointed out, a teacher’s spiritual reflection has to do with “the existential bedrock of fundamental beliefs, hopes and fears about oneself and others” (2001c, p. 478). Thus, there a few key elements of spiritual reflection reported by seminary teachers that must be understood if, according to Korthagen (2004), we are to properly understand the reflective practices and processes of seminary teachers and how this reflection impacts the professional
development of these teachers.

All of the codes that will be summarized in this section can be encapsulated by Brookfield and Hess (2008), who postulated that if there is “something inherently different about religion-based teaching” as opposed to teaching of academic subjects, it is that, “Theological teachers view their stewardship of learning as something of a sacred trust, a process distinguished by the movement of the Holy Spirit within all those involved” (p. 2). The religious and moral nature of religious education distinguishes most religious educators from most teachers of other subjects. Teachers of more secular subjects usually so not expect their students to “live” what they are learning in class for salvific purposes. The researcher can recall his high school geometry teacher telling the class that they would be glad they were learning geometry because they would have to use it one day. Despite excessively vocal student protests, he was right—at least in the case where the researcher undertook to finish the basement of his home. However, as important and valuable as this geometry teacher felt his subject was, he likely did not feel that an understanding of geometry was necessary for the eternal salvation of his pupils—at least he never said so. Religious educators are different in that sense. They believe that the application of the concepts they teach students have an “other-worldly” application to them and that they cannot help students understand and apply those concepts if they are not living them themselves and anticipating some kind of divine influence in helping students understand and apply what they are learning in the classroom.

Thus, when it comes to spiritual reflection, professional seminary teachers talk about their role in terms of the following kinds of codes.

- Life correction reflection
- Being in the best “mind set”
- Being an instrument (i.e., in the sense of being a tool in the hands of the divine)
- Living worthy
- Having the Spirit

Teachers regularly talked about their own experiences learning from what they were teaching and wanting to focus more on living what they had taught in class. They realized that they were not perfect people, but they felt that they could not effectively teach religious principles they did not believe or at least try to practice in their own lives. They also felt that they needed a certain amount of clarity or spiritual stability in order to teach effectively. Teachers who felt unsettled or like their life was in chaos reported that they found it difficult to teach in religious education settings. Teachers also approached their task of religious education with a certain degree of humility, recognizing that their personal charisma or intelligence would not be the most persuasive forces for success in the classroom. They recognized the moral agency of their students and knew that they had to respect the individual spiritual journey that each of their students was on, acknowledging that they could only hope that their efforts as religious educators would have some positive impact on students during that essential personally quest. Much like the code for “lesson correction reflection,” teachers in this study did not believe that they could compartmentalize their personal and professional lives. They believed that their behavior and actions at home and in the community had a direct impact not only on their ability to teach effectively, but also on their credibility in the eyes of their students.

Finally, all of the teachers in this study—recognizing their own personal inadequacies
from time to time—hoped for, as Brookfield and Hess (2008) called it, “the movement of the Holy Spirit” within their classrooms and among their students.

Despite all the educational theories and training that religious educators may receive, they cannot separate their professional competencies from the aspects of their faith that make those professional capacities “existentially valid” (Mayes, 2001a, p. 18). So although there were not any specific practices or processes that can be said to have promoted spiritual reflection (such was not the intent of this study), it can be clearly stated that professional seminary teachers felt that spiritual reflection had a significant impact on their professional development since, as one teacher stated, “You teach what you are.”

**General Analysis of Findings**

The sections for each level of reflection in this chapter have already summarized general observations about each level of reflection. In Chapter 5, more specific conclusions and recommendations regarding reflection in S&I will be presented. This chapter will conclude with some general analytical comments on the data from this study.

First, all four levels of reflection identified in Hatton and Smith’s (1995) theoretical framework for this study were identifiable and prevalent among the professional seminary teachers in S&I in this study. The research showed that teachers in the observation and interview phase of this study were more inclined to critical reflection and less inclined overall to technical reflection. Teachers engaged in a wide range of practices that promote these various levels of reflection. While some practices may have a tendency to promote certain kinds of reflection—for example, being observed promoted
the most technical reflection, and writing activities tended to relate to more critical reflection—no practice seemed to substantially isolate one level of reflection from the others.

Second, while the researcher could not identify any strong connections between levels of reflection in this study whereby a teacher’s engagement in one was found to be a catalyst for or hindrance to other forms of reflection, it was found that data from all levels of reflection contributed to a more complete understanding of how teachers reflected about some of their practices in the classroom and aspects of their professional development. For example, understanding more fully how teachers evaluate student participation in seminary depends on data having to do with technical reflection and data pertaining to descriptive reflection. Understanding how a teacher works with his principal contributes to understanding how he aligns himself with S&I leadership.

Third, it must be understood that there is a distinction between reflective forms, or practices (such as the Professional Growth Plan or observing other teachers or keeping a professional journal) and reflective substance (such as the levels of reflection). Teachers, instructional leaders, and administrators must identify the kind of reflection they want to accomplish with each form before they assume that distribution of the form will promote a given level of reflection. How the form is presented, implemented, and evaluated by the teacher and others will have a high impact on how that form is processed by the teacher. These preliminary or preparatory decisions will also be a significant factor on the impact that these forms will have on the professional development of teachers who engage in them. Chapter 5 will present further conclusions and recommendations on these and other findings from this study.
The conclusions for this study will come via interpretation of the description and analysis provided in Chapter 4. Wolcott (2001) pointed out how interpretation differs somewhat from description and analysis in qualitative research:

Interpretation, by contrast, is not derived from rigorous, agreed-upon, carefully specified procedures, but from efforts at sensemaking, a human activity that includes intuition, past experience, emotion—personal attributes of human researchers that can be argued endlessly but neither proved nor disproved to the satisfaction of all. Interpretation invites the examination, the “pondering,” of data in terms of what people make of it. (p. 33)

This interpretation will consist of two main sections that correspond to the two reasons this study was undertaken, as explained by Creswell (2005): to add to the knowledge of the subject of teacher reflection among professional seminary teachers in S&I (and perhaps for other religious educators as well); and to suggest improvements for practice (see pp. 4-5). Thus, the first interpretive section will discuss the significance of the data as it relates to the research questions for this study and contributes to a grounded theory for teacher reflection in S&I, as suggested in the beginning of this study. The second interpretive section will present suggestions for reflective practice for teachers, instructional leaders and supervisors, and institutional administrators based on the data from this study and a more cohesive theory regarding teacher reflection as a function of professional development in S&I. Finally, this chapter will conclude with recommendations for further research that could contribute to a greater understanding of teacher reflection among professional religious educators in S&I, as well as collaborative
projects that could be undertaken to increase the understanding and improve the practice of teacher reflection as a function of professional development among religious educators at large.

A Grounded Theory of Reflection for Professional Seminary Teachers in S&I

One of the primary aims of this study was to address the premise that there was a lack of description, understanding, interpretation, or explicitly articulated theory of teacher reflection as an integrated function of professional development for professional seminary teachers in S&I. To generate a grounded theory—”a general explanation…that explains a process, action, or interaction among people” (Creswell, 2005, p. 52-53)—this study sought for answers to the following research questions.

1. What are some of the reflective practices among professional S&I seminary instructors?

2. How do these teachers engage in reflective practices and activities?

3. How do they perceive these reflective practices and activities as having an impact on their professional development?

The data collected from the survey, observations, interviews, and documents pertaining to this study provide answers to these questions that contribute to a grounded theory and provide solid grounds for recommendations that can potentially improve reflective practices for teachers in S&I.

To answer the first question, this study showed that there are a wide variety of
potentially reflective practices among professional seminary teachers in S&I. While the following lists are not comprehensive or exhaustive lists of all possible reflective practices among the teachers in this study, they represent a significant summary of major reflective practices that teachers, instructional leaders, and administrators should consider as they focus on incorporating reflection into professional development activities and programs. Some of the more common institutionally promoted or available practices that could invoke reflection in which the teachers in this study engaged were:

- Teachers observing other teachers
- Supervisors, such as principals and area directors, observing teachers (teachers reported especially positively about working with their principal)
- Attending inservices
- Reading S&I produced handbooks or other written material
- Seeking higher education
- Participating in professional training programs

Some of the less common institutionally promoted or available potentially reflective practices in which professional seminary teachers in this study engaged were:

- Using the Professional Growth Plan
- Writing reflectively about what they have observed from other teachers
- Attending professional conferences
- Engaging in professional learning communities

There were also reflective practices that teachers in this study generally engaged in that did not seem to originate with any particular institutional reflective tool or activity. Some
of these more common informal—perhaps instinctive—reflective practices included:

- Discussing teaching practices with colleagues
- Collaborative lesson planning
- “Lesson correction reflection”
- Writing reflectively through professional development activities (such as area assignments or inservice meetings)
- Evaluating teaching performance in light of personal teaching goals (that do not relate directly or explicitly to the Professional Growth Plan, or the S&I Objective and TLE)
- Learning from mentors

Some of the less common informal reflective practices among the professional seminary teachers in this study were:

- Having their own lesson plans reviewed
- Skill focused evaluations
- Reviewing lesson plans from other teachers
- Reading professional journals related to improving teaching

As previously noted in Chapter 4, comments from Alan, Carl, and Dave all suggested that teachers do not perceive these various practices as being connected, harmonized, or integrated in any systematic way.

Some of these teacher reflection practices tended to lead teachers to engage in specific levels of reflection proposed by Hatton and Smith (1995). However, none of the reflective practices identified in this study could be said to lead exclusively to any
particular level of reflection. For example, while observing other teachers, being observed by others (supervisors as well as colleagues), and collaborating with faculty to prepare lessons were inherently dialogic reflection practices, from teachers descriptions of these experiences, this practice usually led to discussions that would be more focused on technical reflection—getting the "mechanics right," as Alan said. Teachers who engaged in reflective writing assignments, like those shared by Alan and Carl, tended to focus heavily on critical reflection as well as spiritual reflection, depending on the nature of the assignment. Evaluating one’s teaching performance against personal teaching goals could be a highly descriptive reflective activity for some teachers, or it could focus solely on technical reflection if the teacher did not seem to be willing to consider his own motives, intentions, or rationale behind the goals that he had set to accomplish in the classroom.

Thus, it is important for professional seminary teachers (and those who supervise them) to understand that the many practices, tools, or forms provided for them in S&I will not necessarily lead to given levels of reflection by nature of the inherent design of the form itself. The direction of the reflection will be determined by the intents and attitudes of the persons who employ these various forms. Assessment and evaluation are, therefore, essential components in guiding the professional reflection of teachers if that reflection is to have an optimal impact on the professional development of the individual teacher. It should also be noted that forms of reflection can be used to effectively lead to multiple levels of reflection when carefully designed and deliberately employed.

Having identified some of the teacher reflection practices in S&I and how they
might be understood as tools for reflection by professional seminary teachers, this interpretive discussion will now focus on the process of teacher reflection as understood within the four major levels of reflection that formed the theoretical framework for this study: technical, descriptive, dialogic, and critical (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Each level of reflection can serve a useful purpose in the professional development of professional religious educators. However, professional development will be greatly enhanced if teachers will learn to integrate the various levels of reflection as a function of their professional development within their particular religious education context.

This integration of the levels of reflection can accomplish four related purposes that have been referred to previously in this study. First, teachers who can effectively integrate the four levels of “reflection on action” will move closer to “reflection-in-action.” Hatton and Smith (1995) described “reflection-in-action” as

the ability to apply, singly or in combination, qualitatively distinctive kinds of reflection (namely technical, descriptive, dialogic, or critical) to a given situation as it is unfolding. In other words, the professional practitioner is able consciously to think about an action as it is taking place, making sense of what is happening and shaping successive practical steps using multiple viewpoints as appropriate. (p. 45).

Gary shared the following basketball analogy during his interview to illustrate the kind of reflective automaticity envisioned by “reflection-in-action:”

When Kobe [Bryant] is driving the ball down the court, he sees a certain opening. Kobe doesn’t call timeout, go over, get into his files, and say, “Oh yeah, this move has worked on that situation.” He doesn’t even think about it; he just does it. I’d like to become the kind of teacher that has…a thousand tools at my disposal that I use often enough that at any moment I can grab that tool.

Just like a professional athlete, professional teachers are not likely to develop this kind of reflective automaticity without an understanding of and experience with the various types
of reflection through reflective activities that engage them in actual reflection.

The second objective that can be accomplished with the successful integration of the various levels of reflection is the “alignment” between a teacher’s core sense of identity, beliefs, and mission with his competencies, skills, and behaviors in the classroom. Teachers who develop this alignment—or, who are at least progressing toward it, since Korthagen (2004) admitted that complete alignment may “take a lifetime to attain, if attained at all” (p. 87)—increase their effectiveness in the classroom by having a clarified understanding of their purpose and a clear direction for how to accomplish it. This will likely also increase a teacher’s “professional trustworthiness” (Skinner, 2008, pp. 99-100) that Skinner argued will enhance the student-teacher relationship, which is so vital in religious education. Without this alignment, teachers constantly risk disruptions by “gestalts,” the default behaviors that teachers employ independent of professional training or espoused theories (Korthagen, 2004, p. 81) as they face the inevitable dynamic challenges as they strive to teach students; they also face personal stagnation in their professional development as they potentially fixate on only one level of reflection; and the entire profession of religious education risks a regression into the “crisis of professionalism” that led to a lack of trust in institutions in the 1960s, as described by Argyris and Schön (1974).

Third, religious educators who integrate the various levels of teacher reflection enable themselves to see more clearly their “espoused theories,” identify incongruencies between their “espoused theories” and their “theories-in-use” and develop working and ever-improving “hybrid theories of practice” (Argyris & Schön, 1974). As teachers
evaluate their actions, endeavor to make implicit assumptions explicit, and formulate new lenses for viewing and evaluating their practice—despite the discomfort for doing so (after all it was the LDS leader Joseph Smith who commented that his own “serious reflection” was accompanied by “great uneasiness” [Joseph Smith—History 1:8])—they become more effective and more satisfied (i.e., self-actualized) in their work.

Fourth, as teachers overcome the discomfort of their “cognitive dissonance” (Glickman et al., 2004, pp. 137-139) and integrate the four levels of reflection investigated in this study, they move toward Glickman’s ideal of teachers who “assume full responsibility for instructional improvement” (p. 208). Of course, this does not mean teachers engage in isolated professional development (which would completely ignore the dialogic level of reflection), but teachers who successfully integrate the four levels of reflection take primary responsibility for their own sustained professional development.

Therefore, teachers, instructional leaders, and administrators in S&I should understand each level of reflection and its own inherent benefits as well as how it relates to other levels of reflection. While technical reflection represented the smallest amount of qualitative data in this study, its significance cannot be underestimated. Teachers need to engage in reflective practices that evaluate their effective use of teaching skills. These practices cannot be viewed as insignificant or of little importance as teachers claim to focus on the larger goals of the S&I Objective or the TLE. Religious educators may have a propensity to this as they subordinate pedagogy to higher moral purposes for their teaching. Teachers must also be cautious not to overemphasize technical reflection to the point that the pedagogy becomes an end in itself, as seemed to be the case in this study
with the emphasis on student participation in the classroom. Observations, video recordings, skill focused evaluations (such as the diagram Dave’s instructional leader did on student participation), and similar activities can lead teachers to effective technical reflection that helps them describe what they are doing in the classroom.

As with all levels of reflection, technical reflection needs to be connected to other levels of reflection in order to be effective in promoting professional development among religious educators. When a teacher is observed, he may then report what happened in his classroom to a colleague or supervisor. However, if he then engages in a collegial evaluation and exchange of ideas with a colleague or supervisor, dialogic reflection enables a teacher to weigh competing ideas with his own and then exchange, modify, or incorporate those competing ideas. However, any observers and teachers should be aware that the level of trust in their relationship and the degree to which the teacher being observed feels secure will have a tremendous impact on that teacher’s willingness and capacity to improve through such experiences.

While the researcher initially supposed that technical reflection would naturally lead to descriptive reflection, this was not necessarily the case with the seminary teachers who were interviewed in this study. In fact, it was only rarely the case. From the data collected from the teachers in this sample, no patterns or trends emerged that showed teachers describing what they did and then independently explaining why they did it. Rather, when teachers engaged in technical reflection, they would then forego explanations of their actions entirely, or they would move on to dialogic or critical levels of reflection where they seemed to be more comfortable. Descriptive reflection is critical
for professional seminary teachers in S&I because it requires them to explain the rationale behind their decisions in the classroom. It requires them to engage in “deliberate thinking about action with a view to its improvement” (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 40). A few of the teachers in this study did engage in descriptive reflection via practices such as reflective writing about their own teaching or evaluating their teaching performance against personal teaching goals; however, they reported that they did not have time to engage in these practices regularly. And when they did engage in these practices, they did not include the S&I Objective or TLE as an explicit part of their rationale.

In the interpretation of this study, descriptive reflection is seen as key to a teacher’s ability to integrate the four levels of reflection and attain the benefits described for doing so. The more a teacher engages in “reflection on action,” the more likely they are to develop the ability to engage in “reflection-in-action.” Descriptive reflection can lead professional seminary teachers in S&I to align their classroom behaviors more closely with their mission and values as religious educators and to the mission and objectives of S&I. While teachers are often implicitly striving to accomplish the aims of the S&I Objective and TLE currently, greater descriptive reflection could lead to greater unity between administration, supervisors, and teachers so that efforts at professional development in S&I are designed and perceived as being part of one cohesive approach to improving teaching. Teachers who articulate an explicit rationale for their classroom behaviors through descriptive reflection could also more effectively bridge the gap between “espoused theories” and “theories in use” so that their “hybrid theories of practice” become more consistent and easier to evaluate and improve.
Teachers who do not become skilled in descriptive reflection risk two potential extreme problems. On one hand, teachers arrested in the supposedly more “practical” realm of technical reflection may risk being continually baffled by the fact that a particular method or activity works in one class but not in another, as they continue to blindly employ the same pedagogical practices or activities despite classroom dynamics or individual students needs. On the other hand, teachers arrested in the supposedly more “philosophical” realm of critical reflection risk ethereal discussions and ponderings over ideas and concepts pertaining to identity, mission, and values without ever bothering to consider how to accomplish those aims through effective pedagogical practice in a way that impacts students.

While technical and descriptive reflection may seem to have more obvious potential connections, and critical reflection will also be shown to have strong possible connections to descriptive reflection, dialogic reflection may seem to be more disassociated from the other levels of reflection. However, in S&I, this apparent disassociation may be a result of the current S&I culture which promotes such heavy dialogic reflection so that its connection is almost invisible because of its obviousness—like the fish who does not realize he is swimming in water. Alan, Gary, Evan, and Bruce all had sufficient years of experience in S&I to recognize that there has been an increase in seeking, giving, and receiving feedback within the last decade of S&I’s approach to professional development. Although the implementation of this practice has not been particularly well defined or sufficiently implemented (at least to the satisfaction of most of the interviewed teachers in this study—recall particularly Alan’s and Carl’s comments
about S&I’s approach to professional development), there has been a deliberate effort on the part of S&I administration and supervisors to encourage more dialogic reflection. The qualitative data from interviews, observations, and documents in this study support this trend by showing dialogic reflection as the second most common form of reflection among professional S&I seminary teachers in this study.

Most of the potentially reflective practices identified among professional seminary teachers in S&I inherently promote or support dialogic reflection: teachers observing other teachers; supervisors observing teachers; inservice meetings; seeking higher education; reading S&I developed handbooks and materials; using the Professional Growth Plan (probably the least effectively implemented method identified in this study); attending professional conferences; engaging in professional learning communities (i.e., apprentice seminars and “cluster groups”); discussing teaching practices with colleagues; collaborative lesson planning; learning from mentors; reviewing lesson plans; and reading from professional journals. In all of these potentially reflective practices, teachers are—or can be—encouraged to weigh competing claims and viewpoints as they explore possible solutions to the problems and challenges they face in their teaching and in their professional development. Teachers who engage regularly in dialogically reflective practices avoid the insular dangers of a form of “intellectual inbreeding,” wherein teachers avoid broadening horizons or seeking improvement out of convenience, fear, or insecurity in one form or another.

Supporting and promoting dialogic reflection in S&I is more complicated than just developing the right forms or modes of reflective practices. Because dialogic
reflection involves the highest level of human interaction among all the levels of reflection, building and strengthening relationships between teachers, supervisors, and administrators is vital. Teachers in this study discussed the need for trust between dialogic partners, as well as the overall need to feel secure and unthreatened, as vital components of successful dialogic reflection. Unity among faculty members and collegial relationships between S&I teachers and supervisors cannot be underestimated in the effective encouragement of dialogic reflection.

While descriptive reflection can be viewed as an essential link between technical reflection and critical reflection, dialogic reflection can be seen as a type of reflection in S&I that crosses all levels of reflection in an effort to consistently engage the teacher in dialogue with others in the quest for sustained professional development. While team teaching can promote some aspects of dialogic reflection (Ramsey, 2008), “the typical milieu of the school [or seminary] makes it difficult for teachers to see themselves as learners, to reflect on practice, and to create a collaborative, intellectual environment that sustains them as a community of learners” (Blase & Blase, 2004, p. 93). Teachers in individual classrooms and offices can become a somewhat isolated practice without any form of dialogic reflection. A skilled dialogic partner can provide a helpful objective “mirror” for a teacher stuck in technical reflection, by which the teacher can compare what he thinks happened in class with what another teacher or supervisor observed. A skilled dialogic partner can ask a teacher searching questions, or offer compelling suggestions, that help him to articulate his rationale behind his behavior. A skilled dialogic partner can also help a teacher ask questions or put forth ideas of a critically
reflective nature that help the teacher consider his alignment with institutional objectives and/or his impact on his students, the rest of his faculty, and the larger community.

One of the assumed benefits of dialogic reflection expressed by most teachers was also potentially problematic. Most of the interviewed teachers in this study mentioned, in one form or another, the benefit of getting “lots of eyes” on something—whether it be a lesson plan, goals, their own classroom teaching, or whatever. The assumption seemed to be that multiple perspectives would always be advantageous for helping teachers see things from different vantage points. While there is an alluring sound of truth to this in a post-modern, pluralistic, predominantly constructivist society, Eisner maintains that an “enlightened eye” is a key to successful observation and subsequent professional development (Eisner, 1991). Dialogic reflection will be most effective when it involves a sufficient degree of “connoisseurship” (Eisner, 1991), and teachers and instructional supervisors should make efforts to attain this capacity. Suggestions about how to accomplish this will be find in the section on recommendations in this chapter.

Critical reflection was perhaps the most interesting levels of reflection for the researcher to investigate and analyze throughout this study. On the survey, it proved to be most difficult level of reflection to identify. Professional seminary teachers in S&I also seemed to be fairly provincially-minded and did not generally seem to consider elements of critical reflection pertaining to race, gender, social justice, etc., as found in most professional religious education journals, or even in *The Religious Educator* (see Jenkins, 2009; Eastmond, 2008; Olsen, 2006). In fact, they even seemed quite reticent to discuss such issues when the researcher would try to press them on such matters. Their reluctance
to “speculate” about such things forced the researcher to back down on some of these issues. Having presented a paper on the correlation between racial identity development and religious identity formation among young single adults at the national meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Chicago, Illinois (2008), it seemed clear to the researcher in this study that professional seminary teachers in S&I did not engage in critical reflection the same way that other religious educators in other contexts seemed to engage in critical reflection. Did this mean that these teachers did not engage in any form of critical reflection?

After interviewing Gary (the final interview participant), who was rated the highest in critical reflection on the survey and whose qualitative data sources produced the most critical reflection material of all interviewed teachers, it was apparent to the researcher that this was the most critically reflective teacher of the six who were interviewed for this study. Even though he mentioned issues pertaining to issues of gender and community, however, it was still apparent that he did not engage predominantly in the kind of critical reflection that might be found in the religious education journals and books reviewed by the researcher.

As was already alluded to in Chapter 4, this study shows while there was some minor evidence of all three aspects of critical reflection posited by Hatton and Smith (1995), the seminary teachers in this study seemed most focused on “thinking about the effects upon others of one’s actions” (p. 45). The largest amount of data among all levels of reflection was “promoting the spiritual growth and development of students.” (It is important to point out that although the descriptive code for “evaluating student
participation in seminary” accounted for 34% of the descriptive reflection data, teachers used nearly 5,000 words to talk about “promoting the spiritual growth and development of students” as opposed to just over 2,000 words for “evaluating student participation of students.”) While the S&I Objective and TLE were not generally mentioned specifically in connection with this coded data, it can be easily seen how the teachers in this study were in harmony, in principle at least, with these institutional aims.

However, even though teachers seem to readily engage in critical reflection, more so than any other level of reflection, none of the reflective practices identified among the professional S&I seminary teachers seemed to effectively transmit a teacher’s critical reflection into action in the classroom. While more experienced teachers like Bruce and Gary tended to move from technical reflection to critical reflection in the interviews more than other teachers, there did not appear to be any particular practice that encourages teachers to regularly evaluate or explain how particular classroom behaviors or pedagogical decisions relate to “promoting the spiritual growth and development of students.” With only a few minor exceptions, teachers generally said that they “hoped” what happened in the classroom would lead to this outcome, but they generally did not seek to explain “how” they thought what they did in the classroom would lead to that outcome. This is not to say that the teachers in this study could not do that—because they showed very effectively in the interviews that they could—but this is just to say that they did not report that there was any particular reflective practice that encouraged them to make this connection on a regular basis.

The connection between the “espoused theories” of S&I professional seminary
teachers (i.e., the S&I Objective and the TLE, even when not articulated as such by specific terminology) could be strengthened through the effective evaluation of “theories in use” (i.e., technical practices and reflection) via descriptive and dialogical reflective means to generate effective “hybrid theories of practice” (Argyris & Schön, 1974). As mentioned earlier, it is important for seminary teachers to make explicit connections between the aims of their critical reflection and their technical reflection via descriptive and dialogic reflection to avoid the “directionless change” that comes from “competence without purpose” as well as the “inefficiency and frustration” that comes from “purpose without competence” (Glickman et al., 2004, p. 476).

Figures 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 are discussed and shown individually below and depict models that illustrate potential explanations for the relationship between the four levels of reflection for professional seminary teachers in S&I. Following each model is an explanation of the model as a preface to the recommendations for how teachers, supervisors, and administrators can promote greater reflection as a function of professional development and an impetus for sustained professional development.

The model depicted in Figure 5.1 shows the levels of reflection as distinctive steps, or parts, of professional reflection. An organization that approaches professional reflection in this manner would develop specific forms, or reflective tools or practices, of reflection that seek to isolate the levels of reflection and then have participants engage in reflective activities that help them engage in each level of reflection as part of a program
of sustained professional development. This model may be feasible for some institutions, but it does not seem to fit with the current reflective practices or environment of S&I. It is also doubtful whether this model would lead to the four benefits of integrating the four levels of reflection mentioned earlier in this chapter.

The model depicted in Figure 5.2 illustrates the necessary connectedness between the levels of reflection. It is also helpful for showing the goal of sustained professional development as the core of the reflective process. An assumption of this model is that all levels of reflection are equally desirable and equally sought after by the professionals within the institution. An institution that follows this model in encouraging reflection as a function of professional development recognizes that forms, or modes, of reflection may not promote or support discrete levels of reflection. The institution might even seek to develop reflective forms, or practices, that deliberately seek to incorporate many, if not all, levels of reflection within a single reflective practice. This model may be too complex to implement in most institutions, although it will likely foster the integration of the four levels of reflection mentioned earlier in this chapter, particularly the “reflection-in-action” posited by Hatton and Smith (1995) whereby teachers have developed a seemingly equal adeptness in each level of reflection and are able to draw upon each

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**Figure 5.1. Equation model of reflection.**
Figure 5.2. Relationship model of reflection.

level with a high degree of expertise. Another problem with this model as a representation of teacher reflection among professional seminary teachers in S&I is that it indicates direct relationships between all the levels of reflection—such as technical reflection and critical reflection—which were not adequately supported by the data in this study.

The model shown in Figure 5.3 best illustrates how the four levels of reflection operate within the reflective practices and processes of the professional seminary teachers in this study as a function of sustained professional development. In this model, descriptive reflection is shown as a critical link between technical reflection and critical
reflection. The arrow shows how dialogic reflection crosses through the other three levels of reflection and integrates all levels of reflection in a process that leads to sustained professional development. This also reflects the emphasis on dialogic reflection found among the professional S&I seminary teachers in this study, and how the various dialogically reflective practices in S&I support and promote teacher engagement in other levels of reflection.

**Suggestions for Practice**

Having developed a grounded theory and reflection model via description, analysis, and interpretation of the data, the researcher offers some practical suggestions for improving the practice of reflection among professional S&I seminary teachers in a way that will lead to sustained professional development. This section proposes two general suggestions for S&I teachers, supervisors, and administrators followed by specific suggestions for each of these levels that they can incorporate to improve the practice of teacher reflection.

*Figure 5.3. Integrated model of reflection.*
One thing that all teachers, supervisors, and administrators could do to increase the impact of their reflection in their quest for sustained professional development is to seek further education about reflection and reflective practices. The list of references at the end of this study provides several resources for increasing one’s understanding of professional reflection. All could engage in building their own list of resources that help them better understand reflection as it pertains to their specific role in their religious education context.

It is also the view of this researcher that reflection in S&I would be enhanced in general by increased descriptive reflection. A teacher may be able to repeat back minute-for-minute what happened in class and the decisions that he made (i.e., technical reflection), or he may be able to talk eloquently and articulately about institutional objectives and the positive impact he hopes to have on the faith identity development and spiritual progress of his students. But the teacher who is willing to risk the potential “cognitive dissonance” that comes from examining his behaviors and striving to explain the rationale behind them will be developing reflective habits that lead to sustained professional development. Even if the teacher’s initial attempts at doing so are not carried out at the expert level, continual efforts at descriptive reflection will most likely lead a teacher to make the vital connections that need to be made between “espoused theories” and “theories in use” that will lead to the development of effective and ever-improving “hybrid theories of practice” (Agryris & Schön, 1974).

A few of the suggestions in the following paragraphs will be new practices that were not found among the professional S&I seminary teachers in this study. Many of the
suggestions in the succeeding paragraphs come from the researcher’s impressions of the potential for the increased impact of certain reflective practices already found among these teachers given recommended adjustments in either the frequency or in the process of these practices. Some of these suggestions are also supported by Hess and Brookfield (2008) in their chapter, “‘How do we connect classroom teaching to institutional practice?’ Sustaining a culture of reflective practice in teaching.”

At the level of the teacher in S&I, perhaps the most important suggestion for this study is found in this statement from Ramsey, “a reflective process is the key to teacher transformation. It is one thing to speak about this trust as a primary area for growth and reflection; it is quite another to embody it consistently” (Hess & Brookfield, 2008, p. 127). Most of the teachers interviewed in this study talked about the difficulty in sustaining any reflective practice. Thus, the first suggestion for teachers is to work at consistently employing a reflective routine that works for them.

The second suggestion for teachers is a practice that the researcher did not find among the teachers in this study. Alan said during his interview that he wondered what his “theory of teaching” was. It might be beneficial for any teacher to develop what could be called a “teacher platform,” in which the teacher tries to articulate what he believes about the roles of the teacher, the learner, the curriculum, and so forth in the religious education process. Doing so invites the teacher to make implicit assumptions explicit. The teacher could then make a video recording of his teaching and watch his classroom behavior to identify areas where his behavior aligns with his teaching platform and also look for inconsistencies between his behavior and his teaching platform. The teacher
could also share these platforms with those who observe his teaching and ask the observer to look for these same areas of alignment and divergence during the observation. While this may begin as a critical reflection practice, it can quickly involve the other levels of reflection through the processes described above.

One thing that many teachers in this study found to be helpful was to “evaluate their teaching performance against a set of teaching goals.” This practice encourages both technical reflection and descriptive reflection. Depending on the nature of the goals it could also facilitate critical reflection. As a teacher discusses this process with colleagues, a supervisor, or a spouse, this could also become a significant dialogically reflective activity. To increase the congruence between “espoused theories” and “hybrid theories of practice” and make good use of present tools and activities for reflection in S&I, a teacher would do well to make sure his teaching goals are reflected in his Professional Growth Plan and are stated in ways that can be directly correlated with the S&I Objective and TLE.

Given that teachers are so focused on “promoting the spiritual growth and development of students,” it would seem that teachers could maximize their efforts here by seeking to interface more actively with the rest of the adult stakeholders who are interested in this outcome for the students who attend LDS seminaries. By dialogically reflecting with parents and local Church leaders about the lives and needs of students, teachers’ understanding of the backgrounds of their students increases and they approach this most important goal in a more unified way. While some of this can be accomplished presently in a limited way through parent-teacher conferences and the work of S&I stake
representatives, further work in this area may need area presidency or General Authority approval before proceeding.

Finally, it is the opinion of this researcher that teachers could improve almost every level of their reflection by increasing their professional reading, including the reading of histories and biographies pertaining to religious education and religious educators. Teachers who engage with professional literature are generally participating simultaneously in three of the four levels of reflection. They may by engaging in descriptive reflection as they seek to better understand “best practices” in religious education. The literature they read is a form of dialogic reflection inasmuch as it challenges teachers to weigh competing claims and ideas regarding religious education practices and the rationale behind them. By immersing oneself in professional literature, a teacher is more likely to engage with literature that promotes institutional aims and objectives so that his thinking and actions become more aligned with those goals. Reading professional literature may also improve critical reflection as a teacher comes to view himself more completely as a professional religious educator and subsequently seeks for fulfillment in bringing that identity into his classroom through adjusting and modifying his behaviors accordingly.

From the perspective the researcher received from surveying and interviewing teachers in this study, the researcher proposes the following five suggestions to help instructional leaders and supervisors promote more impactful teacher reflection. First, instructional leaders and supervisors must be sure to build and continue to develop relationships of trust with teachers. When teachers feel that instructional leaders and
supervisors desire primarily to be a resource to help teachers through formative reflective experiences, then there will be a greater chance of success in those experiences. S&I has produced the *Administering Appropriately* handbook, which gives good instruction in this regard. Blase and Blase (2004), Glickman and colleagues (2004), and Marzano and colleagues (2005), have written extensively on the effective qualities of school principals and much of what they have written maybe helpful for seminary principals, inservice leaders, and area directors as well. Given the pervasive nature of dialogic reflection in S&I, these relationships must be built on trust and respect in order to foster positive professional reflection.

Second, instructional leaders and supervisors may increase the impact of teacher reflection by using lesson plan reviews in tandem with classroom observations. While these reflective practices may be inherently dialogic, they also can encourage effective technical and descriptive reflection. A supervisor or instructional leader who is also skilled at making connections to critical reflection will be able to help teachers make those important connections as well. Dave gave an example of how this can be done effectively in Chapter 4.

Third, the researcher suggests that even if instructional leaders and supervisors choose not to incorporate lesson plan reviews in their observations, observers should more consistently employ the pattern of pre-observation preview, observation, and post-observation interview. This will help the leader and the teacher establish the purpose of the observation (perhaps even discuss the level of reflection that should result through the observation and interview experience) and identify criteria for the observation, focus the
observation, and then discuss the observation within clearly identified and prearranged parameters. This may help alleviate the fear of the “element of surprise” from post-observation interviews where the observer begins to report on and evaluate items that the teacher was not even thinking about during the observation. To foster descriptive reflection, the thoughtful observer will focus on being a “mirror” for the teacher (avoiding analysis or judgment as much as possible) and asking the teacher carefully crafted questions that help the teacher consider the rationale behind his actions and identify the aims that he was attempting to accomplish through those behaviors.

Fourth, while the burden for sustained professional development rests primarily with the individual teacher, the instructional leader and supervisor can play a vital and desirable role in that process. Every teacher who was interviewed in this study welcomed the influence, guidance, and support of a caring instructional leader or supervisor who was interested in helping the teacher improve. While reviewing lesson plans and observing classes can be a large part of this process, so can the effective use of the Professional Growth Plan. The researcher feels that this tool produced by S&I could be one of the important keys to the effective sustained culture of professional reflection in S&I—if it used properly and consistently. As teachers and supervisors become more adept at using this tool, they will find ways to integrate all four levels of reflection and move ever closer to “reflection-in-action” and sustained professional development for teachers.

Finally, instructional leaders and supervisors in S&I could increase the impact of teacher reflection by finding ways to engage teachers with more professional literature.
This could involve *The Religious Educator*, talks from the “Talks for Teachers” web site, biographies of Church leaders who have contributed significantly to the history and development of S&I, articles from the *Religious Education* journal, and a host of other available sources. Reading of this kind has the potential to positively impact the view teachers have of themselves as part of a community or culture of religious education. Instructional leaders and supervisors could use this reading as part of an inservice program, as the one described by Gary, or they might encourage professional learning communities or cluster groups that could read and discuss these articles and the impact they have for their teaching. This practice may foster descriptive, dialogic, and critical reflection primarily.

The researcher also has some final suggestions for S&I administrators who make policy for the institution. The first one is to continue to promote the dialogically reflective culture that has come to be accepted as normative in the last ten years. One way to do this is to maintain the present policy of “Teachers Visiting Other Teachers.” While the process of this practice may be greatly improved (through the use of lesson plan reviews, or pre- and post-observation interviews), the support for this practice should not be diminished. Teachers already report that this is a tremendously beneficial practice for them, and it has the potential to become even more impactful as a potentially reflective practice for both the observed and the observer. Every level of reflection can be accomplished through this practice, if it is done correctly. However, if a teacher walks into a classroom as it begins, sits in the back of the class, and then walks out as soon as the class is over, the benefit of this practice is significantly minimized.
Second, while the researcher feels that teachers observing other teachers can be a healthy reflective practice, he also recommends that S&I find ways to develop more “connoisseurship” among observers. Perhaps this could be done by developing specific instruments for helping an observer to look for specific aspects of the S&I Objective in a classroom. Or perhaps specific instruments could be developed for helping observers focus on identifying one particular element of the TLE in a classroom visit. These instruments could be developed in conjunction with the current assessments that are being developed by the Information Services division to help teachers focus on those specific measures. These instruments could include pre-formulated questions that encourage descriptive reflection and plenty of space for the observer to take notes on what he learned from his experience that will help him improve as a teacher. S&I could also develop “connoisseurship” by spending more time training seminary principals and other instructional leaders on how to make their observations more effective through some of the means already mentioned in this chapter. That training would be especially beneficial for new principals—and their faculty!—who usually have no educational administrative training in S&I or otherwise.

Third, S&I could encourage area and local inservice groups to develop more long-term professional learning communities that focus on professional literature and invite teachers to engage dialogically with material that will help them with descriptive and critical reflection. Several teachers interviewed in this study pointed out the “fleeting impact of area inservice” as a challenge in professional development in S&I. Principals and area directors, or local training councils, would need to be trained on how to
organized, maintain, and follow up with these professional learning communities to encourage the kind of reflection and implementation that would lead to sustained professional development.

Fourth, seminary principals primarily could use more training on how to effectively use the Professional Growth Plan. As has already been mentioned, this tool has great potential to be an effective professional development tool when used in conjunction with the “Regular Results Discussion” form. However, most principals have only seen these forms and been told to use them. Very few, if any, have received any proper training on how to use them consistently with their faculty. If they have been trained, the research in this study shows that this training has been largely ineffective to date and should be revised and redone.

Fifth, S&I could help teachers feel more supported in their desires to attend professional conferences. For the reasons articulated by Gary in Chapter 4, these conferences have great reflective potential for teachers. While this may incur some additional expense for substitute teachers occasionally, S&I could probably develop a schedule or rotation for allow teachers to take up to two professional conference days each year. Of course, it would be best if these days could be arranged for nonteaching days; but it might be helpful for teachers who wanted to attend these conferences if they felt like their attendance at such conferences was viewed more favorably.

Any of these suggestions would help to improve a sustained culture of teacher reflection in S&I. It is the view of the researcher that teachers have the primary responsibility for their own reflective practices as an integrated function of their
individual professional development, but that instructional leaders, supervisors, and administrators can play a vital role in the reflective process of teachers in helping them to have an even greater positive impact on the lives and development of students in religious education.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

For S&I in general, this study could precipitate multiple future research possibilities for regarding teacher reflection among seminary teachers in S&I. Given the limitations and delimitations of this study, perhaps one of the most urgent needs in the area of teacher reflection are studies that would focus on various groups of seminary teachers—female teachers, part-time teachers, and called (formerly “volunteer”) teachers—in an effort to seek a more comprehensive understanding of the reflective practices and processes of seminary teachers at large. Another one of the more pressing needs would be further studies on each level of reflection used in the theoretical framework for this research. While this study has shown that the various levels of reflection in the primary theoretical framework are difficult to isolate, further studies could explore each of these levels of reflection in greater depth and even conduct experimental or quasi-experimental studies in an effort to identify how specific reflective practices and processes within each level of reflection might be improved. Another study that might be particularly helpful for clarifying the potential power of descriptive reflection would be to study whether teachers who focus on making more explicit connections between their classroom teaching and the S&I Objective and TLE become
more effective at teacher reflection and perhaps more effective teachers. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted with seminary teachers, instructional leaders, and supervisors to see how their reflective practices change over time, with assignment changes, and based on their experience with other faculty and supervisors, since some data in this study suggests that teacher reflection may be significantly affected by these factors.

Within the larger institution of S&I, there are also several immediate needs for increasing our understanding and improving the practice of teacher reflection. One potential study could focus on the role of principals, area directors, and other instructional leaders in the process of teacher reflection. This would increase our understanding of the challenges they face as they strive to fulfill this role and improve our perspective of their role in this process. Another potential study could focus on teacher reflection among institute teachers. It is the feeling of the researcher that certain factors such as faculty size, years of experience, educational background, and the inherent differences between seminary students and institute students could lead to significantly different findings about reflective practices and processes among institute teachers as opposed to seminary teachers. Some of the same studies recommended for seminary teachers in the preceding paragraph would also need to be conducted for institute teachers to get a clearer perspective of teacher reflection among this group of S&I faculty. Another study, involving a survey and several interviews, could be conducted among S&I administrators to clarify the vision of reflection as a function of professional development within S&I.
In the larger community of religious education, it is the opinion of this researcher that religious educators in S&I and in religious education institutions for other Christian denominations and faiths have much to gain from one another through comparative and collaborative research on teacher reflection. Applying the same theoretical framework used in this study, or the same interpretive models, studies could be conducted in which religious educators in other religious education settings share their own experiences and how they practice teacher reflection in ways that they perceive as having a positive impact on their professional development. Such attention to teacher reflection among professional religious educators has the potential to enhance professional development and improve the effectiveness of religious education and its impact on society.
REFERENCES


Haines, J. R. (2002). *Building professional capacity through collaborative staff development* (Doctoral dissertation). Rowan University, Camden, NJ.


Taylor, H. E. (1995). *Teacher research and reflective narrative analysis: Methods of learning about and from global education* (Doctoral dissertation). The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.


Appendix A

Sample Self-Reflection Tool on the Ten Wisconsin Teaching Standards
Self Reflection Tool on the Ten Wisconsin Teaching Standards

Instructions: This self reflection tool is designed to provide a personal profile of classroom performance assets based on the Wisconsin Teacher Standards for educators. The inventory consists of statements that describe classroom performance related to the Standards for teachers. The profile could be used to identify goals and which standards are addressed in a Professional Development Plan.

Check only one answer per question. Use the “notes” you take as you complete the survey to describe your personal reflections. Respond to every statement. After completing the self-reflection tool, spend some time thinking about how your answers could inform your professional growth plan.
## Self Reflection Instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Ability</th>
<th>Very confident/Strongly agree</th>
<th>Confident/Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain/Disagree</th>
<th>Very uncertain/Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**STANDARD 1 The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the disciplines he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.**

1. I understand the major concepts and tools of inquiry in my discipline(s).

2. I create learning experiences for my students that connect them to the knowledge base of my discipline.

3. I keep abreast of new research and development in my discipline(s).

4. I engage in professional discourse about children’s learning of my discipline(s).

5. I create interdisciplinary learning experiences that integrate knowledge from several disciplines.

**STANDARD 2 The teacher understands how children with broad ranges of ability learn and provides instruction that supports their intellectual, social, and personal development.**

6. I understand how children learn and construct knowledge.

7. I understand that students’ physical, social, emotional, moral, and cognitive development influence learning.

8. I respect the diverse talents of all learners.

9. I use my students’ strengths as a basis for growth, and their errors as an opportunity for learning.
10. I consider my students’ physical, social, emotional, moral, and cognitive development when making instructional decisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Ability</th>
<th>Very confident/Strongly agree</th>
<th>Confident/Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain/Disagree</th>
<th>Very uncertain/Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**STANDARD 3** The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and the barriers that impede learning and can adapt instruction to meet the diverse needs of students, including those with disabilities and exceptionalities.

11. I understand that students have different learning styles.

12. I design instruction that helps use students’ strengths as the basis for their growth and learning.

13. I believe that all children can learn at high levels.


15. I am effective in adapting instruction to accommodate students with exceptional educational needs.

16. I know about strategies to support the learning of students whose first language is not English.

**STANDARD 4** The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies, including the use of technology to encourage children’s development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

17. I understand the different cognitive processes involved in learning.

18. I know how to stimulate the different cognitive processes involved in
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>learning through different instructional techniques, technologies, and resources.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>I value my students’ active participation in the learning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I encourage my students to become independent, critical, and creative thinkers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>I constantly monitor and adjust my instructional strategies in response to students’ feedback and learning progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STANDARD 5</strong> The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>I understand the principles of effective classroom management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>I use a range of strategies to promote positive relationships, cooperation, and meaningful learning experiences in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>I take responsibility for establishing a positive climate in my classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>I understand the importance of peer relationships to establishing a positive climate for learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>I take responsibility for establishing a positive climate in my school as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STANDARD 6</strong> The teacher uses effective verbal and nonverbal communication techniques as well as instructional media and technology to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>I understand how cultural differences can affect communication in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
28. I understand how gender differences can affect communication in the classroom.

29. I recognize the importance of non-verbal as well as verbal communication.

30. I am a thoughtful and responsive listener.

31. I know how to ask questions and stimulate discussion in different ways and for different purposes.

STANDARD 7 The teacher organizes and plans systematic instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.

32. I am able to take contextual considerations (i.e. individual student interests and community resources) into account in planning instruction.

33. I value short- and long-term planning with colleagues.

34. I create learning experiences that are appropriate to curriculum goals.

35. I create learning experiences that are relevant to learners.

36. I create learning experiences that are based on principles of effective instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Ability</th>
<th>Very confident/ Strongly agree</th>
<th>Confident/ Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain/ Disagree</th>
<th>Very uncertain/ Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STANDARD 8 The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the student.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

37. I understand the advantages and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limitations (i.e. validity, reliability, and related concerns) of different types of students’ assessments.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I value ongoing and diverse types of assessments as essential to the instructional process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am committed to using multiple measures to assess student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I maintain useful records of student work and performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I modify teaching and learning strategies based on the results of students’ assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to communicate student progress, knowledgeably and responsibly, based on appropriate indicators, to students, parents, and colleagues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STANDARD 9 The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effect of his or her choices and actions on pupils, parents/families, professionals in the learning community and others and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.**

| I understand methods of inquiry that provide me with a variety of self-assessment and problem-solving strategies. |
| I am aware of the current research on teaching and learning and of resources available for professional learning. |
| I am committed to continually develop and refine my practices that address the individual needs of students. |
| I seek out professional literature, |
colleagues, and other resources to support my own development as a learner and a teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Ability</th>
<th>Very confident/Strongly agree</th>
<th>Confident/Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain/Disagree</th>
<th>Very uncertain/Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STANDARD 10</strong> The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents/families, and agencies in the larger community to support student learning and well being and who acts with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. I understand laws related to students’ rights and teacher responsibilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>49. I respect the privacy of my students.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. I am willing to consult with other professionals regarding the education and well-being of my students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>51. I establish respectful and productive relationships with parents/guardians of all my students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>52. I use community resources to foster student learning</td>
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Appendix B

Copyright Permission Letter and Religion Teacher Self-Evaluation Form
7 February 2010

Ryan S. Gardner
223 S. 200 E., Heber City, UT 84032
435-657-1263

Dear RCL Benziger:

I am in the process of preparing my dissertation in the College of Teacher Education and Leadership at Utah State University. I hope to complete in the Spring of 2011.

I am requesting your permission to include the attached material as shown. I will include acknowledgments and/or appropriate citations to your work as shown and copyright and reprint rights information in a special appendix. The bibliographical citation will appear at the end of the manuscript as shown. Please advise me of any changes you require.

Please indicate your approval of this request by signing in the space provided, attaching any other form or instruction necessary to confirm permission. If you charge a reprint fee for use of your material, please indicate that as well. If you have any questions, please call me at the number above.

I hope you will be able to reply immediately. If you are not the copyright holder, please forward my request to the appropriate person or institution.

Thank you for your cooperation,

[signature]

I hereby give permission to Ryan S. Gardner to reprint the following material in (his/her dissertation).

[Request to use “Religion Teacher Self-Evaluation Form” and reprint in modified form in appendix.]
Religion Teacher Self-Evaluation Form

Self-evaluation is an important element in your formation as a religion teacher. Use the following form to assess your particular areas of strength and areas where growth is needed. Then create an action plan to further your growth in any areas necessary. It will be helpful to revisit your action plan and use this self-evaluation several times throughout the school year.

Name ___________________________  Grade Level  ______  Date ________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promoting Knowledge of the Faith</th>
<th>Consistently</th>
<th>Adequately</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teach Catholic beliefs and traditions appropriate to the age level of the children</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhibit an enthusiasm for the Catholic faith and a desire to continue to learn about it</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participate in various workshops and courses to further knowledge about the Catholic faith</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liturgical Education</th>
<th>Consistently</th>
<th>Adequately</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help the children learn about and celebrate the Church’s liturgical year</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage the children to fully participate in worship and the sacraments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regularly participate in the liturgical life of the parish</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral Formation</th>
<th>Consistently</th>
<th>Adequately</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foster children’s understanding of Christian morality and good decision-making skills</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Help children apply Catholic, Christian values to their everyday lives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model Catholic values for the children</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching to Pray</th>
<th>Consistently</th>
<th>Adequately</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assist children in understanding the importance of prayer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Incorporate a variety of prayer forms into lessons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare and utilize a prayer area for the classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take time for personal spiritual renewal and have a regular practice of prayer</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education for Community Life</th>
<th>Consistently</th>
<th>Adequately</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make the classroom a loving Christian community so that children can experience and understand its importance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicate well with parents and include them from time to time in class projects or lessons; encourage the children to share what they have learned with their families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognize and affirm the unique gifts of each child in the class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make an effort to spend time sharing ideas with other teachers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend teacher meetings and gatherings</td>
<td></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missionary Initiation</th>
<th>Consistently</th>
<th>Adequately</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the children to participate in service activities offered either through religion class, the school, or the larger parish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Help the children make faith connections to events and people in their families, local community, and around the world

Challenge the children to think of the many different ways they can make a difference in the world

Strengths:

_____________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Areas for Growth:

________________________________________________________________________

Action Plan:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Appendix C

Teacher Self-Evaluation Handbook, Seventh-Day Adventist School System

Teacher Performance Appraisal

Rationale

Teachers are qualified experience practitioners, who are expected to see that everything is right all the time. Performance appraisal, however, is in the teaching profession now. Schools in general and some Adventist schools in particular urgently need to have a regular, credible and professional appraisal process in place.

A teacher must have ownership and responsibility in their own appraisal, progress and development. Approval on its own is useless unless the purpose is for the teacher to realize they need a different occupation. The purpose of appraisal is to focus on areas where we can have teacher professional development to enhance effectiveness and customer satisfaction. Change and growth are the focus, not appraisal.

We are offering a service through our school. We need to get it right to prove we are on target, and only then can we tell our Board or the public we have it right.

The simple process of having your mentor teachers watch you teach and look over your work is needed for someone with 20 years teaching experience as well as an inductee. We need to put away our inhibitions and become professionals supporting each other.

The day may not be too distant when our teaching practice is brought under scrutiny by courts. This is a reality. A credible performance appraisal process will not only undermine litigation, but ensure it does not happen.

The Upper Valley Adventist School administration team wishes to support you in 2000-2001 in helping you facilitate a performance appraisal process that will help you focus on your needs for enhancement and progress.

Help us help you.

Yours sincerely,
Wayne Hughes
Principal
Introduction

Self-evaluation is an integral part of a teacher’s professional growth and development. Every successful teacher engages periodically in such an exercise. This document merely guides and formalizes the process. In cooperation with your mentor teachers, it leads to collaborative planning of goals for continued professional growth and support from the system. Ultimate objectives are teacher’s satisfaction and excellence in education.

Instructions

It is suggested that the first action should be to write your Vision Statement. This is your personal vision for your ministry and will necessarily affect the other responses. Then, complete the document by marking each applicable item on the five point scale. A score of 1 is low and a score of 5 is high.

There is provision to analyze your scores and elaborate on your perceived strengths and weaknesses in the section following each part of the questionnaire.

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Introduction
Instructions
Vision Statement

Questionnaires

The Teacher in the Classroom:
a) Instructional Planning
b) Teacher Concerns for the Student
c) Teacher Techniques
d) Student Evaluation
e) Classroom Management

The Teacher as a Professional:
a) Professional Growth
b) Professional Knowledge
c) Staff Relations
d) Personal Attributes
e) Community Relations

Acknowledgements

This document is based on one prepared by the Newfoundland Teachers Association.
Vision Statement
Please write your vision for education for Upper Valley Adventist School.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

1. The Teacher in the Classroom

**Instructional Planning**
As a Teacher I:

1. Plan effectively for both long and short term  1 2 3 4 5 NA
2. Plan lessons on a daily basis  1 2 3 4 5 NA
3. Integrate with other subjects areas where appropriate  1 2 3 4 5 NA
4. Schedule for a balance within and among subjects  1 2 3 4 5 NA
5. Recognize and plan for varying individual needs  1 2 3 4 5 NA
6. Effectively plan the use of available facilities, equipment and resources  1 2 3 4 5 NA
7. Plan to take advantage of community resources to aid teaching  1 2 3 4 5 NA
8. Plan regular assessment of student learning.  1 2 3 4 5 NA
9. Adapt instruction to meet changing needs and conditions  1 2 3 4 5 NA
10. Ensure that the Biblical Word under-girds my teaching  1 2 3 4 5 NA
11. Promote the idea of service to God and human kind over self-serving.  1 2 3 4 5 NA
12. Actively include curriculum frameworks and materials  1 2 3 4 5 NA

I believe I plan well in the following ways:

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

My planning needs improvement in the following areas:
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

2. Teacher Concerns for the Student

As a Teacher I:

1. Consistently model the behavior I expect of students  1 2 3 4 5 NA
2. Clearly state my expectations of behavior  1 2 3 4 5 NA
3. Encourage students in the practice of self-discipline  1 2 3 4 5 NA
4. Minimize student exclusion as a disciplinary measure  1 2 3 4 5 NA
5. Avoid deliberate embarrassment of students  1 2 3 4 5 NA
6. Control my own emotions in discipline 1 2 3 4 5 NA
7. Encourage student creativity, exploration and individuality 1 2 3 4 5 NA
8. Listen attentively to students 1 2 3 4 5 NA
9. Am sensitive and responsive to individual students and their needs 1 2 3 4 5 NA
10. Commend effort and work well done 1 2 3 4 5 NA
11. Have a pastoral concern for students that result in action 1 2 3 4 5 NA
12. Take a deep interest in the spiritual growth of students. 1 2 3 4 5 NA

I believe I relate well with students in the following ways:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

My relationship with students needs reconsideration in the following areas:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

C. Teaching Techniques

As a Teacher I:

1. Use a variety of teaching methodologies 1 2 3 4 5 NA
2. Integrate subject areas where appropriate to demonstrate relationships 1 2 3 4 5 NA
3. Use teaching resource materials prudently 1 2 3 4 5 NA
4. Elicit student responses to develop interpretive, analytical and evaluative skills 1 2 3 4 5 NA
5. Provide adequate thinking time after posing a question 1 2 3 4 5 NA
6. Allow for students of differing ability and background to experience success 1 2 3 4 5 NA
7. Respond positively to pertinent students questions 1 2 3 4 5 NA
8. Adjust my vocabulary to an appropriate student’s level 1 2 3 4 5 NA
9. Guide students in the discovery of concepts, principles and generalizations 1 2 3 4 5 NA
10. Ensure adequate opportunity for student participation in class 1 2 3 4 5 NA
11. Ensure that students understand the objectives on the lesson 1 2 3 4 5 NA
12. Ensure that my teaching methods are based on Christian principles. 1 2 3 4 5 NA

I believe my teaching techniques are satisfactory in the following areas:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
My teaching techniques need review in the following areas:

D. Student Assessment

As a Teacher:

1. My assessment program is:
   a) consistent with the school assessment policy 1 2 3 4 5 NA
   b) consistent with the stated objectives of the course / syllabus 1 2 3 4 5 NA
   c) consistent with the current trends in assessment moving to outcomes 1 2 3 4 5 NA
2. I use standardized achievement and diagnostic tests when appropriate 1 2 3 4 5 NA
3. I vary my approaches to assessment, including skills knowledge 1 2 3 4 5 NA
4. My assessment program provides for assessing outcomes in the Key Learning Areas 1 2 3 4 5 NA
5. I use assessment results to:
   a) analyze effectiveness on my teaching 1 2 3 4 5 NA
   b) plan instruction and review 1 2 3 4 5 NA
   c) diagnose student’s strengths and weaknesses 1 2 3 4 5 NA
   d) implement strategies to meet needs as diagnosed 1 2 3 4 5 NA
6. I keep accurate assessment records 1 2 3 4 5 NA
7. My reporting to parents is based on the assessment program 1 2 3 4 5 NA
8. My reporting program is consistent with school policy 1 2 3 4 5 NA
9. I frequently check student work as part of my assessment plan 1 2 3 4 5 NA
10. I encourage and reward quality work 1 2 3 4 5 NA
11. I periodically evaluate my assessment policy to maintain relevance 1 2 3 4 5 NA
I believe my assessment program is satisfactory in the following areas:

My assessment program needs review in the following areas:

5. Classroom Management

As a Teacher I:

1. Ensure that lighting, temperature and ventilation are optimum for the physical well-being of students 1 2 3 4 5 NA
2. Ensure suitable desk size and seating arrangements 1 2 3 4 5 NA
3. Have developed effective routines for dealing with:
   a) attendance 1 2 3 4 5 NA
   b) lateness 1 2 3 4 5 NA
   c) excusing students from room 1 2 3 4 5 NA
   d) collection, distribution and correction of assignments 1 2 3 4 5 NA
   e) distribution of supplies and equipment 1 2 3 4 5 NA
   f) behavioral problems 1 2 3 4 5 NA
   g) student duties 1 2 3 4 5 NA

4. Ensure that the students receive maximum instructional time by:
   a) starting classes on time 1 2 3 4 5 NA
   b) maintaining close supervision 1 2 3 4 5 NA
   c) avoiding early dismissals 1 2 3 4 5 NA

5. Maintaining my room as an orderly working environment 1 2 3 4 5 NA
6. Avoid accumulation of unused materials 1 2 3 4 5 NA
7. Have effective dismissal, assembly and emergency drill routines 1 2 3 4 5 NA
8. Keep attendance register and cumulative records up to date 1 2 3 4 5 NA
9. Perform other clerical duties promptly and efficiently 1 2 3 4 5 NA
10. Provide for students with physical disadvantages 1 2 3 4 5 NA
11. Ensure my daily plan book is up to date 1 2 3 4 5 NA

I believe my classroom management practices are satisfactory in the following areas:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

My classroom management practices need review in the following areas
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

The Teacher as a Professional

A. Professional Growth

As a teacher I:

1. Participate in conferences and workshops when possible 1 2 3 4 5 NA
2. Read professional materials 1 2 3 4 5 NA
3. Cooperate with colleagues to improve curriculum and instructional techniques 1 2 3 4 5 NA
4. Endeavor to enhance the dignity and status of the teaching profession 1 2 3 4 5 NA
5. Adhere to the Code of Ethics for Adventist Teachers 1 2 3 4 5 NA
6. Am interested in the better operation of the whole school system 1 2 3 4 5 NA
7. Am involved in formal academic studies 1 2 3 4 5 NA
8. Periodically review the Self Evaluation Handbook 1 2 3 4 5 NA
9. Am familiar with the Southwestern Union Education Code and Texas
Conference policies and seek to influence their formulation through appropriate channels

10. Have a current First Aid certificate

I believe my professional growth is adequate in the following areas

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

My professional growth needs review in the following areas

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

B. Professional Knowledge

As a teacher I:

1. Am academically competent for my teaching assignment
2. Have adequate knowledge of learning theories
3. Have a working knowledge of child and adolescent psychology
4. Am familiar with trends in curriculum
5. Am able to discuss current research in my area of instruction
6. Am familiar with school and board expectations and policies
7. Have become familiar with teacher=s rights, duties and responsibilities
8. Understand and accept the philosophy, aims and objectives of SDA education
9. Understand and work to implement the thrust of SDA curriculum
10. Seek to ensure that state curriculum requirements are met in the context of SDA Christian education

I believe my professional knowledge is adequate in the following areas

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

My professional knowledge needs review in the following areas

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
C. Staff Relations

As a teacher I:

1. Attempt to be enthusiastic, friendly and promote harmony in the school  1 2 3 4 5 NA
2. Readily accept my fair share of responsibilities  1 2 3 4 5 NA
3. Treat each staff member well and equally and offer assistance as needed  1 2 3 4 5 NA
4. Welcome new staff and offer assistance as needed  1 2 3 4 5 NA
5. Maintain good working relationships with all school personnel  1 2 3 4 5 NA
6. Accept fair and constructive criticism  1 2 3 4 5 NA
7. Keep an open mind to suggestions for improvement  1 2 3 4 5 NA
8. Develop initiative in trialing new ideas  1 2 3 4 5 NA
9. Refrain from criticizing the staff of the school publicly  1 2 3 4 5 NA
10. Contribute to staff meetings by being prepared to speak to agenda items  1 2 3 4 5 NA
11. Share ideas and materials with others  1 2 3 4 5 NA

I believe my relationship with school staff is satisfactory in the following areas:

My relationships need review in the following areas:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. Personal Attributes

As a teacher I:

1. Demonstrate warmth, friendliness and sensitivity to other’s feelings  1 2 3 4 5 NA
2. Demonstrate a sense of humor and understanding  1 2 3 4 5 NA
3. Am enthusiastic for the teaching profession  1 2 3 4 5 NA
4. Possess a positive self-concept  1 2 3 4 5 NA
5. Am a good listener  1 2 3 4 5 NA
6. Demonstrate good grooming and acceptable standards of dress  1 2 3 4 5 NA
7. Model good work habits of punctuality, dependability, efficiency and accuracy  1 2 3 4 5 NA
8. Demonstrate good health habits and physical fitness  1 2 3 4 5 NA
9. Take an active interest in my church  1 2 3 4 5 NA

I believe my personal attributes enhance my teaching in these ways:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

My personal attributes need some attention in the following areas:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
E Community Relations

As a teacher, I:

1. Am actively involved and appreciated in my local SDA church
2. Plan my lesson outcomes to include community matters and service
3. Involve community presenters and parent helpers
4. Talk to parents about their child’s progress at least twice a year
5. Visit parents in their home
6. Am perceived as an adequate teacher by students' parents
7. Have students who willingly choose the electives I teach
8. Have students who seek my help and advice in school and personal matters
9. Try and have at least one personal conversation with each pupil per term
10. Have students who invite me to participate in their events
11. Have achieved a healthy rapport / relationship with my students
12. The community sees me as a suitable role model

I believe my acceptance in this community contributes to my teaching in the following ways:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Areas where appreciation, confidence of and acceptance could be enhanced are:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D

Survey Questions for Teacher Reflection Study
Survey Questions for Teacher Reflection Study

[Note: Because this survey will be conducted using Survey Monkey, the format for the survey will look differently than it does here, but the questions and response format will remain the same.]

Introduction to survey: You have been invited to participate in a survey of full-time seminary teachers in the Seminary and Institutes of Religion for the dissertation study of Ryan S. Gardner. This survey focuses on the professional reflection of full-time seminary teachers. Teachers may be said to be engaging in professional reflection when they are engaged in discussions and activities that encourage “deliberate thinking about action with a view to its improvement.” Your time and thoughtful responses to the questions in this survey are much appreciated. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Page 1—Demographic Questions

How old are you? 24-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  61+

How many years have you been a full-time seminary teacher? 1-3  4-7  8-10  11-15  16-20  21-25  26-30  31+

How many different assignments have you had in S&I?   1-2   3-4   5-6   7-8   9+

If you are currently a seminary instructor, have you ever served in an administrative position, such as seminary principal or coordinator? Yes  No

Have you ever served in the position of in-service leader? Yes  No

Were you hired through one of the pre-service centers? Yes  No

Is your bachelor’s degree in an education-related field? Yes  No

Do you have a graduate degree? Yes  No  If yes, please list them:

Have you participated in other professional education training experiences—religious or otherwise—such as university courses, teaching seminars, conferences, enrichment lectures or courses, etc.? Yes  No  If yes, please list or describe them:
**Page 2—Technical Reflection Questions**

1. How often do the following people observe your teaching and give you feedback:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>At least weekly</th>
<th>2-3 times/month</th>
<th>At least monthly</th>
<th>At least quarterly</th>
<th>1-2 times/year</th>
<th>Less than once per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague</td>
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<td>Supervisor</td>
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<td>Students</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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</table>

2. When the following individuals observe your teaching and give you feedback, how would you describe the impact of that feedback on your professional development?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very impactful</th>
<th>Somewhat impactful</th>
<th>Not very impactful</th>
<th>Not impactful at all</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague</td>
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<td>Supervisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. How often do you invite the following individuals to review your lesson plans and give you feedback on them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>At least weekly</th>
<th>2-3 times/month</th>
<th>At least monthly</th>
<th>At least quarterly</th>
<th>1-2 times/year</th>
<th>Less than once per year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague</td>
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<td>Supervisor</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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</table>

4. When the following individuals review your lesson plans and give you feedback, how would you describe the impact of that feedback on your professional development?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very impactful</th>
<th>Somewhat impactful</th>
<th>Not very impactful</th>
<th>Not impactful at all</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague</td>
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<td>Supervisor</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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</table>
## Page 3—Descriptive Reflection Questions

1. How often do you…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>At least weekly</th>
<th>2-3 times/month</th>
<th>At least monthly</th>
<th>At least quarterly</th>
<th>1-2 times/year</th>
<th>Never</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss your use of practices, skills, techniques, etc. with another person?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observe other teachers teaching and give them feedback on their teaching?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Write reflectively about what you have gained from these observations?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend a local in-service where the focus is on improving teaching?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend an area in-service where the focus is on improving teaching?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Write about your own teaching experiences, such as in a personal journal?</td>
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</table>

2. How would you describe the impact of the following activities on your professional development?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Very impactful</th>
<th>Somewhat impactful</th>
<th>Not very impactful</th>
<th>Not impactful at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussing your use of teaching practices, skills, techniques, etc. with another person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observing other teachers and giving them feedback on their teaching</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing reflectively about what you have gained from these observations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending local in-service</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending area in-service</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing about your own teaching experiences, such as in a professional journal</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Page 4—Dialogic Reflection Questions

1. **Please indicate how often you read from the following resources:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>At least weekly</th>
<th>2-3 times/month</th>
<th>At least monthly</th>
<th>At least quarterly</th>
<th>1-2 times/year</th>
<th>Less than once per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching the Gospel Handbook</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Talks for Teachers” (website)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching Seminary Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charge to Religious Educators</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Religious Educator</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. **How would you describe the impact of your reading from the following resources on your professional development?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Very impactful</th>
<th>Somewhat impactful</th>
<th>Not very impactful</th>
<th>Not impactful at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching the Gospel Handbook</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Talks for Teachers” (website)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching Seminary Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charge to Religious Educators</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Religious Educator</td>
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</table>

3. **If you subscribe to any of the following types of journals, please indicate how frequently you read from these journals:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Journal</th>
<th>At least weekly</th>
<th>1-2 times/month</th>
<th>At least monthly</th>
<th>At least quarterly</th>
<th>1-2 times/year</th>
<th>Less than once per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional education journals</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(AERA, Teacher Education Quarterly, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional religious education journals (BYU Studies, Religious Education, etc. NOT The Religious Educator)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. **If you read from the following types of journals, please describe the impact of your study from these journals on your professional development:**

| Impact of Study | Very impactful | Somewhat impactful | Not very impactful | Not impactful |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|
|                 |                |                    |                    |              |               |
5. If you have participated in, or are now participating in, the Apprenticeship Program, how would you describe the impact of this program on your professional development?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional education journals</th>
<th>Professional religious education journals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very impactful</th>
<th>Somewhat impactful</th>
<th>Not very impactful</th>
<th>Not impactful at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. If you ever participated in the Teacher Support Program with Teacher Support Consultants, how would you describe the impact that your experience with this program had on your professional development?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page 5—Critical Reflection Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. If you participated in the Professional Development Program (PDP), how would you describe the impact you feel this had on your professional development?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you participated in this program, what do you feel you have retained the most from this program?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 2. If you have ever read or studied the life history, or biography, of any professional educator(s), please describe the impact of this on your professional development: |
| Please list the educator(s) you have studied: |
| 3. What do you feel you have retained most from reading this life history or biography? |
4. If you have ever read or studied the life history, or biography, of any religious educator(s), please describe the impact of this on your professional development:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very impactful</th>
<th>Somewhat impactful</th>
<th>Not very impactful</th>
<th>Not impactful at all</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Please list the religious educators you have studied:

5. What do you feel you have retained most from reading this life history or biography?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At least weekly</th>
<th>At least monthly</th>
<th>At least quarterly</th>
<th>I have looked at it once or twice</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. How often do you look at the Teaching and Learning Emphasis Wiki online?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>1-5 times</th>
<th>6-10 times</th>
<th>11 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. How many times would you estimate that you have contributed to the TLE Wiki online?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consistently (every year)</th>
<th>Pretty consistently (almost every year)</th>
<th>Hardly ever, if at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. How consistently would you say you have used the Professional Growth Plan (or equivalent) provided by S&I?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At least weekly</th>
<th>2-3 times/month</th>
<th>At least monthly</th>
<th>At least quarterly</th>
<th>1-2 times/year</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9. When you use a Professional Growth Plan, how often do you review it throughout the year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very impactful</th>
<th>Somewhat impactful</th>
<th>Not very impactful</th>
<th>Not impactful at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. How would you describe the impact of your use of the Professional Growth Plan on your professional development?
11. The next phase of this research study on teacher reflection will entail a single visit from the researcher. During the visit, the researcher will observe one class and conduct a brief pre-observation interview and post-observation interview with you. Only the interviews will be digitally recorded. Once the interview is transcribed, you may be contacted by the researcher to check portions of the transcription for accuracy. If you would be willing to participate in the next phase of this study, please enter your e-mail address below. (Note: Collecting your e-mail address at this point will NOT connect your e-mail to any of your answers throughout the rest of this survey.)
Appendix E

Letter of Information
The following is the Letter of Information for the interview portion of this research study:

Letter of Information  
Teacher Reflection among Professional Seminary Faculty in the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion in the Church Educational System  
Dissertation Research for Ed.D. in Curriculum & Instruction

Introduction/Purpose Dr. Michael K. Freeman, associate professor in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership at Utah State University (USU), and Ryan Gardner, a doctoral candidate in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership at USU, are conducting a research study to describe the process and explain the nature of teacher reflection among professional seminary faculty in the Church Educational System for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Reflection in this study is defined as “deliberate thinking about action with a view to its improvement.” The purpose of the study is to help Ryan Gardner gather data that will hopefully provide a theoretical framework for a better understanding of teacher reflection among professional seminary faculty in S&I, and among religious educators in general. You have been asked to take part because Ryan Gardner has identified you as a useful source of information about this subject. You will be one of six participants in the interview and observation portion of this study.

Procedures If you agree to be in this research study, the following will happen to you. Ryan Gardner will contact you to set up a classroom observation and interview. Prior to the observation, there will be a 15-minute pre-observation meeting. The purpose of this observation is to gather data about the process of teacher reflection in the daily classroom teaching environment. Following the observation, you will participate in a 45-minute interview concerning teacher reflection practices and procedures. The interview will be digitally recorded for eventual transcription. You will be asked questions such as: What opportunities did you have during your experience in the pre-service program to reflect on your teaching and teaching practices? What kinds of reading or study activities do you engage in that help you to reflect on your role as a teacher, improve practice, and develop professionally? What kinds of writing activities do you engage in that help you to reflect on your role as a teacher, improve practice, and develop professionally? What role, if any, do you feel that your principal or area director have in your own reflective practices
as a teacher? This data will be valuable for helping us better understand the daily reflective practices of seminary teachers in S&I.

**New Findings** During the course of this research study, you will be informed of any significant new findings (either good or bad), such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participation in the research, or new alternatives to participation that might cause you to change your mind about continuing in the study. If new information is obtained that is relevant or useful to you, or if the procedures and/or methods change at any time throughout this study, your consent to continue participating in this study will be obtained again.

**Risks** Participation in this research study may involve some added risks or discomforts. Although the researcher is not there to evaluate your teaching skills or effectiveness, you might feel some discomfort during the classroom observation visit(s). You might feel a certain amount of discomfort during the interview because Ryan Gardner requests that the interviews be audio taped for eventual transcription. You may also feel some discomfort if you are hesitant to engage in self-evaluative or self-reflective procedures or processes. However, this study is considered to be minimal risk.

**Benefits** There may not be any direct benefit to you from these procedures; however, many teachers have found that participating in experiences that encourage teacher reflection are beneficial for them professionally and personally. It is also hoped that the information gathered from this research will be useful in helping faculty and administration in S&I to better understand the practice of teacher reflection, which is a key aspect of teacher development and autonomous, self-initiated and self-maintained professional improvement. It is hoped that this research will help teachers and administrators to better facilitate teacher reflection in the future so that teachers will be better able to accomplish the purposes and objectives of S&I. In addition, the larger field of study surrounding religious education will benefit by this contribution to a presently shallow reservoir of professional knowledge on the subject of teacher reflection within the religious education context.

**Explanation & offer to answer questions** Ryan Gardner has endeavored to explain this research study to you and answer your questions. If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may reach Dr. Michael K. Freeman at (435) 797-3939.

**Voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw without consequence** Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence or loss of benefits. You may also choose to refuse to answer any questions during the interview or observation experience.

**Confidentiality** Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Only the student researcher will have access to the data which will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked room. Your privacy and safety are a primary concern in this study. Your name will only be known to the student researcher. When the student researcher transcribes your interview, the student researcher will assign you a
pseudonym so that the transcripts will not contain your name to protect your privacy. All your records and any identifiable information will be locked in a cabinet in a secure location in which only the student researcher has access to maintain confidentiality. Audiotapes of your interview will be destroyed four weeks after the researcher’s interview with you. Other identifiable information, including the code linking you to this study, will be destroyed after one year of your interview.

**IRB Approval Statement**

The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at USU has approved this research study. If you have any pertinent questions or concerns about your rights or a research-related injury, you may contact the IRB Administrator at (435) 797-0567. If you have a concern or complaint about the research and you would like to contact someone other than the research team, you may contact the IRB Administrator to obtain information or to offer input at irb@usu.edu.

**Investigator Statement**

“I certify that the research study has been explained to the individual, by me or my research staff, and that the individual understands the nature and purpose, the possible risks and benefits associated with taking part in this research study. Any questions that have been raised have been answered.”

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Michael K. Freeman, Ph.D.    Ryan S. Gardner
Principal Investigator     Doctoral Candidate
(Telephone—435-797-3939)    (Telephone—801-240-8702)
Appendix F

Observation/Interview Protocol
Pre-Observation Conference Procedure

(Thank the participant for their participation.)

Ask the participant if there is anything about this observation that they are nervous or uncomfortable about.

Questions for participants:

(Technical; Descriptive) What are your learning objectives for your lesson today?

(Open) How did you decide on these objectives?

(Dialogic) What professional experiences or activities have you had that you feel contributed to your selection of these objectives or activities (i.e. Professional Growth Plan goals, recent in-services, journal articles read, observing other teachers, evaluation of students needs, etc.)?

(Critical) How do you feel that your lesson today fits with your overall vision and what you hope to accomplish as a religious educator?

(Critical) How do you see your lesson objectives as accomplishing the larger purpose of S&I?

(Technical; Descriptive) Do you anticipate any problems or challenges during your lesson today? (Technical; Descriptive) If so, how do you plan to deal with these problems or challenges?

Ask the participant if they have any other questions.

(Thank the participant again for their participation.)

Classroom Observation (Data Collection Strategy: Selected Verbatim)

The researcher will take notes on the dialogue and other noticeable interactions between teacher and students related to the teaching objectives and activities for the lesson; challenges that arise during the class and teacher responses to those challenges; and other behaviors that that will give the teacher data to reflect on after the observation.

Suggested Interview Questions

These interviews will follow a semi-structured format, using some of the following recommended questions:
(Thank the participant again for their participation.)

*Post-Observation Questions*

1. (Technical; Descriptive) How well do you feel you accomplished your objectives for your lesson today? (Critical) How do you think what you accomplished today helped you to accomplish your larger goals as a religious educator?

2. (Descriptive; Dialogic) As you taught today, did you think of any other objectives or activities that you would have liked to include or try? How do you think these might have changed or improved your lesson?

3. (Descriptive) Did the students respond the way you had hoped or anticipated during this lesson? Was there anything different that you hadn’t anticipated?

4. (Descriptive; Dialogic) What challenges did you face in teaching today? How do you feel about the way you handled those challenges?

5. (Descriptive; Dialogic) Is there anything you would like to learn or improve on as a result of your lesson today? What resources will you use to find out what you would like to know about that?

*General Teacher Reflection Questions*

6. (Open) What kinds of reflective practices do you engage in *prior* to teaching?

7. (Open) What kinds of reflective practices do you engage in *during* teaching?

8. (Open) What kinds of reflective practices do you engage in *after* teaching?

9. (Dialogic; Critical) What would you say are the specific needs of your students in your current assignment? How do you feel the needs of the students impact the way you teach?

10. (Dialogic) What role, if any, do you feel that your principal or area director have in your own reflective practices as a teacher? How do they help you think about your teaching? How do they help you in your professional development?

11. (Dialogic) What kinds of reading activities do you engage in that help you to reflect on your role as a teacher, improve practice, and develop professionally?

12. (Open) What kinds of writing activities do you engage in that help you to reflect on your role as a teacher, improve practice, and develop professionally?
13. (Open) Do you have other conversations with other people, such as relatives or a spouse, that help you reflect on your role as a teacher, improve practice, and develop professionally?

14. (Open) What impact would you say the Professional Growth Plan has had on your development as a professional religious educator?

15. How do you think your educational background (college, post-graduate, etc.) prepared you for teaching seminary?

16. If you had to choose one professional activity or exercise that has contributed the most significantly to your professional development as a teacher, what would you say that is and why?

17. What are your overall impressions about S&I’s approach to professional development?

18. Do you think having your lesson plans reviewed has more or less impact on your professional development than being observed by someone else and getting feedback from them? Why do you feel this way?

19. What do you think is your biggest need as a teacher professionally?
CURRICULUM VITAE

RYAN S. GARDNER

CAREER OBJECTIVE:

To secure and sustain a career in a growing, dynamic religious education institution that values religious education as an integrated process by which individuals are fostered in the development of religious knowledge, belief, and practice so that they become a positive influence in a moral society.

EDUCATION:

BA in English, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. (5/1998) GPA: 4.0 Focused on medieval literature and critical theory, President’s Honor Roll, Phi Beta Kappa.

MA in Religious Education, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. (12/2002) Grad GPA: 3.96 Thesis focused on the historical concepts of Zion and New Jerusalem in America from early colonialism to 1835 with a comparison to the teachings of Joseph Smith, Jr.

PhD in Education, Utah State University, Logan, Utah. (5/2011) Grad GPA: 3.96 Dissertation research on teacher reflection among professional seminary faculty of the Church Educational System of the LDS Church.

EXPERIENCE:

PROFESSIONAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR, Church Educational System of the LDS Church (6/1998-Present)

Teaching: Taught seminary (secondary-level) and institute (college level) courses for 11 years. Scripture-based courses as well as applied religion courses.

Administration: In-service leader for one year at Heber Seminary, responsible for training assessment and in-service planning; institute coordinator for one year for Heber UT Wasatch Institute, responsible for teaching courses, increasing enrollment through activities, campus recognition, and cooperation with local Church leaders, and supervising institute teachers; seminary principal for three years at Park City Seminary, teaching courses, planning in-service training for faculty, managing budget and resources.
Curriculum development: Worked as instructional designer in curriculum services for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion from 6/2009 to present. Design and develop various curricula for international use.


“Beyond the Tower of Babel”: Presentation paper focused on the correlation between race identity development and religious identity development.

COLLOQUIUM PRESENTATION, Religious Education Association, Denver, Colorado (11/2010).

“Teacher Reflection That Encourages Transformative Teaching and Learning”: Presentation focused on presenting preliminary results of current research on teacher reflection among professional religious educators.