A Phenomenological Study of Professional Identity Change in Released-time Seminary Teachers

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY CHANGE
IN RELEASED-TIME SEMINARY TEACHERS

by

Mark D. Mason

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ABSTRACT

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Many practitioners commonly deal with implementing a change that is imposed by an organization. Some imposed changes require practitioners to alter more than what they do in practice but also to change their identity. Many researchers have studied identity change through the lens of sociocultural theory, specifically utilizing communities of practice theory (CoP). However, the majority of these studies used CoP theory as a vehicle to implement the imposed change. Yet some studies have found that after the trial period ends many practitioners revert back to the way they performed in practice prior to the study. One reason for this problem could be that the nature of the change experience that practitioners must undergo is not understood.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to reveal the nature of the change experience of six released-time seminary teachers in response to the adoption of the teaching and learning emphasis (TLE) within the Seminaries and Institutes of
Religion for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Specifically, the research question was “What is the nature and meaning of the change experience of a sample of released-time seminary teachers who are considered to be effective at learning to understand and implement TLE”? Researching S&I teachers’ change experience is important because it may relate not only to the needs of the S&I organization, but also in a broader sense to the nature of the experience of practitioners who undergo an imposed change by the organization for which they work that alters their professional identity.

Three central themes were found that represented the nature of the change experience for the sample group. The themes were represented as transformational, sociocultural, and self-reflective change. Each participant’s experience varied in the particular details of his individual change experience. Nevertheless, all participants experienced some degree or kind of transformational change within their particular configuration of knowledge, character, and professional practice. Furthermore, all study participants engaged in sociocultural learning practices to facilitate their change. Finally, study participants experienced self-reflective changes.
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

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Many practitioners commonly deal with implementing a change that is imposed by an organization. Some imposed changes require practitioners to alter more than what they do in practice but also to change their identity. Many researchers have studied identity change through the lens of sociocultural theory, specifically utilizing communities of practice (CoP) theory. However, the majority of these studies has used CoP theory as a vehicle to implement the imposed change. Yet some studies have found that after the trial period ends many practitioners revert back to the way they performed in practice prior to the study. One reason for this problem could be that the nature of the change experience that practitioners must undergo is not understood.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to reveal the nature of the change six released-time seminary teachers experienced in response to the adoption of the teaching and learning emphasis (TLE) within the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion
(S&I) for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Researching S&I teachers’ change experience is important because it may relate not only to the needs of the S&I organization, but also in a broader sense to the general understanding of practitioners who must understand and implement a change imposed upon them by the organization for which they work. Participants were interviewed to collect descriptions of their experience with the change. The interviews were analyzed using hermeneutics, a method of interpreting written text. From the analysis specific themes were developed that in the end were formed into a single interpretation. Three central themes were found. The themes were represented as transformational, sociocultural, and self-reflective change. Each participant’s experience varied in the particular details of his individual change experience.
I would like to Dr. Nick Eastmond, my committee chair, who both guided and pushed me to finish my dissertation. Thank you Dr. Eastmond for your tireless support throughout this process and your willingness to go the extra mile. I would also like to thank each member of my committee. Each of you has contributed to my success in very meaningful ways. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Byron Burnham for being willing to experiment with the idea of a distance education doctorate. Without this effort to experiment I could not have attained my goal.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Many practitioners commonly deal with implementing a change that is imposed by an organization. An imposed change could be any requirement that necessitates that practitioners alter their practice. For instance, the requirements of No Child Left Behind or National Council of Teachers of Mathematics could constitute an imposed change. Furthermore, some imposed changes require practitioners to alter more than what they do in practice but also who they are. This kind of change is referred to as identity change. Identity change involves practitioners fundamentally altering aspects of their knowledge, skill, and attitudes regarding their professional practice (Wenger, 1998).

Many researchers have studied identity change through the lens of sociocultural theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leont’ev, 1974; Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural learning involves the idea that practitioners learn in situated practice through social interaction with other members of their professional community (M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Specifically, this dissertation will focus primarily on the adoption of imposed changes utilizing an instance of sociocultural learning known as communities of practice (CoP) theory (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Many researchers have examined the influence of CoP theory on adopting an imposed change that alters practitioners’ identities. The majority of these studies used CoP theory as a vehicle to implement the imposed change. For instance, Akerson, Cullen, and Hanson (2009)
studied the effect of CoP theory in professional development settings to assist teachers in implementing nature of science (NOS). There are many studies showing the value of CoP theory at assisting practitioners in the change process (Chesbro & Boxler, 2010; Clausen, Aquino, & Wideman, 2009; Given et al., 2010; Glazer, Hannafin, Polly, & Rich, 2009). Yet some studies have found that after the trial period ends many practitioners revert back to the way they performed in practice prior to the study (Barnett, Higgenbotham, & Anderson, 2006; Gorodetsky & Barak, 2009). One reason for this problem could be that the nature of the change experience that practitioners must undergo is not understood. Loftus and Higgs (2010) recommended that an answer for this problem could be to look at the nature of imposed changes through phenomenological research.

**Research Approach**

The purpose of a phenomenological study is to reveal the nature and meaning of human experience (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Because the problem S&I administrators and teachers face regarding TLE is a lack of understanding regarding the nature of teachers’ change experience, phenomenology is an effective methodology to provide such information. To understand the approach of this study requires an explanation of some key concepts. These concepts include ontology, phenomenology, and hermeneutics.

**Ontology**

The topic of research regarding whole person change has been discussed for many years. Ontology, the study of being or identity, is a central concept used in defining a
person’s change in character and in practice (Little, 1993; Mezirow, 2000; M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; Schön, 1983; Wenger, 1998). Herein, the concept of ontology reflects peoples’ reasoning or justification for who they are—what they do, what they think, how they feel, and what they believe (Lave & Wenger, 1991; M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; van Manen, 1990). This concept of ontology is not the positivistic idea described within the natural sciences and originating with Comte (Bourdeau, 2011). Positivism conceived of ontology as the metaphysical state of what is real based solely on sensory experience (Blackburn, 1994). The knowledge goal of positivistic science is generalized, objective truth. Rather, ontology as used herein describes a person’s mental construction of a sense of meaning for his or her experience throughout life.

**Phenomenology**

Phenomenology as a research methodology can be used to reveal research participants’ ontologies. According to Giorgi (1999), phenomenology is a compound term consisting of the Greek word phenomenon or φαινόμενον, which means “to make manifest” or “to bring to light” (p. 68). In Greek, the word phenomenon literally means things that appear, such as heavenly bodies, a table, or a person (Oxford English Dictionary [OED], 2010). According to Moustakas (1994) a phenomenon is the appearance of something in human consciousness. It includes any human experience for which people create meaning. Specifically, Moustakas explained that revealing the human phenomenon of any experience is an attempt to combine the external or objective sense of reality, or a person’s actions, with the subjective or internal thoughts that

1 The definition of positivism and other important terms are italicized throughout this document and defined in the glossary found in Appendix A.
coincide with those actions.

Phenomenology is also composed of the word logos or λόγος, which means reason or logic. Thus, phenomenology is the study of things that manifest themselves to human consciousness. It reveals the reasoning or thinking that underpins whatever phenomenon is being investigated (Giorgi, 1999). Researchers use phenomenology to reveal the meaning people create from the perspective of someone who is knowledgeable about the phenomenon being investigated (Creswell, 2007; Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994).

Meaning is defined as a person’s intentionality. Intentionality within this dissertation begins with a concept developed by the philosopher Edmund Husserl. He defined it as the process of the human consciousness justifying why one thinks, feels, and believes the way one does about a given phenomenon (Russell, 2007). Furthermore, van Manen (1997) described meaning as the rationale for thinking something about a phenomenon (cf., Moustakas, 1994). Thus, human meaning is created through the intentional acts people associate with their experiences with phenomena. In other words, phenomenological studies intend to reveal through the lived experience of participants the meaning they have created for their experience. Phenomenologists argue that by revealing participants’ meaning for their lived experience, they are revealing the nature of the experience from the human perspective (Giorgi, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Furthermore, meaning is conveyed through the language used to describe one’s experience.

Researchers can reveal the meaning participants have developed through in-depth
interviews that are transcribed into a textual expression of each person’s experience with the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). However, within phenomenological research one does not simply reveal the meaning of individual participants. The object is to produce a blended view of the phenomenon that accounts for the perspective of all research participants (van Manen, 1997). Creating this interpretation is accomplished through the science of hermeneutics. *Hermeneutics* is a method of interpreting a written text such as the expression of an individual’s meaning for a phenomenon (Hekman, 1983; Moss, 1994; Ormiston & Schrift, 1990). In fact, McPhail (1995) described the process of hermeneutic phenomenological interpretation as developing an educated understanding of the phenomenon. While the intention of phenomenological research is to reveal the meaning that participants have developed for a given phenomenon, this objective does not suggest that what is revealed is a complete telling of every possible perspective (van Manen, 1990). Hence, the final product of a phenomenological study reflects the composite understanding of the researcher based on all of the evidence found in the examination of the phenomenon from the perspective of the lived experience of the participants who were interviewed.

**Research Context**

The focus of this study is the change experience released-time seminary teachers are undergoing in implementing the teaching and learning emphasis (TLE). The Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (S&I) is a religious educational program that is part of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). S&I is a worldwide institution
that serves students age 14-30. It is comprised of two major divisions, seminary and institute. The seminary program serves students age 14-18 (junior- and high-school-age students within the US), while the Institute program serves students 18 and older (college and graduate school age). Within the seminary program are subdivisions based on who teaches a given course and how the teacher delivers the instruction. Released-time seminary is taught by professional teachers at buildings adjacent to public education facilities. There are currently 119,267 released-time seminary students and 2,264 full- and part-time religious education employees within S&I (S&I, 2012). Hence, S&I represents a very large organization affecting many people worldwide (Appendix J).

In 2003, S&I senior administrators produced a document titled *A Current Teaching Emphasis for the Church Educational System*. While the original document has undergone both major and minor revisions, as well as three name changes, it is currently titled the *Teaching and Learning Emphasis* (see Appendix B for all versions). The current version of TLE is comprised of two documents. The first document, *The Teaching and Learning Emphasis*, seeks to establish the purpose or objective of S&I teaching. It also asserts seven statements designed to focus teachers on the fundamental practices they must emphasize in their classrooms to help students accomplish the objective of S&I. The second document, *The Teaching and Learning Emphasis: Training Document* repeats the seven general statements explaining what teachers should emphasize, but also includes what the document calls *Statements of Principle*. These statements explain why teachers should emphasize the practices identified in the TLE document. In summary,

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2 The objective of S&I states: “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” (S&I, 2009a).
TLE intends to make clear the overall purpose of S&I teaching, the essential classroom learning practices that teachers should emphasize to accomplish that purpose, and the rationale for why teachers should implement the identified learning practices.

This study seeks to reveal and understand the nature of the change required for released-time seminary teachers to effectively understand and implement TLE. Currently, no one has conducted research to reveal the nature of such a change. Without conducting such research, what is presently known about the nature of seminary teachers’ experience is based on the assertions and the assumptions of S&I administrators, rather than empirical evidence. Researching S&I teachers’ change experience is important because it may relate, not only to the needs of the S&I organization, but also in a broader sense to the nature of the experience of practitioners who undergo an imposed change by the organization for which they work that alters their professional identity.

The specific concern for S&I administrators regarding the adoption of TLE was addressed by Chad Webb3 (2009b). He expressed a concern that some teachers would think of TLE as merely a teaching methodology and fail to realize its purpose. Webb explained that TLE was meant to connect a means with an end, to identify key learning practices, and the rationale behind them, that lead to accomplishing three objectives. These objectives are to help students:

1. Learn to understand the *scriptures* so they can “understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ” (S&I, 2009a).

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3 Serves as the current Administrator for S&I. He holds the most senior professional position of the program. He is responsible to supervise all operations for S&I. This includes all programs worldwide. These positions include responsibility for 717,484 students, 3,293 full and part-time employees, and 7,160 secondary students in various church schools worldwide (S&I, 2012).
2. Help students to prepare to worship in the LDS temple when they are old enough and prepared to do so.

3. Develop the understanding and ability to prepare themselves and others to receive the ultimate blessing in LDS theology, which is eternal life with God in the hereafter.4

The nature of these goals implies that S&I teachers are to assist students in experiencing an identity and character change called personal conversion.

Personal conversion is a central concept defining what it means to learn within the S&I context. Within LDS doctrine conversion is defined as “changing one’s beliefs, heart, and life to accept and conform to the will of God” (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [LDS], 2011).5 A person does not experience this change as a single event. Instead, it is a life-long pursuit to conform one’s life to the will of God. Hence, knowledge for students in S&I is a complex form of learning that involves changing the whole person—thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and actions (Bednar, 2006; Scott, 1993a, 1998, 2005, 2010b).

According to Hall6 (2003a, 2003b, 2009), the introduction of TLE was intended

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4 LDS theology asserts that life continues after death. However, where a person lives in the next life and what privileges a person enjoys depends upon the choices he or she makes during mortal life. Thus, the purpose of S&I instruction is to educate the youth regarding the choices they can make in this life to help them receive the greatest happiness now and in the next life.

5 While some LDS members may think of conversion as a single event this is a misconception. For instance, some church members think of baptism as their moment of conversion. Some members will speak of their first spiritual experience confirming that the LDS Church is “true” as their conversion. Such events signify the beginning point of “a mighty change of heart” (Mosiah 5:2). However, conversion is a lifelong process of change to conform one’s life to the will of God and is really a matter of change by degrees over a lifetime (Bednar, 2007; Oaks, 2000; Scott, 2002).

6 Chad Webb is the current Administrator of S&I. His assistant is the Associate Administrator who is currently Randall Hall.
to refine the fundamental teaching and learning principles of S&I. A principle here is defined as a general rule that makes decisions clear and assists people in making good choices (Scott, 1993a, 1993b, 1998). S&I teaching philosophy asserts that Gospel principles apply both to religious character development and to teachers understanding how to perform effectively in practice (Webb, 2007). The authors of TLE intended to refine the principles of learning that, among other things, assist students in deepening their conversion (R. L. Hall, personal communication, September 7, 2011). While the TLE documents do not mention the term “conversion,” it is argued herein that conversion is essential to the objective of S&I because students cannot “rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ” (S&I, 2009a) unless they are converted to them. This is because one cannot rely on something in which one does not believe. Furthermore, relying on the teachings and atonement of Jesus Christ implies that a person is living according to the person’s knowledge. By definition, conversion is not only accepting something as true, but also conforming one’s life to the principles that are being taught. Therefore, conversion is essential to S&I’s objective.

Epistemology is in part the explanation of what knowledge is and how it is obtained (Blackburn, 2008). The concept of conversion is central to defining what it means to gain knowledge and explaining how people gain knowledge in S&I contexts. Hence, S&I administrators adopting TLE seems to reflect a refinement of the organization’s epistemology. Thus, it appears that the process of teachers understanding and implementing TLE could alter their fundamental assumptions regarding their practice within S&I. However, the nature and meaning of the effect of such a change on released-
time seminary teachers’ practice are currently unknown.

Randall Hall explained that S&I administrators did not know the whole impact TLE would have on teachers when they originally introduced it. Administrators assumed that some teachers who were more familiar with the principals involved would more readily adapt to the change than those who were less familiar with them (personal communication, September 7, 2011). While S&I has made extensive efforts to assist teachers to understand and implement TLE effectively (Hall, 2003b, 2009; Hawks, 2007; Webb, 2009a, 2009b; Webb & Alford, 2009; Webb, Dunford, Mason, & Shepherd, 2005), Paul Johnson7 acknowledged that after 8 years of continued effort, many teachers still struggle with implementing it (personal communication, February 9, 2011). Without conducting research the nature of what change is necessary to become effective and help students deepen their conversion is unclear. Revealing the nature of the change for S&I teachers who have become effective at understanding and implementing TLE could assist those who are continuing to struggle to do so.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to reveal and interpret the lived experience of a purposeful sample of released-time seminary teachers. Specifically, this study will reveal the nature of the change S&I teachers have experienced while learning to understand and implement TLE effectively. The idea of understanding and

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7 Serving directly under the Church Board of Education and Board of Trustees, the Commissioner of Education directs the operations of all Church Educational System (CES) schools, organizations, and programs. At the time this dissertation was conducted, Elder Paul V. Johnson of the First Quorum of the Seventy was assigned to serve as the Commissioner of Education.
implementing TLE seems to be part of a process that is never fully completed or finalized. With this thought in mind, the expression “learning to understand and implement TLE” was adopted. However, to be more succinct the phrase will be shortened to understand and implement, yet implying the thought that such an experience is a continued and ongoing process of learning. The nature of participants’ experience will be revealed through the meaning they created for their experience with understanding and implementing TLE. Meaning herein is defined as the thinking participants associate with their experiences of understanding and implementing TLE. This rationale will be revealed through an analysis of the language participants used to describe their experiences with TLE. The analysis of the phenomenon will be accomplished through the process of hermeneutic phenomenology. The phenomenon being investigated is the change experience of becoming effective at understanding and implementing TLE. From the perspective of lived experience the nature of the phenomenon is currently unknown. The concept of being effective S&I teachers is defined herein as those who have experience teaching in S&I prior to the adoption of TLE. In addition, effective is defined by the expert opinion of the teacher’s area director.

It is thought that the final product of this dissertation will reflect the composite understanding of the researcher based on the evidence found through phenomenological inquiry. This inquiry will include the examination of the context and development of TLE, the researcher’s personal experience as a released-time seminary teacher of 17 years, a review of literature conducted prior to interviewing the participants but based on

8 Defining the terms “understand” and “implement” within this dissertation proved to be somewhat problematic. See Chapter VII for a more detailed explanation.
studies that seem relevant to the phenomenon, and a revealing of and an analysis of the participants’ change experience. Thus, the final product will reflect the composite interpretation of the phenomenon as discovered through this examination.

In discussing the value of conducting phenomenological research, van Manen (1997) explained that researching people’s lived experience can transform what people do and why they do it into a narrative that reveals the pedagogical meaning of human experience. van Manen continued, explaining that as such, phenomenology can discover universal meaning from human experience and provide lessons that educate people so they can approach a situation more thoughtfully (cf. Moustakas, 1994). Hence, revealing the essence of study participants’ experience of understanding and implementing TLE will provide many benefits. It will provide an understanding of how they successfully negotiated ontological change to become effective at implementing TLE. Owing to the pedagogical nature of phenomenological studies, reading the results will challenge other S&I teachers and administrators to reflect on aspects of their professional practice they might be overlooking. It also provides findings that support teachers’ and administrators’ assumptions and personal experiences, thus potentially increasing their confidence as they to understand and implement TLE. It should create dialogue to develop new areas of training or refine existing concepts and practices. Finally, it shows how S&I’s training needs are similar to the discussion that is currently underway within sociocultural research literature.
Research Question

The primary research question of this study is what is the nature of the change experience of a sample of released-time seminary teachers who are considered to be effective at understanding and implementing TLE? It is thought that answering this question will reveal the rational structure of participants’ thinking regarding the change experience combined with the actions they have taken to be rated as effective. Thus, this research reveals the essence of participants’ ontological change resulting from understanding and implementing TLE effectively.

Assumptions

The primary assumption of a phenomenological study is that researchers can reveal the meaning of lived experience through phenomenological inquiry. This assumes that participants will be honest about their experience and forthright about their thinking or justification underlying those experiences. Furthermore, it assumes that people can remember the details of their lived experiences. Finally, it assumes that researchers will set aside their personal biases and look at the nature of the participants’ lived experiences, rather than provide justification for their foregone conclusions.

Limitations

This study will not include observation of participants’ behaviors. It will primarily rely on conducting in-depth interviews to reveal participants’ experience. Because this study is a first of its kind, it is thought that the clearest path to discovering the nature of
this particular phenomenon at this time is simply to ask teachers to describe the nature of their experience. However, the findings of this study might reveal that additional research is needed to observe certain behaviors that were described herein. As a result, this study could inform further investigations and provide needed direction.

The findings of this study were not designed to be generalized to any wider population. Rather, it is the responsibility of the reader of research to determine to what extent the results may be applicable in other settings. The intention of a phenomenological study is to present the current understanding about a phenomenon to increase awareness, prompt further discussion, foster personal reflection, and provide insights for additional research (van Manen, 1990).

The participants of this study are considered by their local supervisors to be effective at understanding and implementing it. Thus, it is assumed that the participants are pro-TLE. Hence, this study does not focus on revealing the experience of teachers who are less effective at implementing TLE or resistant to implementing it.

This study will not include any S&I personnel who teach institute, daily seminary (formally called early morning seminary), home study, or in online programs. These programs lie outside of the approval obtained from S&I for conducting this research.

This study will rely upon local administrators to identify participants who are considered by them to be effective at implementing TLE. As there are statistically very few female teachers in S&I, this study will not attempt to represent gender equally; however, it also did not exclude anyone from participating in the study based on his or her gender.
van Manen (1990) explained that phenomenology has no standard set of rules for conducting an effective research study. Because of this lack of standardization he argued that researchers must rely on fundamental principles outlined in the phenomenological methodology, a sound understanding of qualitative research practices and principles, and clear reasoning. Because of the potential for a messy result and confusion of the reader, a clear outline of organizational decisions has been provided within this dissertation. The overview is intended to provide justification for some design decisions that might appear to break with standard research tradition. The overall organization of the dissertation is intended to move from broad and general terms to more and more specific and finer detail.

Chapter I provided an overview of the context of S&I and the problem presented by the introduction of TLE. It also presented a summary of the research approach this study followed, the purpose of the study, and research questions. It concluded with the relevant assumptions of phenomenology and the limitations of this study.

Chapter II discusses the use of phenomenology as a research methodology. It examines the nature and relevant history of ontology and phenomenology. It also examines important considerations regarding phenomenological research and design decisions that lead to conducting effective phenomenological research. Because there are many important aspects of the research methodology that come into play during the remainder of the dissertation, it was thought that by presenting the methodology section first would provide the necessary definitions and methodological understanding
necessary to discuss some of the topics that followed.

Chapter III presents the researcher’s perspective. Because the phenomenon has never been investigated, the researcher’s perspective became increasingly important in shaping the direction of the literature review and the formation of any Preunderstanding regarding the phenomenon.

Chapter IV discusses and reviews the relevant literature. The literature review served three important purposes.

1. Further establishing the necessity of the study,
2. Providing support for research design decisions in addition to what has already been outlined in the methodology section, and
3. In so far as is possible, providing what is known about the phenomenon for comparison with the lived experience of participants, during analysis and interpretation in Chapters VI, VII, and VIII.

Chapter V discusses the research design and methods of data collection and analysis employed during the study. This chapter presents the decisions that were made based on the information presented in Chapters II, III, and IV.

Chapter VI presents the general description of the research participants and a general description of the participants’ change experience. Each participant’s experience is told in terms of general themes of transformational change.

Chapter VII presents a structural description (i.e., a reflective analyses of the data). It presents a synthesis of the themes of the phenomenon into a composite interpretation. This interpretation will be based on the researcher’s reflective analysis of
the textural description. This chapter focuses on the theme of sociocultural change experienced by the study participants.

Chapter VIII continues the structural description (i.e., a reflective analyses of the data). This chapter focuses on the theme of change through self-reflection experienced by the study participants.

Chapter IX is the conclusion of the study. This chapter contains a summary of the findings, a discussion of the findings, recommendations for continued research, and the researcher’s reflection on his lived experience conducting this study.
CHAPTER II
RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND METHODOLOGY

As stated previously, prior to conducting this investigation the nature of the change experience released-time seminary teachers have undergoing to become effective at implementing TLE has been unclear. However, from the examination of the TLE documents and the assumptions of S&I administrators it is likely that some teachers have experienced high-level change. They may have altered in some way their professional practice and their identity. While some continue to struggle to understand and implement TLE, some have been seen by others to be effective at it. What is important to this study is to understand the meaning of the change experience of those teachers who are considered effective at implementing TLE. It is thought that by revealing the nature of the change experience for teachers judged as effective, it could educate those who are trying to follow in that path.

In traditional research a review of literature might follow the introduction of the dissertation. However, given some unique features of phenomenology, it is important to begin by explaining the philosophy and methodology. Thus, this section will examine the following: The philosophy underlying the concepts of ontology and phenomenology; and the definitions, assumptions, and form of a phenomenological study.

This section will first examine the relevant history and philosophy underlying the concepts of ontology, its relationship to metaphysics, and the problem of mind-body dualism. It will also define the human sciences and discuss the relevant history and philosophy of phenomenology and its relationship to the creation of meaning. It will be
seen that by revealing someone’s ontology through phenomenological research one can understand a person’s rationale for his or her actions. Thus, revealing ontological understanding from the perspective of someone who is knowledgeable about a particular phenomenon could provide valuable understanding. Finally, it will discuss how phenomenological inquiry leads to revealing a person’s ontology.

Relevant History and Philosophy of Ontology

Ontology or identity is a central concept defining whole person change. The etymology of the word ontology is complex. It is a compound word constructed from Greek terms. These terms are onto or ὄντι, which means being or that which exists and logos or λόγος, which means reason or logic (OED, 2010). As stated, the concept of ontology reflects peoples’ reasoning or cognitive justification for who they are—what they do, what they think, how they feel, and what they believe. This concept of ontology is not the positivistic idea described within the natural sciences and originating with Comte (Bourdeau, 2011). Positivism conceived of ontology as the metaphysical state of what is real based solely on sensory experience (Blackburn, 1994). The knowledge goal of positivistic science is generalized, objective truth.

In contrast, the human sciences reflect the study of what it means to be human. The human sciences include biography, ethnography, history, phenomenology, psychology, and sociology. Phenomenology is the study of human identity or the meaning of lived experience (van Manen, 1997). When defining ontology within the context of human sciences M. J. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) wrote, “Ontology is the
consideration of being: what is, what exists, what it means for something—or somebody—to be’’ (p. 227). This concept represents the meaning created by the human mind. It might include one’s assumptions, beliefs, and interpersonal theories relating to the actions one takes because of the personal meaning developed from one’s life experience (Levinas, 1996). Thus, ontology in this sense is the essence of a person developing thoughtful knowledge of the experience of being human (van Manen, 1997).

From the perspective of traditional philosophy, metaphysics is the study of what exists or what is real with regards to things or entities that are beyond the methods of the natural or physical sciences (Blackburn, 1994; Hofweber, 2011). One of the central categories within metaphysics is the problem of mind-body dualism. Robinson (2011) explained that the essence of the mind-body problem focuses on understanding the meaning of mind and its interaction with the external world. First, the term body here represents not only an individual’s physical entity but also the outwardly observable nature of things external to the mind. In other words, the body represents the external, objective world. On the other hand, the term mind represents the obscured, inward, and unobservable thing that makes up the psychological consciousness. Certainly the mind is real; nevertheless, it seems to exist beyond the reach of physical science and experience with the five senses. One cannot see, taste, smell, touch, or hear mind.

Many notable philosophers have examined issues relevant to the mind-body problem. One of the earliest examples comes from Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*. He claimed that through the senses people experience things external to themselves that are observed in nature (Aristotle, 2006; Blackburn, 1994). From such a proposition, one
could argue that as people name, describe, and categorize the physical properties of things other people in turn can identify and reason about them. For example, someone could describe the physical qualities of a triangle. From that description someone else could recognize instances of it. More importantly someone like Euclid could begin to describe the properties of many different shapes in ways that assist in developing the understanding of geometry. While the example certainly does not explain the entire process, the point is clear. Through the study of external things, humankind has developed what it calls scientific knowledge.

When explaining how people claim to have valid knowledge about the body or the external world, traditionally they turn to positivistic research. This kind of research seeks for generalized, causal knowledge based on empirical evidence, hypothesis testing, and validated results to form conclusions about a research question (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). However, this knowledge framework seeks to strip away human bias as much as possible, as it is seen as a potential source of error.

In contrast, from the perspective of philosophy, metaphysics is the area of study that seeks to understand the nature of mind. Epistemological questions about metaphysics require in part a definition of what kind of things the mind can know and how one knows such things. Plato was a philosopher who considered metaphysical questions. One of Plato’s (1874, 2008) central attempts was to define what is real within the mind. He did this through a philosophical concept he called the forms.

Plato (2010) explained that physical examples of things as they exist in nature are imperfect copies of something that is ideal yet exists in the mind. For instance, one
example of this category of knowledge is a famous argument regarding the idea of a perfect triangle. A summary of the argument could be one can examine in nature physical triangles that are imperfect in their shape, form, or angle. However, in the mind one can conceive of a triangle that is perfect with respect to those qualities. Hence, the mind can conceive of an ideal triangle that exists independent of an instance of it in the objective world. This sense of reality is known *a priori* (Blackburn, 1994). *A priori* in the metaphysical sense means known prior to experience or by reason alone (OED, 2010). Therefore, Plato posited that something exists that is purely a creation of the mind. He called that thing the forms. Philosophers have continued to define mental objects such as Plato’s forms. However, today they call this kind of knowledge abstract objects or concepts (Rosen, 2009). In other words, one way to conceive of metaphysical knowledge is through abstract thinking about the external world.

In addition, epistemology requires that metaphysics demonstrate how abstract knowledge is created. For instance, Schön (1983) acknowledged the value of the scientific method, yet questioned whether such an approach can explain the creation of abstract knowledge. For instance, he considered the situation where a scientist is preparing to conduct empirical research and begins to create a hypothesis. Schön noted that, while the hypothesis is central to conducting scientific experiments, the creation of a hypothesis itself is not formulated by using the scientific method. In fact, hypotheses are really a matter of a hunch or intuition. Hence, Schön’s point is that the scientific method fails to explain the creation of one of its central components and that academia needs a means for the explanation of what seems to be intuitive knowledge. Arguments such as
Plato’s discussion of the forms and Schön’s contention about the creation of hypotheses gave reason for Gadamer to define “the objective knowledge of the scientific method as a special case of knowing rather than the universal model of all knowledge” (Hekman, 1983, p. 218). In other words, we need a thoughtful way of discussing the process of creating knowledge about human consciousness.

Phenomenology and the Creation of Meaning

In contrast to the methods used to produce valid knowledge in the natural sciences, in the past no such method existed for the human sciences. This meant the problem of mind-body dualism expressed the need for providing a thoughtful way to examine the mind or subjective consciousness and its interaction with objective things (Robinson, 2011). According to van Manen (1990), the human sciences are the study of the nature of consciousness for human beings who act purposefully to create meaning that describes how they interact with the external world. Thus, the human sciences embrace human perspective that creates meaning for one’s experience.

A German philosopher named Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) attempted to address the problem of mind-body dualism with the intent of explaining the workings of consciousness (McPhail, 1995; Moustakas, 1994). He attempted this by describing the process of how mind creates meaning. For instance, Husserl described the nature of the psychological self and how it abstracts objective ideas such as logic (Blackburn, 1994). Logic here refers to the fundamental laws that govern argumentation independent of any
individual knower, such as the rules and theorems of propositional calculus. This means that the mind can produce ideas that are acts of consciousness, independent of the objective world (Beyer, 2011). There is, after all, no such thing as logic independent of the mind. Hence, something exists as mind or consciousness.

Husserl posited that understanding the interconnected nature of subject and object leads to understanding how human minds create meaning (Beyer, 2011). Meaning according to Husserl is created through what he called intentionality (Russell, 2007). Blackburn (1994) explained that Husserl’s concept of intentionality was influenced by a contemporary philosopher named Franz Brentano who was one of his teachers (cf., Russell, 2007). Brentano and Husserl agreed that intentionality is comprised of acts of consciousness and objects of consciousness. This means that “Consciousness is always ‘directed’ toward an object. Consciousness is always conscious of something” (cf. Giorgi, 1997; Russell, 2007, p. 79). However, Husserl developed a richer sense of the idea of intentionality beyond what Brentano had taught him.

Transcendental subjectivity is the name Husserl gave to his theory of the creation of meaning (Blackburn, 1994; Russell, 2007). Transcendental subjectivity is the idea that people have the ability to rise above their subjective selves and interact with the objective world; in other words, Husserl attempted to explain the interaction between subjective experience as it produces meaning for the external world so that other people can understand a person’s lived experience in a productive way, in a way that transcends mere subjectivity. According to Russell, Husserl divided this process into three

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9 Propositional calculus is the science of argumentation. Using symbols and logical operators one can construct propositional statements that represent language. Then applying theorems such as equivalency or modus ponens one can manipulate the propositions to determine the validity of arguments.
interrelated parts to which he gave names from Greek terms, noema, noesis, and hyletic
data. First, the Greek word *noema* or νόημα means a thought or perception of the mind
(OED, 2010). For Husserl noema is a mental construct that is related to an object that
people perceive. It is not the actual object but it is a person’s perception of it (Moustakas,
1994). This means that noema is a mental thing or an intentional object that people create
to represent the physical thing with which they have interacted (Beyer, 2011).

Second, Husserl used the Greek word *noesis* or νόησις, which in this context
means to understand or to intend (OED, 2010). Husserl described it as the process of
human thought regarding the noema (Beyer, 2011; Russell, 2007). In other words, people
create concepts for external things through the mental processes of noeses. Thus, noema
is the object created by the mind and noesis is the intentional act that created it.

Third, the Greek word *hyle* or ὕλη means primary matter, as in the original stuff
from which the Greek’s believed the universe was constructed (OED, 2010). Husserl
used the term to represent the primary substance by which people perceive the objective
world through the senses (Russell, 2007). The natural sciences would refer to hyletic data
as photons for seeing, sound waves for hearing, chemicals for smelling and tasting, and
neuron pulses for feeling. A person perceives the sensations of the external world and
through acts of consciousness he or she creates a noema for the experience (Poleshchuk,
2009).

Thus, Husserl claimed that people create meaning as they perceive the external
world and then create concepts through intentional acts to explain what they think about
those experiences (Donnelly, 1999; Giorgi, 1997). Understanding Husserl’s concept is
important to this dissertation because it directs how to reveal meaning for research participants. According to Moustakas (1994), the meaning a person creates for a phenomenon is bound together by revealing the external objective experience with the internal subjective experience. In other words, researchers reveal meaning by having participants describe what they do and describe what their rationale or thinking is behind their actions, i.e., why they do it. In this manner Husserl argued that the phenomenologist overcomes the mind-body problem by combining the object with the subject, the body and its actions with the mind and its thoughts (Blackburn, 1994; Moustakas, 1994; Russell, 2007). Hence, within such a description the phenomenon is revealed.

**Development of Ontology**

Husserl defined essence as a person’s experience combined with the meaning he or she created (Moustakas, 1994). This concept of meaning is the uniting of the real or objective world with the ideal or subjective mind (Moustakas, 1994; Russell, 2007). In other words, the essence of a person’s experience is the creation of intentionality for a particular moment. Furthermore, it is argued that from the meaning people create throughout life they form their personal assumptions, beliefs, and theories (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The combined meaning people create over time and throughout their lives represents their ontology or their identity. This means the essence is a description of particular meanings for one’s experience, while ontology is the collective meaning of experiences over a lifetime.

In the broadest respect, ontology represents every conscious and subconscious
aspect of a person’s identity. It includes memories, associations, habits, skills, concepts, and categorizations (Schön, 1983, 1987; Wenger, 1998). It constitutes one’s perspectives (Duguid, 2005), character (M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000), history (Loftus & Higgs, 2010), assumptions, and interpersonal theories (Schön, 1983, 1987). In sum, ontology represents a person’s identity (Wenger, 1998), the total accumulation of who and what people are individually over time.

A person’s ontology becomes a foundation through which he or she understands and interprets the world (van Manen, 1997). This means from a phenomenological perspective what individual people know is shaped through their ontology (cf., Brookfield, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Schön, 1983, 1987). Based on these thoughts, Gadamer asserted that ontology precedes epistemology (Hekman, 1983; Loftus & Higgs, 2010). This conclusion means that one’s perspective and understanding of life is based on one’s experience and the meaning one has created for it and that any knowledge added must pass through the filter of the person’s mindset from previous experience. Thus, ontology shapes the knowledge people gain.

**Tacit Nature of Ontology and the Value of Phenomenological Inquiry**

Argyris and Schön (1974) observed the nature of professionals’ learning to implement theory into practice. In the process of their research, they described a problem that they observed among professionals. The problem is that what practitioners say they do is often not the same as what they actually do in practice. This phenomenon is described as having an espoused theory and a theory in practice. An espoused theory is
what people say they do in practice. It can also be what the employing organization says practitioners are supposed to do. A theory in practice is what professional actually do when performing their work. Argyris and Schön’s book spends a great deal of time outlining how to overcome this problem. However, the point here is that the previous discussion defined ontology as the development of someone’s interpersonal theories. An espoused theory, then, is a reflection of one’s ontology. In light of Argyris and Schön’s observations, one can see that one’s ontology can directly influence a person’s outcome in professional practice. Furthermore, Argyris and Schön explained that practitioners are often unaware of the discrepancy between what they say they do and what they actually are doing. This point highlights the importance of increasing professionals’ awareness of the influence of ontology on people’s practice.

In addition, Argyris and Schön’s (1974) discussion also points out an important problem that must be overcome when seeking to reveal practitioners’ ontologies. In some of his additional writing Schön (1983) identified this problem as having tacit knowledge. Polanyi (1966) defined tacit knowledge as knowing “more than we can say” (p. 51). Schön (1983, 1987) observed in his research that professionals often develop subconscious, routine, habitual behavior in practice, which they cannot always overtly explain to others. Yet Schön also found that the very heart of helping someone understand what it means to participate in a field of practice requires others to glean the tacit knowledge of experienced professionals.

Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) examined various groups of professionals and how they passed along the tacit, ontological knowledge they gained. In
their investigation of newcomers to a profession Lave and Wenger found that practitioners learned tacit knowledge by participation in the practice with experienced members of the community to which they belonged. Through legitimate practice that increased in level of participation over time, newcomers were observed and given feedback that allowed them to develop the ability to perform according to the knowledge of the CoP. In other words, tacit knowledge was passed along through situated practice and social interaction between new practitioners and those who were more experienced. In sum, if ontology represents the collective meaning within practice developed by professionals over time and if that knowledge is hidden or tacit, then something must be done to reveal such important understanding.

Loftus and Higgs (2010) argued that researching lived experience through phenomenology is one way to reveal the tacit knowledge gained by professionals in practice. In an attempt to describe how to reveal such hidden knowledge Heidegger (1996) posited that phenomenological inquiry can make people aware of their hidden personal theories. He explained that there is a difference between the preontological self and the ontological self. Self here is defined as the sense of meaning people create for their experiences. Preontology is characterized as the implicit or tacit self. It is the unconsidered nature people have created out of routine and habit. People have simply learned to think of and interact with elements of their lives in habitual ways. Hence, preontology is the raw stuff of unconsidered meaning.

Heidegger argued that as people engage in phenomenological inquiry they can change their undiscovered self into explicit understanding (Levinas, 1996). In other
words, people become aware of the meaning they have created for their experiences in life as they examine their own thinking about those experiences. Hence, Levinas quoting Heidegger stated that the essence of ontology is “a being who understands being” (p. 3). This means the nature of phenomenological inquiry is for someone to become aware of the human meaning for the experiences of life.

With these thoughts in mind Giorgi (1997) explained the importance of Husserl’s philosophy of phenomenology. He said that Husserl’s description of transcendental subjectivity provided the foundation for discussing and revealing how people create meaning for their perceptions of the external world. Understanding the process of perceiving the world, performing acts of intention on one’s perceptions, and formulating ideas based on those intentional acts allows researchers to describe intelligently how the mind creates meaning for one’s experiences. Thus, Husserl’s philosophy provides a much needed means for discussing how professionals might access the tacit experience they develop in practice.

Since Husserl’s original development of his philosophy, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) further developed the philosophy of phenomenology. Based on Husserl’s, Heidegger’s, and Gadamer’s writings, as well as other philosophers, researchers in the human sciences have developed phenomenology as a modern research methodology (Giorgi, 1985, 1997, 1999; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1997).
CHAPTER III
RESEARCHER’S PERSPECTIVE

Transcendental Nature of Phenomenological Research

Moustakas (1994) explained that to be transcendental means that researchers must rise above themselves to look beyond the ego to the meaning of the phenomenon. In this sense ego means one’s own self or consciousness. In others words, the goal of phenomenological research is for the researcher to look beyond assumptions, bias, or Preunderstanding regarding the phenomenon. Preunderstanding is what a person knows prior to collecting data from the study participants. The point is, if researchers can look beyond their Preunderstandings, then they are more likely to formulate a sound conclusion, rather than one based on supposition. This is what it means to transcend oneself. Researchers accomplish this by participating in a process of bracketing their perspective to reach a state of epoché.

Husserl described epoché as reaching the state of looking beyond oneself (Blackburn, 1994). The Greek word epoché or ἐποχή means a “suspension of judgment” (OED, 2010). Husserl conceived of bracketing information that researchers already know about the phenomenon so they could examine their Preunderstanding before beginning an investigation (D. W. Smith, 2009) and suspend their judgment (Russell, 2007). As a mathematician Husserl compared his idea of bracketing to the way a person brackets certain parts of an equation to separate them from other parts. Hence, it was thought that bracketing Preunderstanding would avoid creating a final interpretation that was merely a
foregone conclusion (Creswell, 1998; van Manen, 1997). In other words, by bracketing one’s Preunderstanding researchers could avoid simply looking for justification in the data that supported their suppositions about the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Bracketing one’s perspective is accomplished in a number of ways. First, researchers are to engage in an interview with a trusted colleague to discuss their Preunderstanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). The purpose of this interview is to describe their biases and assumptions about the phenomenon. By acknowledging their biases Husserl thought that researchers could suspend judgment while looking at the evidence (Moustakas, 1994). It is also important for researchers to create a short description of their life experience to provide the context from which they have formed their views of the world.

Second, researchers continue examining their understanding of the phenomenon while conducting the study. This is accomplished by keeping a dialectic journal (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Such a journal is considered to be dialectic because it reflects a discussion between the interview transcripts and the researchers’ perspectives on the phenomenon.

However, Moustakas (1994) explained that one of Husserl’s assumptions was that researchers could absolutely transcend their ego through the bracketing process. Moustakas admits that based on his experience this is a lofty expectation and is unlikely to be achieved in full. This means that the value of bracketing and seeking for epoché is reflected in the desire to enhance one’s openness, “even if a perfect and pure state is not achieved” (p. 61). Therefore, phenomenological researchers should engage in bracketing
and seek to suspend their judgment, but also remember that seeking for a totally unbiased approach is not possible.

**Maintaining Openness**

According to Gadamer (1989), researchers cannot reach epoché where they completely sets aside their Preunderstanding (Nyström & Dahlberg, 2001). Instead, Gadamer explained that researchers seek to examine their Preunderstanding in openness. According to Nyström and Dahlberg, Gadamer defined openness as being able to see “the otherness.” Seeing the otherness means critically examining one’s preunderstanding and presenting it openly. Being open allows researchers to avoid presenting projective interpretations. Nyström and Dahlberg explained that projective means the idea of imparting one’s unexamined opinion in the form of an interpretation. In other words, openness is the effort to avoid considering the evidence based on a narrow horizon or perspective. Hence, when researchers bracket their Preunderstanding, they may not be able to completely suspend judgment (Moustakas, 1994; Nyström & Dahlberg, 2001), but they can consider their preunderstanding in contrast to a careful examination.

**Bracketing the Researcher’s Perspective**

Within this dissertation epoché and openness were accomplished in three ways. First, I created a short description of my life experience. This experience is intended to provide some influential context that contributed to the formation of my views. The contents of this description are the result of questions asked of me by my major professor
and also a continued personal reflection to examine the aspects of my life that may contribute to my personal perspective of the phenomenon. The results of this reflection are contained later in this section.

Second, I participated in a bracketing interview with a trusted colleague. After engaging in the interview and through a continued examination of my experience as a released-time seminary teacher I will present a summary of four themes that have emerged, explaining my perspective of the phenomenon. These themes will represent the core of my Preunderstanding of the phenomenon based on my experience with it (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). In addition, what will follow herein is an examination of my Preunderstanding in light of documented events within S&I. This preliminary analysis will form the basis of what is known about the phenomenon of released-time seminary teachers understanding and implementing TLE effectively.

Finally, I examined and will continue to examine my understanding of the phenomenon while conducting the study. This has been accomplished by keeping a dialectic journal (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Such a journal is considered to be dialectic because it reflects a discussion between the interview transcripts and my perspectives on the phenomenon. Additional bracketed information can be found in Appendix C containing copies of important dialectic journal entries.

Nyström and Dahlberg (2001) recommend that openness is achieved by examining four aspects of one’s experience. These include the cognitive, social, and emotional, and historic aspects of preunderstanding. The following examination will attempt to consider these four aspects insofar as is possible.

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10 The relevant contents of the bracketing interview can be found in Appendix F of this dissertation.
Researcher’s Context

I was born into an LDS family. My mother was a member of the LDS church; however, my father was not. They divorced when I was 6 months old. In spite of this fact, my mother remained an active Latter-day Saint and raised me in the faith. As a young adult, I served an LDS mission in Ohio from March of 1990 to April of 1992. On completion of my mission, I enrolled at Brigham Young University (BYU) in Provo, Utah. It was while attending BYU that I began thinking about teaching seminary for the LDS Church.

As far as my personal life is concerned, I have been married to Tricia Mason for nearly 18 years. She is from Southern California. She also served a mission for the LDS Church in Houston, Texas. We met at BYU. We have lived all of our married life in Utah, and all but 1 year in Davis County. We are the parents of seven children—six girls and one boy.

Becoming a seminary teacher is an extensive process. It involves earning a bachelor’s degree in a field of one’s choosing. My bachelor’s degree is in philosophy. In addition, potential seminary teachers must take two training courses in LDS religious education, one in teaching theory and one in teaching practice. Anyone can enroll in the two courses. However, after completing them only those who are selected can participate in a yearlong student teaching opportunity. In my recollection, it was difficult to obtain a student teaching position. I remember our preservice trainer Randall Hall telling us that some 350 people had enrolled in the introductory course. By the time we were finished, as I remember it only 48 of us received student teaching positions. I student taught at
Spanish Fork senior seminary in Spanish Fork, Utah. Again, as I remember it by the end of our yearlong student teaching experience only 18 of us were hired to teach fulltime. I honestly did not expect to be hired because the positions were so desirable and yet so few in number. In addition, watching the other student teachers in my group was humbling. They were very good. I doubted I would ever get hired.

In spite of my doubts, in April of 1995 I was hired fulltime to teach for the LDS Seminaries and Institutes of Religion. Currently I have taught for the LDS Church for nearly 17 years. I have taught for 11 years split between two senior seminaries and for the last 6 years at four different junior seminaries. All of these assignments were in the Utah Davis Area.

In 2003, when the Teaching and Learning Emphasis (TLE) was first introduced, I immediately became fascinated with it. I think my fascination came for two reasons. First, my personality is such that I love to succeed and I saw TLE as a means to measure success. I liked the fact that it was performance based and I could begin to see if I was successful or not. Prior to the introduction of TLE, I often felt very lost as to whether or not I was successful in teaching seminary. When my supervisors would evaluate me, I felt like the majority of what they would say was merely their subjective opinion. As a result, I had a difficult time implementing their recommendations. Yet I sorely needed help. I was a young teacher with very little experience. I often felt vulnerable and wondered why I was not receiving better training from S&I.

The second reason why I liked TLE was because I was just finishing a master’s degree in Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences (ITLS) at Utah State
University. I was also at that time applying to the ITLS doctorate program. I was fascinated with learning theory and how to improve teaching and learning. I immediately began analyzing TLE in terms of its instructional goals and methods. Over the course of the next 5 years I engaged in numerous conversations with teaching colleagues, S&I administrators, university classmates, and professors about TLE. As a result of some fortuitous connections, I was invited to participate in an evaluation of one of the elements of the TLE document with Chad Webb, who was at that time the preservice manager for S&I and with Bryce Dunford who was one of the managers in S&I training. Following that experience I was involved in a number of other training experiences regarding TLE. The end result was I began to increase and broaden my understanding of what I thought TLE was all about.

Ultimately, I feel like I did not begin to grasp the concepts of TLE until I was assigned as the mentor of a new seminary teacher. It was during my 2-year experience of working with someone to explain what I thought TLE was and also hearing what this new teacher thought that I began to realize how to understand it and how to implement it. It was also during my experience of being a mentor that I was able to focus my evaluation of the research literature that related to TLE. I had read many things before, but now I began making connections that I had never seen. I started reading literature about reflective practice, adult education, CoP and other sociocultural learning theories, and phenomenology. I spent nearly 3.5 years reading to try to comprehend what I thought might be an explanation for how seminary teachers might understand and implement something like TLE.
In 2008 I received approval from the S&I research committee to begin this dissertation. It has been a grueling experience trying to read and understand fully what I think a change in professional practice like TLE might require. While I am thrilled with all that I have learned from reading and then applying what I have learned, I am even more excited by the prospect of learning from great teachers in S&I who are considered effective at implementing TLE. Based on information revealed in the bracketing interview, and entries from the dialectic journal, the following assumptions, biases, and Preunderstandings have been identified.

**Themes from Researcher’s Experience**

Four themes emerged from my experience. These themes have some justification in the research literature and may provide further insight when compared with the lived experience of participants. These themes are experiencing transformational learning, challenging assumptions through self-reflection, engaging in sociocultural learning experiences, and desiring improvements to professional development.

**Experiencing transformational learning.** First, because of the introduction of TLE I underwent a transformation in my personal life and in my career. Specifically, I had to let go of a particular attitude toward teaching seminary for me to become more effective at TLE. I thought for a long time that to increase teenagers’ interest in what was being taught, I needed to entertain them. That does not mean I was not trying to influence students’ spirituality, but what it does mean is that I often included elements in my teaching that were not edifying. I mean that we played games and I used object lessons that were filled with fun and even intense interaction, but they did not help students
understand doctrines and principles. In fact, I believe on the days that I played such
games or used such object lessons they overshadowed the spiritual experiences rather
than encouraged them. Yes students were laughing, cheering, and generally having fun,
but they were not changing their lives, deepening their level of conversion, or learning to
rely on the teachings and the Atonement of Jesus Christ through those activities (S&I,
2009a).

One experience had a profound effect on me. During a lesson we had covered the
material we needed to cover. I had planned at that point to have the students play a
scripture game. After about 5 minutes of playing, a young female student raised her hand
and said, “Brother Mason. Could we stop playing this game? Let’s just go back to talking
about the scriptures and feeling the Spirit.” This particular student came from a very
troubled background where her mother had children from multiple fathers and was
currently divorced. She had told me numerous times that she was trying to change her
life. The interesting thing is no one complained when she said it and the whole class
gladly put away the fun and went back to the scriptures.

Another moment that shaped my understanding happened when I was teaching in
a classroom with very thin portable walls. It was very easy to hear what was happening
on either side in the neighboring classroom. This particular day the teacher next door was
playing a version of a television game show to cover certain chapters of scripture. At that
time the game show was very popular and everyone recognized the music. As the
intensity of the game increased, the students in this teacher’s class were cheering and
yelling in a wild frenzy. That day we were talking about the temple. There was a very
powerful spirit in our class. We were watching a video where a General Authority was sharing his experience of being in the Salt Lake temple and how he had gained a personal testimony of a Gospel truth. I was so nervous that my students would complain that we were not playing a game like the other class was. Instead, I was surprised that my students were annoyed with the other class’s cheering and yelling because it was disturbing the feeling that was in our class. In fact, one student asked, “What are they doing in there?” Another student said, “I just wish they would stop.” That day I learned a very valuable lesson. I learned that what my students wanted was not fun and games—they wanted to feel the Spirit.

I began to search through talks from the General Authorities to help me understand what kind of change I needed to make. Two statements have shaped my opinion. The first is from J. Reuben Clark (1994).

You do not have to sneak up behind this spiritually experienced youth and whisper religion in his ears; you can come right out, face to face, and talk with him. You do not need to disguise religious truths with a cloak of worldly things; you can bring these truths to him openly, in their natural guise. Youth may prove to be not more fearful of them than you are. There is no need for gradual approaches, for “bedtime” stories, for coddling, for patronizing, or for any of the other childish devices used in efforts to reach those spiritually inexperienced and all but spiritually dead. (p. 6)

I have interpreted President Clark’s comment in my teaching to mean that the games and unedifying activities were approaches that cloaked religion rather than helped students to see it for what it was. The activities overshadowed the Spirit of love, peace, and revelation, rather than helped to invite it in.

The second statement that influenced my opinion comes from David A. Bednar (2006). He explained the nature of teaching by the Spirit when he said;
It is never about me and it is never about you. In fact, anything you or I do as an instructor that knowingly and intentionally draws attention to self—in the messages we present, in the methods we use, or in our personal demeanor—is a form of *priestcraft* that inhibits the teaching effectiveness of the Holy Ghost. (p. 4).

I interpreted the idea of entertaining teaching as a way that drew the students to me instead of to the Savior. I formed that conclusion because so I often I found that the more entertaining I was the more the students liked *me*. That was manifest in comments students made when they came back to talk with me after a new semester started. They would often compare their new teacher to me saying, “He’s not as fun as you.” Based on my experience, I felt like I was not helping my students love the Savior as much as I was encouraging them to love me when my focus was to entertain rather than to edify.

However, I have also found as I started to change that an additional problem started to emerge. As soon as I quit using the entertaining devices and methods I had students telling me that my teaching was not as fun as Brother so and so. I also had one administrator tell me that my teaching was boring my students. The reality is at first, these statements did describe what was happening in my classroom. My students were bored and I was not as fun as I was before.

In my experience, letting go of the desire to entertain my students was extremely painful. I had to change my attitude about teaching and turn more to the scriptures. My students also had to change. They had to learn how to identify doctrines and principles for themselves and learn to find joy from being edified rather than being entertained. This experience reflected a transformation for me. I had to change my character, my performance, and attitude to become more effective at teaching by the Spirit.
I also think that my change in teaching required a transformation for my students. Those students who were used to being entertained had to learn to find a different sense of value for their experience in seminary. From my perspective for students to learn to find the value of scripture in their lives required varying lengths of time and degrees of personal change. I do not know all of the reasons why some students change more quickly than others. I also do not know all of the reasons why some people must work so hard to achieve what others do very easily. I think there are many personal influences that students must deal with that are beyond the control of the teacher. I have learned that students whom I never thought could or would want to change will experience profound transformations. I have also seen that no matter what I do, in the end students must choose for themselves what they will do. Not everyone will transform. In fact, some have removed themselves from seminary in spite of all of my best efforts.

As I began to investigate literature regarding the change experience, I read portions of Argyris and Schön’s (1974) book about putting theory into practice. They described practitioners having two kinds of theory. The first is an espoused theory. That is what a seminary teacher would say he or she does. The second is a theory in practice. That is what a seminary teacher actually does. Had someone asked me what I did for work, I would have told them about TLE and described what it expected of me. Yet, when I began to examine myself compared with other great teachers, I realized that I was not actually doing all of the things that I was supposed to be doing. As I began this dissertation, I wondered if other teachers had experienced a transformational change. If not, what kind of change experiences have they had?


**Challenging assumptions through self-reflection.** Second, I began to challenge my assumptions about teaching seminary when TLE was originally introduced. I began the process of self-examination and reflection because I realized that my experience in the classroom was failing to match what I thought was expected of me. Along with TLE I had read Mager’s (1997a, 1997b, 1997c) books on writing performance goals and objectives and measuring instructional results. I was thinking about the goals of TLE and what they meant.

One day I was in a classroom observing another teacher using a technique I had used before in my classroom. As I watched the students playing the game, I recognized that they were having fun; but, I also realized they were not learning anything. Yet the teacher had introduced the activity as a way to learn the content he was teaching. After the game was over and the class had ended, I quickly pulled aside two or three students and asked, “Can you tell me what scripture you were just learning about?” “No,” was the answer from all of the students I asked. My suspicions were verified. The activity was not teaching the students much about the scripture they were studying, even though the activity was very entertaining.

Over time as I was studying TLE I began to notice that I was not doing well at many of the things the document recommended to me. For instance, one experience I had I was teaching using a game and afterward a teacher that I overheard was talking to another teacher that I respected a great deal, saying that I was a show boater, that my teaching was fluffy and that I was just an entertainer. It hurt. My friend tried to console me, but I realized that the other teacher’s criticism was in some ways right. While I was
not completely given to entertaining my students, I was guilty of playing games and engaging in activities that were not spiritually powerful but were purely entertaining.

At the same time, I also had a friend on that same faculty who was a profound teacher of the scriptures. I was teaching a student who had been in my friend’s class prior to being in mine. One day, talking about my colleague, this student said, “He is amazing. He can answer any question from the scriptures. I love being in his class.” Listening to my student caused me to reflect. My colleague was not an entertaining teacher. In fact, he had described himself to me by saying once, “when I was a new teacher I felt very strongly that my one job was to teach the scriptures and nothing else. I have been true to that charge my whole career.”

I began to analyze what would happen in my classroom when I often felt what I recognized as communication from the Holy Ghost telling me that I was not doing teaching effectively. I began noticing a trend. When I played games to entertain or introduced lessons in a funny, non-spiritual way, the students maintained that attitude throughout the class. Even though they were having fun, the lessons lacked the spiritual power I was looking for that would bring about conversion to the doctrines, like TLE was encouraging me to do. I would feel the uncomfortable feeling of the Spirit leaving. Things would be awkward. Students’ heads would go down. More students would get out their cell phones, talk, or pass notes. I would begin to analyze more about the experience trying to understand what I was doing or not doing that lead the students to inappropriate behaviors.

As a result I began trying to do more spiritual things in class and less fun and
games. TLE described students needing to learn to identify and understand doctrines and principles and to learn to explain, share, and testify. I realized that the level of spirituality in my class was not strong enough to help students do these things a natural way.

I saw this first as I was teaching my students to make “I know” statement as a form of testimony. For instance, after students made a comment, I would say something like, “Could you put that in an ‘I know’ statement?” Then the student would repeat back something, like “I know that families can be together forever,” or some common LDS phrase. Yet these statements were hollow approximations of real testimony. They felt formulaic, like students could put an “I know” statement at the front of their sentence and out would come a testimony. I reflected on the fact that a genuine testimony is not a formula or a pat answer.

In connection with these experiences, I began to reflect on my own level of spirituality. I asked myself, “How much do I have the Spirit in my life outside of seminary?” I noticed there were things that I was doing in my personal life that were out of harmony with the Gospel. I began to repent and change those things. Over time, I noticed something very important things happening. Joseph Smith\(^{11}\) described it this way.

When you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas, so that by noticing it, you may find it fulfilled the same day or soon; (i.e.) those things that were presented unto your minds by the Spirit of God, will come to pass; and thus by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation…. (J. F. Smith, 1976, p. 151).

I found that as I was becoming more in tune with the Spirit of God, when I was teaching I would see opportunities to help students to explain doctrines, share personal experiences, or testify of what they knew was true.

\(^{11}\) Joseph Smith is considered the founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
For instance, a young female student who had cancer came into class one day and put her head down on her desk. That happened about every 3 weeks for her because she would receive another round of chemotherapy. At this particular instance, we were talking about something that related to gratitude for our blessings. I had a thought come to mind. I will call it a spiritual prompting. The thought was to ask her to share with the class a little bit about her experience with cancer. She lifted her head off of her desk and said, “I get so tired after Chemo but I just don’t like missing seminary. I love the way it makes me feel. I feel like I can do it [go through with life, including treatments] when I come here.” She went on to describe the problems she had and yet how grateful she was for God helping her through those problems.

The class was silent, but not in an awkward way. Some were in tears. What I would call the feelings of the Spirit and the feelings of God’s love were present. That day, I realized that helping students to bear testimony was not something that happens through a formula. It is something that happens when I as a teacher see opportunities and listen to the Spirit, because the Spirit will give me questions to ask the right students to help them share their experiences and bear testimony of how they have seen God in their lives. Also through my personal reflections about my spiritual life, I realized that I needed to change to be more of a tool in the Lord’s hands.

Experiences like those caused me to reflect on my own performance (Schön, 1983, 1987). I began to examine what I thought it meant to teach seminary. The TLE gave me the vehicle to find new ways to perform in the classroom to help students understand the scriptures and develop a relationship with Jesus Christ. After reading
Schön’s books I began to wonder if other teachers had reflected in a similar way on their professional practice as a result of TLE. How would other teachers describe their change experience?

**Engaging in sociocultural learning experiences.** Third, from my experience I learned that to implement TLE effectively one could not do it entirely on one’s own. The most influential experience I had understanding and implementing it came during a 2-year period when I taught with a new teacher and was assigned as his mentor. Before this experience I had read extensively about theory and doctrine that I thought helped me to understand TLE. I had changed significantly, as described in the section about transformational change. However, when I began to interact with the new teacher whom I was mentoring in ways that reflected social learning, my understanding increased tremendously. For example, we worked together to prepare our lessons. We talked primarily about the doctrine and principles and then briefly about methods that we might use to teach those ideas. After these discussions, we created our individual lesson plans apart from each other. In addition, during lunch we talked about what went well and what did not. Each time we evaluated our lessons we asked each other why we thought something worked or did not work. Then we searched for explanations to support our opinions in S&I teaching literature, either in talks by *General Authorities* or in other resources like the *Teaching the Gospel* handbook (S&I, 2001).

We regularly observed each other teaching. Our feedback did not focus on what was wrong and trying to correct each other as much as trying to explain why things were working or were not working. If we had problems in our classroom, we would talk with
each other about what was happening and why we thought things were going wrong. Then we would try to find what we could do to change our approach. The value was as we talked with each other we both were learning. There was no unequal relationship between the two of us. I believe this is because we always lead the conversation to principles of effective teaching, rather than just pointing out elements of each other’s performance.

Later, as I read Situated Learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) I began to understand the importance of situated cognition or situativity theory (Bandura, 1978, 1986, 1989). I realized the value of the difference between learning that I am supposed to do certain things as a seminary teacher, versus learning how to do those things in practice (Duguid, 2005; Ryle, 1949). While I still think that some seminary areas might need to improve the way they incorporate skills practice in inservice meetings, I changed my focus and realized I did not have to wait for administrators to implement skills training strategies. In fact, I began to feel that maybe situated learning or sociocultural learning would be more advantageous. Sociocultural learning involves the idea that practitioners learn in situated practice through social interaction with other members of their professional community.

Desiring improvements to professional development. Fourth, in my experience I felt a significant desire for help to understand and implement TLE. I looked to the inservice training that S&I offered in hopes that it would help me understand it and learn to implement it. My background includes teaching at the Missionary Training Center (MTC) in Provo, Utah. I taught there for about 2 years before becoming a seminary
teacher. When I taught there they had a strong skills training program. As a result, I felt competent in my skill set because the supervisors there constantly worked on modeling, practicing, observing, and giving feedback.

When I was hired to teach for S&I, I expected a similar level of training competence in the program. I remember my first fulltime year in 1995 feeling very disappointed because there was no skills practice at all. I felt like the administration handed me my curriculum manuals, patted me on the back, and sent me into the classroom. I was observed once that year by my area director who told me I was doing great. I did not feel like I was doing great. I had loads of problems that terrified me.

Later, after TLE came out a new training resource guide was published called the Administering Appropriately (S&I, 2003) handbook. After reviewing it, I was excited because it contained a detailed section about skills practice. Unfortunately, at least in my area, I do not recall any change in skills training. In addition, S&I published the Teaching Emphasis Training Resource DVD (S&I, 2006), which modeled examples of teachers practicing relevant skills. Again I waited for the area to implement some form of skills practice. I was disappointed when I found that little change resulted from the DVD. In fact, I felt a degree of push-back against the idea of skills training. On more than one occasion I discussed the idea of including skills training with local leaders. The response was always negative for various reasons. During one summer inservice our area director did organize activities that included skills practice: modeling, observation, and feedback. It was very beneficial for me personally. However, that model was never followed again. Our area reverted back to a discussion of principles and doctrine style inservice, which
for me was less effective in helping me improve in TLE competencies.

I began reading professional development (PD) literature to understand how other teaching practices were dealing with similar problems. I found that the problem of not engaging in skills practice in the teaching profession is common. In fact, I found two seminal pieces. The first, Little (1993) described the need for a reform in the teaching profession that included situated training, practice, observation, and feedback for teachers. I also found Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) who conducted an extensive review and evaluation of the PD reform movement to determine what was effective in helping teachers to improve their practice. I was pleased to find that PD that involved situated learning or social learning was more effective than PD that did not include such hands on skills training and practice.

However, I also found a degree of comfort in my reading. I learned that other teachers had experienced what I had. In particular Meier (1992) had written an article suggesting that the need for reform in PD could not come from the top down as administration tried to influence teachers to change; instead, it must come from the bottom up as individual teachers determine to transform their own practice (cf., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Giroux, 1988; Little, 1993; Wilson & Berne, 1999).

Summary

In summary, the four themes that I feel are prominent in my change experience are as follows.

1. Challenging assumptions through self-reflection (Brookfield, 1995; Mezirow,
1990; Schön, 1983, 1987),


3. Social learning experiences (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2000; Wenger et al., 2002), and

4. Professional development changes (Garet et al., 2001; Little, 1993; Meier, 1992).

Through this section I have tried to capture the essence of the change experience I have undergone to become more effective at implementing TLE. I have a hard time distinguishing between what happened to me that I found voice for in the literature and how I changed as a result of what I read. I think it was a mutually reinforcing relationship between the two. Regardless of how the changes came about, these four themes played a key role in developing my understanding of the change experience of understanding and implementing TLE effectively.

For me the bracketing interview was more than a ritual. When approaching this dissertation, it became increasingly important to acknowledge my assumptions about my personal experience. In fact, in writing this section of the dissertation I began to realize more keenly the profound influence these four themes had on my understanding of TLE and how I changed as a result. In fact, as I wrote this section, I felt I successfully bracketed my preunderstanding sufficiently to examine the participants’ experiences so I could openly listen to their perspectives. Furthermore, having the explicit statement of my preunderstanding provided me with an excellent resource to review to make sure I
was not simply searching for evidence to support my earlier position. In addition, having a written reminder of these four themes helped me while interviewing participants to recognize moments when I needed to proceed with caution. For instance, if a participant began talking about transformational change, I knew that I needed to proceed carefully to avoid comments that would encourage them to talk more about that topic. Being aware of my biases helped me to remain thoughtfully silent at those moments during the interviews to allow participants room to reveal their experiences without any heavy handed encouragement. Finally, it was important to acknowledge here that, prior to engaging in this research, it was unknown to me what other people’s experiences were like as they came to understand and implement TLE.

In all, I thought that by examining the cognitive, social, emotional, and historical aspects of my preunderstanding I could more openly contrast it with the experience of other people. Doing so followed a precedent set by other phenomenological investigators (Giles, 2008; Jahreie, 2010; Prytula, 2008; Roberts, 2009; Wimmer, 2010). What will follow in this dissertation is a continued examination of my preunderstanding through the review of literature.
CHAPTER IV
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The intent of this dissertation was to understand the nature of the change experience of released-time seminary teachers who are learning to understand and implement TLE effectively. Because of the unique nature of the phenomenon, there were no phenomenological studies that examined it specifically. Because this study represented a first of its kind, it was important to develop a thoughtful strategy to guide the literature review to find relevant research. Furthermore, the issue of how to structure a literature review for a phenomenological study was an important point of discussion, because “each [phenomenological] research project holds its own integrity and establishes its own methods and procedures to facilitate the flow of the investigation and the collection of data” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 104). To address this concern, I examined the way both Moustakas and van Manen (1990) described literature reviews.

From the examination of Moustakas (1994) and van Manen (1990), it was clear that there are three purposes for conducting a literature review within a phenomenological study. These purposes included: (a) establishing the necessity of the study; (b) providing what is known about the phenomenon for comparison with the lived experience of research participants, in so far as is possible; and (c) providing support for research design decisions.

Establishing the necessity for the study will be accomplished by examining what is occurring within S&I that lead to the necessity of revealing the nature of phenomenon. In addition, discussing what is known about the phenomenon will be an extension of the
bracketing interview (Moustakas, 1994) and represent a continued effort to maintain an attitude of openness (Nyström & Dahlberg, 2001). Finally, providing support for design decisions constitutes an effort to examine carefully what general resources such as what Moustakas and van Manen recommended, as well as to consider examples from research studies.

**Establishing Necessity for the Study**

First, S&I is a large organization influencing many people. Currently there are 119,267 released-time seminary students and 2,264 full- and part-time religious education employees within S&I (S&I, 2012).

Furthermore, the S&I organization expects its released-time seminary teachers to understand and implement TLE effectively. This is clearly established by the publication of the TLE documents themselves (S&I, 2009a), the training DVD (S&I, 2006), the production of the TLE wiki (S&I, 2009b), as well as numerous training conference presentations by S&I administrators and LDS General Authorities (Bednar, 2006; Church Education System [CES], 2003; Hall, 2003a; Hawks, 2007; Scott, 2005).

In addition, the purpose of TLE was for teachers to increase their abilities to assist students in deepening their conversions, to understand how to read LDS scripture, and to learn to teach other people from the LDS scriptures (Hall, 2003a; S&I, 2009a). The origin of TLE was that S&I administrators were considering how they could help their teachers improve their abilities in those three areas (Hall, 2003a). Proprietary research conducted in 2005 and 2006 by the LDS Church for S&I also revealed that after 3 years the majority
of released-time seminary teachers did not understand the expectations of TLE and even fewer of them were capable of implementing those expectations at expert levels. These points are presented merely to show that TLE required some degree of change of its released-time seminary teachers. However, the nature of the change is unknown. Hence, because of the expectation of S&I, clearly released-time seminary teachers must experience some degree or kind of change to learn to understand and implement TLE effectively.

From a broader sense an important area of study related to this dissertation is examining the experience of practitioners learning to understand and implement an imposed change and the influence of that change on their professional identity. One way to examine such a change is through the lens of sociocultural learning (M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000), primarily CoP theory (Wenger, 1998). Many studies utilizing CoP theory have considered practitioners developing a professional identity as a new practitioner (Fox & Wilson, 2009; Jawitz, 2009; R. G. Smith, 2007; Williams & Ritter, 2010) or identity change resulting from moving from one CoP to another (Dahlgren, Hult, Dahlgren, af Segerstad, & Johansson, 2006; McArdle & Ackland, 2007). However, few studies have examined the nature of practitioners’ experience with an imposed change from a phenomenological perspective. To facilitate this discussion, what follows

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12 I was privileged to read two proprietary research studies with the permission of the researchers. I was also allowed to interview those who conducted the studies. However, at the request of the LDS Church, I was neither allowed to directly cite nor quote statistics from these studies. This requirement was stipulated to prevent any requests for access to the proprietary studies as they are a matter of private record. However, the studies are mentioned here to provide support for the choice of dissertation topic. It is also noted that some of the findings from the studies were summarized and presented in a conference for S&I by Hawks (2007). Therefore, the existence of said studies is verifiable. Furthermore, conversations between senior administrators in S&I confirmed that program administrators are still of the opinion that the problem of understanding and implementing TLE persists for many S&I teachers (personal communication, R. Hall, September 7, 2011; personal communication, P. Johnson, February 9, 2011).
is first an examination of the relevant literature as it relates to themes that were developed from my perspective as the researcher; and second a consideration of the relevant phenomenological research literature.

What Is Known: Themes from the Researcher’s Perspective

It is clear that presently the nature of the change experience of released-time seminary teachers who understand and implement TLE effectively is unknown. What must be determined is how participants would describe their lived experience while learning to understand and implement it. However, what is known thus far about the phenomenon is based on two sources. First, the examination in Chapter I of the TLE documents themselves revealed that teachers may be experiencing character or identity and practice related changes. In addition, the researcher’s perspective is vital because I am also a released-time seminary teacher. My preunderstanding was previously examined in Chapter III and developed by comparing it to relevant research literature. From my experience four themes were developed. These themes are that my experience learning to understand and implement TLE facilitated transformational change; stimulated self-reflection; was enhanced by sociocultural learning experiences; and highlighted the need for improved professional development.

To further consider the possible nature of the phenomenon, I examined literature in areas of activity theory, adult learning, change theory, CoP, community-based learning, epistemology, identity development and transformation, knowing in organizations, learning communities, motivation and change, ontology, phenomenology,
professional development, professional wisdom, situated cognition, and sociocultural theory. The results of this search were compared with the themes from the examination of my perspective in Chapter III.

**Imposed Changes May Facilitate Transformational Change**

The roots of transformational learning developed as part of adult learning theory (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998; Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Mezirow (2000) explained that transformative learning is more than increasing cognitive knowledge or behavioral performance. Transformational changes occurs when teachers rethink why they do what they do in practice (Dall’Alba & Barnacle, 2007; M. J. Packer, 2001b). Schön (1983, 1987) observed that practitioners experience transformation as they looked beyond their routine, habitual practice and learned to solve important novel problems (cf., Donnelly, 1999). Others described transformation occurring when practitioners made foundational changes in their character, perspectives, and attitudes, or in other words in their identities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; M. J. Packer, 2001b; M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; Wenger, 1998). Thus, transformational learning could be defined as teachers altering their identity, perspective, and assumptions about their practice and what is required of them to be effective at it (Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

Duguid (2005) explained that when practitioners experience cognitive learning they are learning what it means to be. For example, a college student who wants to become a seminary teacher enrolls in training courses to study the theory and practice of teaching seminary. In those courses she would learn what it means to be a seminary
teacher. Whereas, Duguid explained, when practitioners engage in performance of their practice they are learning how to be (cf., Ryle, 1949). For example, a newly hired seminary teacher begins to transform her character as she learns through doing what seminary teachers do. She becomes a seminary teacher because she is doing what seminary teachers do, rather than learning that seminary teachers are supposed to do certain things. Hence, the nature of transformative learning is doing and becoming, rather than understanding and learning about.

Researchers have found that transformation occurs when adults experience something called a trigger event. Trigger events could be disconfirming experiences (Mezirow, 2000). A disconfirming experience happens when someone must change because of a painful realization. For instance, a seminary teacher recognizing that the way he is teaching no longer aligns with current expectations could trigger change. In addition, a trigger event could also be a positive motivation such as having a joy for learning. For instance, Brookfield (1986) found that adults transformed their characters because they like the learning experience. A joy of learning experience could be a seminary teacher examining TLE, considering where his performance was in relation to the expectations, and working to change because he wanted to get better. In other words, how people respond to transformational opportunities depends on their perspective on change and their experience as individuals.

Theorists believe that transformational change is difficult to negotiate. Knight (2002), elaborating on Leont’ev’s hierarchy of interactions, described three levels of change within performance, namely operations, actions, and activities. Operations are
routine changes, such as a new process for recording hours that a seminary teacher has worked. Moreover, actions are changes that are more mindful, such as a seminary teacher learning to implement a new teaching technique.

Activity level changes are the highest of Leont’ev’s three levels. Knight (2002) described activities as “suites of actions.” These changes lead people to create new views of self and of the world around them. Hence, Knight described activity level learning as the “fundamental reappraisal of assumptions which have hitherto governed” a person’s thoughts, actions, and beliefs (Knight, 2002, p. 213). Leont’ev’s concept of activity level change aligns well with the idea of transformational change or transformational learning, because it requires an examination of assumptions and a change in one’s character or identity.

The following will show that it is reasonable to assume that TLE could require transformational change for some released-time seminary teachers. In an interview between Chad Webb and Kenneth Alford, Webb explained in one sense the change he thinks S&I requires of its teachers when it introduced TLE to them.

The Teaching Emphasis is an attempt to incorporate and emphasize those principles of learning that we believe will lead to deepened conversion—to help the Gospel go from a young person’s head to their heart. We’re not saying that what we have done in the past was not right or that there’s a new way of doing things. What we are suggesting is that we should continue to do all of the good things we’ve always done, as well as working to identify additional principles of learning that will deepen conversion, protect our students against the influences of the world, and prepare them for what the Lord is expecting of them. (Webb & Alford, 2009, p. 240)

First, it is important to note from Webb’s statement that the goal of TLE is to facilitate deepened conversion. Previously, it was established that the goal of deepened conversion
requires students to change not just what they know cognitively, but also what they believe and do in their personal lives (Chapter I). Thus, a teacher implementing TLE principles and practices will expect that students will learn to transform their characters and behavior. Furthermore, it is clear that Webb thought that implementing TLE does not require “a new way of doing things.” However, Webb stated that teachers will need to identify additional principles of learning to accomplish this objective. From Webb’s statements it sounds like the needed change will not require a radically new approach to S&I teaching. Yet it is uncertain what additional principles may be required. One must note that no list is provided within the interview text. In other words, the principles are currently unknown. However, Webb’s statement reflects that teachers must discover the principles on their own.

In S&I a principle is defined as a general rule that is true for all people in all situations (B. K. Packer, 1985; Scott, 1993a, 1993b, 1998). Thus, teachers learn to govern their behavior by implementing principles both in and out of the classroom. Scott (1998) described the process of extracting principles from the scriptures as receiving spiritual communication from God combined with cognitive actions. The spiritual process includes praying and learning to discern thoughts and spiritual feelings that help a teacher to understand what to do. The cognitive process includes understanding the definition of a principle, reading the scriptural text, analyzing it for relationships between actions and consequences. Then teachers are to create a conditional statement that characterizes what the scriptures teach. However, Scott also explained that for teachers to create complete principles they must examine more than one location in the scriptures because often
principles are composed of multiple elements which must be combined into a unified whole.

It is also possible that Anderson and colleagues’ (2001) revision of Bloom’s taxonomy presents some answers to how teachers might extract principles. Based on Anderson colleagues’ description of mental actions, identifying teaching principles includes lower level actions such as interpreting, inferring, abstracting, comparing, and explaining to higher level actions of analyzing, evaluating, and creating. In other words, the complexity of learning to discover principles can vary from lower- to higher-level thinking.

An additional comment that might also reveal what teachers need to change comes from Webb as he continued his interview with Alford. Webb said that the most pronounced change teachers would likely experience when learning to implement TLE is with regards to understanding the role of the student. He stated:

Is the student actively participating? Is the student discovering things? Are students talking about ways the Gospel blesses their lives? Are they sharing their own experiences with Gospel principles? Those kinds of experiences with the scriptures and with their peers will help to take Gospel principles into their hearts and will prepare them to be able to share it with others. (Webb & Alford, 2009, pp. 240-241)

Clearly, one of the central assumptions underlying TLE is that teachers must learn to facilitate increased student participation in the classroom in a way that leads to deepened levels of conversion.

However, Sweat’s (2011) dissertation studied the correlation between students’ oral participation in seminary classrooms and the relationship of that participation with students’ perceived religious experiences. In other words, Sweat examined the
assumption that students explaining, sharing, and testifying is related to an increase in perceived spiritual experiences. Sweat interviewed 563 seminary students from 25 randomly selected classes concerning their level of in-class oral participation and their subsequent perception of religious experiences. He examined ten common student oral participation activities. From his study, he found a statistically significant correlation ($r = .32, p < .01$) between students’ overall in-class oral participation and their perceived in-class spiritual experience. Individually, 4 of the 10 oral participation behaviors were found to be statistically significant predictors of in-class spiritual experiences. Those four behaviors were reading or reciting scripture out loud, explaining LDS doctrines to others, singing hymns, and sharing testimony with others by expressing personal beliefs. Clearly, these findings show that in-class participation does have a relationship with students’ perception of religious experiences when focused on the particular behaviors.

Nevertheless, upon examining the multiple regression results Sweat (2011) also found that students’ in-class oral participation, including all ten common activities, only accounted for 12.7% of the total variance for perceived spiritual experiences with the sample of students in question. In other words, in class participation seems to be a smaller factor in producing spiritual experience than S&I administrators may have thought, when compared with all of the activities that might produce spiritual experiences whether in or out of class. This fact is particularly important in light of Sweat’s analysis of talks from S&I and LDS Church leaders regarding the implementation of TLE. Of the 51 talks given on TLE Sweat found that 39.2% of them assert that “student oral participation [will] facilitate desired spiritual outcomes through the Holy Ghost” (p. 29).
In other words, nearly 40% of the talks suggested that student oral participation is central to students feeling the Holy Ghost. While it seems to be true that student oral participation is a significant factor in students having perceived spiritual experiences in class, it also seems clear that S&I teachers might need to question the assumption that merely explaining, sharing, and testifying is sufficient to help students to have spiritual experiences. Hence, the nature of the change experience to become effective at implementing TLE appears to be unclear and could require significant reflection on what teachers can and must do to influence student conversion.

Finally, Johnson (2011) explained the kind of change he thinks teachers must make to increase their ability to assist in fostering student conversion. He said:

I think one of the keys is to actually realize how Gospel things are internalized. You learn in the scriptures that in order to do that, students have to be able to experiment on the word, give heed and diligence, exercise faith, and do the will [of God], and then they’ll know. I think the action that students take is a crucial part. Sometimes we forget that, and we think that just dumping information on students is the end that we’re after, but that isn’t. We’re really hoping that [the Gospel] becomes part of their lives and changes their lives. So, what we do in the classroom and outside the classroom should help bring them to that experimenting on the word—to actually following through and living the commandments. That is what drives the Gospel into their hearts. We don’t control them doing that, but we can help increase the possibility they’ll do it. (pp. 1-2)

From Elder Johnson’s comments what seems to be implied is that some S&I teachers might think that conversion occurs by telling students the right things. Clearly Elder Johnson thought S&I teachers must go beyond telling students important information and teach them in ways that challenge them to act on what they learn. S&I training literature has clearly established that all teachers are to encourage student application of what they learn (S&I, 2001). However, it is conceivable that some teachers are still focused on
teaching content, rather than teaching to change a student’s behavior. This point is very important in light of what Argyris and Schön (1974) wrote about putting theory into practice.

Argyris and Schön (1974) observed that what practitioners say they do is not always the same as what they actually do in practice. This phenomenon was previously described as having an espoused theory and a theory in practice. With this in mind, combined with Elder Johnson’s thoughts just quoted, it is conceivable that there are teachers who believe they are teaching to deepen students’ level of conversion, yet they are in fact focused more on disseminating information. What is necessary, then, is helping teachers to see their theory in practice in comparison with the espoused theory of S&I, namely TLE. Such an experience of self-evaluation could lead some teachers to a transformative change.

In sum, transformational learning is defined herein as seminary teachers potentially altering their identity, perspective, and assumptions about their practice and what is required of them to become effective at implementing TLE. This kind of change could occur for them because of a trigger event, either through a disconfirming experience or a joy of learning experience. In addition, at least three reasons exist to think that released-time seminary teachers either have experienced or will experience some degree of transformational learning at some point in the future. These reasons include the following.

1. Most teachers will be required to identify additional principles of learning to accomplish the objectives of TLE. Current understanding means that teachers could need
to engage in the simpler cognitive process of abstracting up to the more complex processes of evaluating and creating.

2. All teachers must facilitate or learn to facilitate increased student participation in the classroom in ways that lead to deepened levels of conversion, based on the central tenants of TLE. However, recent research revealed that the assumption that students engaging in oral participation will necessarily lead to deepened levels of perceived spiritual experiences may not be completely accurate. It appears that teachers may need to explore other forms of student participation that lead students to act on what they learn to achieve the desired levels conversion.

3. Some teachers may need to examine their theories in practice compared with their espoused theories to determine if what they do in practice in fact aligns with what they say they are doing. This examination could lead to challenging previously held assumptions in a way that leads to transformational change.

Imposed Changes May Facilitate Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is one of the essential practices that seminary teachers could engage in to lead to character or identity change and to practice or performance change. Previously, it has been suggested that S&I teachers may need to alter their character or identity—in sum, their ontology—as it has been called. In addition, it has also been suggested that teachers may need to alter their practice in a significant way, challenging previously held assumptions about what it means to teacher seminary. For instance, teachers might need to examine the way they have defined interpersonal theories and how
they are implementing them. They might also need to examine practice such as the possibility of an over reliance on oral participation (Sweat, 2011) and investigate other means of leading students to act on what they learn in class. While the nature of these changes is not yet clear, research literature reveals one kind of change that might describe what some seminary teachers are experiencing.

An examination of Schön’s (1983) book *The Reflective Practitioner* has revealed a central theme describing the potential nature of the seminary teachers’ identity change experience. This nature includes practitioners learning to define who they are in terms of defining one’s identity. Schön observed that overtly defining one’s identity can shape a practitioner’s professional practice. For instance, he described a case study where he observed a city planner who saw himself not as a “writer of plans, covering the walls of his office with maps and charts” but as a “community organizer and advocate,” forging relationships to negotiate successfully between developers and the city council (p. 221). Because of his personal definition of his professional purpose, the city planner performed his job differently from someone else who saw himself as an organizer of the city. In other words, Schön observed that the nature of practitioners improving their performance in their professional practice includes redefining their professional identity.

In addition, Schön (1983) described the tacit nature of professionals altering their identities. He defined professional identity as the objectives, strategies, relevant facts, personal values, and interpersonal theories considered by the practitioner when solving professional problems. However, Schön argued that over time such behaviors become overlearned, habitual, or automatic. Driskell, Willis, and Cooper (1992) explained the
concept of overlearning as when a practitioner learns to perform a task to the point of perfect execution. Then, training continues until at some set number of repetitions of the task it becomes overlearned. The principle behind overlearning is that the greater the number of repetitions of a task, the greater is the person’s retention of how to perform the task without error (cf., Lave, 1988; van Merriënboer, 1997).

Furthermore, Schön (1983) explained that professionals create their identities as they gain knowledge through personal experience while they engage in practice. He explained the dynamics of professional identity evolution through a process called reflection-in-action. Schön developed the concept through observation and analysis of multiple case studies. Reflection-in-action occurs as practitioners ponder on their actions, asking questions like, what objectives am I trying to accomplish; what evidence supports my thinking; what assumptions have I made; what principles am I drawing upon; and how will I test my solution and evaluate the results? After reflecting, practitioners then follow through with their plans for implementing the strategy and testing the results, repeating the process until reaching a satisfactory conclusion. Through this iterative process Schön argued that practitioners produce sound results for solving novel professional problems. In turn, the results of these solutions form the substance of practitioners’ characters or identities.

When practitioners learn to perform routine behaviors without conscious thought of the principles supporting the behavior, their understanding of the related rationale becomes tacit. Polanyi (1966) defined tacit knowledge as knowing “more than we can say” (p. 51). Schön (1983) argued that overlearned or automatic behavior and the tacit
knowledge supporting it are useful when solving routine problems; however, when practitioners encounter novel problems—such as those that might be experienced by an enforced change to their professional practice such as TLE—reflection-in-action is required.

Within S&I there is evidence of LDS General Authorities challenging released-time seminary teachers to examine the identities they have created for themselves. For instance, Elder Scott (2005) described the nature of teaching seminary as participation. He characterized the weakest kind of teaching as being a “talking head” (p. 3). Instead, he described teachers needing to examine themselves and their style of teaching to see if they align with the example of Jesus Christ, where students are led to discover and receive truth, rather than being told it.

In addition, Elder Bednar (2006) encouraged teachers to consider their professional identities when he referred to the adage, you can give a man fish and he will eat for a day. You can teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime. He then said, “As Gospel instructors, you and I are not in the business of distributing fish; rather, our work is to help individuals learn to ‘fish’ and to become spiritually self-reliant” (p. 4). In other words, it seems that Elder Bednar thought that the way released-time seminary teachers define their identity should be as guides, who influence their students to learn to achieve. If, for example, seminary teachers expect students to bear testimony, they will provide them with greater opportunities to do so.13 Hence, S&I teachers ought to examine their

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13 One might examine Elder Scott’s (1998) example of helping students to become spiritually led. In this talk he discusses the process of helping students find principles in the scriptures. From Elder Scott’s talk one could argue that teachers might need to alter their identity to include the idea that they are to help students see principles rather than to continually teach stories or thematic lessons.
personal teaching identities and whether they are encouraging students to increase their
degree of participation in class.

Finally, Elder Johnson (2011) challenged teachers to examine the way they are
teaching. He said, S&I teachers must be certain they are not teaching the same way they
did 10 or 20 years ago. He continued, “What was sufficient then will not offer adequate
protection now” (p. 2). In other words, teachers must become self-reflective and consider
the way they are teaching to improve and meet the demands placed on students today.
This thought gives the impression that the very nature of the seminary profession, the
nature of the changing world and the conditions in which the seminary age youth are
growing up, require that teachers continually reflect on their performance and seek to
improve to match the demands and needs that the youth face today.

In sum, Schön (1983) described the meaning of reflection as being able to see the
tacit nature of one’s practice. This seeing would lead practitioners to re-evaluate what
they are doing to better align their theory in practice with their espoused theory and
further clarify their definition of identity for their profession. In turn, the three General
Authority statements would seem to concur, where Elders Scott and Bednar would direct
S&I teachers to consider the nature of their professional identity, specifically whether it
included the meaning of leading students to greater acceptance of responsibility and
personal action to live the Gospel; and Elder Johnson’s desire was that they consider the
meaning of reflection and whether many S&I instructors are teaching the same way they
did 10 or 20 years ago or whether they have improved. What is needed is to reveal the
meaning of effective released-time seminary teachers who have become effective at
teaching in the way that TLE requires. It is unclear if they have engaged in reflection that led them to character or practice redefinition or what reflection meant to them in the process of becoming effective.

**Imposed Changes May Facilitate Sociocultural Learning Experiences**

Because no one has conducted research yet to reveal the nature of the changes effective seminary teachers have made to understand and implement TLE, it makes sense to cast a broad net to describe the general nature of ontological or identity level change. Then additional research within S&I can begin to focus more specifically on important areas that emerge within this framework and possibly outside of it as well. Sociocultural theory is a specific instance of situated cognition or situativity theory. Situated cognition (Bandura, 1986, 1989) attempts to “reflect the fundamentally social nature of learning and cognition” and how practitioners learn to perform within the context of professional practice (Kirschner & Whitson, 1997, p. 1). In other words, it describes how people learn to perform their professional practices in their specific context.

Leont’ev (1974) and Vygotsky (1978). However, M. J. Packer (2001a) and M. J. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) did not differentiate this way. Instead, they combine all four theorists under the heading of sociocultural theory. This is confusing and reflects a degree of concern for M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s position. Nevertheless, for convenience in referring to M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s definition of ontology, this dissertation will adopt their use of the term sociocultural theory, noting that it overlooks Kirshner and Witson’s important distinction.

One of the central goals of sociocultural learning is to explain how people develop their ontologies or identities. For people to understand the concept of ontology requires them to see learning not as an event, but as a process of development and change following along a pathway of growth that both Greeno and Wenger refer to as a trajectory (Greeno, 1997; M. J. Packer, 2001b; Wenger, 1998). With this thought in mind people might conceive of forming their identities over time through years of experience along a pathway of development. The following discussion will consider two theories that describe the development of ontology through sociocultural learning. The first is a definition created by M. J. Packer and Goicoechea (2000); the second is a discussion of Wenger’s (1998) Communities of Practice theory.

**Packer and Goicoechea’s definition of ontological change.** Within sociocultural theory M. J. Packer and Goicoechea (2000), through an extensive literature review, attempted to combine the broad perspectives of sociocultural learning into a synthesized, holistic concept of individual identity change. Within their definition is a description of knowledge, knowing, and some fundamental conditions of learning. First,
knowledge of self is what is learned through the process of identity formation (M. J. Packer, 2001b). This concept of knowledge of self-aligns well with the goal of phenomenological inquiry, where individuals’ meaning for lived experience is revealed (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). It also seems to align well with the meaning of change encouraged by TLE. As previously stated three LDS authorities have encouraged seminary teachers to consider their identity and how it influences their teaching.

Learning is defined as the process of developing personal and cultural identity (M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). According to M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s definition, people accomplish this process as they develop and transform their identities through the following conditions:

1. A person is constructed,
2. In social context,
3. Formed through practical activity,
4. And formed in relationships of desire and recognition,
5. That can split the person,
6. Motivating the search for identity. (pp. 231-234)

The intention behind their definition is to describe whole person development and change of identity. Yet, it is unclear how much of their definition will relate to the lived experience of released-time seminary teachers.

Examples of sociocultural studies reveal people constructing their ontologies through choices they make in response to the influence of the society and culture in which they live and practice (Markus, n.d.; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). One such seminal piece of research was Lave and Wenger’s (1991) study of master-apprentice relationships among Vai and Gola tailors. In their study, they show newcomers learning through social interaction and practical activity as they observe experienced tailors,
practice their trade, receive feedback, and develop knowledge by engaging in legitimate participation in the CoP. Since Lave and Wenger’s publication, numerous theorists have researched the development of newcomers’ ontologies through social interaction and legitimate participation (Goldie, Dowie, Cotton, & Morrison, 2007; Killeavy & Moloney, 2008; Koro-Ljungberg & Hayes, 2006; Malfroy & Yates, 2003; Warhurst, 2006).

Wiessner and Sullivan’s (2007) study described the nature of people who desire success yet often feel alone in the process of becoming. Through social interaction, one research participant learned that, “we all have fears,” but “they are easier to face when we know we are not alone” (p. 102). In other words, when dealing with the desire for success one also must face the fear of failure, and through social interaction people can overcome that fear. A participant in a similar study realized through social practice, “my concerns, fears, and uncertainties are shared and there is nothing unusual or different about the issues I am having to tackle” (Staniforth & Harland, 2003, p. 87). Thus, in both cases striving for success meant that participants would experience fear, yet through social practice they developed greater confidence and a new perception about themselves—”I am not alone.” Hence, elements of their identities were formed through social interaction, desire, and seeking to reconcile the feelings of fear and striving for success.

Moreover, M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s (2000) definition omits an essential concept of identity development discussed by Wenger. Wenger (1998) argued that an important aspect of identity development occurs as communities create reifications and practitioners interact with them. Reifications are concepts that are objectified either through physical or mental artifacts (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Kirschner &

For instance, Glazer and colleagues’ (2009) research showed the profound impact of reifications on teachers’ ability to perform within a practice. They showed how K-5 teachers unified their faculty by utilizing a common curriculum to learn to implement new technology. Thus, change meant unification through the reification of the idea of a common curriculum. Akerson and colleagues (2009) researched a case where multiple elementary school teachers relied upon a shared collection of children’s books to shape the examples they used. In addition, teachers improved their performance by using a system of chart paper for tracking students’ progress. Finally, teachers used posters to explain key concepts of the central philosophy of the study called nature of science. In other words, change meant finding common tools or ideas that link their practice together.

Finally, Hatano and Wertsch (2001) and Wertsch and Rupert (1993) researched how people shape their thoughts about and conform their efforts in practice through the use of mediational means. Mediational means are reifications that allow people to participate in practice; they mediate people’s abilities to perform work. For instance, according to Wertsch (1991), one plausible explanation is that the designers of the QWERTY keyboard intentionally designed it to slow data input to avoid keys jamming on a manual typewriter (cf. Wertsch & Rupert, 1993).14 Modern computer manufacturers continue to implement the QWERTY design, even though empirical evidence shows the design decreases efficiency and evidence supports that multiple examples of faster

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14 Noyes (1983) suggested that the claim that QWERTY intentionally slows data input may not necessarily be true. However, Noyes did offer evidence that improved versions of keyboard layouts in fact do exist.
keyboard designs exist (Noyes, 1983). In fact, Noyes’ research found that QWERTY persists for at least two reasons. First, because of its ubiquitous acceptance so that people will not abandon the familiar style of keyboard; and second, because manufacturers do not see a cost benefit to purchase new machinery to produce an alternate keyboard style. This example shows the significant influence of reifications on practice to the point of persisting out of familiarity, rather than productivity.

From these examples it is clear that reifications are a significant factor in shaping people’s practice and thus influencing the development of their identity or ontology. With these examples in mind, M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s (2000) definition will be altered as follows: A person is constructed in social context, formed through practical activity, *interaction with reifications*, and in relationships of desire and recognition that can split the person, thus motivating the search for identity.

Gorodetsky and Barak’s (2009) research serves as an important example of all of the aspects of M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s (2000) definition of ontological development and change. In their 12-year study of teachers in a combined high school and junior high school setting in Israel, Gorodetsky and Barak found that when teachers engaged in social collaboration and self-examination, it led them to reflect on their fundamental practice and create new definitions of their identities. After 7 years of studying the same schools, Gorodetsky and Barak observed that teachers were engaging in practices recommended by the pedagogy they were seeking to implement through the study, but the teachers were doing so without theoretical understanding. In fact, the researchers described the teachers’ behavior as routine and thoughtless. What changed
the teachers’ performance occurred when homeroom teachers realized they had freedom to approach their problems in a new way.

The homeroom teachers began to discuss with each other problems they were having with students. They recognized they had defined their identity as babysitters. As a result of their realization, they redefined their identities as people who researched solutions to problems. As they sought for answers by studying learning theory, in fact, they found solutions for students’ problems. Then, they experimented with what they learned, observed each other, shared ideas, practiced together, and implemented their new learning strategies. Through this process, their professional identities began to evolve. They no longer saw themselves as receivers of knowledge, waiting for someone to tell them how to fix students’ problems. The homeroom teachers began seeing themselves as creators of knowledge and implementers of new, untried ideas. Their practice evolved and students began to change in ways previously unseen.

When homeroom teachers experienced transformational change and significant increases in success with students, the regular classroom teachers began discussing what had elicited the transformation. The effect was regular classroom teachers began to follow the pattern of the homeroom teachers. They too began researching solutions to their problems. They began observing each other, discussing their problems, and sharing what they had learned.

The changes that homeroom and regular classroom teachers made began to influence their administrators as well. For instance, the principal realized she no longer was the person with all of the answers. She had to assume a new identity as someone who
supported and encouraged the faculty to continue discovering. She said that identity change was very difficult but very important for her. In addition, a senior administrator visited the school without knowledge of the changes the teachers had made. She assumed the school maintained the status quo; however, when she found that teachers were assuming more responsibility she felt threatened and began to chastise the faculty, telling them they were out of line and in jeopardy of losing their grant for the school. It took time for the faculty and administration to explain to the senior administrator the nature of the changes that had occurred and the benefits the students were experiencing. In the end, she was pleased with the success, but she also had to alter her identity in relation to that particular cluster of schools.

In effect, the school culture, the teachers, and administrators were transformed through social practice that led them to construct new identities. Their new identities were the result of practical activities. The homeroom and regular room teachers interacted with reifications such as new teaching methods, research studies, and revised meeting schedules to form new definitions of self. They experienced relationships of desire as they sought for ways to help students and for recognition with their administrators to see that they had developed greater levels of competence as creators of knowledge. They wanted to be recognized for their success and thus empowered to act. These changes resulted in splitting many peoples’ identities, forcing not only the homeroom and regular room teachers to search for new definitions of self, but also the principal and senior administrator to redefine their identities as well. Thus, Gorodetsky and Barak’s (2009) study represented an exceptional example of the nature of the
experience of those who undergo identity change through sociocultural learning.

It is unclear to what degree M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s (2000) definition of ontological change describes the experience that released-time seminary teachers are undergoing. It is important to compare the points of their definition with seminary teachers’ experiences. However, this dissertation does not intend to use M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s definition as a definitive lens through which to examine all of the experience of the study participants. Instead, the intent herein is to cast a broad net and allow the naturally emerging experience of participants to emphasize what principles of their definition were important to them. Hence, I will not specifically ask questions to verify whether or not the M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s definition is being used, but allow that information to emerge naturally.

**Wenger’s description of identity development through CoPs.** In addition to M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s definition of ontological change in sociocultural learning environments, Wenger’s (1998, 2000) *communities of practice* (CoP) theory also has provided an important perspective that might assist in understanding participants’ lived experiences. Wenger’s (1998) concept of CoP theory provides extensive explanation of the professional identity evolution. For Wenger (1998), identity change involved transforming the whole person as he or she interacts within a community of practitioners (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Moran, Jacobs, Bunn, & Bifulco, 2007; Viskovic, 2005).

CoP theory explains the dynamics of identity change as a cognitive process of metaphor creation combined with social elements of learning such as observation, modeling, and imitation. According to Wenger (1998), CoP theory stands on four
primary assumptions.

1. People are social beings who are part of a community, which is made up of the social configurations in which they engage.

2. Knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to a valued enterprise, i.e., when someone participates in the goals and objectives of the community he or she gains knowledge. Both codified and tacit knowledge exist for individuals and communities.

3. Knowing occurs through active participation in the pursuits of the enterprise. Practice defines the action of the enterprise as reflected in the shared historical resources, frameworks, and perspectives of the community.

4. Meaning is the ultimate result of learning within a CoP. When participation in the enterprise is combined with reifications, portraying concepts of the enterprise in concrete ways, then meaning is created.

Wenger (1998) also defined three central components of a CoP. These components are the mutual engagement of a community of practitioners; the joint enterprise of a negotiated practice; and the collective production of a shared repertoire of resources developed through reification. Each of these components contributes to meaning making and the dynamics of professional identity evolution.

Mutual engagement involves learning through a community of participants engaged jointly in the same enterprise. Wenger (1998) described mutual engagement thus:

[Participants] have a sustained history of mutual engagement. They negotiate with one another what they are doing there, how they should behave, their relation with the company [or organization], and the meanings of the artifacts they use. They have developed local routines and artifacts to support their work together. They
know who to ask when they need help. And they introduce into their community new trainees who want to become proficient at their practice. (p. 123, italics added)

The idea of mutual engagement means that people are collectively working on the same practice. As practitioners collaborate through a process of negotiation practitioners collectively develop the objectives they will accomplish (Yang, 2009), they create strategies as they share problems and engage in joint decision making (Margolin, 2007), and learn relevant facts about the practice by watching and talking to other teachers about the practice (Ng & Tan, 2009). Through the process of mutual engagement and negotiation practitioners create a shared vision as they converse about beliefs and values related to their CoP (Frost, Robinson, & Anning, 2005; T. H. Nelson, Slavit, Perkins, & Hathorn, 2008). In addition, they articulate new knowledge leading to the development of personal theories (Staniforth & Harland, 2003; Yang, 2009). In other words, mutual engagement brings a community of practitioners together in important social configurations to negotiate how to accomplish the work of the practice. Social configurations consist of the interrelationships within the community, including apprentices, newcomers, old timers, mentors, coaches, trainers, administrators, inservice leaders, principals, and so forth, who interact in a variety of ways.

Wenger (1998) described joint enterprise as a local community defining the objectives of their practice. Multiple communities of practice might exist within an organization or company. One CoP could be high-level administrators who define the global objectives for the entire organization. Another CoP could be the local practitioners who define their practice. Together the two CoPs would negotiate the joint enterprise.
Thus, every community member is responsible to contribute and determine how to accomplish the global objectives of the organization depending on their practice situation, whether global or local.

To illustrate, Wenger (1998) described a group of claims processors working for an insurance company he called Alinsu. For instance, the supervisors gave the claims processors a new form. The supervisors envisioned the form to accomplish a specific purpose. However, how they implemented the form was “actually defined by claims processors through their mutual engagement in practice” (p. 78). They talked about strategies of what to do to utilize the form in the most effective ways. They developed tacit, local knowledge and practices. They were still responsible to accomplish the global objectives (i.e., use the form), but the practice of using it was developed locally.

The *shared repertoire* of a CoP consists of the resources the community creates to communicate about and accomplish the work of the community. Wenger (1998) explained that practitioners create shared resources through a process called reification. To reify means making something abstract into something concrete (OED, 2010). A *reification* is an idea or tangible thing created through metaphor and used by the CoP to communicate with community members how to accomplish the practice. In sum, reifications are concepts turned into objects for explaining how practitioners perform their practice. Through participation with reifications, practitioners develop meaning and identity. Shared resources are the aids that allow practitioners to talk about and participate in their practice. They make up the substance of the repertoire. There is no claim that one resource is better than another resource. The community creates and
evaluates resources through mutual negotiation.

For instance, Glazer and colleagues’ (2009) research showed how K-5 teachers who were learning to implement new technology relied on the shared resource of a common curriculum to improve awareness and knowledge across the CoP. Akerson and colleagues (2009) described elementary school teachers who used a shared collection of children’s books to provide examples, a system of using chart paper to track students’ progress, and posters to explain key concepts of the nature of science (NOS).

**Relevance of CoP theory to S&I.** CoP theory seems to be relevant to learning within S&I. For instance an example of a social configuration could be an emerging seminary teacher being paired with an experienced mentor.

Knowledge could be defined as a seminary teacher learning to ask effective questions that lead students to identify and understand doctrines and principles in the scriptures. TLE seems to be an example of codified knowledge, whereas the knowledge teachers acquire when implementing TLE would likely be considered to be tacit knowledge.

Knowing, for example, might be seminary teachers who implement TLE objectives in their classrooms. Here knowing infers the ability to act in a specific way. They might be creating ideas, objects, or methods that accomplish TLE objectives and as such are learning through participation. This kind of negotiation of practice leads to knowing and knowledge. Over time seminary teachers participating in the implementation of TLE could produce individual and community histories, examples, and personal and collective theories regarding how TLE works. The concepts would be
the artifacts or reifications used within their CoP. Through discussing and sharing these reifications, teachers could negotiate the practice in which they engage and create their shared repertoire.

Meaning results from the combination of social interaction, learning through practice, and the development of reifications. The TLE document could be an example of a reification or shared resource provided by the S&I organization. Local seminary teachers might create meaning associated with the TLE document as they interact with the ideas it conveys. They could create localized meaning when they negotiate how to implement TLE in their classrooms, and as they engage socially in sharing and collaborating with other community members to understand its meaning. According to Wenger (1998), localized, negotiated meaning is ever changing, applies both to individuals’ and to the community’s identities, and reflects members’ experiences with the world in which they engage. Identity is a form of meaning making. Within S&I, identity might be described as how learning changes the personal and community histories of becoming seminary teachers who understand and can apply TLE.

The authors of S&I training literature encouraged important elements of mutual engagement and social interaction. For instance, new teachers are encouraged to work with skilled mentors; veteran teachers are expected to collaborate with colleagues; and administrators ought to observe teachers’ classroom performance (S&I, 2003).

Within S&I there seems to be examples of practitioners working with a joint enterprise. For instance, the TLE document was created by administrators as a set of global objectives to help teachers learn to deepen students’ levels of personal conversion.
However, if CoP theory is functioning within S&I, then local practitioners are negotiating with their colleagues and faculty members how to implement the document. It is this tacit, local knowledge that is of interest within this dissertation. It represents the practical wisdom that van Manen (1990) described as the objective of a phenomenological study.

Within S&I there is also likely a shared repertoire. For instance, top-level administrators created the TLE Wiki for teachers and administrators to define key terms (S&I, 2009b). The website reflects the ideas seminary and institute teachers have developed to help explain what they think TLE means. The website is an example of a reification. It could be very helpful to understand the shared repertoires developed by released-time seminary teachers who are effective at implementing TLE. It is not necessarily important in general to study how all of CoP theory relates to the experience of understanding and implementing TLE. More important is revealing the experience of effective seminary teachers and seeing if their experiences relate to CoP theory and how important those aspects of their practice seem to be to their development of understanding and implementing TLE.

In other words, this investigation helps isolate particular aspects of CoP theory that seem to be relevant both to understanding and implementing TLE. Like M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s (2000) definition, an examination of the emergent themes of participant’s experience may emphasize what elements of CoP learning were influential to their experience.
**Imposed Changes May Facilitate Need for Improved Professional Development**

Recently Gardner (2011) completed his dissertation examining the need for improved professional development strategies in S&I. The need Gardner’s study addressed is the fact that TLE has created what seems to be a significant change in released-time seminary teachers’ practice, yet little change has occurred in professional development and inservice training to accommodate teachers’ needs to understand and implement TLE. To accomplish this purpose, Gardner’s study examined the process of self-reflection that current seminary teachers experience while engaging in practice in comparison with Hatton and Smith’s (1995) description of four types of reflective practice. Through a combination of survey and observation data, he collected information about 48 seminary teachers.

Gardner (2011) defined the four types of reflection in terms of Hatton and Smith’s (1995) understanding. The four types include technical, descriptive, dialogic, and critical reflection. **Technical reflection** involves decision making regarding immediate behaviors or skills as interpreted through the practitioner’s personal worries and prior experience. This type of reflection seems keenly connected to M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s (2000) concept of ontological change, where practitioners engage in practical activity and then consider their desires and sense of recognition in terms of those behaviors. However, M. J. Packer and Goicoechea extend beyond Hatton and Smith, suggesting that these desires lead people to fracture their identity and ultimately redefine themselves.

**Descriptive reflection** is closely related to intentionality within phenomenological inquiry. It involves a description of the events in which the person has engaged as well as
providing justification behind the events. In other words, it is the description of the external behaviors and the internal rationale. However, Hatton and Smith (1995) lack the detailed explanation provided by Husserl to describe the mental constructs relating to the objects of intentionality, namely noesis, noema, and hyletic data (Russell, 2007).

Dialogic reflection also relates to phenomenology. It includes the idea of weighing competing claims and perspectives and considering alternative resolutions for one’s lived experience (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Dialogic reflection seems to relate to the concept of imaginative variation, where the researcher considers the plausible interpretations of the lived experience and presents variations of themes that seem reasonable. However, dialogic reflection focuses on discovering solutions whereas imaginative variation is considering justification for an interpretation.

Critical reflection examines the problems and issues that someone sees and extends beyond the immediate context, considering what other influences might contribute to the circumstance (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Most important, critical reflection seems to represent the process of examining lived experience and seeking to understand the meaning that underlies it (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Thus, this type of reflection directly relates to phenomenological inquiry where people examine their preconceived notions and assumptions, seeking to provide justification for them.

What is important about Gardner’s (2011) study in relation to this dissertation is that it demonstrates that seminary teachers are naturally exhibiting elements of phenomenological inquiry. Furthermore, Gardner recommends that such inquiry could readily lend itself to improved professional development within S&I. While Gardner did
not focus on revealing the nature of the change experience of understanding and implementing TLE, what Gardner’s study does present is evidence that the nature of teaching in S&I seems to be reflective and, in the case of those he interviewed and observed, it appears to be very near to phenomenological reflection.

In addition to Gardner’s research, Little (1993) conducted a seminal review of professional development (PD) literature with the intention of encapsulating the essence of the reform movement within PD. Little recommended six essential concepts to effective professional development. They are as follows.

1. Professional development needs to inspire whole person change that relies on collaboration with colleagues to encourage “consultation and support” (p. 138).

2. It needs to consider the teachers’ specific teaching context and their experience with teaching.

3. PD needs to work toward consensus at times and dissent at other times. If teachers are not free to express opinions, their creativity could be stifled, their assumptions go unexamined, and alternatives unconsidered.

4. It should provide a broad perspective, considering not only the context of individual teachers but also the broader context of the school or organization’s needs and direction.

5. PD must include technical skill training but more importantly some form of reflective practice that leads teachers to examine their assumptions and beliefs as related to their profession.

6. PD efforts must be a balance between the interests of the individual teachers
and the interests of the educational institution.

Many of Little’s (1993) points overlap nicely with concepts already introduced in this literature review. They include ideas of whole person change like transformational learning and ontological development, practice in context as related to sociocultural learning, and examining assumptions as in reflective practice and phenomenological inquiry. However, Little’s analysis goes beyond what has already been presented herein. She also recommends taking a broad perspective to consider the needs of the individual and the needs of the organization, as well as balancing those needs. While Little’s description is primarily prescriptive, offering recommendations for changes that ought to be made, it is possible that her suggestions could lead to a clearer understanding of the nature of participants’ lived experience when compared with the findings of this study. It is yet to be determined what influence Little’s recommendations will have on this study.

Finally, Guskey (1986, 2002) offered a simpler description of the needs of professional development in comparison to Little’s (1993) analysis. However, what Guskey added to the description is very important. In particular, he noted that from his perspective the motivation for teachers to change their behavior and improve their performance comes when teachers see the influence that their efforts have on student growth and development. In other words, Guskey offered a very keen insight into the nature of teacher change. Teachers change when they see that what they are doing is making a difference in the lives of students.

In sum, there is evidence of the need for S&I to consider changes to their professional development efforts. These changes might include increased understanding
and training of reflective practices that lead to self-evaluation and identity redefinition. Furthermore, there is evidence that teachers might need the broad based changes in PD that include principles of transformational and sociocultural learning, as well as phenomenological inquiry. In addition, these changes might need to balance the needs of the teachers with the needs of S&I. Finally, S&I might need to focus more attention on revealing stories of students’ successes related to implementing TLE to increase teachers’ motivation to understand and implement it. In all, these insights, as well as the others found earlier in this review of literature, and the researcher’s perspective, may become more relevant as the data from this dissertation are analyzed and the findings can be compared.

**What Is Known: Themes From the Literature Review**

The review of literature examined studies utilizing phenomenological methods that seemed relevant to the phenomenon being investigated in this dissertation. In addition, studies were included that utilized social learning strategies, were related to identity change, and involved implementing some kind of change in practice. These criteria were selected because of the examinations outlined previously in this dissertation, namely it is thought that successful implementation of TLE likely requires some variation of social learning strategies and leads to some form of identity change. Furthermore, the examination of the TLE documents also revealed that some form of change in professional practice is likely.

Sixteen studies were found that might relate to the phenomenon being
investigated. However, only ten studies were utilized; six were rejected because they failed to meet all of the foregoing criteria. Nine of the 10 studies used phenomenology overtly as the research methodology. One was not identified directly as a phenomenological study but employed phenomenological principles in its design. Five of the studies contained findings that were relevant to this dissertation. As a result, five themes were developed from the review of literature. The themes are as follows. Imposed changes may facilitate:

1. Challenging relationships,
2. Examining metacognitive processes,
3. Nurturing relationships,
4. Understanding teacher-student relationships, and
5. Defining effectiveness.

**Imposed Changes May Facilitate Challenging Relationships**

The Barnett and colleagues (2006) study examined the tensions in relationships between a small inner-city high school and university partners. The university partnered with a high school to assist them in implementing a new learning pedagogy. After training the teachers in the pedagogy, if teachers desired they were partnered with a university representative to assist them in transferring what they learned in the professional development training into their classrooms.

The study examined the nature of the tension between teachers and their university partners. Tensions also arose between teachers and the local administrators.
The nature of the tension developed over what was being provided to the teachers. The teachers were used to a style of teacher training where the inservice occurred in their classrooms and trainers provided them with specific curriculum means to implement what they had learned. As a result, the teachers had created a specific identity for the inservice trainers. Thus, the teachers wanted the partners to provide them with specific curriculum to implement the new pedagogy.

However, the partners’ perspective was based on a different paradigm. They defined themselves as coaches or supporters to facilitate new ways of thinking. As a result, they did not bring curriculum ideas and when challenged to do so, they felt like it was not an appropriate strategy to do so. Thus, a conflict arose between the teachers and the partners.

What is clear from this study is that when making changes to a teacher’s practice that involves changing identities, tensions will likely increase. The study found it was very important during these moments of tension to maintain a strong relationship of trust otherwise people stopped functioning together. Also researchers found that making significant changes like this required a long-term commitment from both parties, the teachers and the partners. If both parties are not committed to long-term change, the teachers reverted back to their previous style of teaching, and little change was effected.

This study could be relevant to the implementation of TLE. When asked to implement TLE, it is likely that many S&I teachers have needed to change their practice and possibly redefine identities for themselves or inservice leaders. Instead of university partners, released-time seminary teachers have administrators such as those who created
TLE, area directors, and principals. It is unclear what kind of tension if any has emerged as a result of implementing TLE. It is also unclear how inservice leaders’ identities may have been redefined.

**Imposed Changes May Facilitate Examining Metacognitive Processes**

Prytula’s (2008) dissertation examined the nature of teachers’ metacognitive processes when interacting in social learning settings. Prytula defined metacognition as the study of what and how people think about thinking. She interviewed three teachers to determine the nature of their experience in developing metacognition within a social learning context.

One important finding from Prytula (2008) was that teachers were not often aware of their metacognitive processes. She found evidence that teachers were in fact engaging in acts of metacognition and those acts were, in fact, influencing their behavior; however the teachers were not typically aware of their metacognitive thought processes. She found teachers went through a process of description of their thoughts and moved into a form of analysis by considering their thought processes. This process involved a great amount of retrospection, considering conflict, and discussing these processes with other people.

Prytula (2008) described two “defining moments” for teachers (p. 185). These moments occurred when teachers became aware of their own metacognitive processes and then began to change what they did within the learning communities to encourage the same kind of thinking in others. The second moment was when teachers found a mental tool that allowed them to deepen their metacognitive patterns. For instance, one teacher
found that taking time to reflect was necessary for her to become more aware. Another teacher realized that she needed to discuss what she was thinking with someone else to deepen her understanding of her metacognitive processes.

From her research findings, Prytula (2008) described a tentative model of metacognition that emerged. The model includes people reflecting on their metacognitive processes. They can accelerate the process through dialogue with others. This is important because it requires them to “give voice” to their thoughts (p. 186). Through reflection and dialogue people can deconstruct and reconstruct their thought processes. This process hinges on people choosing to engage in metacognitive acts. The process leads people toward personal mastery. Personal mastery is defined as becoming aware of one’s thinking about thinking and examining one’s unconsidered thoughts or assumptions.

Prytula’s model is important to this dissertation because it is similar to reflective practice. In fact, one of Prytula’s findings was that the process of metacognition was similar to Schön’s (1983) concept of reflection-in-action as well as other theorists’ versions of similar reflective practices. Furthermore, because Prytula’s model of metacognition focuses on revealing people’s mental consciousness for their thoughts and assumptions, it is very similar to phenomenological inquiry. However, Prytula did not go as far as Husserl in seeking overtly to connect the mental processes with the external world.

In addition, Prytula’s model may also prove to be relevant to S&I’s situation in light of statements from Johnson (as cited in Ballard, Johnson, & Webb, 2010). Johnson
suggested that teachers may need to examine the experience they go through as they learn to deepen their own levels of conversion. While he offers no suggestion of what this process may involve, Prytula’s (2008) examination of metacognition may offer some help. Prytula explained that “teachers must first be aware of the processes of their own metacognition before they can be effective enough to pass such skills on to their students” (p. 182). Prytula recommends that teachers develop strategies that allow students to examine their own thinking. She said this approach involves “modeling, encouragement, and flexibility.” She described the process as one that can neither be forced nor rushed. It requires students to examine what they do and why they do it.

**Imposed Changes May Facilitate Nurturing Relationships**

Flanagan (2009) studied the nature of experience of 4 nurses and 31 patients who were learning to interact through a new presurgical nursing model. The model was based on four theories reviewed and combined into one by Flanagan. First, the investigator taught the model to the nursing staff, and then encouraged them to recruit patients to participate in the study. Flanagan relied on van Manen (1990) to guide the design of her study. She observed the nurses during the professional development workshop where the model was taught. During the course of the study she had nurses regularly make entries into a reflective journal. After all of the data were collected, Flanagan transcribed the journal entries and analyzed the transcripts using hermeneutics.

The important results can be summarized into two groups. First, Flanagan described the results of the professional development observations. During the
professional development workshop nurses were observed discussing with their supervisor how they were engaging in their presurgical practice. They compared where they were with the expectations of the model. From these discussions, Flanagan (2009) observed that the “nurses came to recognize that the old paradigm of delivering a prescriptive approach to nursing care was not working and gradually changes began to occur.” (p. 163). In other words, as nurses began to examine their practice they realized that the way they were thinking about nursing care no longer matched the needs of patients. When they could see the goal of what they were shooting for, and compare it to the reality of how things were going they felt a greater need to change and could see ways they needed to alter their thinking. This point seems important because Argyris and Schön (1974) have described how practitioners often do not see the difference between the way they function in practice compared to the theory they are learning to implement. Having this moment of reflection and comparison upfront seems to have aided the nurses in altering their perspective.

Second, Flanagan (2009) developed six themes from the findings of the study. In general these themes described the meaning of improved caring relationships. Theme one was finding balance. To find balance for nurses meant they needed to consider not only the relationship they were developing with their patients, but also their care for themselves. Nursing is a stressful occupation and often nurses overlook their personal needs. The nurses found to be effective meant they needed to take time for themselves during the day for simple things like going to the bathroom.

Theme two was being with the patients. With the busy hustle of a demanding
schedule nurses needed to remain focused when they were with their patients to insure they were building relationships of trust. One nurse found she needed to put aside her pressing schedule, pull up a chair, and sit next to a man just to allow him to feel at ease. She realized just for those few moments he needed companionship. This was an important moment for the nurse as she learned to discern her patient’s needs and put him first.

Theme three was to let go of control. Nurses realized that their patients had a stake in the healing process and that as care givers they could not dispense healing like a drug. They had to reflect on their actions with patients until they realized that it was a mutual process of decision making between them and their patients. That meant the nurses had to let go of being in control all of the time and give some of that control to the patients. Then patients felt cared for and not rushed. Thus, they had to learn to deal with the human problems of care giving while being stressed out. Nurses felt they learned the difference between nursing and healing. Healing meant making choices together, whereas nursing was simply following a routine.

Theme four was making the choice to change. The nurses had to make a choice to change. They had to explore options of creativity. This required a conscious desire to integrate their new identity and become someone new, the person they wanted to be, the person who responded to their perceptions of patients, rather than just doing a job. Part of this meant they needed an outlet, a way to express how the change was influencing them. They found “drawing, poetry, journaling, and music” helped them cope with the difficulty of the changes they were experiencing (Flanagan, 2009, p. 167). One nurse said
that she had felt in the past that her supervisor was her captain. Now she felt empowered. It was her choice to make the necessary changes. That freedom allowed her to learn to navigate a path to change.

Theme five was acknowledging suffering and recognizing limitations. This was a very difficult theme for many nurses. They realized that in spite of all their best efforts, not everything went well. They had to learn to cope with uncomfortable people who were not happy, even with all of the extra care the nurses were giving. Things do not always go well.

Theme six was nurses learning to forgive themselves. The nurses recognized a need to forgive themselves. They were not perfect. They made mistakes. They had to take time to let go, to pray, to meditate, to experience “therapeutic touch and presence,” and to forgive (Flanagan, 2009, p. 161). This sense of caring for self represented a move toward a greater sense of spirituality and an appreciation for life. The authors realized that “forgiveness facilitates, [an] increase [in] spirituality, and enhances self-discovery” (p. 167). They forged meaningful connections with patients and with each other. They truly experienced transformational change and “a sense of increased awareness and personal movement toward healing.” (p. 168).

Flanagan’s (2009) research was important to S&I by comparison. Nurses could be compared to teachers and patients could be compared to students. By examining these six themes one might find ways to compare the nurses’ experience to released-time seminary teachers who are learning to implement what may prove to be a difficult change for their practice. Helping seminary students learn to deepen their levels of conversion may be
comparable in some ways to the experience of healing (R. M. Nelson, 2005). Therefore, S&I teachers might face some of the same difficulties in “cultivating a learning environment of love, respect, and purpose” (S&I, 2009a) as nurses found in creating an environment of healing through improved relationships.

**Imposed Changes May Facilitate Understanding Teacher-Student Relationships**

Giles’ (2008) dissertation examined the nature of teacher-student relationships in preservice learning contexts. He examined 17 participants, nine lecturers and eight student teachers. He collected data through in-depth interviews both of students and teachers. From his interviews he developed two themes in particular that are relevant to this dissertation, namely relationship and comportment. Giles’ work is similar to Flanagan’s (2009) in relevance to this dissertation. Both addressed some sense of relationship between teacher and student. Both are relevant to the TLE concept that teachers should focus on “cultivating a learning environment of love, respect, and purpose” (S&I, 2009a).

**Leading to relationships that matter.** The theme of relationship had numerous sub-themes. First, “Teachers and students are always in relationship” (Giles, 2008, p. 103). Many teachers interact with students with personal interest in them in ways that reflect being “engaged, connected, and respectful” (p. 104). This is important because teachers can become so focused on the lesson that they forget the human need. Completing the task becomes more important than focusing on the needs of the student. Teachers can insure that the environment is safe for everyone. They are concerned about
the individual.

When both the teacher and the student care for each other there is a stronger relationship. Teachers feel empathy. They look for people who have unresolved problems and are weighed down by pressures. They focus on what matters in the moment. For instance, the teacher’s arrival in the classroom matters. One student noted that her teacher would show up late. The message it sent to her was the she did not matter to the teacher.

**Leading to relationships of insignificance.** Sometimes relationships between teachers and students become a matter of indifference. Teachers can communicate their indifference through many ways. They create confusion by not being organized, on time, or even absent without an excuse. They are “too laid back,” vague, and provide no instructive feedback (Giles, 2008, p. 111). Being late, being disorganized might communicate to the student that the relationship does not matter.

Students can see through false relationships. For instance, one student described a teacher who appeared to be very nice and open, yet she was indifferent in other ways that mattered. Grades were lax, she showed up late, and was not on task. The students knew she liked them, but that was all that the relationship ever was. It was shallow.

Some teachers focus on self-serving goals like research, test scores, and improving their own status. These acts alone might not build the relationship with students but create a sense of indifference.

Sometimes teachers may create a feeling such that “the relationship does not appear to matter” (Giles, 2008, p. 113). Teachers who yell at students may show that the relationship does not matter at all. Students may feel small and belittled. Teachers who
are unbending in classroom practices might communicate that relationship does not matter. These teachers may be communicating a sense of conditional acceptance. They are unbending. There is only one way. The teacher may no longer care about the student, only caring about things being done the “right” way, which is the teacher’s way. Such teachers might be communicating to their students that they are an object rather than a person.

Sometimes relationships are imbued with “dis-ease” (Giles, 2008, p. 116). Teacher relationships with students might make them feel vulnerable or ill at ease. Through facial expressions teachers might communicate feelings that lead to dis-ease. For instance, students might sense uncertainty in a teacher’s attitude toward them. In other instances, relationships can be open at first but reach a level where either the student or the teacher becomes uncomfortable with the level of openness. These relationships can matter in different ways to the student and to the teacher. The student can be more open than the teacher wants them to be or vice versa. Some relationships can become traumatic for either the student or the teacher. One student described a teacher treating the class like teenagers. She felt frustrated, thinking she and her peers were adults.

**Developing comportment.** Comportment means what is the nature of our relationship or how we are in the relationship (Giles, 2008, p. 121). Some teachers communicate a sense of relaxed concern. They are able to adjust to the students. In addition, they can show genuine concern. This allows the student to develop feelings of enjoyment and happy memories with their teacher. The feeling in the class is natural,
which draws the student into the relationship with the teacher.

Some teachers communicate a lack of experience. Students can sense this. For instance, one account is of a teacher who knew all of the right answers, but could not communicate well with the students. They could sense the teacher was knowledgeable in theory but they felt that she had no practical knowledge of how to teach.

The way a teacher presents him or herself can inspire the students. Attributes like respect, joy for the subject, consistency, sensitivity, love, trust, and a sense of being colleagues can influence a feeling of inspiration for a subject.

Some teachers’ comportment leads students to dread being with them. For instance one teacher seemed to notice every little mistake his students were making. It put the students on edge. They said they felt like he was always talking down to them, correcting them harshly. As a result, many students said they dreaded being in his class.

Teachers may need to observe the class and the interaction between students. Sometimes students can say things to each other that hurt the feelings of love and purpose in the classroom. For instance, a story was recounted of students making anti-Maori comments in a teacher’s class. These comments destroyed unity. The teacher had to step in and redirect what was taking place.

Finally, some students live in fear of failure. They will make excuses that relieve them of facing the fact that they do not know how to do what is expected of them. In other words, they will mask the real problem. Sometimes students will blame teachers for their own mistakes, and then threaten them when they do not get what they want. One teacher faced such a student. The student repeatedly skipped class, failed to turn in
assignments, and on one occasion she told the teacher that her class was “a nothing class” and did not care if she passed or failed.

In the face of the student’s frustrating behavior, the teacher said she stood firm but maintained her professional demeanor during this young woman’s attacks on her. Later the young woman realized her mistake, fulfilled the assignment, and performed very well. Afterward, she came to the teacher saying, I thought you would fail me because of the way I treated you, even if I completed the assignment. The teacher responded that for her it does not work that way. The student said she did not know she could do well on the assignment. The teacher realized that it was the student’s fear that had led her to misbehave. The teacher’s response allowed the student to face her fear and to grow.

**Imposed Changes May Facilitate the Need for Defining Effectiveness**

Milne, Scantlebury, and Otieno (2006) developed a sociocultural learning model to increase teacher’s effectiveness in urban high school settings. After teaching the model to the teachers involved in the study Milne et al. contrasted two members of the study, one who was effective at implementing it named Beth and one who was not effective named Hugh. Data were collected from the teachers’ narrative descriptions of their experiences and from observation of teachers’ actions during the professional development workshop and while teaching in the classroom. The contrast revealed some critical aspects of effective use of the model. These aspects were analyzed and developed into themes.
The primary theme was the teacher’s use of agency as it relates to influences of resources and the school’s cultural schema. First, Beth’s attitude toward her students reflected an active choice to look past the negative and to see the potential. She was aware of her students’ needs. She showed empathy toward them and their in-class challenges. She looked for opportunities to create experiences that would lead to success, even though her students were lower income and considered poor learners of science.

Beth recognized from the workshop the value of the ideas she was taught. She set clear goals for her students and herself, specifically to incorporate technology, increase the amount of chemistry content being taught, improve her own understanding of chemistry, develop an application for the inquiry approach of learning taught in the workshop, improve students’ academic achievement, and implement a peer mentoring program.

Even though she had few resources, Beth thought creatively about what she could use. Her school was new and met in a modified, repurposed office building. There was no science lab available to the students and her. She reviewed a textbook she had purchased and saw experiments she felt she could adapt to her classroom. Rather than allowing the obstacles she faced to inhibit her students’ learning, she collaborated with one of her colleagues to develop creative ideas. They designed a modified “heat of combustion laboratory activity” (Milne et al., 2006, p. 337). They determined to use votive candles as a heat source for their experiment, cut the bottoms and tops off of soda pop cans to create a tube to contain the heat and reduce air movement, and used Chinese take-out containers. The experiment was a success.
One of Beth’s goals was to increase her students’ success in passing science classes. When she completed the research study, Beth presented data that showed that in 2000, prior to her training experience with Milne and colleagues (2006), that 30% of her students had passed during one grading period and 40% had passed during the following grading period. However, during the year 2002, during the research study, 70% of her students had passed the science courses she taught. During that period Beth had changed many aspects of her teaching. She “chose the textbook, developed material resources, made use of human resources such as the librarian, technology teacher, and students, to develop curriculum and lessons” (Milne et al., 2006, p. 340). While no causality can be implied to any particular decision Beth made, the point that Milne and colleagues made is that Beth actively made choices about what she would do in her classroom. The fact that Beth made decisions such as enrolling in the professional development workshop, setting goals to implement what she learned, and developing creative strategies, showed initiative on her part to change what she could to influence her students’ level of success.

Hugh’s attitude, on the other hand, was focused on the difficulty of his assignment. He had been transferred from a very large city school, to a small middle school. The administration at his new school assigned him to teach beginning science students. He described them as the “general kids” and students of “low ability” (Milne et al., 2006, p. 337). As a result of his students’ lack of ability, the school thought they did not deserve a lab experience. The money for such things was used to provide lab experiences for the higher achieving students at the school, something they felt those
students deserved as a reward for their efforts. Hugh often expressed his frustration at not being given the resources he thought he needed to properly teach his students. He felt overwhelmed trying to understand how to motivate students to like science when he did not have any hands-on lab resources to provide them. He felt like all he could offer to his students was a boring lecture and desk work. He also was assigned to teach three different topics. Because of his teaching schedule he felt rushed each day just to prepare to teach.

Hugh was an experienced teacher. The researchers thought he showed initiative signing up for Milne and colleagues (2006) professional development workshop. During the workshop he received the same training as Beth had received in instructional strategies. However, he did not set any explicit educational goals for his classroom or for himself. Instead, the change to his new school seemed to overwhelm him. He felt that because he did not have access to a laboratory, that his only option was to rely on the inquiry method he had learned in the professional development workshop. As a result, he regularly stated in interviews that his plan was to implement the inquiry method taught to him during the workshop.

However, when the investigators observed Hugh teach they noticed that he did not properly apply the instructional strategies he had learned. One example described how Hugh used an experiment for his class to teach Boyle’s law, regarding pressure and volume. He heated some water in an aluminum can over a small portable butane burner. Next to him he had a larger container of ice water. After heating the water in the aluminum can, he plunged it into the ice water and the can was instantly crushed. The
interesting instructional moment was that his students were not impressed by the demonstration. In fact, they begin making fun of Hugh. Their wisecracks and disrespectful comments reflected an unequal relationship between his students and him. At one point some of his students attempted to explain what they thought he was showing them. Instead of encouraging their inquiry and discovery, Hugh responded, “Shh. I didn’t ask for you to answer yet” (Milne et al., 2006, p. 343). The researchers commented that during Hugh’s class “there was little positive emotional energy from Hugh or the students” (p. 344). The researchers comment on the fact that Hugh did not engage his students. They never were allowed to be part of the experiment, only to sit on the outside as passive observers until he wanted their participation. Then when he was finished with the demonstration he provided them with a worksheet to “inquire” regarding why the can was crushed when he plunged it into the water.

Over time Hugh began to realize that he was not in fact engaging his students in inquiry based learning. There was no openness, questioning, or problem solving in his teaching design. Instead, he recognized that he had “gotten into a rut” of “presenting learning as the distribution of problems on worksheets for students to answer” (Milne et al., 2006, p. 344). The researchers concluded that when situations became stressful for Hugh, he reverted to his habitual way of teaching. They concluded that Hugh’s inability to see beyond his students’ limitations and the limitations placed upon him by the school impeded his use of agency or choice to act. Instead of making decisions and planning, he increasingly felt victimized by his situation and eventually stopped trying to innovate.

While phenomenology does not seek to identify the causes for change or lack of
change, it does seek to explain the nature of the change experience. It seems from these two examples that the nature of the change required an attitude of innovation and an ability to see beyond one’s limitations. Teachers might need to be creative when faced with constraints of time, resources, and unmotivated students. For Beth success meant setting goals, researching, collaborating, creating, innovating, and measuring students’ levels of success. For Hugh success seemed to be defined by choices that were beyond his control, such as the students the school gave to him, the opportunity for lab experiments, and having a heavier teaching load. When faced with these constraints, Hugh seemed unable to make choices to lift him beyond his past habits of teaching. He was unable to innovate and change.

The relevance of this study to the S&I context might be to consider the perspective that effective seminary teachers have regarding issues of choice. The evidence might reveal the teachers’ attitudes toward their students, the goals they set, their abilities to collaborate, research, create, innovate, and measure success. It might also reveal what choices participants feel are beyond their control. In sum, when examining the experience of successful seminary teachers this study might reveal how such teachers define success or effectiveness through their attitudes, beliefs, and actions.

**Summary**

In summary, these five themes represent an extension beyond my personal experience as the researcher. These themes will become important during the analysis phase of this study to increase the sense of imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994; i.e., looking beyond what is obvious to me and is based on my own experience).
Providing Support for Design Decisions

Not only did the review of literature develop themes that extend beyond my understanding, but it also provided support for design decisions. Researchers might turn to four common, primary guides to conduct phenomenological research. They are Creswell (1998, 2007), Giorgi (1985, 1997, 1999), Moustakas (1994), and van Manen (1990, 1997). Each writer emphasized something different. Creswell attempted to create a general survey of the methodology. Giorgi emphasized research within the field of psychology. Moustakas favored an understanding of the philosophical view that supports the methodology. Moreover, van Manen directed his work toward understanding the broad nature of the human experience. This dissertation will rely primarily on Creswell, Moustakas, and van Manen’s explanations of phenomenology.

It is important at this phase of the dissertation to have clearly defined the final goal of a phenomenological study so one can see how pieces that were discussed earlier fit into the final product. This is made clear by what Husserl referred to as the process of *transcendental phenomenological reduction*. Moustakas (1994) explained the process in three steps.

1. The process of data reduction and interpretation is transcendental because it seeks to rise above mere supposition and subjective opinion to provide a justified interpretation of the phenomenon.

2. It is phenomenological because it emphasizes looking at the phenomenon, albeit it through the eyes of people who have experienced it.

3. It involves a process of reduction into the essence of people’s experience with
the phenomenon turning their experience into themes or horizons that eventually are
formed into a blended or holistic interpretation.

The following is a discussion of each of these three points and their sub-points.

**Transcendental Nature of a Phenomenological Study**

**Epoché and openness.** The process begins with the ideas outlined previously as
epoché and openness (see Chapter III). To provide a justified, transcendental
interpretation, a phenomenological study begins with the researcher bracketing his or her
perspective (Moustakas, 1994). To set aside one’s perspective or reach epoché is an
attempt to identify one’s biases and assumptions. Furthermore, it also emphasizes
maintaining an attitude of openness to consider new ideas (Nyström & Dahlberg, 2001).
This sense of openness occurs not only by critically examining one’s assumptions, but
also by considering themes that are developed during the review of literature. Thus, by
considering additional experience through the research literature the investigator is open
to additional interpretative ideas.

**Nature of lived experience.** The second piece that was previously discussed was
the concept of the nature of lived experience. This means researchers will examine what
many study participants have not considered or have taken for granted. This is because of
the potentially *tacit* nature of ontological understanding (Polanyi, 1966). Because of the
tacit nature of ontology, one must consider what kind of data to collect. Revealing tacit
experience occurs through open-ended questions during in-depth interviews. The focus of
investigators is to avoid presenting data that are merely the participants’ generalized
conclusions, but rather a description of their experience (van Manen, 1990). van Manen recommends that this is accomplished by asking participants to provide their experiences with the phenomenon as they share anecdotes, examples, or stories of what it was like to experience the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) referred to this kind of data as obtaining naïve descriptions. By naïve Moustakas meant the descriptions are previously unconsidered. In other words, the nature of phenomenological inquiry is a discovery process for the participant as well as well as the researcher.

For instance, Giles (2008) collected narrative stories of teacher and student interaction. Barnett and colleagues (2006) interviewed teachers and administrators investigating a collaborative relationship between university partners and a local school. They collected interview data where participants described the nature of their relationship between teachers and partners. Finally, Milne and colleagues (2006) interviewed participants who engaged in the implementation of a new pedagogical structure in a professional development setting. They collected participants’ accounts of the nature of their experience learning to implement the new structures. These three examples are relevant because they collected data about a student-teacher interaction, collaboration between teachers and administrators, and learning to implement a new pedagogical strategy. All three of these are examples of data that will likely result from this dissertation.

Describe the context. In addition, because of the nature of revealing participants’ perspective through their lived experience, researchers using phenomenological methodologies will describe the context of the group or individuals they were studying.
They will detail the context such as the number of students who attended the school involved in the study, a description of students’ ethnographic and economic circumstances, as well as test scores and other data relevant to the objectives of the study. The important point is that context helps situate the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) and van Manen (1997) both argue that situating participants’ experiences in context allows researchers to provide an accurate and truthful account of the lived experiences with the phenomenon. Hence, it provides strengthened verifiability.

**Reveal the purpose.** Furthermore, the nature of the phenomenological experience is purposeful (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1997) and intentional (Russell, 2007). In other words, participants’ meaning for their experiences are reflected in the justification or rationale they offer regarding what they do and what they think with reference to the phenomenon of interest (M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Thus, to reveal people’s ontology researchers could ask participants to consider both what they have done in relation to the phenomenon and why they have done it. For example, Teixeira and Gomes (2000) found that the nature of the phenomenon they were studying was revealed as they examined the actions participants took and why they took those actions.

**Emphasize human experience.** Because of the nature of a phenomenological study, researchers always seek to resolve a similar kind of problem. This kind of problem is the lack of information about the nature of a particular human experience (Creswell, 1998; van Manen, 1990). For instance, the need that underlies Barnett and colleagues’ (2006) study was to help faculty at Chamberlain High School, a small inner city school within an a large urban school district, to realize the value of collaboration between the
university and community organizers. The problem for the faculty was there existed a lack of understanding of how to facilitate such relationships. Researchers’ initial investigation found that teachers felt a sense of tension between them and their collaborative partners. Hence, the purpose of the study was to reveal the nature of the tension between these groups of people. The research question could be stated thus: what is the nature of “the tensions that pervade the partnership and the perceptions of teachers, university partners, and school administrators regarding the partnerships”? (p. 23).

In sum, the purpose of phenomenological research is to reveal the hidden meaning of people’s experiences with a phenomenon to understand what intentional acts they performed to create meaning for their experiences. This process involves the researcher bracketing his or her experience and maintaining an attitude of openness. In addition, through the research process it is thought that participants will reveal their intentions or their purposeful acts, thus providing an explanation for the reasoning or thinking that underlies their experience as well as to reveal the meaning they have created for their experience (Donnelly, 1999; Russell, 2007). Through the process of phenomenological inquiry it is thought that researchers will transcend human nature, in so far as is possible, and reveal the essence of the phenomenon.

**Phenomenological Nature of the Study**

**Data collection.** The process of effective data collection in a phenomenological study requires first that one recognize the final goal. That goal is to reveal the nature of the participants’ experience with the phenomenon. To accomplish this, one must know how to collect data in a rigorous, academic fashion. This process includes a sound
knowledge of qualitative research collection methods, some proprietary to phenomenology and others general to qualitative research. These methods include obtaining access and developing rapport with research subjects, selecting a sampling strategy, determining collection methods, knowing how to conduct in-depth interviews effectively, managing the data, maintaining focus, obtaining data sufficiency, resolving field issues, and ensuring standards of quality and verification (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990, 1997).

**Obtain access and develop rapport.** Creswell (1998) discussed the importance of gaining access to and establishing rapport with study participants. Gaining access to study participants means one must consider ethical concerns and potential risks to participants. This is typically handled through an institutional review board or IRB. Obtaining the consent of study participants through an informed consent document insures that ethical concerns are addressed up front. Furthermore, Creswell explained that an informed consent form must include the right to voluntarily withdraw, a clear description of the central purpose of the study, protection of confidentiality, an explanation of risks, and a description of the expected benefits. In some cases, gaining access also includes receiving permission from a proprietary committee who determines the feasibility and viability of research within an organization.

Establishing rapport with study participants is another essential aspect to conducting good research (Creswell, 1998). Developing trust with study participants allows them to feel confident enough to talk with a researcher and reveal important information. Trust can be developed through the initial contact where the study is
explained and the participant develops a relationship with the researcher. In addition, both Moustakas (1994) and van Manen (1990) explained that research participants must have an intense interest in the phenomenon being studied. Furthermore, Creswell (1998) explained that one can develop trust by being organized and thorough when interacting with participants. This includes having a plan for the first contact, as well as a plan for how to conduct the data collection in a warm but professional manner. This also means there is some idea of reciprocity for those who give their time to the study. Including reciprocity means explaining clearly to participants what they will receive because of their participation in the study.

While few relevant phenomenological studies for this dissertation could be found, nine were located. From those nine, for example, Flanagan (2009) studied the nature of participants’ experience with a new presurgery model for helping patients to prepare for surgery. Upon invitation to participate, all study participants received an explanation of the value of the study and were given the option to participate. As a result, participants who were selected did so voluntarily. Fleming (2008) studied the nature of participants’ experience undergoing a career transition. In selecting study participants, she first acknowledged that many potential participants had problems with openly discussing issues that evaluated their experience in the career training program she was studying. As a result, upfront Fleming openly acknowledged the concern with study participants and found her openness helped develop greater trust. Finally, Milne and colleagues (2006) conducted a preparticipation interview, explaining the nature of the study, the benefits to participants, and the time commitment. This preinterview allowed
Select a sampling strategy. Determining appropriate sample size for a phenomenological study is not driven by a strict systematic decision making process. van Manen (1990) explained that phenomenology has no hard and fast proprietary rules for methods such as determining sample sizes. Hence, it is important to turn to sound, general qualitative principles for any guidance in selecting participants.

First, locating research subjects requires a sampling strategy. Creswell (1998) described a general strategy called purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling emphasizes having “a clear criteria in mind” to determine who fits with the goals of the study and who does not (p. 118). Creswell explained that owing to the nature of phenomenology, a criterion based sampling strategy is most likely appropriate. Criterion sampling occurs when all study participants meet some predetermined quality or condition. For instance, Moustakas (1994) offered the following guide. He asserted that whoever participates in a phenomenological study must meet the essential characteristics that he or she has lived experience with the phenomenon of interest, is willing to participate, and is intensely interested in the phenomenon. Likewise, Creswell (1998) and van Manen (1990) suggested that when selecting participants for a phenomenological study the central criterion must be that the person has lived experience with the phenomenon of interest.

For example, Milne and colleagues (2006) observed a cohort of teachers who were engaged in a professional development program for science teachers. Among the cohort, two teachers were selected as study participants because they demonstrated a wide variety of experience relevant to the goals of the program. In addition, Teixeira and
Gomes (2000) interviewed seven people who had experienced the phenomenon at least one career change in their lifetime.

Next, sound qualitative sampling relies on the concept of engagement. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the concept of engagement as the idea that researchers will examine multiple perspectives. By including multiple voices researchers avoid being “blinded by [their] own biases” (p. 55). Therefore, phenomenological researchers can avoid presenting a single, narrow perspective by collecting data from a variety of subjects to avoid presenting mere supposition for their findings.

Wimmer (2010) is an excellent example of engagement, where six teachers were interviewed, two elementary math teachers, two middle-school math teachers, and two middle school science teachers. Thus, selecting a wide variety of participants allowed Wimmer to present more diverse opinions regarding the phenomenon of integrating new math and science literacies. However, Fleming’s (2008) research is an example that shows engagement is not always a desired strategy. Her yearlong examination of career change required an in-depth look at two people, rather than a broad look at a variety of people. Clearly, with phenomenological research the sampling strategy must be tied to the purpose of the study.

Creswell (1998) recommended phenomenological studies should include from 5 to 25 participants. However, as a general rule Creswell’s standard is not always followed. For instance, a review of nine phenomenological studies relevant to this dissertation revealed a selection of participants ranging from one to 35 in number (see Table 1). van Manen (1990) asserted that within phenomenological research there are theoretically an
Table 1

Numbers of Participants in 10 Relevant Phenomenological Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barnett et al. (2006)</td>
<td>14 (7 teachers and 7 administrators)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanagan (2009)</td>
<td>35 (4 nurses and 31 patients)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleming (2008)</td>
<td>2 military career changers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles (2008)</td>
<td>17 (9 lecturers and 8 student teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milne et al. (2006)</td>
<td>2 (1 male and 1 female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prytula (2008)</td>
<td>3 (one from each learning community)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberts (2009)</td>
<td>1 (a single participant in a workshop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teixeira &amp; Gomes (2000)</td>
<td>7 (each experienced the phenomenon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wimmer (2010)</td>
<td>6 (2 teachers from three groups)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

unending number of individual perspectives about a given phenomenon. Therefore, when selecting an adequate number of participants, one must carefully consider the purpose of the study and how many participants are required to achieve the desired purpose. Based on the review of the nine relevant studies cited in Table 1, the single most important guiding principle for selecting participants for a phenomenological study is the number of participants must align with the purpose of the study. Clearly, Creswell’s rule is more of a suggestion than anything hard and fast.

Determine collection methods. When discussing data collection methods it is important to keep the objective of phenomenology foremost in one’s mind. It is to make plain people’s perceptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Because of this, one seeks to obtain thick descriptions of people’s experiences. van Manen (1990) described thick description as collecting stories, experiences, and anecdotes that capture the essence of the experience, rather than general descriptions. By collecting thick description,
interviewers insure that there is ample evidence to reveal the experience from the perspective of the person being interviewed.

There are two primary means by which researchers might collect phenomenological data, namely interview and observation (Creswell, 1998). However, the consensus opinion is that the primary means of data collection is in-depth interview (Creswell, 1998; Giorgi, 1997, 1999; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990, 1997). Of the nine studies surveyed that are relevant to this dissertation, eight out of nine included some form of in-depth interview. Seven of the studies used in-depth interview as their primary data collection method. Of those seven studies three used in-depth interview as their only data collection method. Additional data collection methods were observation, reflective journals, both handwritten and audio recorded, and artifacts. Clearly, in-depth interview is the primary method of data collection, although not the sole method (see Table 2).

### Table 2

**Data Collection Methods from 10 Relevant Phenomenological Studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Data collection methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flanagan (2009)</td>
<td>Tape recorded reflective journals from nurses. Observation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleming (2008)</td>
<td>Observation in career change program, interviews, and artifacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberts (2009)</td>
<td>In-depth interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teixeira &amp; Gomes (2000)</td>
<td>In-depth interviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Upon further examination of the nine studies, one sees that data collection methods are integrally linked to the purpose of the study. For instance, the purposes of the three studies that used in-depth interview as their sole collection method are as follows. Giles’ (2008) purpose is to reveal the teacher-student relationship within preservice teacher education programs. Roberts’ (2009) purpose was to reveal the nature of learning within an online learning community of teachers. Finally, the purpose of Teixeire and Gomes’ (2000) study was to describe the experience of adults who have at some point in their lives questioned their professional activities and sought to change them. All three of these studies had but one purpose that was focused directly on revealing the nature of a phenomenon that had occurred in the past.

In contrast, Fleming (2008) sought to describe the process of sociocultural identity development for career changers. Fleming used a mixed method of case study and phenomenology. She included observation because she was examining a case of two career changers, an experience that was currently taking place. Likewise, Barnett and colleagues (2006) documented the development of a school partnership over a 2-year period. During the implementation of the professional development strategy the researchers observed the tensions that developed between the faculty and administrators. Hence, Barnett and colleagues also had participants keep reflective journals to record their experiences over long periods of time. At key points during the study they interviewed participants to understand the nature of the tensions that existed. From these examples one can see that interviews were used primarily when the purpose of the studies was to examine a phenomenon that had already occurred, whereas one observed a
phenomenon that was presently occurring.

This is not to say that interview is the sole method of data collection for phenomenological studies. After all van Manen (1990) noted that interview, observation, reflective journals, artifacts, and literary accounts all are viable data sources. What is important is that the pattern of matching data collection methods to the purpose of the study holds true for all nine studies. Hence, researchers must clearly identify the purpose of their study and insure that the chosen methods for data collection align with that purpose.

**Develop interview strategies.** To organize the interview experience Creswell (1998) recommended that participants develop an interview protocol that they will follow throughout the study. This protocol might include a selection of interview questions. However, van Manen (1990) explained that due to the emergent nature of phenomenological interviews it is difficult to prewrite a set list of questions. With this in mind, van Manen (1997) suggested that researchers ask questions of participants that are reflective in nature and drive participants to think of their experiences with the phenomenon. In addition, questions should cause participants to reflect on why they have done what they have done.

One strategy is to develop a well-written introductory question. For example, Flanagan (2009) asked all nurse participants the same leading question, namely “What was the experience of being with this patient in this way like for you?” (p. 164). Giles (2008) began all of his interviews with, “Tell me about a really good teacher you have had” (p. 88). Moreover, Teixeir and Gomes (2000) asked each participant, “I should like
you to tell me about your career choices” (p. 81).

After participants have responded to the initial question, researchers should be prepared to probe for additional answers. van Manen (1990) explained that probing could include many techniques. For instance, one could ask additional questions to reveal intentionality. Researchers could ask questions that cause the participants to reflect on what it is like to experience the phenomenon or to consider what they have done while experiencing it and why they have done it. In addition, researchers might also pause while participants collect their thoughts. van Manen explained that patience and silence can often elicit more detail. Researchers might also repeat the last question. Repeating the question could allow participants to think deeper. They might also restate the previous answer to insure they understand the full experience form the participant’s point of view.

In this fashion, van Manen (1990) suggested that phenomenological inquiry involves semi-structured interviews with the intent to collect a description of what it is like to experience the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants involved in the study. Such a discussion produces what Moustakas (1994) called naïve descriptions of the participants’ experiences.

However, some important issues must be addressed to insure that the descriptions collected are accurate. Moustakas (1994) described a principle that applies to the accuracy of data collection. Specifically, researchers must strictly observe that interview questions do not influence or lead participants. This means an interviewer must not ask questions that lead participants to say what the interviewer wants them to say. The interviewer can control this by saying less and listening more.
Obtain data sufficiency. Deciding when a researcher has reached the end of data collection is an important point of determination. For instance, within grounded theory research one speaks of reaching a point of data saturation. Creswell (1998) defined data saturation as researchers finding “information that continues to add until no more can be found” (p. 56). Theoretically, within a phenomenological study data saturation of this kind is not possible, as van Manen (1990) has asserted that there are potentially an unending variety of perspectives to reveal. However, some phenomenological studies have described knowing when they have finished data collection as reaching a point of data sufficiency.

For instance, Giles (2008) defined data sufficiency as being satisfied that new stories for individual participants are largely a re-telling of an essence or essential meaning that was already expressed in an early interpretation. In fact Giles realized that for his study one interview was enough because the clarity of the data was sufficient to render a second interview as unnecessary. Giles’ interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes. He was seeking to collect stories of teacher-student interaction. One telling provided enough detail to identify the phenomenon.

Wimmer (2010) judged sufficiency based on the fact that she was examining a phenomenon that occurred frequently, hence she needed to capture more detail to reflect that frequency. As a result, Wimmer determined to conduct a series of three interviews to insure she collected enough data to represent the frequency of the phenomenon.

Prytula’s (2008) purpose was to reveal the nature of metacognition for teachers in social learning settings. Prytula found it necessary to conduct a preinterview, two
semistructured interviews, several telephone conversations, and a variety of informal contacts. The nature of teachers’ metacognitive practice in social settings required her to collect more information to feel satisfied she had enough data.

In summary, this means that data sufficiency for a phenomenological study is a bit touchy feely rather than hard and fast. Moustakas (1994) wrote, “There is no absolute or final reality in experience” (p. 51). To determine sufficiency, then, in phenomenological research is a subjective judgment. Moustakas, summarizing his own thoughts, as well as quoting Husserl, said:

Depending on my particular goals, I may have enough of what an experience has already provided me, and then “I just break off” with an “It is enough.” However, I can convince myself that no determination is the last, that which has already been experienced always still has, without limit, a horizon of possible experience of the same. (p. 32)

Thus, sufficiency is likely determined by examining the goal of the study and setting a rule that allows the researcher to determine that enough data have been collected. Such a rule could reflect whether the researcher is finding new information from interviews, the participants feel they have nothing more to add, or the interpretation clearly represents the nature of the phenomenon based on the data collected.

**Manage data.** Creswell (1998) recommended that researchers make an audio recording of interviews. After interviews are conducted, researchers must transcribe the audio recordings. Moustakas (1994) pointed out that to insure quality of research, transcriptions must be accurate and convey the meaning of the interview. Furthermore, Creswell recommended making a double recording of the interview as a failsafe.

Researchers must also have a clear data management strategy to avoid a
disorganized approach. Creswell (1998) recommends backing up computer files, having a double recording system for interviews, developing a master list of types of information gathered, not associating participants’ names with interview transcripts, and storing sensitive information in a locked file cabinet.

**Maintain focus.** Because phenomenological data could amount to numerous pages of transcript, to avoid getting lost in the fuzziness of the interview experience one must be consistently mindful of the original question being examined (Moustakas, 1994). van Manen (1990) explained that being disciplined and focused on the primary research question will help avoid being inundated with too much or with unfocused information.

**Ensure standards of quality and verification.** The issues related to standards of quality and verification involves each of the following. They are strictly observing that interview questions do not cause influence or lead participants, insuring that transcriptions are accurate and convey the meaning of the interview (Moustakas, 1994). In addition, one must employ general strategies of engagement, establishing rigorous procedures, conducting in-depth interviews, utilizing member checking, and obtaining thick descriptions in interviews (van Manen, 1990).

**Resolve field issues.** Field issues represent the category of practical wisdom in conducting effective qualitative research. These issues are myriad. Creswell (1998) provides a substantial list in his book. It is important during the conducting of this study to refer often to Creswell’s list and plan ahead to resolve issues. Also it is important to keep a field journal to document how these issues are resolved. Some issues that seem relevant have already been dealt with in previous sections of this document. For instance,
two issues are gaining access and establishing rapport with interviews and how to conduct effective interviews.

Reducing Lived Experience

Data reduction. Within a phenomenological study data analysis begins with the process of data reduction. Moustakas (1994) defined this phase as creating the textural description. Giorgi (1985) referred to it as Level 1 analysis. In the textural description a researcher presents what the participants have done in relation to the phenomenon. Moustakas explained that this initial phase begins the process of reducing or simplifying the participants’ experience into essential themes or horizons (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). It is the first step of seeing through the details of the interview transcripts to identify and reveal the phenomenon itself.

Husserl referred to the development of themes as seeing participants’ horizons (Creswell, 1998). The concept of a horizon reflects the idea that a person develops differing vistas that describe what it is like to see the phenomenon (van Manen, 1997). Like with visual landscapes, the term horizon depicts the idea that there are multiple vantage points of the same phenomenon depending on the person’s experience with it (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1997). The reduction or simplification of the data occurs as the researcher eliminates incidental themes and retains those that are essential. van Manen explained that this is accomplished by asking the question, “If I remove this theme will the textural description still express the nature of this person’s experience with the phenomenon.”

For instance, during this phase of analysis Prytula (2008) simplified the data she
collected into the essential elements of the participants’ experience with the phenomenon. She then presented each participant’s experience in an organized fashion, first presenting a description of the participant’s context. Then she described specific textual examples of the participants’ experiences, introducing each idea with a short statement as a title that captured the essence of the experience. She then published each participant’s textual experience within a separate chapter prior to the final analysis chapter. However, Giles (2008) did not publish the results of his textural analysis. Neither researcher provides reasons for their decisions to include or not include these sections in their dissertations. It is possible that space allowed for Prytula’s to include the description of her three participants whereas the fact that Giles’ study included 17 participants made such a decision impractical.

**Interpret Lived Experience**

The second phase of data analysis is to create an interpretation of the participants’ experience with the phenomenon. This is a more complex phase than is the first, the creation of the textural description. This phase involves multiple steps. First, the researcher begins by maintaining a focus on the research question at all times (van Manen, 1990). Then the researcher creates a holistic interpretation of the essence of the phenomenon. Creating this holistic interpretation occurs over many steps. These steps include multiple readings of the textural description, writing and rewriting to identify themes or horizons, combining and consolidating overlapping themes and eliminating redundancies, maintaining a connection with the original description of the text, and “synthesizing and integrating the insights into a consistent description of the structure” of
what was learned (Moustakas, 1994, p. 83).

**Hermeneutics.** The science of interpreting writing text is called hermeneutics. The main principle of hermeneutics is that interpretation requires multiple looks and repeated reflections to see the varied horizons portrayed in the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). For instance, Gadamer explained the process through the study of works of art (Davey, 2011). With each passing view and act of reflection the viewer engages with the art as an interlocutor. An interlocutor is something or someone with which a person has a conversation. As an interlocutor, art presents elements of composition that engage the viewer and require him or her to ask questions. In turn, the viewer returns to the art to find the answers.

While Gadamer used hermeneutics to analyze the phenomenology of art (Davey, 2011), traditionally hermeneutics is the science of interpreting written text (Ormiston & Schrift, 1990). As such, hermeneutics aligns well with phenomenological research. This is because interview data are transcribed into written text. Like the examination of art, a written text presents textual elements that engage the reader. The reader then begins to form a theme or horizon that captures the essence of the phenomenon. Each horizon reflects a new vista that represents the phenomenon.

The primary means of textual analysis for phenomenological research is called the *hermeneutic circle*. There are five stages to the hermeneutic circle as it relates to phenomenological research. These stages include:

1. Create a transcription of the interviews.
2. Read the transcription.
3. Form an initial interpretation through writing to describe the initial view or theme.

4. Seek to validate the interpretation through structural statements.

5. Revise the interpretation by comparing it to the researchers’ understanding as found in the review of literature (Lieberman & Mace, 2009; Roberts, 2009).

Finally, the process is iterative and requires repeating until the horizons become apparent (Giles, 2008; McPhail, 1995; Moss, 1994; Prytula, 2008; van Manen, 1997; Wimmer, 2010).

While the hermeneutic circle properly begins by transcribing the interview data, interpreting the data begins as soon as the researcher starts talking with participants. This is called the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Engaging in the constant comparative method means that researchers must listen intently during all interactions with participants and especially during the interviews to discern what participants think, feel, and believe and to begin interpreting why they do so. It is thought that if a researcher is aware during data collection, more information could be revealed by asking probing questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, when reading the interview transcript one might ask why participants responded the way they did. This could also lead to additional, important information through follow up interviews or other informal communications (cf., Prytula, 2008). Furthermore, during the entire process, researchers should reflect on the meaning of participants’ experiences in a dialectic journal. This process of constant reflection can lead to capturing additional insights and horizons as they emerge along the way (Creswell, 1998).
Moreover, to begin developing horizons as researchers read through interview transcripts, they must train themselves to look for certain elements in the text. First, they might look for elements of transcendental subjectivity. The technical details of Husserl’s concept of intentionality have already been explained as noema, noesis, and hyletic data. According to Moustakas (1994), typically researchers examine only two parts of intentionality, namely the noema and noesis.

Husserl explained that people have cognitive processes he called intentional acts (Moustakas, 1994). An example of such mental action could include Anderson and colleagues’ (2001) revision of Bloom’s taxonomy of cognitive processes. The taxonomy describes people as they remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create, as well as any of the other sub-sets of mental actions included in the taxonomy (cf., pp. 66-87).

In addition, Husserl also explained that people have emotional responses that he called feeling acts (Moustakas, 1994). While feelings do not explain the meaning a person has created for a phenomenon, feelings do influence what a person thinks or feels. One could turn to Krathwohl, Bloom, and Bertram’s (1973) description of affective human processes as examples of feeling acts. These processes include receiving, responding, valuing, organizing, and characterizing. Furthermore, LDS doctrine and S&I pedagogy also contain important feeling acts that lead to the creation of religious meaning. For instance, one might include perceiving spiritual truth, recognizing spiritual promptings, or believing in messages of faith (Bednar, 2010; Scott, 1998).

Acknowledging that experience of feeling acts that lead to the creation of
religious acts of meaning is not unique to the LDS context. Furthermore, they are no less human than other feeling experiences. For instance, there is evidence of research that examines religious acts of meaning. Lickona (1999) described the character development of adolescents involving acts of valuing and desiring things that are virtuous. His writings described students respecting, caring, and affirming as they develop their meaning of spirituality. In addition, Moore (1999) explained that young people learn to be spiritual as they meditate on spiritual concepts, express love for God and others, and develop concepts of a spiritual role in life. Thus, within Husserl’s concept of transcendental subjectivity there is room for spiritual components that could lead people to develop meaning for experiences with phenomenon.

However, it is important to keep in mind that according to Husserl phenomenology intends to reveal the meaning people have developed through intentionality or cognition (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Ultimately, this means it is what people think about their experience that is the final determination of meaning from the perspective of phenomenological investigation. In other words, while acts of feeling and of spirituality might influence the meaning people develop for different phenomena, researchers must seek to reveal the rational explanation people have developed as a result of the influences they have experienced.

**Horizontalization.** Developing themes and creating a holistic interpretation happens through a process called horizontalization. Husserl described *horizontalization* as a composite of principles including developing horizons, supporting them through textural description, revising them through imaginative variation or structural description,
prioritizing horizons, and writing a composite description. Finally, researchers must
insure that there is a standard of quality and verification in their analysis procedures. This
is accomplished by following the principles outlined hereafter.

As previously described, researchers begin interpretation by forming themes.
Each horizon is intended to be of “equal worth, …non-repetitive, and non-overlapping”
(Creswell, 1998, p. 147). As horizons are developed researchers begin to group them,
forming textural descriptions of the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) explained the idea
of the texture of the phenomenon as being what the participant actually experienced.
After reading the interview transcript, the researcher would provide verbatim extracts
from the transcript to support the initial interpretation of the participant’s experience. van
Manen (1990) explained that researchers should include things like quotes, phrases,
keywords, etymologies, metaphors, and analogies to portray textually what the
participant said that supports the interpretation. Researchers might also include artifacts
that represent an idea participants expressed. These artifacts could include pictures,
posters, lesson plans, and so forth that represent the experience.

**Imaginative variation.** Researchers are seeking to reveal the hidden nature or
essence of the experience. Through a process of imaginative variation Moustakas (1994)
described how researchers seek to reveal the structure of the experience. *Imaginative
variation* is a form of reflection that involves the creation of the possible meanings a
phenomenon that could represent the participants’ experiences. The structure of an
experience is created by researchers as they reflect on the textural description and
develop possible interpretations. In other words, horizontalization and imaginative
variation begin by describing the participant’s experience, continue by revealing additional insights as researchers reflect on the description of the experience, and then support those conclusions with statements or excerpts that support the interpretation. Thus, the process involves imagining the possible interpretations and revising the list into the plausible interpretations to reject the incidental and accept the essential themes. Terms become plausible when they are supported by examples from the textural description of participants’ experience.

**Prioritizing themes.** After creating the reasonable interpretations, researchers then prioritize those themes. Both van Manen (1997) and Moustakas (1994) agreed that it is impractical to capture exhaustively every view or horizon of a participant’s experience. van Manen (1990) described the prioritizing process as researchers determining which themes are essential and which are incidental. Researchers accomplish this by asking the question, would you still call this a description of the phenomenon if this theme were eliminated? If the answer is yes, then the theme is incidental and can be removed. Likewise, researchers must ask, is this theme unique? One can determine this by asking, how is this theme different from previous themes? What does it add that is not expressed in previous themes? And what are the essential differences? One can eliminate any elements that are overlapping and reduce the description to the unique elements of the phenomenon. The final step is for researchers to construct a written description of the essence of the experience being examined.

**Reading and rereading.** Overall the process of horizontalization is accomplished through reading and rereading the transcriptions, and then by writing and rewriting to
reveal why participants have created the meaning they have created. van Manen (1990) described this form of inquiry as writing to reveal the rationality behind how people described their experience with the phenomenon. Furthermore, he explained that throughout this process researchers must maintain a dedicated focus to the primary research question of the study as they collect and analyze the data. The danger of failing to focus on the primary research question is getting caught up in the details and being sidetracked by interesting but unrelated ideas. However, when the process is complete, van Manen (1997) explained that researchers unite the various horizons identified in individual participant’s experience into a composite interpretation. This blended view becomes the expression of the phenomenon as a whole.

Giles (2008) dissertation represents the clearest description of the process of interpretation. First, he wrote a general, brief synopsis of each participant’s experience that ran in length about one paragraph. Then he reread the text of the transcript and compared it to the general synopsis. Giles repeated the process until he formed a cohesive interpretation. Eventually, the general feel, the essence, or nature—the meaning—of the person’s experience emerged. Until the essence emerges, van Manen (1997) recommended that the researcher suspend developing specific horizons or themes. Giles said he recognized when the meaning of an experience emerged because he was satisfied that he knew the answer to the question, “what was this story about?”

Prytula (2008) and Wimmer (2010) presented a description of the participants’ experiences as a narrative representing the essence of what happened to them. This is what Moustakas (1994) called the textural description or what happened to the
participant. Prytula and Wimmer presented this level of data analysis as a separate chapter. It included a summary of the context of participants, paragraphs describing the important events that happened to participants and supportive quotes as evidence of their experiences. Then, in a separate chapter both investigators presented a synthesis of the essential themes, describing the combined or holistic essence of the phenomenon based on the experience of the individual participants. van Manen (1990) described this telling of the essence, not as some mystical description, but as the expression of the linguistic core or construction of the meaning of the participants’ experiences. Moustakas called it the reduction and interpretation based on structural or reflective analysis.

**Composite interpretation.** The final product of a phenomenological study is a composite interpretation. van Manen (1990) explained that this interpretation represents the nature of the phenomenon and is intended to be pedagogical in nature. This means it should create a sense of engagement with its readers and cause them to reflect on their situation and how it relates to the experience of the study participants. In addition, Moustakas (1994) explained that the interpretation does not represent an analysis per se but a description of the phenomenon. It must retain as closely as possible the essence presented by the participants. This not only insures verifiability but also presents the nature of the experience, rather than generalizations. However, van Manen explained that this final interpretation should not present idiosyncratic evidence, but the general idea of human experience.

Giles’ (2008) dissertation presented the best example of a final interpretation from the studies found in the review of literature. Giles organized the participants’ experiences
into overarching themes. These included being always in relationship, comportment, and in the play. Each of the overarching themes were supported by subthemes. The overarching theme was presented as a summary description. What followed for each sub-theme was a textual statement from one of the participants that represented the essence of the sub-theme. Then Giles analyzed the language of the statement to reveal the essence of the experience. Multiple statements from participants were included until the complete nature of that theme was revealed. The following is an example from Giles’ dissertation.

When students sense indifference from the teacher, this matters to the student.

I did have one teacher who worked in a totally different way. The teacher didn’t seem as into it and onto it as my other lecturers were. It always seemed a bit too laid back. I did tend to get high marks, but I never really knew necessarily if I was on the right track or anything like that because things were very vague. She was very friendly, very welcoming and she was a lovely person but it never went beyond that. Some days, she might be late to arrive. I can remember her not turning up at all once. (I16: S5)

The teacher’s way of relating with the students in this story creates confusion for this student. The student wonders about the authenticity of the teacher’s initial welcome. When the teacher seems “too laid back,” the student “never really” knows if she is on the right track. The teacher’s pattern of relating was vague and indecisive. The student is together with the teacher in the same space but not really engaged and connected. The teacher and her way of relating are of concern to the student. The attention the student gives to noticing the teacher-student relationship influences the learning experiences for the student. (p. 111).

This example shows how Giles used the text to reveal the meaning of the participant’s experience. He quoted directly from the expert and then explained how he derived his conclusions from the person’s experience.

In addition, Giles (2008) then supported many of his conclusions with examples from the research literature. For instance, as Giles drew the following conclusion during the previous example he supported it with this statement: “Had the teacher been turned
towards the student, expressing openness towards the student, the student might not have been so tentative and reserved about the openness of their relating (Buber, 1996; Young, 1998)" (as cited in Giles, 2008, p. 112). The use of support from the review of literature throughout his dissertation was to lend a sense of openness and thoroughness to his description of the phenomenon.

In summary, Moustakas (1994) explained that the overall substance of reduction and interpretation is to reveal the essence of “what appears in consciousness” and as it relates to the “product of learning” (p. 27). This idea of “revealing” means discovering a person’s meaning for a phenomenon is less of a process of systematic analysis and more of a focus on finding what a person has learned. While researchers cannot abandon sound methods of data analysis, they also cannot become mechanical in the process. In fact, van Manen (1990) explained the purpose of revealing through interpretation as one of discovering the practical wisdom people have gained through their experience with life. He referred to the idea of revealing participants’ experience as “discerning” the features of participants’ consciousness. Discern is an interesting verb to use when describing a process of data analysis. It implies that researchers are perceiving something rather than revealing something that is hidden or shrouded. In fact, van Manen described the experience as “a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure,” continuing with the idea that “grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of ‘seeing’ meaning” (p. 79). In other words, the process of reducing and interpreting phenomenological data is not systematic, but instead is guided by principles and involves a sense of art and intuition on the part of the investigator.
CHAPTER V
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

As a released-time seminary teacher I, the investigator in this dissertation, experienced teaching before the TLE was published and after the fact. For me understanding and implementing TLE was a very difficult process requiring a personal transformation in my character and understanding. As I began this transformation my personal desire was to understand TLE, through conversations with other teachers, researchers, people who were both graduate school colleagues and seminary teachers, and managers in S&I research and training. Through my experience I became increasingly aware that I was not the only teacher having difficulties understanding and implementing the new approach.

I was privileged to read two proprietary studies for S&I.¹⁵ Those studies showed that after 3 years of working to implement TLE the majority of teachers were still struggling to understand it and even more were incapable of implementing TLE effectively. In addition, I was privileged to interview Elder Paul V. Johnson, the Commissioner of Education for the Church Educational System in 2011. Just prior to our meeting, Elder Johnson had discussed with two other General Authorities why so many teachers were continuing to struggle with implementing TLE. I have wondered if the nature of the change that seminary teachers experience when understanding and implementing TLE might require some teachers to undergo transformational change as I have done.

¹⁵ Discussed previously on pages 54-55.
I found the value of conducting phenomenological research was to reveal the nature of people’s lived experience with a phenomenon such as understanding and implementing TLE (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology can reveal the tacit nature of practitioners’ practical wisdom in learning to take effective action and can also reveal their rationale for doing so.

In the bracketing interview it was revealed that my experience was transformational change as I was learning to understand and implement TLE. Transformational change occurs when teachers rethink why they do what they do in practice (Dall’Alba & Barnacle, 2007; M. J. Packer, 2001b). Transformative learning could be defined as teachers altering their identity, perspective, and assumptions about their practice and what is required of them to be effective at it (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Such change can be very difficult and may require longer periods of time to develop (Garet et al., 2001; Knight, 2002). Furthermore, from the previous examination of TLE documents, administrators’ assumptions about learning, and the nature of deepening student conversion, there seems to be evidence that TLE could require transformational change for at least some seminary teachers. For these reasons, I have undertaken this effort to examine the nature of the change experience of teachers who are learning to understand and implement TLE.

In addition, the review of literature found that many themes might also be involved in other released-time seminary teachers’ experiences of understanding and implementing TLE. As I sought for epoché and openness in the discovery process I realized that practitioners’ could be experiencing a variety of types and degrees of change.
when understanding and implementing TLE. Through the process of phenomenological inquiry, the need for this study has become increasingly important to reveal the nature of the change experience.

**Sampling Strategy**

Both Moustakas (1994) and van Manen (1990) stated that phenomenology requires that research participants be people who have personal experience with the phenomenon. This study utilized criterion sampling, a form of purposive sampling strategy (Creswell, 1998). The criterion was that participants had experience teaching prior to the implementation of TLE and afterward. Six participants were selected by their local administrators as teachers who are succeeding in their implementation of TLE. A sample size of six participants is acceptable according to general phenomenological procedures (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994) and is within the range of sample sizes found in the literature (see Table 1). Six participants seemed adequate to reveal the nature of the phenomenon. The participants were selected based on the following four criteria.

1. Participants were released-time seminary teachers working in three areas (the equivalent of a school district) along the Wasatch Front in Utah. The areas were chosen based on geographical constraints in time travel for me.

2. To insure they had the opportunity to experience a change in identity relevant to the implementation of TLE, they had to begin teaching for S&I before 2003, which is the year TLE was published. Furthermore, to insure they had adequate time to experience a change they had to begin teaching in 2001 or earlier.
3. To insure participants were effective implementers of TLE, I contacted area directors who are teachers’ senior local supervisors within their area. S&I administrators regularly evaluate teachers through classroom observations. Because area directors are required to observe all of their teachers throughout their tenure within an area, they should have a good feeling for who is implementing TLE effectively and who is not. As such the definition of determining who was effective at implementing TLE was left up to the opinion of area directors.

4. To broaden the perspective of study participants, I also considered three ranges of teachers’ time in service prior to the implementation of TLE. The following ranges categorized teachers’ time in service: those hired from 2001-1997, from 1996-1988, and from 1987 or earlier. Two participants were selected from each of the three experience groups, totaling six participants.

**Obtaining Access and Developing Rapport**

Access to research participants was obtained through the following efforts. First, approval was obtained from the CES Education Research Committee. This process involved submitting a prospectus to the S&I manager of Research and Assessment. Upon receiving approval from S&I (see Appendix D) and the doctoral committee at Utah State University, additional approval was obtained through the university’s Institutional Review Board (Appendix E). Once approval was obtained, I contacted senior administrators in S&I’s central office in Salt Lake City, Utah. Administrators referred names of area directors in a metropolitan area within the proximity of where I live and
work. The names of four area directors were provided. I then sent an email to each of the area directors explaining the study and the criteria for selecting participants (see Appendix F). Three area directors responded. One was unavailable at that time.

Phone contact was made with each area director to discuss names of potential participants. I obtained four names from each area director in case some participants either were unavailable or proved not to meet the necessary criteria for inclusion. All three area directors seemed confident in the participants they recommended and did not hesitate to qualify them as effective at TLE. I created a password protected Excel spreadsheet with the name and contact information for each participant and his area director.

The initial contact with each participant occurred through a phone conversation (see Appendix F). That phone call included a brief introduction, an explanation of the general information required for the participant to decide if he wanted to be involved in the study, and notice that he would receive an email containing the IRB informed consent form (see Appendix E) and a Doodle Poll\(^{16}\) invitation. Once participants had scheduled the interview, I contacted them to designate the location for the interview. During the first meeting, I spent a few minutes chatting to begin to build a relationship of trust and put participants at ease. Most already felt comfortable and were excited to be part of the study.

\(^{16}\) A Doodle Poll is part of a web application that allows participants to enter their schedule. People are invited to participate in the poll, selecting when they are available. One of the security settings allows the poll administrator to designate the poll as anonymous, meaning that no one but the administrator is allowed to view the names and responses of other participants. Furthermore, the administrator can designate that only one person be allowed to select an option and each person be only allowed to select one each. That way no double booking is allowed, and confidentiality is preserved. Time ranges were designated. Participants selected the time range that best fit their schedule.
Data Collection Methods

The objective of phenomenology is to make clear people’s perceptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). To obtain thick descriptions of released-time seminary teachers’ experiences, I collected stories, experiences, and anecdotes that captured the essence of the experience (van Manen, 1990). This was accomplished through in-depth interview. I chose to use interview as the main data collection method. Because this study is a first of its kind, there was no clear understanding as to what behaviors and rationale have led teachers to become effective at implementing TLE. Therefore, I thought that the clearest path to discovering the nature of this particular phenomenon was simply to ask teachers to describe the nature of their experience.

Conducting Interviews

Before beginning the interview, to establish rapport I talked for a few minutes to put the participants at ease and also to review the informed consent form (Creswell, 1998). Each participant signed the form before beginning the interviews and returned it to me, each retaining a copy for his record.

Each participant was interviewed twice. The first interviews lasted from 60 to 75 minutes. The second interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Five of the six interviews were conducted face-to-face in the private office of each seminary teacher. One participant’s schedule limited how long he could stay after work. To reduce the difficulty placed on the participant’s schedule because of travel time to his location, the
interview was conducted via Skype\textsuperscript{17} and recorded in the same manner as the other interviews. Because this particular participant and I were already acquainted from attending research conferences, conducting the interview at a distance was not a concern.

**Transcribing interviews.** After each interview was completed, within 48 hours I transcribed the audio recording into a text document of the interview. This effort resulted in 147 pages of transcribed data. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality. The actual names of the study participants never were associated with the interview transcripts.

**Interview protocol.** I developed a protocol (see Appendix F) to guide the interview process (Creswell, 1998). Following van Manen’s (1990) recommendation a single focused lead question was asked of each participant to begin the interview (cf., Flanagan, 2009; Giles, 2008; Teixeira & Gomes, 2000). The lead question was “How would you describe your experience learning to understand and implement the Teaching and Learning Emphasis?” After this initial question was asked, I practiced the following important principles of effective interviewing.

1. Practice patience and silence, listen intently, and remain relaxed to allow the participants to reveal their experience (van Manen, 1990).

2. Practice effective communication skills by listening carefully and at moments of clarification restating what the listener thinks he or she heard (Covey, 2004).

3. Remember the primary research question; consider how the details of the conversation will lead to achieving the purpose of the study; and redirect if the

\textsuperscript{17} Skype is computer mediated video conferencing software. It allows for simultaneous two-way video and audio conversations over the Internet.
conversation is losing focus (van Manen, 1990).

4. Ask participants why they described something the way they did or why they think something is the way they described it. These moments are important because phenomenological researchers intend to reveal the purposive rationale of participants for their lived experience (McPhail, 1995; Moustakas, 1994; Russell, 2007; van Manen, 1990).

Probing for additional responses became natural as the interview developed into a conversation (Moustakas, 1994). Being patient and remaining silent while teachers shared their experiences was easy because the information was interesting. However, after a long experience, I would restate what I thought the participant had said. I did this through moments like the following.

Researcher: There’s probably a couple of things we’re narrowing in on. One of those is probably your own desire to learn.

Daniel: That’s huge! If you don’t have a desire to learn you’re not going to do it, period!

Researcher: Your own ability to take talks [by General Authorities], analyze them, and get feedback on how am I doing on implementing them.

Daniel: Very important.

Researcher: So it sounds like your relationship with others has been to glean information from them. How do you feel like you have influenced others to do more of what you are doing?

Daniel went on to reveal an important experience after this interchange about how he has helped other teachers to understand TLE in a similar way. This moment was important because it allowed the participant and me to connect and understand the nature of the experience. Thus, through restating, summarizing, confirming and probing further the
researcher was able to developing an understanding of the nature of participants’ experiences.

A concern arises with the approach of restating. Moustakas (1994) warned that researchers must strictly observe that interview questions do not influence or lead participants. This means an interviewer must not ask questions that lead participants to say what the interviewer wants them to say. Moustakas said that the interviewer can avoid this problem by saying less and listening more. There is evidence from the interviews that participants did not feel that they had been led. In fact, the evidence repeatedly points to restating leading to understanding. For instance, the following is an interchange with a participant named Aaron. Aaron was asked to describe how he thought TLE had influenced his practice of reading the scriptures. He had responded and this is a follow up to his response.

Researcher: So there is a change in the way you saw scripture. I can see it now, because that was the original question. We were talking about how did you change the way you looked at them. It sounds like even you have broadened your own application, the idea of balancing principles and the idea that there is more going on than just one story or one message.

Aaron: That’s exactly right! We want to balance those principles with Gospel messages as much as we can so that the student gets a rich experience and an edifying experience that [they] can really study the Gospel and just continue to learn and learn and learn, [i.e., they become lifelong, self-directed learners].

Researcher: So this might seem obvious to you, but maybe it will help somebody else. Why do you see that as so beneficial to students?

Aaron: I think we are at a stage now, and I clearly see the General Authorities doing this kind of teaching, that we can’t be always asking for a more Law of Moses type of approach to the Gospel, where we’re simply told what to do and then we go do it. We are to be much more faith and trust-driven people to getting answers, revelation and understanding from the words of the prophets and the Holy Ghost.
Notice how restating and clarifying led to Aaron exclaiming strongly, “That is exactly right”! Such a statement reveals an emotional connection, being understood. Thus restating led to understanding rather than the interviewee feeling manipulated. This kind of example happened repeatedly throughout the interview experience with all of the participants. In addition, it is important to notice that asking Aaron to explain why he thought his actions were beneficial led to a fuller response. He provided a comparison between the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ. This comparison described the nature of the change in his mind.

At times it was difficult to keep participants focused on describing their experience, rather than giving general descriptions (van Manen, 1990). It was difficult for them to gauge how much detail the study required. When this generalizing began to happen, after listening to the participants’ general descriptions, I would redirect participants to talk about their personal experiences. This redirection became an important moment of reflection for the participants. The following example shows clearly that for a seminary teacher named Benjamin being asked to focus on the nature of the change experience and to do so by revealing personal experiences that allowed him to reflect and begin to find meaning.

Benjamin: I don’t know, Mark, how personal you want me to get with this.

Researcher: The research methodology [phenomenology] I am using is all about you revealing your personal experiences. Where I have seen the real value come in previous interviews is where you are going right now. You were starting to talk about “here’s what happened to me.” Keep going that direction.

Benjamin: This will be a good experience for me because these are things that I haven’t thought about in a long time, to be able to dissect and analyze where all of this came from. What was the genesis or the origin where all of this came from?
Really when I think about it, I was blessed to be with a group of teachers who were for the most part, not all of them, perhaps three or four key instructors that I had the opportunity to work with that understood these principles.

Benjamin then began to recount a personal experience that truly was the genesis of his change experience. Being refocused on the primary research question and being asked to share personal experiences of change relating to it, allowed Benjamin to discover what truly had happened to him in developing him in his teaching identity.

**Data sufficiency.** Obtaining data sufficiency is a critical decision in a phenomenological study. Data sufficiency is data saturation, a concept made popular in grounded theory research (Creswell, 1998). For a phenomenological study Moustakas (1994) wrote, “There is no [arriving at] absolute or final reality in experience” (p. 191). To determine sufficiency, then, in phenomenological research is a subjective judgment. Sufficiency is likely determined by examining the goal of the study and setting a rule that allows the researcher to determine that enough data have been collected. Such a rule could reflect whether the researcher is finding new information from interviews or the participants feel they have nothing more to add. From the outset I felt that two interviews would be necessary and sufficient for this study. While Giles (2008) felt that only conducting one interview would be sufficient for his study, this dissertation is different from Giles’ research. Giles was interviewing people who were presently engaged in the phenomenon. The present dissertation potentially requires a significant look into the person’s past for some teachers. Therefore, two interviews seemed necessary. However, at the conclusion of the second interview with each participant it became obvious that no new stories were being shared. Furthermore, I asked the participants to review the
transcripts of both interviews and see if they accurately captured the nature of their particular change experience.

In addition, I asked each participant if there was any essential experience that he thought had not been discussed during the interview. All of the participants responded that what they had shared was an accurate and full description of their experience.

**Data management.** According to Creswell’s (1998) recommendation, a double recording strategy was used to insure that data were not lost, using a laptop computer and audio recording software as well as a mobile phone, which also had recording capabilities. This double recording strategy proved important when one device failed during a particular interview. Having a backup preserved all data. Also a secure cloud service called Dropbox was used to back up all electronic data.

To insure that electronic data were secure I kept all files on a password protected computer. Electronic files both in Dropbox and on the computer’s hard drive were saved in a password protected, encrypted partition using TrueCrypt software. Hard copies of transcripts and other details such as IRB forms were kept in a locked file cabinet inside of the researcher’s office. The office door also remained locked when I was away.

To insure that I did not miss any steps in the data collection process, I created a data collection checklist. The list contained a complete itemization of data sources by participant. This strategy helped insure that all sources were collected properly.

**Ensure standards of quality and verification.** To insure quality standards and verification of data collection efforts the accepted protocol as outlined previously was followed. I obtained access to research subjects through proper IRB channels as well as
the approval process for S&I. The methodologies as outlined in Creswell (1998), Moustakas (1994), and van Manen (1990) for effective phenomenological research were followed. These methodologies included having an effective data collection protocol that provided clear guidance for me to avoid leading participants (Moustakas, 1994). An audio recording of interviews was made and transcriptions of the interviews created to allow for verifiability through verbatim quotes to substantiate interpretations. In addition, I employed a strategy of engagement, which meant to talk with a broad group of participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), established rigorous data collection procedures (Creswell, 1998), conducted in-depth interviews (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990), utilizing member checking by having participants examine the transcriptions for accuracy and completeness (Creswell, 1998). From the interview transcriptions thick descriptions were obtained from the participants by seeking for experiences rather than general descriptions (van Manen, 1990). These descriptions allowed me to portray the participants’ experiences accurately.

**Methods of Reducing and Interpreting Lived Experiences**

Moustakas (1994) described data analysis within a phenomenological study as the process of the reduction and interpretation of lived experiences. Moustakas explained that this involved a two-step process. The first phase of data analysis is to create a textural description of each participant’s lived experience. The second phase is called the structural description of the phenomenon, which is a reflective or interpretive phase.
Textural Description

Moustakas (1994) explained that the textural analysis or Level 1 analysis (Giorgi, 1985) is more of a description of the lived experience of participants than what one might think of as a traditional analysis. It is intended to reflect as closely as possible what the participants actually experienced. In other words, the textural description represents a focused, organized presentation of the participants’ lived experience.

Within this dissertation, to facilitate the textural analysis, first a summary was created of the descriptive context of each participant. In addition, an organized and prioritized version of each person’s experience was created. To create this account, the transcriptions of the interviews for each participant were read multiple times. As the transcripts were read essential ideas were highlighted to organize participants’ experiences, focusing on keywords and phrases that revealed the meaning of what happened to each participant. Consistently the question was asked, “What does this statement or what does this story add to the meaning of this participant’s experience?” Along with highlighting essential parts, the margins of the transcript were also annotated, to identify the essence of what was being said.

The next step was to create an outline of the experience. This outline allowed the essence of the experience to unfold. Seeing the details written out on paper allowed for connections to be made between ideas and overlapping ideas to be consolidated. It also allowed for the best examples of overlapping ideas to be selected. Finally, the outline allowed for the prioritizing of themes that were essential from those that were incidental. To decide if a story or example would be included, the question was asked “Is this
example essential to preserve the essence of this person’s experience?” Thus, in this manner the data were reduced to the essence of each participant’s experience with the phenomenon. Finally, verbatim extracts from the transcript were included to create and support the initial interpretation. In addition, van Manen (1990) explained that artifacts might be included that represent an idea participants expressed. Four artifacts were included to support the essence of the participants’ experiences (see Appendix I).

To reduce the size of the body of this dissertation, yet to present as much as possible of the participants’ relevant lived experiences, the textural description was included in Appendix H of this dissertation. What has been included within the body of the dissertation is the description of the context of the study participants (see Chapter VI).

**Structural Description**

Once the initial textural description was created, the hermeneutic circle and principles of horizontalization were used to develop essential themes. Themes are the horizons or views of the phenomenon held by the participants (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Herein, the final interpretation was created first through presenting the important textural description of the participants’ experiences. Then the hermeneutic circle was used to analyze the data further through the following steps.

1. Create a transcription of the interview.

2. Read the transcript multiple times.

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18 According to van Manen (1990), presenting the textural description allows the reader to engage more fully in introspection with the phenomenon. It was thought that presenting the textural description could be important to readers to create discussion and dialogue. However, space limitations prevented including the full textural description in the body of the dissertation.
3. Form an initial interpretation through writing and re-writing to develop themes.

4. Validate the interpretation through structural statements taken from the textural description.

5. Revise the interpretation by comparing it to the researcher’s understanding and the themes developed in the literature review.

In addition, during data collection and analysis the constant comparative method was relied upon to aid in developing themes and creating the interpretation.

In conjunction with the hermeneutic circle, the themes were developed through the process of horizontalization. This process included forming an initial interpretation and supporting it with structural descriptions. These statements included cognitive, emotional, and religious acts (Anderson et al., 2001; Lickona, 1999; Russell, 2007), as well as words, phrases, etymologies, metaphors, and analogies (van Manen, 1990). These analyses represented reflections on what I thought the participants meant through their descriptions of their change experience. In addition, I relied on imaginative variation to think of the possible themes for an experience and eventually finished the process by revising them into a list of the plausible themes (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). This set of procedures meant writing out all of the themes that emerged from the analysis on a piece of paper, and then grouping them by larger themes and sub-themes until common ideas began to emerge. In addition, this process involved reading and rereading, and writing and rewriting. Throughout the process I sought to discern the features of the phenomenon through insightful discovery. This process occurred as themes were identified by reading the interview transcripts and then comparing them with
the themes developed in the review of literature. By comparing these two sources, additional themes emerged and previously developed themes began to solidify.

The review of literature for this dissertation served as a means of maintaining an attitude of openness, by considering ideas developed by other researchers. The themes developed in the literature review allowed me to expand my perspective. Hence, the literature was used as part of the imaginative variation process. In this way I sought to “transcend himself” (Moustakas, 1994) during the interpretation phase, avoiding the presentation of mere supposition.

As Moustakas (1994) said, it is not possible to include every theme. At some point the researcher must conclude that the phenomenon has been sufficiently revealed. I reached this point when I concluded there was nothing more of significance that could be extracted. Incidental themes were then left out of the composite description. However, the inclusion of the textural description in Appendix H allowed for the reader to consider the majority of themes that were developed throughout the analysis.

Moustakas (1994) described the structural analysis of lived experience as a composite interpretation or what Giorgi (1985) called the Level II analysis. It is meant to capture the holistic experience of participants with the phenomenon. I finalized the analysis process by creating a composite description of the themes, unifying them into the final description of the phenomenon (Giles, 2008; Jahreie, 2010; Prytula, 2008; Roberts, 2009; Wimmer, 2010). In all, to facilitate the reduction and interpretation of the data, I created a data analysis checklist that summarized all of the steps of analysis he would take (see Appendix G). The steps outlined in the checklist were followed as the data were
Based on an examination of the TLE documents and the assumptions of senior administrators it was thought before conducting this research that released-time seminary teachers are likely encountering some kind of transformational change both in character and in practice. The following three chapters will discuss the three themes that emerged.
CHAPTER VI

A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE CHANGE EXPERIENCE

This chapter is intended to present a general description of the study participants’ context and a general overview of the nature of their change experience. Presenting the context of the participants allows readers to understand better the perspective of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Following the presentation of the context is an analysis of the general statements made by study participants regarding the phenomenon. These statements typically came as the first response to the primary interview question, “How would you describe your experience learning to understand and implement the Teaching and Learning Emphasis?” Each of the statements reflects some kind of transformative experience for the participants (Brookfield, 1995; Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Finally, this chapter ends with the concluding thoughts regarding the general pattern of change that was revealed in this chapter.

Context of Study Participants

Participants were selected based on the criterion that they had experience teaching prior to the implementation of TLE. All participants were released-time seminary teachers who taught in senior seminaries. All teachers began teaching prior to the implementation of TLE (before 2003). The newest teachers were both hired in the year 2000. Three area directors were contacted to obtain names of effective teachers; ultimately, six teachers were selected, three from one area, two from another, and one from the last area. In addition, the six participants were divided among three categories
based on when they were hired in S&I: Category 1, those hired from 2001-1997; category 2, those hired from 1996-1988; and category 3, those hired from 1987 or earlier.

A collection of descriptive statistics was gathered from the study participants through a general form that was emailed to them, completed, and returned to the researcher (see Appendix F). The following is a composite description of their context based on the participants’ perspectives. The six study participants were all Caucasian males ranging in age from 35 to 52 (see Table 3). Table 3 describes age, years of teaching, year hired, years at current assignment, number of assignments since TLE was instituted, and range of members of faculties since TLE; ordered by age from youngest to oldest. The average age was 43 and the median age was 42. Hence, the group is very evenly distributed in age. The teacher who taught the most years had taught for 26 (hired in 1986) and the teacher who taught the least had taught for 12 (hired in 2000). Thus,

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics Regarding Six Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years teaching</th>
<th>Year hired</th>
<th>Years current assignment</th>
<th>Assignments since TLE</th>
<th>Range of faculties&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Range of faculty represents the number of teachers on a faculty during the period of time since the introduction of TLE.
everyone in the group had at least 3 years of teaching experience prior to the introduction of TLE and at most 18 years of experience. This fact is important because the central criterion for the sampling strategy was that people could have experienced a change in practice since the introduction of TLE. Having taught at least 3 years prior to TLE’s introduction allowed for teachers to begin forming their practice and experience at least a small degree of change.

Teachers described their various years of experience prior to the introduction of TLE. One teacher had spent 6 of the last 8 years at one assignment,19 another teacher had spent 4 years, two had spent 3 years, and two had spent 1 year. Thus, the group represented fairly diverse experience in years at their current assignments. Finally, three of the teachers had served at two assignments since TLE was introduced, and three had served at four assignments. Hence, all of the teachers had experience with different faculties. Even the teacher who had remained at the same building for 6 years saw numerous changes in personnel while he taught at that seminary. These facts aid to the variety of experience these six teachers have had, allowing for greater variation in the lived experience of participants.

The following is a blended description of the student various bodies at the six schools at which the teachers were assigned. Each teacher was assigned to a senior seminary (adjacent to a high school), teaching students age 15-18. Economic status of the student bodies appears to range from affluent, middle-upper class to lower class socioeconomic status. Ethnic diversity also seems to range from predominately white to

19 An assignment here is being interpreted as a change in faculty. Some assignment changes took teachers out of their Area. However, none of the assignment changes resulted in a move outside of the Wasatch Front in Utah.
various other cultures, including Hispanic, Polynesian, and African American origins. The various student bodies’ perceived activity in the LDS Church includes those who have General Authorities in their families, a long history of activity, and a strong understanding of LDS doctrine to families with parents who are antagonistic toward the Church, seldom or never attend religious services, or who are indifferent. Family dynamics appear to include strong nuclear families for some through the spectrum to divorced parents and separated families. Some of the schools are perceived to boast a strong student body whom teachers viewed as excelling in scholastic abilities, succeeding in sports, drama, music, and other extracurricular activities, while others appear to be less involved in extracurricular activities and lower achievers academically. In all, the student body at the schools where these six instructors teach appears to cover a wide spectrum of socioeconomic, academic, and demographic groups.

The following is a composite description of the participants’ colleagues. Participants have taught at seminaries with very large faculties with as many as twelve teachers and at buildings with very small faculties of three or four. The majority of the participants has taught or is currently teaching at buildings staffed by five and six teachers, which is an average to smaller size faculty for senior seminaries in Utah. The faculties’ teaching experiences are perceived also as being diverse. Some are very young, new teachers, while others have taught for as many as 20, 30, and 40 plus years with S&I. Prevailing faculty group attitudes towards TLE also are perceived as varying greatly from those who are resistant to it, to an entire faculty that is committed to using it and actively trying to implement it. The majority of faculties appear to be trying to understand and
implement TLE successfully, with a range of success in doing so.

Five of the six participants provided in one session a substantial, general description of their experience with the phenomenon. From the following analysis it appears that each of those five participants described some degree of transformational change they had experienced while coming to understand and implement TLE. However, it is important to note that not all participants’ transformations coincided with TLE’s introduction. In fact, some experienced change that lasted over a long period of years prior to the introduction of TLE. Thus, not all of their transformational experience occurred as a result of the adoption of TLE. The timing of their various experiences of change occurred because of a variety of trigger events. However, each example seems to support the notion that a prerequisite to understanding and implementing TLE includes some kind of transformative learning experience, whether beginning beforehand or gradually progressing after TLE’s introduction.

**Transformational Change**

The events leading to transformative learning are labeled here as trigger events. Practitioners transform their ontology or identity when a trigger event requires them to make a significant departure from the present path they are taking to a new, divergent one. Mezirow (2000) described this as a disconfirming experience. A disconfirming experience is one that is painful and cathartic that leads adult learners to seek for resolution because of a problem that has developed. Mezirow explained that the resolution comes for adults as they transform their identity and practice into something
new in response to the challenge they face to improve. However, Brookfield (1986) pointed out that not all trigger events occur because of disconfirming experiences coming from external factors. Instead, they can also come from within the person. He described research where adults engaged in self-reflection because they enjoy learning, whose quest for knowledge becomes a trigger event. For them, the experience is a continued diligent desire for new knowledge and a thrilling recognition that they do not yet have all of the knowledge they need or want.

The idea of a trigger event seems to align well with M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s (2000) explanation that identity or ontology is split by practitioners’ sense of desire and recognition, leading them to “split” their identity and thus seek for resolution.

In addition, according to Mezirow (2000) transformative learning is more than increasing cognitive knowledge or behavioral performance. Transformational change occurs when practitioners rethink the reasons for why they do what they do in practice (Dall’Alba & Barnacle, 2007; M. J. Packer, 2001b). Schön (1983; 1987) observed that practitioners experienced transformation as they looked beyond their routine, habitual practice and learned to solve novel problems of substance or importance in their lives (cf., Donnelly, 1999). Novel here means new, inventive, or challenging. Thus, transformational learning could be defined as teachers altering their perspective and assumptions about their practice and what is required of them to learn to be more effective (Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

Leont’ev (1974) described a hierarchy of interactions for people who are learning
to implement new strategies. Knight (2002), commenting on Leont’ev’s hierarchy, explained that there are three levels of interactions: operations, actions, and activities. Operations are routine changes, such as a teacher learning a new process for recording hours that he or she worked. Actions are changes that are more mindful, such as a teacher learning to implement a new teaching method. However, activity level change is the highest of Leont’ev’s three levels. Knight described activities as “suites of actions,” that require a revision of a practitioner’s personal theories, revising thought, belief, and action to create new views of oneself in relationship to one’s practice. Hence, Knight described activity level learning as the “fundamental reappraisal of assumptions which have hitherto governed” a teacher’s thoughts, actions, and beliefs (Knight, 2002, p. 213).

In the next six sections, what follows are examples drawn from the lived experience of the study participants. With the exception of Aaron, each participant’s experience is listed with a general heading capturing the overall feel of the nature of the change. Then a central statement or statements describing the change are quoted, followed by an analysis of those statements.

A Progressive Change

Drawing from the lived experiences of this study’s participants, Aaron’s transformational experience was the most difficult to summarize. It would involve retelling his entire experience. Unlike the other five participants, he did not offer a summative statement at the opening of the first interview that characterized the essence of his change. That being said, Aaron did describe his experience as “a progressive change,” one that involved a thorough examination of the fundamentals of TLE and a
transformation of his understanding of key aspects of what it means to teach the Gospel in released-time seminary. However, revealing Aaron’s transformational experience will fit better under the discussion in Chapter VII.

**Triggering a Need to Change**

In the research of this study, some of the factors impelling teachers to change became clear. For instance, the language of Joseph’s experience reflects a degree of uncertainty and unfamiliarity in understanding and implementing TLE. Joseph described his uncertainty this way when he said:

I remember when TLE was introduced; they called it the Current Teaching Emphasis. I can’t remember the year that happened, but it was just such a dramatic shift in perception and in what we were trying to accomplish in CES. I remember trying to wrap my brain around it and what it was. I remember sitting in a training meeting as a junior high principal. One of our administrators was talking about the Emphasis. He said something like, “We’re still trying to figure out what it looks like. We’re still trying to figure out what it is. It’s kind of like making a cake. There are all sorts of different cakes, but you know it’s right when it tastes good.” He was describing this ambiguous thing saying, “When you go and observe [other teachers] or when you are planning [a lesson] or teaching it’s hard to describe it, but you know it when you’re there because you can taste it, like the cake.”

Four essential thoughts come from Joseph’s statement. First, his initial uncertainty is clear in the phrase “Wrap my brain around it.” To wrap means to envelop or surround something. This phrase implies TLE required something larger than what Joseph was previously accustomed to implementing. Thus, the nature of Joseph’s change entailed the need to stretch his mind.

In addition, Joseph stated regarding the early years of TLE’s introduction (approximately 2004), “We’re still trying to figure out what it looks like.” This statement
compared TLE to something that was visually unrecognizable or previously unseen. This adds to the description that TLE reflected a change for Joseph.

However, the cake metaphor reveals that the change was something not entirely unfamiliar; this is because Joseph compared TLE to cakes, which are something common place. Moreover, the idea of taste is a powerful expression of pleasure, especially a cake that is sweet and delicious. From this it seems that in spite of the uncertainty for Joseph, TLE meant something that was also somewhat familiar and pleasing to him.

Nevertheless, the cake metaphor also reveals that TLE was something indescribable. Joseph said the cake was an “ambiguous thing.” In other words, it was unclear from the beginning which direction TLE was taking him.

Finally, TLE seemed to inspire the need for Joseph to change his practice. This need to change is seen in his description of it being “a dramatic shift in perception.” In this case, dramatic seems to imply striking contrast or significant change (Dictionary.com, 2012). Moreover, a shift denotes movement from where Joseph was to where he thought he needed to be. Hence, Joseph’s description conveys the idea that the introduction of TLE significantly challenged his understanding of what he was supposed to do as a seminary teacher, potentially requiring him to reconsider his understanding of his practice.

Joseph’s experience of understanding TLE appears to have triggered some level or kind of transformational change. His description of his experience reflects a significant challenge to his understanding of how to teach seminary, requiring him to stretch his mind, find how TLE fit into his practice, and significantly change his perception.
Leont’ev’s (1974) concept of activity level change seems to align well with the change
TLE inspired in Joseph. He seems to have questioned the fundamental assumptions that
governed his thoughts and beliefs about his practice.

In addition, the remaining five participants also experienced trigger events when
they first encountered TLE. However, their experience reflects a trigger event based on a
joy for learning (Brookfield, 1986). For instance, Adam felt curiosity, not knowing what
TLE would “look like” in his classroom. Daniel, had experienced “something like it in
preservice,” but still felt compelled “to read to understand it.” Jacob and Aaron also felt
compelled to read to understand TLE. Benjamin found that “some of the components of
TLE were similar to my philosophy of teaching,” yet he still felt there were elements of it
that he did not understand, which challenged him to discover what they meant.

Desiring to Change

Seemingly as a response to trigger events, Daniel characterized his experience as
coming to understand himself as a result of reflecting on TLE standards. He said:

I think that one of the most important things for me is desire, examining what you
are doing and asking yourself what you can do better. Then you can compare. I
can look at what I am doing and then I can say, “Okay, I could have done this
better. I could have done this better, and this, and this.” That’s huge! If you don’t
have a desire to learn you’re not going to implement TLE, period! Once you are
ready to learn and you are ready to implement what you learn, then you start
getting the keys and you start having success.

As your heart changes, your performance changes. As you have experiences, your
desires and your beliefs change, then your actions change and your results
change…Anytime I change my heart, [I mean] change my internal belief
structure, my actions and my results are going to change. And so if they [the S&I
administrators] want me to change according to the TLE, I first have to change
my belief inside and understand what they are talking about, so that then my
actions and my results can match what they want.
Daniel described a number of key actions he took. First, he experienced a feeling act, one of personal desire to change. Desire is an affective experience and is a form of valuing some specific course of action (Krathwohl et al., 1973). The etymology of the word “desire” originated in Latin, meaning “to miss” or “long for” (OED, 2010). Desiring to change signifies emotional acceptance of the need to alter one’s current state in favor of something of greater value. The heart here implies thoughts and feelings that are central to who and what a person is. Hence, if such desire is a matter of changing the heart (Osguthorpe, 1996), then it implies one must change one’s nature, ontology, or identity. M. J. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) described this experience as a person’s sense of desire and recognition that lead to splitting one’s identity. They explained that the concept of self is a matter of recognizing what one is and what one is not. Then in such an act of recognition the person desires to become something new. Daniel’s situation seems similar to the change nurses made in Flanagan (2009) and Beth made in Milne and colleagues (2006). In each of these studies participants chose to change based on their desires to improve. In this manner, identity is formed as people recognize what they are in relation to what they need or want to be. Daniel conveyed this experience of identity formation when he described examining “what am I doing” and then “asking myself what I can do better.” This implies that people can see themselves, their identity, and what they currently are in contrast with what they are not.

M. J. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) described this sense of recognition in terms of conflict and struggle. This idea connects to Daniel’s statement that “Anytime I change my heart” it involves a “change [in] my internal belief structure.” Such a transformational
moment is what Knight described as the “fundamental reappraisal of assumptions which have hitherto governed” a teacher’s thoughts, actions, and beliefs (Knight, 2002, p. 213). Such questioning of “internal belief structure” can bring about identity change such as the case of participants in Gorodetsky and Barak’s (2009) study. In their study the homeroom teachers saw their current identity as a being “baby sitters” in their homeroom classes. Yet the conflict they felt in accepting that identity led them to examine themselves and to desire to create a new sense of self. Ultimately, their desire led them to redefine their identity as “creators of knowledge” and “problem solvers” in their homeroom classes. While it is unclear yet what specifically Daniel desired to become, the process of examining himself against some idea of “otherness” reveals the transformative nature of his experience.

Finally, Daniel’s statement, “I could have done this better” signifies a sense of weighing what he had done against some perceived standard. Weighing alternatives is a form of dialogic reflection. Dialogic reflection includes the idea of weighing competing claims and perspectives and considering alternative resolutions for one’s lived experience (Gardner, 2011; Hatton & Smith, 1995). Gardner’s research described an example of this kind of reflection as leading to conflict where one person yearned to become a better teacher, but needed to overcome obstacles to do so. In contrast, Flanagan (2009) observed participants who also desired change after seeing a new approach to their practice. However, participants in her study found that, even though desiring to create their new identity did lead to conflict, it also inspired new outlets of creativity.

As M. J. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) stated, desire and recognition can split the
person, thus motivating the individual to seek for a new identity. To create a new identity implies producing or bringing about something new; in this case, a change in identity. Daniel described the process of creating his new identity when he said, “As your heart changes, your performance changes. As you have experiences, your desires and your beliefs change, then your actions change and your results change.” In other words, desiring instigates a process of change in belief, actions, and results that lead to a new sense of self. Thus, in this sense the idea of understanding is broadened to become a matter of desiring or valuing a course of action; an emotional acceptance of change; an examination of oneself and one’s heart by considering personal assumptions. In other words, understanding is not simply a matter of knowing what TLE means or expects of a teachers, but it is a matter of defining one’s professional identity in light of the expectations.

**Teaching by Principles**

In a manner that reflects a change to provide guidance in practice, Adam described the nature of his experience understanding TLE by what it is and what it is not. He explained his perception as follows.

First of all TLE consists of statements of principle not methods. Anytime people start talking about methods [when they are referring to TLE], they are talking about the wrong thing. The [fundamentals of TLE] are principles of teaching that have been effective in facilitating [learning by] the Holy Ghost.

In this example Adam differentiated between principles and methods. Within LDS doctrine a principle is a general rule that applies to all people in all situations, which makes choices clear (Scott, 1993a, 1993b, 1998). When applied to a learning situation,
principles can guide teachers in making correct instructional choices and taking appropriate actions. In addition, S&I teaching methodology defines teaching methods as “the approaches and learning activities a teacher uses to help students learn the content [being taught within a given course of study]” (S&I, 2001, p. 19).

Adam’s opinion that TLE is an expression of learning principles to guide teachers rather than methods of how to instruct students was echoed by statements from all six participants and is a common assertion among S&I senior administrators (Hawks, 2007; J. A. Monson, 2005; Webb, 2007; Webb & Alford, 2009). It is also a conclusion made clear by the previous discussion within the introduction of this dissertation, examining the nature of the TLE documents, which revealed that they provide no specification of teaching methods to explain how to achieve the desired results of TLE; rather, the TLE documents focus on connecting specific student learning performances with basic principles that explain how those performances lead to deepened levels of conversion.

In addition, Reigeluth’s (1999) explanation of the relationship between methods and principles aligns well with S&I teaching philosophy. Reigeluth explained that methods of instruction are the ways teachers “support and facilitate learning” (p. 6). Furthermore, he explained that methods are based on principles of learning. Reigeluth defined principles as “a relationship between two actions or changes” (Reigeluth, 1983, p. 14). He clarified that principles explain why things work the way they do, whether through correlation or causality. This means that understanding principles is linked to the effective and intentional application of methods. In other words, the nature of adopting principles and applying them to teaching methods requires teachers to learn to make
judgments because teachers must be able to comprehend why methods are or are not working as expected.

Certain key theorists believe that when practitioners examine why they do things in practice, it leads to transformative learning (Dall’Alba & Barnacle, 2007; M. J. Packer, 2001b). According to Schön (1983), reflecting on why one performs in a given way can lead to challenging assumptions, recognizing tacit knowledge and routines, and altering one’s practice for the better.

According to Anderson and colleagues (2001), considering why one does what one does in practice requires making judgments at a higher level of thinking than merely learning to implement the steps of a teaching method. For instance, Anderson and colleagues’ taxonomy described the steps a teacher might follow to implement a teaching method as teachers: (a) recognizing a situation where the method applies, (b) constructing meaning for the instruction to be taught, and then (c) implementing the procedures of the method. However, the taxonomy explained that making judgments regarding why a particular method fits a given learning situation would require teachers: (d) to analyze the many facets of the situation, (e) to determine the appropriateness or inappropriateness of a method from a variety of methods, and then (f) to select or to create an appropriate method. Then, the instructor must also implement the method as previously described, evaluating the method’s effectiveness and if necessary making adjustments. It seems obvious that a form of teaching methodology such as TLE that requires teachers to apply principles without providing any teaching methods is a more complex and complicated form of instruction than teachers learning to implement a prescribed teaching method,
where specific steps to take are given.

*Teaching the Gospel* (2001), the primary teaching handbook for S&I, offers this significant statement describing the need for teachers to develop judgment when implementing methods.

As teachers select how to teach the content, they should constantly ask themselves questions such as “Will this [method] lift my students spiritually?” “Will this [method] offend or hurt anyone?” “Is this [method] appropriate in a Gospel learning setting?” Teachers need to remember that it is the Holy Ghost that edifies and [that they must] seek for the Spirit throughout the teaching experience. (S&I, 2001, p. 23)

This quote seems to reveal the interrelationship between principles and methods. Applying Reigeluth’s (1983) definition of a principle, the first action described in the quote would be selecting the method. The second action would be determining the influence of the method on students spiritually. These interrelated actions of judgment correspond with TLE principles of “teach and learn by the Spirit” and “cultivate a learning environment of love, respect, and purpose” (S&I, 2009a). Because TLE does not suggest specific teaching methods, the quotation above demonstrates that released-time seminary teachers must understand the relationship between principles and methods, and discern what methods are appropriate, all of which require teachers to learn to make judgments beyond simply learning the steps of implementing methods.

The requirement within S&I to learn to teach by following principles is not new, nor was it inspired only recently by the implementation of TLE. This is clear because the instruction previously quoted from *Teaching the Gospel* which was written in 2001 predates the introduction of TLE. However, it is clear that the nature of understanding how to teach by principles, upon which TLE is founded, could require teachers to learn to
challenge their assumptions, reflect on why they do what they do, and learn to make judgments about why they would select one teaching method over another, all of which could lead to transformational learning experiences.

**Becoming a Master Teacher**

Turning to another interviewee, Jacob described his experience of understanding and implementing TLE as one that set a standard for which to strive.

To me [TLE is] teaching like the Savior teaches and becoming master teachers like the Savior. I feel like [since TLE came out] I’ve “got the gospel” now. 20 Now I’m just trying to live it and prove [myself]. I’m not groping around lost. I’m a convert. I’m a believer. Now, I’ve just got to live it.

First, Jacob connected understanding and implementing TLE effectively with “becoming master teachers like the Savior.” The idea of becoming a master teacher could mean “being highly skilled or experienced” (Erickson & Anderson, 2005; OED, 2010). Schön (1987) defined a master teacher as someone who could present authentic problems to learners and challenge them in reflective ways to find solutions. However, within LDS doctrine being a master teacher suggests a more specific definition, namely teaching like Christ, the Master, would teach.

To many General Authorities being a master teacher means developing a thorough knowledge of the scriptures (Hunter, 1986), teaching principles that lead to spiritual healing (Scott, 2010a), being able to judge what students need when they need it (Oaks, 2007), living the teachings of the scriptures (Wirthlin, 1980), and learning to minister to people’s needs the way Christ did (T. S. Monson, 1986). In effect, this means

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20 Jacob implies here that TLE is like the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His statement implies that he is converted to TLE.
becoming a Christlike person. To be Christlike embodies a person developing the nature of Christ in so far as is possible. Hence, Jacob’s sense of meaning for understanding and implementing TLE involves from the LDS perspective the act of becoming skilled or experienced to the highest degree. This kind of change is most certainly transformational. The ideal of teaching in a Christlike manner represents attaining the highest, noblest of characters in LDS theology (Clark, 1974; Talmage, 1959).

Moreover, for Jacob using the term “convert” suggested that becoming a master teacher is a religious change of character. Conversion defines what it means to undergo a religious change of character. It requires a conscious decision to give up one’s former ways (LDS, 2011). In the case of religious teaching one must abandon old, ineffective practices (Brookfield, 1990) and become critically reflective in ways that lead to such a change in character (Brookfield, 1995). Certainly the concept of becoming a master teacher reflects transformative learning, where teachers must look beyond their routine practice (Schön, 1983), endeavoring to make foundational changes in their character, perspectives, and attitudes in ways that amount to identity change (Lave & Wenger, 1991; M. J. Packer, 2001b; M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; Wenger, 1998). The difficulty here is dividing Jacob’s experience into categories either of understanding or of implementation. Within his experience the two seem to be highly interrelated where he defined his personal standard as Christlike teaching, yet he also spoke of becoming like Christ. Hence, as asserted within sociocultural theory in practice acts of understanding and implementation become inextricable (Wenger, 1998).
A Point of Departure

Finally, Benjamin, a 26-year veteran teacher described his experience of understanding TLE with words like distill, glean, and grow over time. His description seems to convey the idea of someone who is heading in a new direction.

It’s something that’s taken some time. But for me personally, I believe and I didn’t realize it while it was happening, but I think that the principles which are behind the Teaching Emphasis are the things that I began to slowly comprehend [over the past 18 years]. But you see, I’ve been teaching for 26 years. But how long has TLE be around? Eight years. Almost 26 years ago they [the principles of TLE] began to distill on me. I had no idea that they were going to be part of some future Teaching Emphasis. As far as I was concerned it was just good teaching based upon sound, fundamental principles of truth that were found in the scriptures and in the words of the prophets.

Benjamin stated that the principles he was learning “began to distill on me.” The etymology of the word “distill” suggests trickling or dropping down as beads of water (OED, 2010). Distillation is a slow process. This idea of growth over time is supported by Benjamin’s admission that the change has taken place for him over as many as 18 years. Long, slow growth can be related to ontological change. In fact, the concept of ontology is seen not as an event, but as a process of development and change following along a pathway of growth often referred to as a trajectory (Greeno, 1997; M. J. Packer, 2001b; Wenger, 1998). The etymology of the word “trajectory” is based on the idea of crossing a body of water such as an ocean or a sea (OED, 2010). In physics the idea of trajectory represents the path of moving body over a distance. In other words, identity development is like a voyage or movement along a pathway.

In addition, Benjamin described the interaction between what he called his philosophy and TLE when it was first introduced. He said:
I had [my previous] philosophy in place which served me well for many years. Then as the Emphasis came out I think it helped to expand that philosophy and that understanding. It served as a jumping-off point almost to what you might term a new adventure. My philosophy was in the early stages limited. It was good, it was right, but it was limited. When the Teaching Emphasis was introduced, it expanded my horizon; it expanded my understanding and gave me new things to think about and work on; new principles to try to understand and then in turn incorporate more fully into my teaching.

For TLE to be a “jumping-off point” implies it was a starting point onto or a point of departure along a new path. This is confirmed by Benjamin’s use of the phrase a “new adventure.” Here adventure suggests something exciting, remarkable, and unexpected. In other words, TLE seems to represent a change in Benjamin’s trajectory or identity development. This is strengthened by his use of the term “philosophy.” Benjamin’s use of the term “philosophy” here proposes the idea of a personal world view, something that guides him in his decisions and beliefs (OED, 2010). Researchers in sociocultural learning theory have connected the idea of identity to one’s perspective or personal philosophy (Lave & Wenger, 1991; M. J. Packer, 2001b; M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; Wenger, 1998). The fact that Benjamin described his previous philosophy as limited and that TLE expanded his “horizon” suggests his interaction with TLE instigated an identity change that broadened his view or perspective of teaching. In other words, it is clear that TLE refined or altered Benjamin’s identity. This is particularly important because Benjamin represents a teacher from the “old guard.” He was very experienced when TLE was introduced. Hence, even though TLE did not begin his transformation experience, the continued transformation it inspired seems to have significantly altered his identity. As such, understanding TLE effectively may require even the very experienced teacher to change their philosophy.
Finally, the degree of change TLE introduced for Benjamin seems to be significant. In fact, he said it introduced “new principles to try to understand and then in turn incorporate more fully into my teaching.” In light of the previous discussion regarding principles it is likely that Benjamin’s transformation may have been significant. Teaching by principles can inspire teachers to challenge their assumptions about teaching, reflect on why they teach the way they do, and increase the sophistication of their judgment. With all of these elements combined, Benjamin’s experiences seem clearly to have led him to some degree of transformational change that altered his identity in a significant way. In summary, Benjamin’s experience seems to exemplify the fact that identity change likely occurs as understanding of one’s philosophy develops over time by slowly comprehending concepts and principles as a result of reflecting on practical experience.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Prior to conducting this research, the nature of the change experience for released-time seminary teachers who were learning to understand and implement TLE was unknown. From the previous analysis it is clear that for the participants of this study a prerequisite to being able to understand and implement TLE seems to have been some kind of transformational learning experience. Based on the analysis of study participants’ experiences thus far, this transformation included a six part interrelated process:

- Need to change
- Desire to change
- Chose to change
- Guidance to change
- Standard of change
- Transformation of identity

Figure 1 summarizes summarizing the nature of each part of the process.

**Need to change.** Teachers feeling the need to change could be characterized as a lack of understanding regarding what TLE is or what it requires. There was a degree of uncertainty and unfamiliarity for one participant when deepening his understanding of TLE, requiring him to stretch his comprehension of the practice of teaching seminary. When TLE was new and unfamiliar it may have caused some anxiety and frustration for some teachers simply because they did not know what the terms of the documents meant. They may have felt that they needed to figure out what it meant before they could understand it. Others may have found the uncertainty exciting and embraced it, seeking to study and understand. Some of the terms may have been unfamiliar and ambiguous. Moreover, TLE may have led teachers to “stretch their mind” and look at the familiar practice and wonder how the expectations fit.

In addition, the change may also be characterized as a lack of conceptual understanding of what principles are and how they function. Because TLE is meant as a means to an end rather than being a change in specified teaching methods, the uncertainty and unfamiliarity could have come if teachers did not understand what principles are. The change may have required them to learn how to extract principles from professional literature such as scripture and General Authority talks. Even if teachers understand what principles are and how to extract them, learning to implement principles in their practice
<table>
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<th>Need to change</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lacking understanding of terms and concepts.</td>
<td>Desiring a readiness to change, questioning self, recognizing and valuing change.</td>
<td>Preparing heart to change.</td>
<td>Differentiating between practice and principle.</td>
<td>Adopting Christ as the model teacher.</td>
<td>Departing from the familiar in a new direction.</td>
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<td>Teaching by habit or convenience.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accepting that personal beliefs and assumptions must change.</td>
<td>Analyzing relationships between changes or actions.</td>
<td>Developing thorough understanding of scriptures.</td>
<td>Challenging previously held assumptions.</td>
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<td>Feeling anxious, uncertain, unfamiliar, frustrated or excited, curious, interested, and pleased.</td>
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<td>Becoming familiar with and comparing performance to standards and expectations.</td>
<td>Judging learning situations and matching appropriate principles; evaluating effectiveness of methods.</td>
<td>Living scriptural teachings.</td>
<td>Committing to long-term change, (a journey, not a final destination).</td>
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<td>Realizing that performance is not aligned with standards or expectations.</td>
<td>Willing to take first steps toward change.</td>
<td>Responding appropriately to students’ needs.</td>
<td>Changing identity: knowledge, skills, and attitudes.</td>
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*Figure 1.* Six parts of the interrelated process of transformational change, version 1.
may have been difficult when trying to overcome teaching by habit or convenience. Furthermore, teachers may have needed to learn to make judgments regarding which principles to use in a given learning situation. Schön (1983) wrote that situations such as these are imbued with a high degree of novelty, thus requiring teachers to become more reflective on the nature of their practice.

Regardless of whether the trigger event was external and painful or internal and pleasurable, understanding and implementing TLE likely triggered some level or kind of transformational change for most teachers, challenging them to reflect on how they teach seminary, stretching their minds, and evaluating how the TLE fit into their practice. In one sense, words like uncertain, unfamiliar, frustrated, and anxious might characterize the nature of the change; however, other terms like curious, interested, and pleased also describe the change. This sense of personal connection to TLE could have triggered an activity level change, inspiring many teachers to question the fundamental assumptions that governed their thoughts and beliefs about their practice.

**Desire to change.** Teachers having the desire to change could be characterized by a reaction to the trigger event. As a result of TLE some teachers may have increased their personal desire to change. This personal desire could have meant learning to value the idea of change and developing an emotional sense that change was good. This experience could have been painful for them as they recognized the difference between what they were like as a teacher and what changes they needed to make to become more effective. However, if they examined what they were doing in their practice, and challenged their assumptions about teaching, they could have discovered a new way of defining what it
meant to be a seminary teacher in a way that led them to greater success. This kind of change may have caused some conflict for those who were seeking improvement that was painful and frustrating, yet with creativity and continued desire to improve, they likely created a new sense of purpose and perspective that elevated their practice.

**Chose to change.** Teachers making the choice to change could be characterized by the readiness of a person’s heart to change. Teachers may have made their hearts ready to change as they desired to overcome the negative feelings they had when they realized that their practice did not align with expectations of what is effective teaching. In addition, the choice to change would have implied that teachers accepted TLE as inherently valuable and effective.

**Guidance to change.** The idea of teachers finding the guidance to change is characterized as learning to teach by principles, rather than routine, habit, or preferred practice. Learning to understand how to teach by principles rather than instructional methods alone is characteristic of the nature of TLE. Learning to teach this way may have required teachers to challenge their previously held assumptions, reflect on why they do what they do, and learn to make judgments while selecting one teaching method over another. All of these actions combine into what may have led many teachers to begin the transformation of their teaching practice. Furthermore, this kind of teaching appears to require higher levels of cognitive behavior such as making judgments and possibly creating new methods of instruction. These judgments likely would include understanding the relationship between actions or changes in instructional methods, whether hypothetical, probabilistic, or causal in nature.
**Standard of change.** Teachers establishing a standard of change are characterized by selecting a model teacher who teaches by principles not by routine, habitual, and preferred practice. For some teachers establishing a standard meant setting the goal of becoming a master teacher. Becoming a master teacher may have required developing a deeper sense of religious character, leading to a type of “conversion.” This conversion may have required teachers to abandon familiar, but less effective or even ineffective practices. It may have required teachers to become critically reflective of their character traits and attributes. They may have needed to increase their Gospel knowledge of the scriptures, learn to foster spiritual healing, become able to judge what students needed when they needed it, or increase their personal discipleship in living the Gospel.

In all, becoming a master teacher may have meant learning to teach the way Christ taught. Certainly the concept of becoming a master teacher reflects transformative learning, when teachers move beyond routine practice to make foundational changes in their character, perspectives, and attitudes in ways that amount to the levels of identity change listed in this section.

**Transformation of identity.** Moreover, teachers transforming their identity to understand and implement TLE are characterized by them continually seeking to improve their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. For some teachers this change may have meant that they came to a point of departure from their past effective way of teaching on to a new path. They may have spent considerable amounts of time developing their previous philosophy of teaching. However, if they saw this change as a new adventure, it could be exciting and remarkable. It is important, however, to remember that changing a teacher’s
practice may be a slow process. However, if their previous philosophy was founded on gospel principles, their combination of the new and old teaching philosophies would have blended well together. Moreover, teachers who spent significant time developing their personal philosophies that once were effective may have found that TLE elevated their performance significantly.

In conclusion, it is apparent that teachers understanding and implementing TLE will likely introduce a need for some degree or kind of transformational change, whether it is in one’s practice or in one’s character. Regardless, full transformational change will amount to identity or ontological change. Some could argue that what has been presented in this chapter reflects a single view of teaching. Such an assertion would be valid. However, the intention of this study was not to consider all of the alternative paths to teaching, but was to consider the nature of the change that study participants experienced. In essence, this change included a combination of understanding words and concepts defining TLE and ideas about oneself, as well as implementing teaching principles into their practice. This conclusion appears to suggest that understanding and implementation could be inextricably connected with each other.
CHAPTER VII

SOCIOCULTURAL LEARNING

The nature of qualitative research supports an emergent research design. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained:

Further, the very requirement of an emergent design, in which succeeding methodological steps are based upon the results of steps already taken, implies the presence of a continuously interacting and interpreting investigator. At times only simple refinements in procedure or a simple adjustment in questions to be asked may be called for, but at other times an investigator may strike out on a wholly new track as a result of a single insight. Such matters cannot be anticipated preordinately, nor can programs be built before the fact that will make the needed adjustments automatically. (pp. 102-103)

In the spirit of the emergent design of this dissertation I encountered a kind of epiphany when I began examining the results of the interviews and organizing them into themes. Throughout the study the primary research question has been “What is the nature or meaning of the change experience of a sample of released-time seminary teachers who are considered to be effective at learning to understand and implement TLE?” Because the terms “understand” and “implement” seemed commonplace, I gave no thought to the possibility that the words might need clarification based on a philosophical view of learning.

Examining dictionary definitions of the word “understand” revealed some important variations in meaning. First, the definition of understand could mean to comprehend or grasp the meaning of or the import of something; it could also mean “to comprehend by knowing the meaning of the words” used to describe it (OED, 2010). The cognitive acts of understanding in this sense are to define words and comprehend
concepts. However, understand might also mean “to be thoroughly acquainted with or familiar with” words and concepts and “to know one’s place and conduct oneself properly” with respect to implementing something (OED, 2010). In this sense to understand means to comprehend the degree of knowledge that is needed and to comprehend how to implement something.

Based on the definitions given of the word “understand” it could mean that teachers comprehend the definitions of the words used to explain TLE, comprehend the meaning of concepts or principles underlying it, examine the degree of knowledge necessary to comprehend it, and grasp cognitively how to implement it. This means teachers must understand words, principles, and concepts and the degree of understanding necessary to implement TLE. To implement means to “complete, perform, carry into effect” something (OED, 2010). In other words, to implement means putting what one knows into practice.

The current training model within S&I’s Administering Appropriately handbook divides understanding and implementing into two concepts, namely training principles or doctrines and training skills. The steps for training principles include “defining, illustrating, analyzing, applying, and reporting progress” (S&I, 2003, p. 33). The first three steps of the model are clearly cognitive in nature and relate to the idea of understanding TLE. According to the S&I model once teachers understand principles cognitively, the next step is to apply the principle. One of the foundational assumptions of learning in LDS theology is based on a statement by Joseph Smith, which stated, “I teach them correct principles, and they [the members of the Church] govern themselves”
Joseph Smith seems to have implied by this statement is that principles allow people to see the application clearly. This thought is confirmed by S&I administrators, stating “As individuals learn correct principles, they will be motivated and guided by the Holy Ghost to apply them” (S&I, 2003, p. 9). Therefore, the essence of the S&I training model could be stated as follows. If teachers cognitively understand the principles of learning that underlie TLE, then the Holy Ghost will reveal how to implement those principles effectively.

LDS doctrine teaches that revelation from the Holy Ghost can show people “all things” that a person should do (2 Nephi 32:5). Granted S&I is an organization based on faith in God and revelation; however, it is possible that there is more to the process of implementing principles than the current model explains.

Ryle (1949) explained that when teachers develop cognitive knowledge as they learn *that* they are supposed to do certain things. For example, seminary teachers could learn that they are supposed to help students identify and understand principles. To do so the S&I model for teaching principles suggests teachers could define related terms, consider principles of learning, illustrate those principles in context, and analyze the interactions within the principles. In other words, they are learning things that they are supposed to do. However, Ryle explained that applying principles requires teachers to develop a different kind of knowledge. He argued that in practice teachers would be learning *how* to do the things rather than simply learning *that* they should do them (cf., Duguid, 2005). In other words, cognitive understanding is inextricably linked to performance knowledge. In fact, sociocultural learning would argue that the two must
become one in the same as practitioners learn in practice (Brown et al., 1989; Brown & Duguid, 2001; Duguid, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Because this dissertation examines teachers learning in practice, from this point forward in the analysis of the data separating acts of understanding from acts of implementation became increasingly difficult. For this reason, acts of understanding and implementation were combined in all of the following instances.

Furthermore, if principles are separated from practice there is a risk of creating decontextualized learning. Nicolini, Gherardi, and Yanow (2003) explained that when people conceive of “knowledge as an object instead of a process” (p. 6), they turn knowing into acts of obtaining, storing, transmitting, and circulating knowledge. Decontextualized learning can occur when knowledge becomes an object that is transmitted outside of the practice setting (Greeno, 1993; Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996; Kirschner & Whitson, 1997; Nicolini et al., 2003). In that case learners acquire bits of information that are separated from the whole process (Brown et al., 1989; Sontag, 2009) and thus offer only partial or ineffectual solutions to problems. In other words, practice in context is thought to help practitioners develop the necessary connections between concepts (Brown et al., 1989; Duguid, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Hence, within sociocultural learning gaining knowledge is intended to be a process to be experienced rather than receiving a thing that has been transmitted (Hatano & Wertsch, 2001; Lave, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Nicolini et al., 2003; Wenger, 1998; Wertsch & Rupert, 1993).

The emergent need seems to be clear. There appears to be a need for further
explanation of how teachers are understanding and implementing principles in practice. Furthermore, this explanation could very likely relate to understanding and implementing sociocultural theory. The following sections represent participants’ experiences with sociocultural learning, specifically with mutual engagement as well as with reifications and shared repertoire. If participants indeed have experiences with sociocultural learning, which they certainly must, revealing the nature of their experience could prove to be beneficial in understanding the nature of the process of understanding and implementing the principles of TLE.

**Mutual Engagement**

What is clear from the interview transcripts is that all six participants described some experience with sociocultural learning. Mutual engagement involves learning through a community of participants who are engaged in a joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998). Wenger described mutual engagement as people who are working together in the pursuit of a common practice within a community. Membership is based on a person’s competence in performing the work of the community. Each community member must contribute; they work and grow together, and negotiate the nature of their enterprise, or what it means to work within their community.

The idea of mutual engagement is what interview participants for this dissertation referred to as collaboration. Research examples of mutual engagement show practitioners collectively developing the objectives they accomplish through collaboration (Yang, 2009). They create strategies as they solve problems through joint decision making
They learn relevant facts about the practice by watching and talking to other teachers about the practice (Ng & Tan, 2009). They negotiate a shared sense of vision regarding the beliefs and values of the practice (Frost et al., 2005; T. H. Nelson et al., 2008). Moreover, they articulate new knowledge leading to the development of personal explanations and theories about the practice (Staniforth & Harland, 2003; Yang, 2009).

In other words, mutual engagement brings a community of practitioners together in important social configurations. In those configurations they discuss and negotiate how to accomplish the work of the practice. *Social configurations* within a CoP might include apprentices, newcomers, old timers, mentors, coaches, trainers, administrators, inservice leaders, principals, and so forth, who interact in a variety of ways. It is thought that learning within a CoP leads practitioners to combine their understanding as well as their energies to accomplish group and individual goals.

**Learning to Write Statements of Principle**

Aaron was a 24-year veteran of teaching and the person whose experience was most unique among participants. Of all of the participants he was the only one who had not served as a principal. He described an experience he and his colleagues had when a new principal was assigned to their faculty. They were interacting in a summer inservice group. He described the experience as follows.

One summer all of the seminary teachers in our faculty were under the direction of a new seminary principal. His goal was to help us improve on what he thought was the greatest weakness of seminary teachers, [which in his view was learning to adequately identify principles within the scripture passages that we would be teaching the coming year]. It’s not “teaching and learning by the Spirit.” We’re
okay with that. “Cultivating and learning environment” was not a problem. “Studying the scriptures daily…” [Aaron was pointing at the TLE document he had sitting on the desk in front of him and was going line by line.]…Quite frankly these three bullet-points were not a part of the process. They have stayed pretty constant. I have not changed a lot regarding the first three bullet-points. The emphasis I do now [regarding the first three fundamentals] is very similar to the emphasis I was doing before [our experience in the summer with that principal]. The part that I have gone through a significant change is “understanding the content and context, identifying principles, and then understanding” them in what I like to call, “the relevancy in the life of the student.”

Because this account was told from the perspective of a teacher who was participating in the inservice training and not from the principal’s perspective, it is not possible to know why the principal thought the teachers needed help identifying principles. Nevertheless, what is clear is that the principal established a standard to which he was comparing the teachers’ performance (Mager, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c).

Having a standard to compare to one’s performance is important in light of Argyris and Schön’s (1974) description of theory in practice versus an espoused theory. Theories in practice represent tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966). Hence, Argyris and Schön argued that teachers are often unaware of the discrepancy between what they actually do in practice and what they think they do. To challenge this difference requires some kind of reflective experience where teachers learn to “see” their performance contrasted against the standard. The following account seems to describe how that happened for Aaron and his colleagues.

The seminary principal sat us down with children’s books [during the summer that Aaron referred to previously] and then he asked, “What’s the message of the book? What’s the principle? And then come write it on the board.”

In doing that we had to see if we could take a simple child’s story and figure out the principle or moral of the story. Most of us presumed that we were good at that, because we as teachers should be able to do that. But in reality we found that we
had a weakness in doing that—a significant weakness. Here is the content of the material and we were supposed to sift through that content and see what the message was. That was really challenging for teachers. And then as Elder Scott says, “to be able to write it into a principle statement” was the biggest challenge. You could get a sense for the message but to be able to state it more clearly, to write it as a principle that will guide [someone’s] behavior, that was very challenging for the teachers and for me also.\(^{21}\)

This experience conveys important meaning. Aaron and his colleagues appear to have learned to recognize their inability to write statements of principle.\(^ {22}\) The phrase “most of us presumed that we were good at that…. But in reality we found that we had a weakness,” reveals the attitude of teachers who thought they were doing something well that they recognized they actually are not capable of doing. What is important is recognizing that this realization did not come from defining, illustrating, and analyzing the nature of statements of principle alone (Nicolini et al., 2003). It came from practicing the skills required to identify principles in context and seeing how they seemed to fall short of the ideal (Greeno, 1993; Greeno et al., 1996; Kirschner & Whitson, 1997).

This kind of realization experience reflects what Schön (1983, 1987) described as reflection-in-action. Reflection-in-action requires teachers to consider their performance objectives compared with what they are actually doing in practice. In seeing the difference teachers can begin to recognize where they are succeeding and where they are failing. By establishing a performance standard and then constructing an authentic

\(^{21}\) Aaron offered two contrasting examples of principles based on 1 Nephi 3:7. A statement that is too loosely formed would be “If I obey, then God will bless me.” Aaron offered a second version that he would call a well formed statement of principle: “I am exactly obedient, then God will help me do hard things.” The first is too general. The second captures contextual details of the scripture to create a stronger statement.

\(^{22}\) A statement of principle is a condensed, generalized version of a principle. It is typically written in a conditional form. For example one might write, if we exercise faith like the widow of Zarephath, then God will multiple what little we have to be sufficient for our needs.
practice situation for inservice training this principal seems to have provided such an evaluative experience.

Hung and Chen (2007) explained that authentic inservice training allows practitioners to “mirror” real practice situations so they can “see” what is required to implement principles. This act of mirroring seems to allow practitioners to transform their inservice experience by “learning to be” professionals in practice settings rather than just “learning about” what professionals think and do (Dall’Alba & Sandberg, 1996; Duguid, 2005; McArdle & Ackland, 2007; Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003; Tuomi-Gröhn, Engeström, & Young, 2003).

For instance, take a hypothetical situation of a male S&I inservice leader who is instructing the faculty regarding the following principle of effective teaching: “If teachers identify Gospel principles in the scriptures, then students are more likely to apply what they learn.” Assuming the S&I model of teaching principles as previously outlined, during the lesson the inservice leader would have to define what a principle is and what it means to identify principles. He then would provide a few examples of principles from scriptural passages. Finally, he would have the group analyze the passages to see how the principles were derived. From the example provided Aaron’s principal took a step closer to authentic practice by giving children’s books to teachers to read, asking the teachers to practice extracting principles on their own. This act of practicing the skill of identifying principles would act as a mirror that was close to authentic practice. However, Aaron’s principle also had teachers practice extracting principles from scriptural blocks. The most authentic practice would be to have teachers bring actual passages they would be
teaching that week and practice identifying principles they could use in their lesson plans.

After a training experience such as was just described, the inservice leader would then tell the group to apply what they learned during the coming week in their lesson preparation. When applying principles it is important to set a performance standard in an authentic practice situation. However, beyond what the S&I model requires, teachers must also reflect on their actual performance compared to the standard and what they have practiced. Then through the “mirror” of authentic practice teachers begin to “see” how to implement what they are learning in inservice. Nevertheless, the following example adds an additional requirement, to negotiate a local version of the performance standard.

**Extending Beyond the S&I Training Model**

During the interview Aaron explained that prior to the new principal coming to his building the principal had developed what Aaron called “a nomenclature.” A nomenclature is a naming system, where concepts are given specific names to distinguish them from each other. However, what the principal had presented to the faculty was more than the creation of names for TLE concepts. In fact, he had devised a specific interpretation for TLE and what each of the components meant to him and how he thought they interacted with each other. This particular principal appears to have been well versed in what he perceived were the principles of TLE and he clearly intended to teach his interpretation to his new faculty.23

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23 See footnote 25.
Aaron explained that, during the first summer the principal was at his new assignment, he began to introduce his “nomenclature” or interpretation of TLE. That was also when the principal began practicing with the teachers to identify principles by having them read children’s stories and write statements of principle. Aaron described the influence of these practice sessions. He described the value of having a standard interpretation of TLE as being essential to the colleague and his progression in the following situation.

So this teacher [a colleague] and I spent an entire summer trying to learn what is a principle and what is a doctrine. Well, then Elder Bednar comes along and he made it simple for us. He simply said, “A principle tells us why and a doctrine tells us what.” So, once we kind of settled on that…we said “if you are teaching a doctrine it tells us what we believe and principles are telling us why we believe it, because then it can motivate my behavior.”

So I [am observing] this teacher who was teaching in his classroom, and say to him, “You didn’t tell me why. You are just giving me more information, either a doctrine or a command. And a command doesn’t have a why. Why am I not supposed to kill? I don’t understand.”

He looked at me and he was so frustrated. And he said, “How do I get to where I [can see] the why and I [can] make it into a principle?” So I said to him, “This is the only change you need to do, when you add this to it, now it makes it a why.”

Something clicked in his mind. “That makes a difference for me.” And ever since then he has been able to take the scriptures and figure out the principles of the Gospel, and really in an incredibly impressive way.

Aaron and his colleague provide an example of a locally negotiated practice (Wenger, 1998). Aaron said “So this teacher and I spent an entire summer trying to learn what is a principle and what is a doctrine.” Their interpretation of principles and doctrines, which they had negotiated between the two of them, allowed them to develop a

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24 The specifics of what Aaron said to his colleague would be interesting, although the details were not revealed in the interview. The important point is that Aaron and his colleague had developed a manner of speaking about their practice that allowed them to communicate with each other. The fact that they could understand each other is evidence of a locally negotiated practice.
common understanding that Aaron said assisted them in giving each other feedback. In addition, having this experience helped them gain greater confidence in their understanding and develop increased feelings of solidarity and camaraderie.

Because they had developed a common understanding when Aaron’s colleague said, “How do I get to where I [can see] the why and I [can] make it into a principle?” Aaron was able to explain what to do in terms that his colleague understood. He said, “This is the only change you need to do, when you add this to it, now it makes it a why.” The result was “Something clicked in his mind. ‘That makes a difference for me.’ And ever since then he has been able to take the scriptures and figure out the principles of the Gospel, and really in an incredibly impressive way.” Aaron’s experience appears to be an example of negotiation of a local standard.

According to Wenger’s (1998) CoP theory, local standards of performance are created through a process called negotiation. Negotiation of local standards occurs through interaction between boundary practices and a joint enterprise. Wenger explained that boundary practices occur when CoPs interact with each other within an organization or between organizations. For instance, within an area the teachers on a faculty could be defined as one CoP and the principals within the area could be defined as another CoP. The principals have the responsibility to oversee training on a faculty level and often are formed into a training council, where discussion occurs regarding what and how to train local faculties (S&I, 2003).

A joint enterprise is the essence of a CoP. It is a collective body of people who are engaged in a common enterprise with the purpose of negotiating what it means to do
the work of the enterprise. It involves the idea of community coherence. It is a “collective
process of negotiation” not as the creation of organizational standards such as TLE, but
the local negotiation of how to implement such standards (Wenger, 1998, pp. 77-78). For
instance, Wenger described a group of claims processors working for an insurance
company he called Alinsu. Alinsu supervisors introduced a new processing form that
claims processors were expected to use. The standard practice of using the form was
defined by the organization. The supervisors oversaw the implementation of the form.
However, the supervisors did not define the practice of the claims processors. The use of
the form was “actually defined by the claims processors through their mutual engagement
in practice” (p. 78). In other words, the processors negotiated how to use the form
effectively and implement it within their context. As a result, they created tacit, local
knowledge and practices to accomplish the global objectives the company. The result was
the development of a common understanding of what to do with the form to accomplish
their job. Aaron’s and his colleague’s example of negotiating a local standard for TLE
clearly parallels the Alinsu example.

Aaron explained to me that the principal had developed the interpretation he
taught the faculty.25 However, when Aaron said, “This teacher and I spent an entire
summer trying to learn what is a principle and what is a doctrine” he was describing the
negotiation process required to set a new standard.

25 This fact was verified by asking Aaron directly, “Did the faculty negotiate the interpretation of TLE that
was being taught or was it something that the principal came to the building already having developed?”
Aaron responded, “He labeled that for us. He came in and said, ‘This is what we have. This is what I’ve
developed. It helps us so we can talk to each other about this information.’” Aaron provided me with a
document summarizing what the principal had taught and what he had called the nomenclature. Based on
my examination of the document it is far more than a naming convention. It includes major and minor
concepts defining aspects of TLE, as well as naming those concepts. In fact, it is an attempt to explain the
principles and interaction of principles within TLE.
Aaron and his colleague took what they were taught by the principal and negotiated what they thought it meant. This effort was not merely implementation of what the principal had taught them, but was what they as members of the joint enterprise had concluded from their study. In fact, Aaron said, “once we understood what Elder Bednar had said about principles and doctrines” we said ‘if you are teaching a doctrine it tells us what we believe and principles are telling us why we believe it, because then it can motivate my behavior.’” The statement implies that the ability to implement was connected to what they read from Elder Bednar, not just from what the principal had taught. In other words, Aaron and his colleague negotiated what it meant to implement the training they had received during inservice, combining the principal’s directions with Elder Bednar’s statements plus their own ingenuity. Thus, from Aaron’s perspective the nature of the experience of understanding and implementing TLE includes a process of negotiation.

These examples that have been provided are important because they reveal the nature of change Aaron experienced of understanding and implementing TLE. His change experience combined the steps of the S&I model of teaching principles, practicing in an authentic inservice setting, reflecting on the training that was given, negotiating a new local standard, and observing and providing feedback to assist in the implementation of inservice training.

Finally, Aaron concluded his description of his experience with his principal and his colleague by saying:

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26 Provided that the principal followed all of the steps of the model.
But it took an outsider, another pair of eyes who could say, “Is this what the standard is or is it not?”

So, it’s very helpful for me to have another teacher or a principal who, when we’ve both talked ahead of time, and we can both say, “This is what we agree is identifying a principle. This is understanding a principle. This is applying a principle. This is teaching and learning by the Spirit.” And once we agree to definitions, then we can move into the question, “Is your teaching meeting that particular definition?”

This concluding thought of Aaron’s reveals a very important facet of the nature of sociocultural learning. The standard of implementation once agreed upon by practitioners allows for a shared vision of what success looks like so they can evaluate their performance (Frost et al., 2005; T. H. Nelson et al., 2008). Aaron said, “Once we agree to definitions, then we can move into the question, ‘Is your teaching meeting that particular definition?’” According to their taxonomy, Anderson and colleagues (2001) explained that evaluation of this kind demands a high degree of cognitive understanding. In fact, they explained that high-level evaluation processes require “the use of standards of performance with clearly defined criteria” (p. 83.) so that practitioners can detect “inconsistencies…within a process…[and] the effectiveness of a procedure as it is being implemented” (table on back cover). Thus, a final point must be added to the nature of Aaron’s change experience, which is to learn to evaluate one’s performance against the local standards created by the CoP.27

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27 It is important to note here that S&I administrators have produced a skills training model separate from principle training model already discussed. The skills model includes the steps of defining, modeling, and practicing a skill, followed by providing feedback, incorporating the skill into practice, and then reporting progress. This model also neglects to connect the training experience to the practice setting, other than to stipulate that teachers are to incorporate what they learn. If feedback is intended to be given in the classroom, combined with observation, that step needs to be included in the model.
It Is Complicated Business

After describing his experience of learning with his principal, faculty, and colleague, Aaron explained the overall effect of the training on the whole faculty.

So, then we got into the school year and we started trying to get students to identify principles, knowing that we had worked hard [ourselves] at trying to do it. Knowing that we had gone through the process, we thought it would be helpful to the students. So we were modeling it for them.

Some [teachers] said, “Boy, they [the students in our classes] are just dying at this. They are not liking it whatsoever.” The students struggled. And the teachers were thinking they were helping the students identify principles when in reality they were helping the students restate generic doctrines or command statements. For example, “If you obey, then God will bless you” or “Be obedient like Nephi was obedient.” [The students responded], “We don’t get how this is helpful and valuable. Just tell us the story and we’ll feel good and we’ll move on.” The teachers replied, “Nope, nope, nope.” We were making them work and put effort into it. But it wasn’t working so well.

This example reveals the complicated nature of putting principles into practice. It is a potentially complicated and painful experience. Adult learning theory suggests that changing the fundamentals of a teacher’s practice requires transformative learning. Mezirow (2000) explained that transformative learning occurs when trigger events that are painful and cathartic lead teachers to re-evaluate what they are doing. Aaron and his faculty’s experiences of feeling discomfort while learning to understand and implement TLE are not uncommon. The fact they were feeling this way implies that there were more changes they would need to make.

For instance, Flanagan (2009) found in her research with nurses learning to implement a new model of presurgery care that changing nurses’ practice was messy and difficult. She found that Nurses responded positively to the new presurgery care model she introduced to them and they implemented it with excitement and enthusiasm. Yet
some nurses responded that, in spite of all their best efforts, not everything went well. They had to learn to cope with uncomfortable people who were not happy, even with all of the extra care they were receiving. From their experience the nurses realized things do not always go as might be desired in a perfect world. Reality is more complicated than that.

However, the discomfort Aaron’s colleagues were experiencing cannot be attributed solely to implementing something new into their practice. From Aaron’s perspective some of the difficulty resulted from ineffective implementation of TLE principles. For instance, Aaron stated that “the teachers were thinking they were helping the students identify principles when in reality they were helping the students restate generic doctrines or command statements.” The nature of learning in a CoP can lead to feelings of confusion (Austin, 2007; Eick & Dias, 2005; King & Ross, 2003), frustration (Hung & Chen, 2007; Tolson, McAlloon, Hotchkiss, & Schofield, 2005), inadequacy, despair, and anger (Austin, 2007), and being generally overwhelmed (Fox & Wilson, 2009; Wiessner & Sullivan, 2007). Thus, sociocultural learning can be a messy business.

Aaron also described an additional complication to the inherently complicated nature of changing one’s practice. Some difficulties arose because of interpersonal relationships among members of the faculty regarding the way some faculty members viewed their relationship with the principal. Aaron described himself as someone who keeps “an open mind.” As a result, he embraced the changes TLE brought as interpreted by his principal; yet, from Aaron’s perspective some of his colleagues did not embrace the changes as readily. Regarding his relationship with the principal Aaron said, “He and
I had a relationship where we could openly talk and challenge each other.” According to Aaron’s experience, this open relationship was not shared by everyone on his faculty. In fact, some teachers would come to Aaron privately to talk about their concerns with aspects they thought were wrong with the way the principal was implementing change.

Such difficulties arising from changing teachers’ practices are not surprising. Changing a teacher’s practice requires a high degree of trust. For instance, Barnett and colleagues (2006) conducted a phenomenological study to reveal the nature of tensions that occurred between university partnering teachers and inner city high school teachers. The objective of the partnering teachers was to assist the high school teachers in developing “interdisciplinary environmental science theme based schools” (p. 23). One of the tensions that arose during the study was regarding the role of partnering teachers. The high school teachers saw the partnering teachers’ role as bringing curriculum to help them learn how to accomplish the objectives of the program; however, the partnering teachers defined their role as bringing learning strategies, rather than curriculum materials. This difference in defining roles created tension that became an irreconcilable difference for many of the high school teachers. While the tension for Aaron and his colleagues was different from the teachers’ situation in Barnett et al.’s study, this comparison highlights the fact that relationship building, especially relationships of trust that bring open communication, is essential to creating an environment of change (cf. Flanagan, 2009).

**Overcoming Compartmentalization of Ideas**

When Aaron saw the negative experiences occurring among some of his
colleagues, he acted to remedy the situation. He said:

I would say about October 2007, about two months into [the process of implementing what we had learned in summer inservice], I went to other faculty members. I asked them how it was going for them, and they were not comfortable. They were struggling to figure out the principles. The students weren’t liking it. And I went into the principal and said, “Are you aware of what’s happening?”

His response was “My biggest concern was if we focused solely on this one part of the Teaching Emphasis [identifying principles] that [the teachers] would forget the other parts of it.” That’s exactly what had happened. [The teachers] were thinking, “[Helping students identify principles] is the only way to teach” instead of balancing it with the other bullet-points [all of the other elements of TLE]. In the end [we all realized], “You still have to teach by the Holy Ghost, [which is specified as another component of TLE].

At this point Aaron got out of his chair and went over to his filing cabinet. He began tapping his index finger on a piece of paper in a plastic sheet protector that was taped to the side of the filing cabinet. He said, “So I printed this paper right here which reads, ‘Is the Holy Ghost Present? Are the students feeling the Holy Ghost?’” (see Figure I-1 in Appendix I).

Aaron’s description seems to reveal that an experience of compartmentalization had occurred. van Merriënboer (2009) defined compartmentalization as focusing on only one aspect of a complex problem. He explained that it is the opposite of being integrated. For example, he described an integrated learning experience as one that combined knowledge, skills, and attitudes, all three of which are required for a person to perform well professionally. van Merriënboer explained that typically we train someone to gain knowledge in a classroom setting. We say, “Here is your knowledge.” This seems to be the same idea as thinking of knowledge as a thing that can be transmitted (Nicolini et al., 2003). van Merriënboer continued, suggesting that instructors might have students
practice in a lab or practical environment so they can develop skills. Maybe they will help the students develop attitudes through role playing exercises. Then the instructors expect the students to grasp the overall set of concepts in some “magical” way to become an integrated person. van Merriënboer concluded that some teachers seem to expect students to combine these three elements without any means of guiding them to do so.

Aaron’s description of his faculty’s experience suggests that the nature of their experience led to compartmentalization. This seems evident from the statement, “My biggest concern was if we focused solely on this one part of the Teaching Emphasis [identifying principles] that [the teachers] would forget the other parts of it.” In addition, Aaron concluded, “That’s exactly what happened. They were thinking, ‘This is the only way to teach’ instead of balancing it with the other bullet-points.” The idea of balancing things assumes that parts of equal weight can be compared. Thus, it may not be as simple as reminding teachers to “balance” what they have learned with everything else. After all, comparing parts implies that teachers understand the “weight” of all of the components individually. If training does not seek to create integrated learning, it runs the risk of leaving teachers with compartmentalized knowledge, which is a vastly inferior result.

van Merriënboer (2009) explained that the result of compartmentalization is fragmented learning. Fragmentation of concepts occurs when knowledge is deconstructed into its parts but the learning experience fails to help students make connections to see the relationships between the individual components of the whole process.

Concepts such as whole-task practice could lead to overcoming
compartmentalization and fragmentation. Whole-task practice means breaking down all of the components of the complex process into “meaningful clusters of constituent skills”; then sequencing the introduction of those parts as a modified version of the whole task, building over time to increasing levels of complexity, and possibly introducing part-task experiences to gradually build to full complexity (van Merriënboer, 1997, pp. 173-192, 323).

In addition to whole-task practice, van Merriënboer (2009) suggested that integrated learning must occur in authentic learning settings. Authentic learning settings are those that mirror the actual practice environment as closely as possible and allow practitioners to see the connections between components of the process (Hung & Chen, 2007).

Additional evidence suggests that compartmentalized learning experiences regarding the implementation of TLE are not limited to Aaron’s experience. For instance, Adam shared an experience where he was in an area inservice training meeting in the first year after TLE was introduced. There a well-respected teacher was presenting to the area teachers. After a day or two of the inservice there was a general feeling among many of the teachers that the presenter was not implementing TLE principles. At one point a teacher in the meeting raised his hand and asked the area director, “How come you guys [meaning the administration] are telling us to do all this ‘pair and share’ and student involvement stuff but he [meaning the presenter at the inservice] doesn’t do any of that?” Adam commented in the interview saying:

The thing that made me laugh about it was, here you have [a teacher who was] probably overtly teaching five or six of the seven elements [of the Teaching and
Learning Emphasis], and yet simply because he wasn’t doing “group work” or “pair and share” or just because there wasn’t a lot of back and forth discussion going on between him and the audience, people thought he wasn’t doing TLE.

It appears from Adam’s experience that the nature of the change requires becoming expert enough to realize how all of the parts interact, rather than focusing solely on one or two aspects of TLE. This seems clear from his comment “simply because he wasn’t doing ‘group work’ or ‘pair and share’…people thought he wasn’t doing TLE.” In other words, it is misguided to consider that certain elements represent the whole of TLE or even the purpose of it, or that the absence of one or two elements could negate one’s efforts to implement it.

Furthermore, Flanagan (2009) found that the idea of a balanced approach was essential to implementing her presurgery care model, a change in practice that is similar to TLE. Likewise, this opinion was also shared by Randall Hall (2003b) when TLE was first introduced. He said, “The current teaching emphasis should be looked at in its entirety. The items are not listed in an order of priority. [Implementing it requires] a nice balanced approach, giving attention to all the items listed…” (p. 1). In addition, 1 year later, Iba (2004) described the nature of some teachers he observed who were trying to understand TLE as a group of blind men attempting to describe an elephant. Many are able to say what TLE is like but they are unable to comprehend the full meaning of it. In other words, Iba concluded, TLE “should be viewed and experienced as a whole, with each element essential to the success of the other [parts]” (p. 2).

Both of these early conference presentations focused on the need for teachers to see how to blend all of the elements of TLE together to become effective in using it.
Moreover, Ballard and colleagues (2010) recently renewed the challenge for teachers to learn to go beyond giving information to students, and understand how to integrate all of the principles of TLE together to help students achieve deeper levels of conversion, in many cases through active involvement and often in teaching their peers.

With the evidence from the interviews for this dissertation combined with van Merriënboer’s insights, and the discussion of S&I senior administrators it appears that the nature of understanding and implementing TLE requires teachers to know how the elements of the whole complex process interact with each other.

Hence, what seems to be needed is further, more thorough investigation into the topic of how S&I will address the problem of compartmentalized understanding of TLE principles. Furthermore, it also seems important to understand how S&I will create whole-task practice in authentic learning environments.

**Mentoring Newly Hired Teachers**

Turning to the case of another interviewee, Jacob described his experience as a mentor who has worked with many newly hired teachers. In relating the following experience he explains how he would help newly hired teachers develop important knowledge of effective teaching, based upon his 19 years of teaching and his understanding of TLE.

I love to have them create a lesson and then go watch it being taught [by one of the group]. “Let’s all go watch. We’ve just created this little baby; let’s go watch how it turns out.” Then as you sit there you can say, “Well, that isn’t the way we planned it is it? But [sometimes] “it’s working better” or [other times] “it’s not working that well.” Sometimes I’ll watch with someone and as we sit by each other I’ll say, “Did you see that? What do you think?” or I’ll look at the energy level in the class: “Did you see that? It was really high and now why do you think
it’s gone down?” If he doesn’t have an answer, I’ll explain [mine to him]. “I think it’s because these kids are not engaged and they feel like it doesn’t pertain to them.” We’ll talk about the fact that somehow the scriptures became the boring part. He needs to realize, “They didn’t get [the important conclusion] that the scriptures provide the answer to their questions.”

I think it all just comes together as we identify what is working and what is not when we watch the lesson. Then, as we continue to prepare together, as they start to own the block and they start to talk about it, you can feel the excitement when they find nuggets of gold in the scriptures. Then they say, “This is some good stuff!”

In this example Jacob focused on helping students see what they had learned in an authentic practice setting (van Merriënboer, 2009). For instance, he said he would “have them create a lesson and then go watch it being taught.” In the process Jacob had conversations such as, “Well, that isn’t the way we planned it is it? But ‘it’s working better’ or ‘it’s not working that well.’” Being able to recognize what they had created and then seeing it being implemented could allow teachers to develop lived practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) rather than accumulated information (Kirschner & Whitson, 1997). In fact, Wenger and colleagues (2002) described the value of such a learning experience as being able to develop practical wisdom rather than simply receiving information.

Furthermore, Jacob describes how he would help newly hired teachers develop skills through sociocultural learning.

We try to avoid talking about how we are going to teach what we find for as long as possible. I think the tendency of new teachers is to ask too quickly, “How am I going to teach that?” I just keep reminding them, “Well, that’s about an hour away.” Instead, the more we talk about what are the principles and doctrines, there’s just a spirit that comes into our preparation. Then the “how” we are going to teach comes naturally. It’s inside of you and you are excited about it. Then after all of the discovery comes the question, “How do I teach this?” “Well,” I might say, “how are you feeling inside? How would you get there? What would help us get [students] to this level [of excitement or enthusiasm]?”
Here Jacob is passing along an important skill he has learned and the knowledge that attends it. He describes an interaction between “how am I going to teach that” and recreating what is “inside of you” as a result of the study he does during lesson preparation. The idea of something “inside of you” reveals that during the lesson preparation Jacob is noticing a change within himself from his study. Jacob points out that the preparation experience is connected to discovering doctrines and principles and recognizing the feelings that resulted from learning them.

In addition, Jacob expressed that how to teach content flows naturally from understanding how one realized what to teach. Identifying this process is seen in his questions, “How are you feeling inside? How would you get there? What would help us get [students] to this level?” The end goal of learning for Jacob appears to be creating for students an experience that is similar to what he had experienced during lesson preparation. This goal is important because conversion is more than imparting facts and knowledge; it is creating an experience that changes students’ feelings and beliefs for what is taught in ways that lead them to act on what they have learned (Ballard et al., 2010; Webb, 2007).

The analysis of Jacob’s experience is important because it reveals an ongoing process of reflecting on mental action (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Thus, it represents Jacob examining the metacognitive steps he takes when deciding what and how to teach and the interaction between those two choices (Prytula, 2008). In other words, Jacob reveals a process of teaching a principle in practice (Reigeluth, 1983). It is also important to note that what Jacob is describing is an internal, tacit process he has developed over time.
Having newly hired teachers participate in observing, practicing, receiving feedback and giving feedback is a process that could assist them in developing connections between understanding the fundamental principles of TLE and effectively implementing them (Lave, 1988; van Merriënboer, 2009; Wenger, 1998).

Jacob reveals how through mentoring he strives to encourage an attitude in newly hired teachers of belonging to the seminary organization, in a one-on-one situation:

[Speaking hypothetically to the interviewer,] if you were a new teacher, we are going to prepare our lessons together every day. It’s not me teaching you. We’re going to figure it out together. I just think that for them to discover relevant principles—and sometimes I may see more than they see and they might also share—but they need to get a chance to see, “Where’s the meat in this block? Where’s the Savior in this block?” There’s just this synergy. I think there’s also a feeling that I see them as an equal. I don’t want them to think, “I’m your mentor and I’m going to guide you.” As soon as they can feel, “Hey, I’m a part of this creative process,” they gain some confidence in their own teaching as well. For me that’s been the best thing. Better than inservice meetings; better than saying, “Hey, go read this talk,” [cooperative action empowers them and me].

This example reveals how Jacob could help new teachers develop the important attitude of belonging. Jacob said he would emphasize ideas like, “It’s not me teaching you. We’re going to figure it out together.” These statements reflect a sense of community. Wenger and colleagues (2002) described the value of this attitude when they said, “Community creates the social fabric for learning. A strong community fosters interactions and relationships based on mutual respect and trust” (p. 28).

In addition, Jacob’s attitude of “I see them as an equal” reflects his desire to empower new teachers. Wenger and colleagues (2002) suggested that attitudes of empowerment lead to creating a sense of belonging. In turn, a sense of belonging leads people to feel trusted, and this trust leads to an increase in desire to innovate in one’s own
practice. Then practitioners feel like what they think and do matters. M. J. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) pointed out that relationships of desire and recognition are crucial to identity or ontology creation and development. Thus, fostering the desire in newly hired teachers to participate and recognizing them as equals allows them to form their identities as someone who is a valued member of the community. In summary, Jacob explained:

   To me, I think that the Teaching Emphasis is happening for us during our lesson preparation. As teachers, we have to identify, understand, and apply, even as we’re going through the planning process of creating our lessons. We need to explain, share, and testify to each other. Then we can see the application. As a result, our lessons become, “How we are going to recreate that experience for our students in the classroom?”

In other words, involving newly hired teachers in the process of mentoring during a collaborative preparation experience could assist them in developing a sense of the whole task of combining TLE with lesson preparation and implementation. In fact it seems possible that if any teacher, not just newly hired ones, could have the opportunity to interact with a mentor or colleague in the way Jacob described, they could have the opportunity to experience learning in authentic settings (Hung & Chen, 2007; van Merriënboer, 2009), developing a stronger sense of CoP learning (Wenger, 1998), and experiencing ontological development and growth (M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). If such experiences became the norm, then learning for teachers in S&I could become the “strengthening of those practices and participatory abilities” that form the foundation of the released-time seminary practice (Greeno et al., 1996, p. 23).

**Numerous Instances of Mutual Engagement**

There are multiple examples of teachers engaging in a wide variety of
sociocultural learning experiences. Some teachers benefited from sociocultural learning in the early, formative years of their career through participation in a collaborative group. Adam described how early in his career, he benefited from participation in such a group of teachers. He said;

A few other teachers and I collaborated a lot. I was on a multi-man faculty. We started having some discussions back and forth on “what does this mean? How do we implement that? How do we do that? How does that change our approach and our teaching? And what are they saying about it?”

Adam also said he continues to collaborate with teachers now. In addition, Benjamin said of his first year teaching that he also was involved in a similar group of teachers who “took me under their wing.” He said:

I was blessed to be with a group of teachers who were for the most part, not all of them, perhaps three or four key instructors that I had the opportunity to work with that understood these principles. And through inservice, through discussions, through teaching, through observations, through example, through what I could observe through these teachers and what was happening in their classrooms and what the results were, it [a sense of our own competence] began to grow within me. I recognized the value from what was happening in their teaching.

Joseph, currently a teaching-principal, described a formal way that he and his faculty collaborate. He called it “common prep.” Common prep is where teachers on his faculty meet together regularly during the week during a coinciding preparation hour. He said they all get together to hold “inservice during that time, prepare lessons together, talk about concerns, and other things that help us grow as a faculty. It’s been a good experience for us and [in the end] for our students.”28

Daniel described having experienced a general practice of teachers on his faculty observing each other. He said, “I often have teachers come and watch [me teach]. We’ve

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28 This idea seems possible to implement for Joseph’s small four man faculty, whereas larger faculties may not be able to arrange to have a coinciding preparation period for the entire faculty.
been told to observe [other] teachers. [In addition,] as a principal, I am able to do a lot more as I observe my teachers [teach] to help them learn things [through my feedback] and pick up techniques [by watching them teach].”

Benjamin also explained that he likes to create an atmosphere on his faculty where teachers feel comfortable coming into his office just to sit and talk in an informal way. He said:

I think there’s more communicated through informal inservice, by creating an environment where the teachers feel comfortable, where they come in and they sit in a chair [pointing to the chairs in his office] just like this and we sit and talk about things. We kick ideas back and forth. I think as our conversation goes back and forth your belief systems are made manifest just through the natural process. And without even meaning for it to happen it happens, [ideas are shared and people learn]. I think as a leader, I’m in a position of trust and as we talk and as we share we communicate back and forth. I think [through this process of communication] it’s clearly communicated where I stand and what I believe in [with regards to my philosophy on teaching].

Aaron also described a kind of informal collaborative discussion that he has with his faculty. After he has studied something that he is trying to understand about TLE, he said:

I’m going to go to another teacher and I am going to say, “Do you understand what I am understanding?” And then if he or she was to say, “No that’s not it,” then I would try to massage or to correct it and work it out. That peer review [process] or [to] be able to invite feedback or to process with another individual was very essential to helping me to be able to understand the TLE to the degree that I understand it now.

It is clear that mutual engagement in the form of formal and informal collaboration, modeling, observation, feedback, and discussions in the form of sociocultural learning are essential to the nature of the change experience for all of the study participants. In fact, Adam summarized his experience by saying, “Anybody who
doesn’t collaborate is dead in the water in my opinion.” Adam drew this conclusion because, from his perspective, collaboration leads to synergy.

**Reifications and Shared Repertoire**

Wenger (1998) argued that an important aspect of identity development occurs as communities create reifications and practitioners interact with them. To reify means to make something abstract into something “more concrete or real” (OED, 2010). Reifications are concepts that are objectified either through physical or mental artifacts (Brown et al., 1989; Kirschner & Whitson, 1997; Lave, 1988, 1997; Wenger, 1998). They are an idea expressed as a metaphor or tangible thing created through metaphor and used by the CoP to communicate with community members how to accomplish the practice. Throughout the previous discussion of mutual engagement, there were many examples of reifications. For instance, the principal’s list of steps to distinguish principles and concepts, his “nomenclature” as described by Aaron, is an example of reifications within a CoP.

The shared repertoire of a CoP consists of the combination of reified resources the community creates, which are used to communicate about and accomplish the work of the community (Wenger, 1998). The shared repertoire is also referred to as shared resources. The community creates and evaluates resources through a process of mutual negotiation. Reifications in the form of a shared repertoire are a significant factor in shaping people’s practice and influencing the development of their identity or ontology (Lave, 1988, 1997; Lave, Duguid, Fernandez, & Axel, 1992; Lave & Wenger, 1991;
Within the following sections the influence of reifications on participants’ practice and the formation of a shared repertoire among participants’ CoP will be discussed. For example, as described previously Aaron and his colleague took what they learned from their principal and developed the idea further, creating a new reification. The new reification was to form a stronger definition for principles and doctrines. However, Aaron did not create the new reification alone. It was knowledge that was shared between a colleague and him. However, if Aaron and his colleague had taught the reification they created to other faculty members, for instance, they would have further installed a sense of shared repertoire.

The Influence of Reifications

The TLE documents represent a central example of a reification within the S&I organization (Wenger, 1998). For instance, senior administrators conceived of an idea that would alter the practice of S&I teachers. Their ideas were formed into words and printed onto a page. The documents themselves represent a metaphorical representation of the ideas that the S&I administrators had conceived. Thus, the TLE documents created the means for S&I teachers to understand expectations and begin collaborating and negotiating the meaning of TLE within the local CoP. The influence of the TLE documents on the study participants’ practice is noticed in the following statements.

Benjamin said, before the introduction of TLE:

My philosophy was…good, it was right, but it was limited. When the Teaching Emphasis was introduced it expanded my horizon; it expanded my understanding and gave me new things to think about and work on; new principles to try to understand and then in turn incorporate more fully into my teaching.
The word “expand” means to spread or unfold (OED, 2010). An expanding horizon presents the image of someone with limited vision having some limitation removed and then being able to see a wider range of view. Being blind to what is available “limited” Benjamin’s philosophy. Hence, the introduction of TLE presented new possibilities for him.

Furthermore, Benjamin described how TLE reshaped his “philosophy.” A philosophy, specifically when it defines what practitioners do, guides them in making decisions that influence the nature of their practice (Schön, 1983). For instance, Schön described a city planner who defined his identity as building relationships rather than organizing city neighborhoods. Schön explained that, because of the city planner’s definition of his practice, rather than filling his office with maps to consider how to organize the city, he spent his time forging personal relationships. Then, when developers came to him, he helped to negotiate deals between City Council members and developers. As a result, the city planner’s personal definition for his practice shaped his identity or how he viewed himself within the context of his profession.

Likewise as a reification, Benjamin’s personal philosophy had shaped how he conducted his practice prior to the adoption of TLE. What is important in Benjamin’s example is that the interaction between the reifications of TLE and his personal philosophy also shaped his identity. Benjamin described the effect of the interaction between the two reifications as a “beautiful harmony.” In fact, as discussed in the previous chapter, he said that TLE created a “jumping off point” to a “new adventure.” The previous analysis revealed that the influence of TLE resulted in a significant
transformation of Benjamin’s identity as a seminary teacher.

Another example of a reification study participants interacted with is reading General Authorities’ talks. Multiple research participants described studying General Authority talks to form their understanding of teaching and learning principles that support TLE. For instance, one example is Jacob who said he consistently listens to approximately 12-15 talks per week by General Authorities on his digital audio player. He said while he listens to talks he tries to “identify and understand” what the speaker is communicating. After listening to the talk he asks himself, “How does that really work?” He said, after listening repetitively, “I start to see it. Then I can go [and try to] apply it.” Finally, he feels he fully understands the talk when he can clearly explain what he has learned to someone else.

Jacob described a specific example of how what he learned from one talk by Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1970) influenced him. From that talk Jacob discovered the idea that students can create a “bank of spiritual experiences,” as he called it. Jacob recounted how he realized from Elder Maxwell’s talk that students need to develop personal experiences with the Gospel that “will give each of our young people a storehouse of spiritual experiences on which he can draw” (p. 5). Thus, Jacob said he had altered his practice so he could help students “become converted right now” while they were with him. That way they “walk out [of class] feeling like I helped [them] today.”

29 The General Authorities are the senior ecclesiastical leadership in the LDS Church. These religious leaders regularly speak to church membership in a semi-annual general conference. The talks are then published in the Church’s magazine, the Ensign. There are numerous other opportunities outside of general conference where the General Authorities teach the members of the Church.

30 This is one of the elements of TLE.
Benjamin and Jacob each used printed materials as a reification to increase their power to act. Reifications are “mediational means.” A mediational means is an object or metaphorical idea that allows people to participate in practice. While mediational means and reifications can be used synonymously, the idea of mediational means introduces an important variation to the idea of reifications. The idea of reifications as mediational means is the power they provide to free practitioners to act in practice.

For instance, Daniel described how understanding the TLE documents “expanded my horizon” giving him “new things to think about and work on.” The effect was to free him to reshape his personal philosophy in ways that improved his teaching. Moreover, through studying General Authority talks Jacob discovered an idea that reformed the way he thought about teaching. He realized that students must have spiritual experiences while they are in seminary, not just receive information given to them or have an enjoyable time in class. Jacob’s experience of expanded understanding was influential because Jacob began to change his practice as a result of what he read. Thus, mediational means shaped study participants’ thoughts about and formed their actions in practice. In this way, reifications mediate people’s agency by freeing them to perform the work of their practice (Hatano & Wertsch, 2001; Wertsch, 2002; Wertsch & Rupert, 1993).

Participants also began creating their own reifications as a result of learning to understand and implement TLE. For example, after studying the TLE documents and implementing what he learned from them over time Adam created an important document. The document consists of a list of 25 review questions to guide him in his lesson preparation (see Appendix I). The questions are intended to cause self-evaluation
in his living the Gospel, as well as to examine his implementation of TLE principles in his lesson. Hence, the nature of Adam’s reification is to facilitate evaluation of his character and performance in practice. For instance, the document contains questions like, “Am I striving to live worthily of the Spirit?” and “How does today’s lesson encourage students to read the scriptures on their own?” It seems that the meaning of Adam’s experience from using this reification is to have the means to consistently evaluate his character and his practice.

The idea of character examination and practice evaluation aligns well with the idea of ontological development through sociocultural learning. According to M. J. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) ontology represents the central concept defining whole person or identity change. It reflects peoples’ reasoning or cognitive justification for who they are—what they do, what they think, how they feel, and what they believe (Hekman, 1983; Moustakas, 1994; Russell, 2007). Thus, the reification process seems to provide Adam with a formalized tool to evaluative himself (Hatano & Wertsch, 2001; Wertsch & Rupert, 1993). In other words, Adam’s experience of interacting with the reification he created further develops his concept of self and his identity in practice.

Finally, reifications are also an expression of metaphor (Wenger, 1998). For instance, Joseph described the creation of a metaphor he and his colleagues used at their seminary. They were trying to encourage the TLE practice of students testifying to each other. Joseph’s faculty compared students testifying in class with Dan Jones, an early LDS missionary who was short in stature. To aid him, Dan stood on a soapbox to teach people on his mission to Wales. To help their seminary students learn to testify like Dan
Jones, the teachers on Joseph’s faculty shared the story of him using the soapbox to stand on. They brought a box into their classroom and then encouraged a few students who volunteered to stand on the box in front of class and bear testimony just after class began.

The nature of Joseph and his faculty’s experience was to create a metaphor that taught students how to perform a TLE act. As the teachers compared their students to Dan Jones, the story and the box created a mental bridge between the students and the ability to act like Dan Jones. Thus, the metaphor allowed Joseph’s faculty to empower their students and free them to see themselves in a new way. The practice of using a metaphor to create a reification that aided in teaching is not new. Cobb, McClain and Lamberg (2003) observed a teacher who described the nature of his practice of teaching as the creation of a house. The teacher explained how elements of effective teaching were like posts and beams that he was using to construct a “house” that represented his teaching practice. Thus, a reified metaphor seems to provide a mental bridge to learn to act in different ways. Such reifications seem to give practitioners a mental model that allows them to see themselves in a new light.

**Influence of a Shared Repertoire**

Daniel also created a reification from reading General Authority talks. He read a talk from Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1983) who shared an idea that he found so powerful that he printed and hung it on his office wall. Specifically, Elder Maxwell described three criteria for determining what to teach; they are verity or truth, relevancy, and urgency. Daniel created a wall sign with those three words printed on it and the definitions for each word (see Figure I-2 in Appendix I). He explained that during his lesson preparation
he refers to the three ideas to guide his selection of principles and doctrines. At one point
a senior administrator saw Daniel’s wall sign and asked him for a copy of it.

Coincidentally, I interviewed a total of three participants in Daniel’s area. All
three, including Daniel, had the Verity, Relevancy, Urgency wall sign posted in their
office. None of the other two teachers were given the sign by Daniel. They all received it
from the senior administrator. This seems to be a good example of the development of a
shared repertoire. A shared repertoire represents the reified resources created within a
CoP (Wenger, 1998). One of the central features of a shared repertoire is it provides an
affordance for the community to accomplish the work of the practice (Koliba & Gajda,
2009). The nature of Daniel’s change experience was to examine one reification,
specifically a General Authority talk, to create another reification. This shared resource
then allowed him and others to examine the nature of ideas they would share to guide
them in the performance of their practice.

Concluding Thoughts

Previously the analysis in Chapter VI revealed six parts of an interrelated process
of change. The current chapter has continued to add to the understanding of those six
parts of the process. What follows is a summary of the essential elements that need to be
added to the overall nature of participants’ change experience. What follows is a
summary organized into two sections, mutual engagement as well as reifications and
shared repertoire. Figure 2 depicts an updated version of the table from Chapter VI,
continuing and adding to the summary of the nature of the change experience the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need to change</th>
<th>Desire to change</th>
<th>Chose to change</th>
<th>Guidance to change</th>
<th>Standard of change</th>
<th>Transformation of identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lacking understanding of terms and concepts.</td>
<td>Desiring a readiness to change, questioning self, recognizing and valuing change.</td>
<td>Preparing heart to change.</td>
<td>Differentiating between practice and principle.</td>
<td>Adopting Christ as the model teacher.</td>
<td>Departing from the familiar in a new direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching by habit or convenience.</td>
<td>Becoming familiar with and comparing performance to standards and expectations.</td>
<td>Accepting that personal beliefs and assumptions must change.</td>
<td>Analyzing relationships between changes or actions.</td>
<td>Developing thorough understanding of scriptures.</td>
<td>Challenging previously held assumptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling anxious, uncertain, unfamiliar, frustrated or excited, curious, interested, and pleased.</td>
<td>Realizing that performance is not aligned with standards or expectations.</td>
<td>Coping with or capitalizing on feelings.</td>
<td>Judging learning situations and matching appropriate principles; evaluating effectiveness of methods.</td>
<td>Living scriptural teachings.</td>
<td>Committing to long-term change, (a journey, not a final destination).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Willing to take first steps toward change.</td>
<td>Engaging mutually through collaboration, mentoring, modeling, observation, feedback, and developing shared repertoires.</td>
<td>Responding appropriately to students’ needs.</td>
<td>Changing identity: knowledge, skills, and attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Engaging in modified/whole task practice in authentic settings and in actual context.</td>
<td>Developing deeper sense of religious character.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Developing effective teaching practices.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Negotiating local performance standards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2.* Six parts of the interrelated process of transformational change version 2.
essential elements developed within this chapter. Elements that have been added to the figure are represented in bold face.

**Mutual Engagement**

From the perspective of one research participant, the nature of the change experience included social learning that provided a mirror to see the difference (Hung & Chen, 2007) between perceived practice and actual practice (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Situated learning seemed to occur when inservice training did not merely transmit information (Nicolini et al., 2003), but instead required authentic practice of skills (Lave & Wenger, 1991; van Merriënboer, 2009; Wenger, 1998) related to the principles of TLE. In addition, situated learning required setting a standard for performance (Mager, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c), then the study participant could compare where he was with where he needed to be.

Furthermore, the experience of another study participant revealed that understanding and implementing TLE required a principal to set a performance standard; then CoP members negotiated how to implement that standard to create local knowledge (Wenger, 1998). When a negotiated standard became accepted by some of the members of the CoP (Frost et al., 2005; T. H. Nelson et al., 2008), being able to compare their performance against a clearly defined standard lead to the development of high-level cognitive skills of personal evaluation and judgment (Anderson et al., 2001). While this experience only represents a beginning of understanding of the negotiation process, nevertheless it is a clear example of CoP theory functioning actively and naturally within the S&I context. Furthermore, it reveals that negotiated meaning through the examination
of literature and discussing that meaning can lead to creating personal definitions of practice. Then, as practitioners implement those definitions in their teaching context and provide feedback to each other, they can evaluate whether their teaching experience is or is not an effective example of the definition. Thus, having a common standard could allow practitioners to advance to higher levels of cognitive processing, thus increasing in effectiveness.

However, not all is positive with sociocultural learning. There are sometimes feelings of confusion (Austin, 2007; Eick & Dias, 2005; King & Ross, 2003), frustration (Hung & Chen, 2007; Tolson et al., 2005), inadequacy, despair, and anger (Austin, 2007), and being generally overwhelmed (Fox & Wilson, 2009; Wiessner & Sullivan, 2007). While these feelings may be reflected in many change experiences, because of the seemingly transformative nature of sociocultural learning experiences these feelings could reflect a trigger event and the need to rethink why participants were doing what they were doing (Dall’Alba & Barnacle, 2007; M. J. Packer, 2001b). M. J. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) described the nature of ontological change as feelings of desire and recognition splitting a person and motivating the search for a new identity. Thus, the “messiness” of TLE seems to be a trigger event that could lead participants to reflect and develop a new sense of self (Mezirow, 2000).

An additional concern revolves around the complex nature of understanding and implementing TLE (Hall, 2003b; Iba, 2004). The concern of learning complex processes is that of maintaining the integrity of the whole experience, when breaking it down sufficiently either into constituent parts or into simplified versions of the whole process.
Learning events must then occur in appropriate sequence (van Merriënboer, 1997) and in authentic learning settings (Hung & Chen, 2007; van Merriënboer, 2009).

One answer to overcoming compartmentalized teaching and facilitating whole-task practice in authentic learning situations seems to be effective implementation of sociocultural or situated learning strategies. Some have argued that situated learning assists learners because it creates lived practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and real world activity (Loftus & Higgs, 2010) rather than accumulated information (Kirschner & Whitson, 1997).

In addition, a fundamental principle of sociocultural learning is that no one individual comprehends everything about a given practice; and in turn this means learning in communities allows for practitioners to experience a broader sense of understanding of the whole complex practice by interacting with a group of people who see more than any one individual alone sees (Wenger, 1998). Learning in collaboration seems to allow people to see complex processes through the ontological experience of other people. Having access to other people’s practical wisdom could provide them with opportunities to grasp a broader perspective of the whole task, rather than seeing it only through their understanding alone (M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Hence, sociocultural learning defines knowing as “practices of communities and the abilities of individuals to participate in those practices, then learning [becomes the] strengthening of those practices and participatory abilities” (Greeno et al., 1996, p. 23).

To summarize, if learning is defined as individuals participating within a
community, then authentic practice becomes a matter of learning to do what effective practitioners do within that community (Bandura, 1986; Bandura & Kupers, 1964; Greeno et al., 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Thus, observing the nature of effective practitioners in practice, as well as practicing within the community while being observed and receiving feedback from its members, are likely to lead to increased understanding of the complex processes of the practice.

Mentoring during a collaborative lesson preparation experience reflects an opportunity for learning in an authentic setting (Hung & Chen, 2007; van Merriënboer, 2009). During such an experience released-time seminary teachers could develop lived practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) rather than accumulated information (Kirschner & Whitson, 1997). They could form connections between important TLE concepts, how they interact with each other, and what those concepts mean in application. This could be especially true if the collaborative lesson preparation were followed up with an observation experience while the lesson that was created is being taught.

Furthermore, important skills could be modeled, practiced, and implemented. This opportunity could include helping teachers learn valuable tacit knowledge from experienced teachers, such as deciding what and how to teach (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Prytula, 2008; Schön, 1983).

Moreover, through mentoring, newly hired teachers could develop important attitudes such as fostering “interactions and relationships based on mutual respect and trust” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 28). These attitudes could empower teachers with a sense of belonging that leads them to increased desires to innovate.
Finally, it is clear that mutual engagement in the form of formal and informal collaboration, modeling, observation, feedback, and discussions in the form of sociocultural learning are essential to the nature of the change experience for all of the study participants.

**Reifications and Shared Repertoire**

Reifications seem to expand people’s vision of themselves and their practice. As such, reifications could remove limitations in such a way that participants reconsider their personal philosophy or identity in a way that alters their practice. For instance, the nature of the TLE documents seems to help teachers understand what they should do and how they should define their practice. This feature of reifications as documents seems consistent with Murphy’s conclusions. “As reifications, documents serve to anchor practice and to make the work of practice visible; in so doing, documents also clarify boundaries and reinforce the identity of CoP members” (Murphy, 2001).

Thus, as reifications the TLE documents could guide teachers to see how to become better at directing students to have spiritual experiences, such as the way getting on the “Dan Jones” box allowed Joseph and his faculty to help students see a new way of testifying. In this manner reifications could be a mediational means empowering teachers to act in ways that otherwise they might not think of doing (Hatano & Wertsch, 2001; Wertsch & Rupert, 1993). As participants created their own reifications it seemed to lead them toward greater freedom and empowerment. This was true not only of the Dan Jones testimony box, but also of Adam’s lesson preparation and evaluation document. If consistently used, having either tool could allow a teacher to guide a class toward
performing TLE practices or to build their character and identity and further develop their practice. Thus, reified metaphor seems to provide a mental bridge to learn to act in new, thoughtful ways (Wenger, 1998). Such reifications seem to give practitioners a mental model that allows them to see themselves in a new light.

Finally, as reifications are distributed among teachers, they become part of a shared repertoire of resources (Wenger, 1998). These resources contribute to the formation of the identity of individuals and the CoP as a whole. Wenger said:

An identity, then, is a layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other. As we encounter our effects on the world and develop our relations with others, these layers build upon each together to produce our identity as a very complex interweaving of participative experience and reificative projections. (p. 151)

For instance, the fact that other teachers were using Daniel’s Verity, Relevancy, Urgency wall sign shows the power of a reification to shape teachers’ thinking about themselves and their practice (cf., Berrill & Addison, 2010).
CHAPTER VIII
SELF-REFLECTION

Thus far the nature of participants’ experience has included aspects of transformational and sociocultural learning. The final theme developed from the interview transcripts is self-reflection. Self-reflection is examining one’s ontology, identity, or whole-person. It is the essence of phenomenological inquiry (Moustakas, 1994; Russell, 2007; van Manen, 1990) and the process leading to transformational change (Brookfield, 1985, 1995; Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 2000). What follows is a discussion of the nature of self-reflection among the six research participants of this study to reveal the essence of their change experience with self-reflection while learning to understand and implement TLE effectively.

The Great Commandment

When asked what motivates him to work hard and continually seek to improve, Adam, the teacher with 12 years of experience, explained an important attitude that he has developed.

I just want to be as effective of a teacher as possible. And I’m just not satisfied with having a paycheck and having a steady job and mediocrity. In the sense of, if I teach blaugh-blaugh kind of average, par classes and go home, it bugs me. You know! I want the angel Moroni.\(^{31}\) I want my students to have a king Benjamin\(^ {32}\)

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\(^{31}\) In LDS theology an angel named Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith to direct him in regarding the translation of a book called the Book of Mormon. It seems that in effect Adam is saying, I want my students to experience a dramatic change like Joseph Smith had when Moroni appeared to him.

\(^{32}\) King Benjamin is a Book of Mormon prophet who delivered a lengthy discourse to his people about Christ. After his discourse all of the people said they no longer desired to sin and all wanted to change their lives. In other words, Adam is seeking to teach at the highest level, where every student is changed by his teaching, which is a pretty ambitious thought.
experience when I get done with my discourse, so to speak, and say, “We’ve had a mighty change wrought upon us because of the Spirit of the Lord and we have no disposition to do evil.” I have as of yet to have an entire class say that to me. So I know as of yet I still have some improving to do. So I would say the nature of the change is a desire for improvement and more effective and powerful teaching. So that’s what causes the analysis I would say, my internal analysis anyway.

In Adam’s words, the nature of his change experience is seeking “to be as effective a teacher as possible.” What is important to note is how Adam defines effectiveness. First, he defines what it is not. He sees the opposite of effective as just being satisfied with “having a paycheck…a steady job and mediocrity.” Each of these measures of success suggests someone who is settled into a routine (Johnson, 2006). Instead, Adam sees success as “a desire for improvement and more effective and powerful teaching.” This statement is important because it reveals essential characteristics that Adam possesses. He wants to improve continually. Brookfield (1986) described this kind of desire as having a joy for learning attitude or hungering for improvement.

Some might find joy from learning in itself. Yet Adam seems focused on finding joy in students’ successes. This is evident from statements like, “I want my students to have a king Benjamin experience” and “We’ve had a mighty change wrought upon us.” These statements reveal that Adam derives his sense of success at least in this moment from seeing his students succeed. This seems important in light of Guskey’s (2002) claim that the ultimate motivation for teacher improvement is for them to see their actions resulting in a positive influence on student learning. As a result of his desire to influence students, Adam says he is always striving to improve.

Adam also states that he desires to improve to please God. “To use scriptural
language it is ‘to lay your gift on the altar’ as best as possible; to progress and to improve, to be more Christlike, to be more godlike.” Pleasing God reflects an emotional act of valuing something (Krathwohl et al., 1973), namely God’s judgment of one’s attitude and performance. Adam seems to be seeking for recognition from God. This is seen from the language, “to lay your gift on the altar.” This statement references a New Testament scripture that implies before a person can please God, he must resolve his conflicts with his fellow man and learn to love them as God requires. In other words, Adam feels he cannot love God unless he loves people in a “godlike” way. Adam’s experiences seem to reveal that his motivation to improve comes from a desire to help others and to please God. Thus, Adam’s experience seems to reflect what M. J. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) described as relationships of desire and recognition. He desires to improve in ways that lead to a recognition as an effective teacher in the eyes of God. If so, then such an experience clearly is leading to ontological development and whole person change. In particular, from LDS theology this change reflects the desire to live “the great commandment,” to love God and to love all of humanity.

Teachers learning to define effectiveness through self-reflection is an important finding from Milne and colleagues (2006). In their study two participants in a learning workshop were juxtaposed. Beth faced many obstacles to her success, yet through reflective examination on what she had learned and on what she could do Beth set goals to strive for excellence and was able to produce creative solutions that allowed her to rise above routine, mediocre performance. On the other hand, Hugh felt trapped by his

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34 This is reflected in Matthew 22:36-40.
circumstances and failed to reflect on what he knew in significant ways or to set challenging goals for himself and his students. As a result, he failed to implement what he learned successfully and could not capitalize on important learning opportunities.

**A Transformational, Ontological Change**

This theme is further developed in Benjamin’s experience, a teacher with 26 years teaching seminary. As a new teacher, approximately 24 years ago, he taught a particularly difficult class. He said of them:

> In my first few years, I was humbled to the dust. It was hard. The students were dropping out of my classes. I was overwhelmed. All I could see at that moment, when I was struggling was, I could see them as a bunch of struggling…you know, they were rude, they were being disrespectful, and they were being brats.

I didn’t love them. I thought I did. I went into teach thinking, “I love the students. I love teenagers.” The first few months into it I realized, “Man, I don’t love these guys. They drive me crazy.” I knew that if I did not find that love, I was dead. I was doomed as a teacher. I could not do the work without the love.

Statements like “I was humbled to the dust” and “I was overwhelmed” reflect the fact that Benjamin was experiencing a cathartic realization that triggered for him a need to change (Mezirow, 2000). This realization led him to reflect on his feelings for his students. He saw them as being “rude…disrespectful…brats.” The internal conflict between his negative feelings for his students and feelings that he should love them, seems to have led him to reevaluate his identity as a teacher and his perspective regarding how he viewed the students (M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). He said, “I knew that if I did not find that love, I was dead. I was doomed as a teacher. I could not do the work without the love.”
Benjamin further described his self-evaluation in these terms.

So, I started to pray earnestly, daily, weekly—I mean that I might gain the gift of love that I knew I desperately needed. I knew that if I did not see these kids through the eyes of the Savior that I would not have the ability to teach. I just wouldn’t be able to do what I needed to do as a seminary teacher. And I can’t say when it happened or exactly how it happened, but I do say that—I say this [long pause] with deep gratitude and appreciation to my Savior [pause] I was given the gift of love from the Savior for my kids.

Benjamin’s description reflects a deeply spiritual experience of changing his character.

Statements like, “see these kids through the eyes of the Savior” reflects his desire to develop what in LDS theology is called the gift of Charity. Charity is defined as “the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:45-47). It represents the highest, noblest sense of love for humankind. In addition, this experience was deeply personal and emotional. This was evident by the pauses Benjamin made, signified by the forward slashes in the transcript.35

Also, Benjamin’s tone of voice when telling this experience became very low and the tempo of his speech slowed. All of these signs signified to me that this was a deeply emotional, spiritual experience for him.

What is also important to note is that Benjamin ascribes the change to someone other than himself. He said, “With deep gratitude and appreciation to my Savior [pause] I was given the gift of love from the Savior for my kids.” The idea of receiving a “gift of love from the Savior” represents deep feelings. This is something Benjamin cherished, as reflected in the words “gratitude” and “appreciation.” Using these words implies thankfulness and a sense of esteem or value. This is important because Merriam and Caffarella (1999) explained that “transformational learning can be an intensely

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35 One [pause] signifies my counting to eight internally, approximately five seconds. Hence, a slash was added if I got to the count of eight. The [long pause] represents another eight counts or 5 seconds.
emotional, even painful activity” (p. 337). In fact, all of Benjamin’s descriptions seem to reflect that he was changing his fundamental core values and personal beliefs regarding his practice. This kind of change reflects ontological development (Knight, 2002; Levinas, 1996; M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000) as Benjamin seemed to question the fundamental assumptions of effectiveness within his practice.

Identity Change

Facing a similar situation to Benjamin’s change experience, Jacob also encountered teaching a difficult class early in his career, now approximately 16 years ago. He said:

I remember in one of my first years I had a class that just wasn’t going well at all. I kept praying, but I was praying that they would like me. I was upset because they didn’t like me and my lessons. Instead of…well, I wasn’t upset at all that they weren’t getting testimonies and edification. I was upset that they weren’t buying in [to what I was doing in class].

I was praying more that they would soften their hearts and listen to me, instead of softening their hearts and listening to the Spirit.36 I wasn’t seeing ways that I could change. Instead I was thinking about what I could do to change these guys. It was terrible to have a bad class, but more for selfish reasons I think at first.

The nature of Jacob’s experience reflects a change in attitude that seems to have led to a change in identity. At first he said he focused on getting students to “soften their hearts and listen to me.” This comment suggests that he defined himself as the central factor to students understanding the Gospel message. In other words, he thought he had the answers his students needed; if they would “listen to me,” then what he had to say could

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36 Fundamental to conversion in LDS theology is that personal change comes through feeling the influence of the Holy Ghost or Spirit. This kind of change is thought to be motivated by God, not just by teachers’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
help them. This is not to suggest that Jacob thought the answers he was dispensing were his own. He clearly thought he was leading his students to God. Instead, the point is not what he was telling his students but that he thought them listening to him would deepen their conversion. Thus, Jacob had defined himself as the central actor in the process of student learning.

However, Jacob described a change that occurred in his attitude. He said he began to realize, “I wasn’t seeing ways that I could change.” In fact, in saying the students will not “listen to me” he was in some ways ascribing blame to his students for the way things were going in class. In other words, he was overlooking his own need to transform his practice. In this point Jacob somewhat resembled Hugh in Milne and colleagues’ (2006) study who blamed his circumstance and students for his problems.

However, unlike Hugh the following moment of self-reflection points out how conflict led Jacob to examine himself (Mezirow, 2000) and ultimately redefine his professional identity (M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). He said:

When I started to realize “this isn’t even my class,” I felt even worse because I realized that “it’s His [Jesus Christ’s] class” and I was blowing it. Then the prayers really changed. Then you’re going, “Quit worrying about my class. It’s His class! I want them to love Him not me.” There’s just a big difference when your heart’s on what we know it should be. It’s about Him.

There is a fundamental assumption underlying Jacob’s thinking here. The assumption is based on LDS doctrine. It is that when people come unto Christ, they develop a relationship with Him that will change who and what they are (Benson, 1985). This assumption is important because Jacob’s reflection on his experience reveals that he

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37 There are specific steps for people to come unto Christ. Primarily, people must exercise faith in Christ, repent of sins, be baptized by immersion, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and continue obeying God’s commandments throughout their lives.
knew coming to Jesus Christ was what changes students’ lives. However, Jacob seemed to operate on an overriding assumption, that he was responsible to bring the students to Christ.

Jacob’s problem is similar to the difficulty nurses faced in Flanagan’s (2009) study. The nurses recognized that they could not dispense healing like a drug. They realized they had to involve the patients more in the healing process, which naturally meant they had to give up some of their control. Similarly Jacob began to realize there was a difference between teaching and conversion. Teaching is an act that teachers control. However, conversion (or learning) is like the healing process. It requires mutual decision making involving both the teacher and the student. Just as patients cannot recover on their own without the care of a nurse, so students need the guidance of a teacher as they deepen their levels of conversion. Furthermore, as nurses cannot heal patients without obtaining their cooperation and increasing their understanding, seminary teachers cannot help students become converted without students increasing their knowledge and learning to act on what they know. Thus, as Jacob questioned his fundamental assumptions about the learning process, he was able to reevaluate the role that control within his own class played in the conversion process and subsequently how he could adjust his own teaching to give more control to students.

However, to recognize the error in his assumption, Jacob had to change his attitude. This action was important because he needed to make a fundamental shift in professional identity to overcome the error in assumption. He said:

I don’t believe that anybody in this business doesn’t know where their focus should be [which is on leading students to Jesus Christ], but really getting it there
is a trick. I mean, really recognizing that these are His children and not ours; then it’s His classroom. We’re just instruments.

First, Jacob said “I don’t believe that anybody in this business doesn’t know where their focus should be.” From Jacob’s perspective it is common knowledge that seminary teachers should bring students to Christ. Certainly the point is obvious as S&I is a religious organization that is founded on the teachings of Christ. However, what is obvious to the mind does not always translate into practice.

In fact, Argyris and Schön (1974) found that practitioners’ actions often do not align with what they profess to others that they do in practice. In other words, cognitively knowing what one should do and even espousing it verbally are insufficient for affecting performance change. Argyris and Schön explained that they believe this misalignment happens because professionals develop routine, tacit behavior. Jacob’s statement, “When I started to realize this isn’t even my class” reveals the fact that he was previously unaware of his assumptions. Thus, practitioners must find ways to question their assumptions.

However, the answer for change at first might not be obvious. For instance, the way Jacob changed seems to relate both to redefining his identity and altering what he did in his classroom. For instance, Jacob said his change resulted when he realized something about his relationship with his students. He said “these are His children and not ours; then it’s His classroom. We’re just instruments.” The word instrument implies something that is used by someone. In other words, essential to Jacob changing his practice was realizing that he was not supposed to be the one who changed his students. Instead, Jacob began to see himself as a tool to help his students develop a relationship
with God; then God would change the students.

This important realization reflects a change in professional identity for Jacob. He transformed his thinking about himself. He no longer thought of himself directing student learning because as a tool he was to help his students build religious relationships with God. This change seems similar to Schön’s (1983) description of the city planner who defined his identity as a forger of relationships rather than an organizer of neighborhoods. The city planner’s definition of self-shaped what he did in practice because the identity difference guided him to set different objectives than he would have as an organizer of neighborhoods. In other words, identity definition is a likely factor that influences practitioners’ performance.

Concluding Thoughts

The previous two chapters presented analyses that contributed to the six parts of an interrelated process of change. This final chapter will add to the understanding of those six parts of the process. At the end of the concluding thoughts of this chapter is the last updated version of the table from Chapter VI. Elements added from the findings of this chapter have been noted in bold face (see Figure 3).

The self-reflective seminary teacher seems not to be satisfied with routine performance. Instead, such a teacher could be always seeking for improvement and finding joy in learning (Brookfield, 1986). Specifically, an effective teacher might find joy from seeing students succeed. This joy would come as he or she led students to develop stronger relationships with God. Furthermore, a reflective S&I teacher would
<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lacking understanding of terms and concepts.</td>
<td>Desiring a readiness to change, questioning self, recognizing and valuing change.</td>
<td>Preparing heart to change.</td>
<td>Differentiating between practice and principle.</td>
<td>Adopting Christ as the model teacher.</td>
<td>Departing from the familiar; <strong>unsatisfied with routine practice.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching by habit or convenience.</td>
<td>Accepting that personal beliefs and assumptions must change.</td>
<td>Accepting that personal beliefs and assumptions must change.</td>
<td>Analyzing relationships between changes or actions.</td>
<td>Developing thorough understanding of scriptures.</td>
<td>Challenging previously held assumptions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling anxious, uncertain, unfamiliar, frustrated or excited, curious, interested, and pleased.</td>
<td>Becoming familiar with and comparing performance to standards and expectations.</td>
<td>Coping with or capitalizing on feelings.</td>
<td>Judging learning situations and matching appropriate principles; evaluating effectiveness of methods.</td>
<td>Living scriptural teachings.</td>
<td>Committing to long-term change, (a journey, not a final destination).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Realizing that performance is not aligned with standards or expectations.</td>
<td>Willing to take first steps toward change.</td>
<td>Engaging mutually through collaboration, mentoring, modeling, observation, feedback, and developing shared repertoires.</td>
<td>Responding appropriately to students’ needs.</td>
<td><strong>Accepting responsibility to change identity:</strong> knowledge, skills, and attitudes.</td>
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<td>Engaging in modified/whole task practice in authentic settings and in actual context.</td>
<td>Developing deeper sense of religious character.</td>
<td><strong>Reconsidering core values, recognizing weaknesses, refining Christlike character attributes.</strong></td>
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<td>Developing effective teaching practices.</td>
<td><strong>Seeking to please God, rather than students or self.</strong></td>
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*Figure 1.* Six parts of the interrelated process of transformational change version 3.
also seek to please God by showing love and devotion to Him. Thus, a reflective teacher desires to improve so he or she receives recognition from God, period. This means that effectiveness to such a teacher means pleasing God. Self-reflective teachers could overcome difficult obstacles by reflecting on what they learn about TLE, setting challenging goals to improve their and students’ performance, and striving to produce creative solutions to the problems they face (Milne et al., 2006). Thus, through self-reflection they could allow their desire and recognition to lead them to ontological change and rise above mediocrity (M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). It is thought that such reflective practices could lead teachers to abandon old, ineffective practices (Brookfield, 1990) and become critically reflective in ways that lead them to change their characters and performance (Brookfield, 1995).

Self-reflective teaching practices could lead seminary teachers to feel painful emotions as they reconsider core values, recognize their own weaknesses, and change fundamental attributes of their character (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Mezirow, 2000). Seeking to resolve these internal conflicts could lead them to revise their ontological identities and reevaluate their perspectives on teaching (M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). For seminary teachers, however, this process could be a spiritual experience producing deepened love for God and gratitude for His help as they refine their character and their teaching practice.

Finally, by becoming self-reflective, seminary teachers could identify errors in assumption about their practice that could be inhibiting their performance. For instance, questioning assumptions could be important because like other practitioners seminary
teachers develop routine, tacit behavior (Polanyi, 1966; Schön, 1983). Hence, the answer to improving their practice might not be obvious. Even though learning in practice such as through sociocultural or situated learning seems to be an essential factor in understanding and implementing TLE (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), learning in practice alone might not be enough. This conclusion might follow because self-reflection also could be required to alter a practitioner’s identity (Brookfield, 1995; Mezirow, 2000).

For instance, seminary teachers could need to alter their identities to include the idea of becoming tools in the hand of God. Rather than thinking they are supposed to be in control of the learning process, some teachers might need to give up some control of the teaching process, allowing students to accept more responsibility for learning (cf., Flanagan, 2009). Because of the tacit, routine nature of practice, it is plausible that some teachers may not realize their need to change and possibly fail to recognize other assumptions that are inhibiting their performance (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Subsequently, some teachers may need to redefine their professional identities (Schön, 1983). In addition, the act of redefining their identities could require them to accept responsibility to transform themselves, rather than blame others or their situation for persistent problems (cf., Milne et al., 2006).
CHAPTER IX
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe and interpret the lived experience of a purposeful sample of released-time seminary teachers. Specifically, it was intended for this study to reveal in a phenomenological manner the nature of S&I teachers’ experiences of learning to understand and implement the TLE effectively. The primary research question of this study was “What is the nature or meaning of the change experience of a sample of released-time seminary teachers who are considered to be effective at learning to understand and implement TLE?” It was thought that answering this question would reveal the meaning or rational structure of participants’ thinking regarding the change experience combined with the actions they have taken to become effective. Thus, this research intended to reveal the essence of participants’ ontological change resulting from understanding and implementing TLE effectively.

Essence of the Lived Experience

The essence of the lived experience for the six participants appears to reflect three elements of change that are interwoven with each other. First, participants’ change reflects some degree or kind of transformational learning (Mezirow, 2000). This is important because transformational learning is thought to be more complex and difficult than merely understanding the steps of implementing a teaching method (Knight, 2002). However, it is clear that TLE could require some released-time seminary teachers to alter their practice by implementing specific teachings methods. For instance, teachers could
learn to encourage their students to identify, understand, and apply doctrines and principles. Yet, because TLE is principle-based, the necessary change seems to require more of teachers than merely learning to perform these teaching techniques. Rather, it appears that a prerequisite to understanding and implementing the methods of TLE is some kind or degree of transformational change. Thus, the nature of the change revealed in the study seems to amount to a refinement of teachers’ ontologies (Levinas, 1996; M. J. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000).

Furthermore, two methods of change emerged from the study. These methods were sociocultural learning and self-reflection. Sociocultural change in the form of Communities of Practice theory seems evident from the nature of participants’ change through mutual engagement on many levels, participation with multiple reifications, and the development of a repertoire of shared resources (Wenger, 1998). The experience reported by participants suggests that the nature of participants’ change experience fundamentally involved sociocultural learning practice.

However, participants’ experience also suggested that the change included a personal, self-reflective component (Brookfield, 1995; Schön, 1983). This self-evaluation seemed to occur through such things as experiencing multiple kinds of trigger events, choosing to set personal goals for success, and overcoming difficult obstacles. Participants learned to abandon ineffective practices and become critically reflective both of their performance in the classroom and their personal character in ways that allowed them to challenge assumptions and redefine their teaching identities. The fact that participants were self-reflective seems particularly important because of the tacit nature
of practice. This tacit nature can allow people to espouse that they are implementing TLE. Yet upon examination of their knowledge, skill, and attitudes (van Merriënboer, 2009) teachers can realize that their theory in practice does not match their espoused theory (Argyris & Schön, 1974). At least at first, teachers can “talk the talk, but not walk the walk.”

In an attempt to summarize the findings of this study into a useful format, as the researcher, I organized the nature of participants’ change experience into a six part interrelated process (see Figure 4). This process includes:

- Need to change
- Desire to change
- Chose to change
- Guidance to change
- Standard of change
- Transformation of identity

I think it is important to say, that I do not see this as a stepwise process, but as something that is fluid, dynamic, and interactive.

Finally, it is important to note that prior to collecting and analyzing participants’ lived experiences the initial analysis of the TLE documents, the assumptions of S&I administrators, and my experience as the researcher suggested that participants could be experiencing some kind of transformational change; some aspects of sociocultural learning; and some degree of self-reflection. However, it is also important to note that
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*Figure 2. Six parts of the interrelated process of transformation, final version.*
these three themes were not known to me prior to conducting a thorough review of the theoretical and research literature. In other words, these themes were not a matter of presupposition but part of the discovery process in considering the nature of the possible change experience.

In addition, verification procedures were taken to ensure the quality of the study results. In particular a bracketing interview was conducted and the researcher’s biases were openly acknowledged (Russell, 2007). Open ended questions were asked during the interview process to insure that participants were not led to provide a desired response (van Manen, 1990). Moreover, once the interviews were transcribed a copy of the full transcript was given to the participants for member checking to evaluate for accuracy of their experience (Creswell, 1998). After the textural description was created a copy of it was also given to each participant for evaluation of accuracy. Through the process of horizontalization (i.e., imaginative variation, multiple readings of the transcript, and multiple rewritings), the themes were eventually developed (Moustakas, 1994). To allow for openness, during this process I also consistently referred to the review of literature and considered alternative themes (Nyström & Dahlberg, 2001). The resulting themes and analysis reflect a combination of the literature across multiple topics combined with the statements by the teachers interviewed. All analysis of lived experience and development of themes can be directly connected to actual verbatim statements taken from the transcripts (Moustakas, 1994). Hence, the quality of the analysis of this study is verifiable.
Discussion of the Lived Experience

The nature of the change experience for this particular group of teachers is important because it represents a blending of three theories regarding identity change, namely transformational theory, sociocultural theory, and self-reflective practice. The transformational nature of the study participants reflects something that may at first seem unusual to some. This assertion is because Knight’s (2002) examination of systematic change within education suggested that whole-sale transformational change of identity is not the norm either for individuals or for organizations. Knight, referencing van Geert (1994), suggested that this lack of widespread transformational change is so because most human change occurs gradually over time. Hence, Knight explained that change is typically incremental and slow, occasionally resulting in a burst of transformation or a “phase change” (p. 235). This thought seems consistent with the message of S&I administrators who have stressed that understanding and implementing TLE should not amount to wholesale change of teaching style but would be best implemented by small, continuous changes (Hall, 2003a).

However, one cannot confuse the difference between a significant revision in direction or of purpose from the long-term process of implementing the envisioned change. It is true that the mainstay for most teachers will likely be continuous effort required in the form of incremental changes over time. Nevertheless, the nature of the change experience of this set of study participants suggests a need for many teachers to engage in occasional events of significant reevaluation of their teaching identity and practice. This reevaluation may come in the form of increased desire to change one’s
knowledge, skills, and attitudes; understanding the influence of teaching by principles; learning to cope with the uncertainty and unfamiliarity associated with a change in professional identity; evaluating one’s teaching against the standard of Christ, the Master Teacher; and challenging one’s assumptions regarding the effectiveness of one’s practice.

Moreover, the nature of the change experience for study participants is important because of the potential interaction between sociocultural learning and reflective practice. M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s (2000) claimed that “Self-consciousness is not the result of the individual reflecting on him- or herself, but emerges in the relationship with another” (p. 233). Their statement is important, as it suggests that identity is developed through sociocultural interaction and not through personal self-evaluation. However, what emerged from the lived experience of study participants revealed that identity development and transformation seemed to form as a result of sociocultural interaction combined with self-reflective practices. In other words, this study calls into question the position of sociocultural learning as the single explanation of identity development.

While M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s (2000) point is clear, that a person cannot create the idea of self without something to contrast it with, there would be no self without the individual as human beings are never represented as a collective only. Thus, the results of this study suggest that there should be more investigation into the naturally occurring instances of sociocultural learning and self-reflection to further understand the interaction between these two elements of identity development.

Furthermore, the nature of sociocultural learning requires a high degree of trust and openness among colleagues. This requirement is apparent because sociocultural
learning could require released-time seminary teachers, for instance, to observe each other while practicing unfamiliar skills, to give and receive feedback, to openly discuss different teaching philosophies and to challenge personal assumptions about them, as well as to engage in other potentially uncomfortable moments of change. Since all study participants were considered to be high-performers of TLE by their area directors, this conclusion suggests that these particular teachers are likely to be more confident in their teaching abilities than others would be. Their level of performance might explain their general acceptance of sociocultural learning as characterized in the analysis chapters of this dissertation.

However, some S&I teachers might not welcome or enjoy increased levels of social interaction in their practice. For instance, Barnett and colleagues (2006) found that when implementing changes such as TLE it is likely that instituting the new requirements will facilitate challenging relationships (cf., Flanagan, 2009). For instance, the relationship between Aaron’s principal and the other members of the faculty was challenging because of an apparent lack of trust. Other challenges could include being observed when a teacher feels he or she is not effective. Additional studies show that not all practitioners enjoy sociocultural learning experiences or think that they are beneficial to their practice. In fact, some practitioners experience varying degrees of fear, anxiety, and skepticism when engaging in sociocultural learning (Austin, 2007; Curry, 2008; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2010; Margolin, 2007; Warhurst, 2006). Some see collaboration as taking them away from their duties (Brooks & Scott, 2006) or placing an increased demand on their time (Baumfield & Butterworth, 2005; Borko, 2004; Buckley & Du Toit,
Buckley and Du Toit found that some practitioners see themselves as more knowledgeable than their colleagues, feeling they would gain minimal benefit from social learning; and some communities must fight a culture of “knowledge hoarding.” Finally, Buckley and Du Toit found that some people simply prefer to work alone. Hence, sociocultural learning strategies come with an inherent list of potential problems.

In spite of the potential difficulties with sociocultural learning, the nature of study participants’ experiences overwhelmingly revealed the effectiveness that sociocultural learning practices played in their personal change experience. In light of the potential difficulties with implementing such strategies for some S&I teachers learning to do so could require a change in attitude to become effective at sociocultural learning or in the end they may never find it beneficial. Nevertheless, this study seems to emphasize the importance of S&I developing a stronger understanding of the need to cultivate a culture of social learning among its teachers and administrators (Wenger et al., 2002).

In addition, it is clear that the nature of the study participants’ change experience was to engage in reflective practices. Very little information was revealed from this study about the kinds of reflective practice participants engaged in. It is clear that through reflective practice participants overcame obstacles to learning how to understand and implement TLE, to setting goals for personal improvement, to producing creative solutions to solve problems, to increasing their desire to change both in practice and in character, and to questioning their assumptions about teaching. However, what is required is a more thorough examination of the types of reflection that lead to these
activities. This could come from a more complete examination of Gardner’s (2011) work with reflection and Prytula’s (2008) work with metacognition in comparison with the experiences of participants within this study.

Moreover, there were topics discussed within the review of literature that were simply not addressed in this study. For instance, Little (1993) described effective professional development efforts that not only work toward consensus but also allow for dissent. As it appears, all six of the participants within this study represent a consensus opinion that TLE is effective and advantageous to their practice. However, there certainly must be some within S&I who have valid reasons to challenge TLE and its effectiveness within the context of their experience. It seems important to understand the full impact of TLE on S&I teachers that administrators should seek out and value the voice of those who are dissatisfied with TLE.

Finally, the nature of this dissertation’s research question led to an examination of teachers’ relationships with each other, but did not examine teachers’ relationships with students. Giles’ (2008) seminal work with inservice teachers and student teachers revealed the essential nature of teacher-student relationships within that context. Because of TLE’s emphasis on influencing change within students, it seems important that more attention be devoted to understanding the phenomenological nature of this important relationship within S&I.

**Recommendations for Continued Research**

Because I focused on revealing the nature of experiences of released-time
seminary teachers who are recommended as effective at implementing TLE their perspective is inherently biased toward viewing TLE positively. However, there certainly must be other teachers’ lived experiences regarding TLE that present it in a less favorable light. Revealing alternative perspectives, especially from teachers who are struggling to implement TLE, could significantly add to S&I administrators’ and other teachers’ understanding. This additional phenomenon might be stated as the change experience of released-time seminary teachers who are struggling to understand and implement TLE effectively. In addition, there are likely other perspectives than those who are struggling with TLE. There could also be teachers who think there are principles that contradict the fundamental assumptions of TLE. Revealing their perspective could also benefit the discussion regarding TLE.

Furthermore, not all relevant aspects of the review of literature were adequately addressed by the findings of this study. For instance, Flanagan’s (2009) study described nurses engaging in self-reflection through reflective journals. Combining this practice with what Gardner (2011) learned about reflective practice could significantly add to the discussion of self-reflection, and help teachers become transformational learners.

Moreover, this study produced little information regarding the tensions released-time seminary teachers are experiencing while learning to understand and implement TLE. Some obstacles that participants encountered in this study include overcoming internal conflict such as changing one’s heart, altering internal belief structures, and refining personal philosophies. Some teachers had to learn to teach students in ways that were relevant, rather than by their personal preferences. Some teachers faced students
who did not like them or who thought what they were teaching was not interesting. Other teachers faced problems between their principal and members of the faculty. Finally, teachers dealt with inservice training that was compartmentalized and fragmented. What was not adequately dealt with herein is the nature of the tensions that were created in these situations (cf., Barnett et al., 2006).

Finally, Prytula’s (2008) seminal research on inservice teachers’ development of metacognitive practices presents an opportunity for continued study. Prytula developed a model explaining how teachers become aware of their metacognitive processes. She found that teachers who became aware of their metacognitive processes began teaching those processes to other teachers. As those other teachers became aware of their own metacognitive processes, they were better prepared to become self-reflective, consider their assumptions, and address issues with learning in their practice. Studying the nature of metacognitive practices among released-time seminary teachers could further enlighten members of the S&I organization in ways that lead to increased transformation.

**Researcher’s Lived Experience**

Conducting this study has been a tremendous adventure. As a researcher I developed a significant respect for the level of competence of the six teachers I interviewed. Their humility and honesty with me during the interview process was refreshing. Their depth of love for teaching, their willingness to change, and their examples of professionalism were truly inspiring. For example, one participant in particular who is well known among his peers for his competence with TLE said:
I think we’re still trying to figure TLE out. I think I’m still trying to figure it out. I don’t think we understand it still, even the groups that implement it or even those that are identified as high implementers of TLE by their peers. I would call into question why I might be identified as one [who understands it], or anyone else [for that matter].

This genuine sense of humility, honesty, and desire to improve ran throughout the experience with all six teachers but was epitomized by this statement.

Yet the level of accomplishment by all six participants to understand and implement TLE led me to reflect on my own practice as a seminary teacher. Since I began this research project, I have grown immensely in my understanding, not only of the research process, but also in understanding of transformational theory, sociocultural theory, and reflective practice. In addition, my interaction with the research participants also caused me to reflect on how well I understand and implement TLE in my classroom.

Finally, I have come to appreciate the power of phenomenological research. After all of the data were collected I had the opportunity of casually talking with each of the participants individually. The general feeling from all six of them was very positive regarding their involvement in the study. One participant in particular captured this sentiment. He remarked:

Thanks for letting me be a part of the process. It has allowed me to work through and solidify some of the more ethereal points of my thoughts on TLE and teaching. In fact, just reading over the transcript again has given me some ideas for another project and some personal study [topics] for the summer.

For this participant and for all of the others, this experience seems to have been exactly what Moustakas (1994) said it would be, one of mutual discovery for all who were involved.
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APPENDICES
Appendix A

Expanded Glossary
Glossary

**Actions:** These are changes that are more mindful than operations, such as a seminary teacher learning to implement a new teaching technique. Actions, Operations, and Activities are concepts included in Leont’ev’s Hierarchy or Interactions.

**Activity:** This level of change represents the highest of Leont’ev’s three levels. Knight (2002) described activities as “suites of actions.” These changes lead people to create new views of self and of the world around them. Hence, Knight described activity level learning as the “fundamental reappraisal of assumptions which have hitherto governed” a person’s thoughts, actions, and beliefs (Knight, 2002, p. 213). Leont’ev’s concept of activity level change aligns well with the idea of transformational change or transformational learning, because it requires an examination of assumptions and a change in one’s character or identity. Activity level changes are involved in Leont’ev’s Hierarchy of Interactions, which also includes Operations and Actions.

**Administrators:** Within S&I, the administration is organized by faculty, area, and senior administrators. At the faculty level, a principal supervises his faculty. A faculty might consist of a few junior high seminary teachers or a large 14 person senior seminary. Within an area, an area director supervises his area teachers. An area might consist of 70 to 90 teachers. For instance, Davis County comprises the Utah Davis area, which employs over 80 teachers. Outside of Utah, area geographical boundaries are substantially larger. The senior administration of S&I are professionals assigned to work in the Church Office Building or church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah.

**Area Directors:** At the faculty level, a principal supervises his faculty. A faculty might consist of a few junior high seminary teachers or a large 14 person senior seminary. Within an area are multiple faculties with an area director who supervises the teachers within the geographical boundary of the area. An area might consist of 70 to 90 teachers. For instance, Davis County comprises the Utah Davis Area, which employs over 80 teachers and constitutes the area within the Davis County School District. Outside of Utah, area geographical boundaries are substantially larger.

**Authentic Learning Settings:** Those that mirror the actual practice environment as closely as possible and allow practitioners to see the connections between components of a complex process (Hung & Chen, 2007). In addition to, van Merrienboer (2009) suggested that whole-task practice can integrate learning if it occurs in authentic learning settings.

**Board of Trustees:** The Board of Trustees is composed of members of the Church Board of Education and divided into various Boards of Trustees with significant, distinct responsibilities. No information is published regarding the individual boards or which members of the Church Board of Education are assigned to them.
**Boundary Practice:** Occurs when Communities of Practice interact with each other within an organization or between organizations.

**Bracketing:** Researchers “bracket” information that they already know about the phenomenon so they can examine their Preunderstanding before beginning an investigation (D. W. Smith, 2009) and suspend their judgment (Russell, 2007). As a mathematician Husserl compared his idea of bracketing to the way a person brackets certain parts of an equation to separate them from other parts. Hence, it was thought that bracketing Preunderstanding would avoid creating a final interpretation that was merely a foregone conclusion (Creswell, 1998; van Manen, 1997). In other words, by bracketing one’s Preunderstanding researchers could avoid simply looking for justification in the data that supported their suppositions about the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

**Church Board of Education:** Consists of the First Presidency, who are the highest governing body of the Church; three members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the second highest governing body of the Church; and three other general church leaders.

**Church Educational System:** “The umbrella for all education programs of the Church” (LDS, 2010). CES includes all church universities and colleges, namely Brigham Young University (BYU) Provo, BYU-Hawaii, BYU-Idaho, and LDS Business College. It includes all seminaries and institutes of religion consisting of 717,484 students in 2011 (S&I, 2011). And it includes the management of the Perpetual Education Fund (PEF). “Perpetual Education Fund [exists] to provide members with opportunities to gain education and training which lead to employment opportunities in their own countries. Young men and women who are living in certain areas outside of the United States may apply for the fund. The fund gives loans, with minimal interest, to the student to pay for tuition and books. After the student completes school, he or she will repay the loan over an 8 year period. Members of the Church donate money to help the fund continue” (LDS, 2010).

**The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:** The governing religious organization that owns and operates the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion.

**Commissioner of Education:** Serving directly under the Church Board of Education and Board of Trustees, the Commissioner of Education directs the operations of all CES schools, organizations, and programs. At the time I conducted this dissertation, Elder Paul V. Johnson of the First Quorum of the Seventy was assigned to serve as the Commissioner of Education.

**Communities of Practice:** This theory was popularized by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998). Communities of Practice (CoP) theory is an instance of situated cognition theory which relies on the premise that practitioners learn through participation in a community through participation in mutual engagement in a joint enterprise utilizing a shared repertoire. CoP theory rests on four primary assumptions. These are people are
social beings who are part of a community, which is made up of the social configurations in which they engage. Knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to a valued enterprise, i.e., when someone participates in the goals and objectives of the community he or she gains knowledge. Knowing occurs through active participation in the pursuits of the enterprise. Meaning is the ultimate result of learning within a CoP. Learning in its consummate form develops the identity of the practitioner.

**Compartmentalization:** Focusing on only one aspect of a complex problem. It is the opposite of being integrated. An integrated learning experience is one that combines the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for a person to perform well professionally (van Merriënboer, 2009).

**Constant Comparative Method:** The concept of researchers listening intently during all interactions with participants and especially during the interviews to discern what participants think, feel, and believe and to begin interpreting why they do so. It is thought that if a researcher is aware during data collection, more information could be revealed by asking probing questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Conversion, Converted:** “Changing one’s beliefs, heart, and life to accept and conform to the will of God (Acts 3:19)”

“Conversion includes a conscious decision to give up one’s former ways and change to become a disciple of Christ. Repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, the reception of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and continued faith in the Lord Jesus Christ make conversion complete” (LDS, 2011). Nearly all students have already been baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost through an ordinance called confirmation. However, conversion is not only accepting something as true, but also conforming one’s life to the principles that are being taught. What seminary students are working on now is making conscious decisions to live according to the commitments they made at business, to keep the commandments, and give up sinful practices as defined by LDS doctrine. Through the process of conversion they “will be changed into a new person who is sanctified and pure, born again in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17; Mosiah 3:19). (LDS, 2011).

**Critical Reflection:** Examines the problems and issues that someone sees and extends beyond the immediate context, considering what other influences might contribute to the circumstance. Most important, critical reflection seems to represent the process of examining lived experience and seeking to understand the meaning that underlies it (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990).

**Data Reduction:** A complex process of simplifying study the participants’ experience into themes or horizons (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). It involves seeing through the details of the interview transcripts to identify and reveal the phenomenon itself. This is accomplished as researchers begin to see themes that emerge from the data.

**Descriptive Reflection:** It is closely related to intentionality within phenomenological
inquiry. It involves a description of the events in which the person has engaged as well as providing justification behind the events. In other words, it is the description of the external behaviors and the internal rationale.

**Dialogic Reflection:** It includes the idea of weighing competing claims and perspectives and considering alternative resolutions for one’s lived experience. Dialogic reflection seems to relate to the concept of imaginative variation, where the researcher considers the plausible interpretations of the lived experience and presents variations of themes that seem reasonable.

**Doctrine:** Refers to the basic teachings of the Church. A doctrine is a fundamental, unchanging truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (S&I, In Press). “The word of God is the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ and by His prophets” (H. B. Eyring, 1999).

**Epistemology:** In part the explanation of what knowledge is and how it is obtained (Blackburn, 2008).

**Epoché:** This means a “suspension of judgment” (OED, 2010). Husserl conceived of bracketing information that researchers already know about the phenomenon so they could examine their Preunderstanding before beginning an investigation (D. W. Smith, 2009) and suspend their judgment (Russell, 2007).

**Female Teachers:** S&I policy requires female teachers to support church doctrine concerning the family and its preeminence. Because church doctrine defines gender roles, it expects that male and female teachers will adhere to those roles. Men are expected to assume the role of financial provider. Women are expected to assume the role of nurture for the children (LDS, 1995). As a result, “no mother with minor children living in the home or divorced person may be employed full-time to coordinate or teach seminary or in full-time institute of religion” (S&I, 2010, 7 July p. 11-4). Therefore, S&I employs few women as full-time seminary teachers.

**First Presidency:** The highest ecclesiastical organization of leadership for the LDS Church. It is comprised of three men who are regarded as prophets. The man who has served as an apostle for the longest period of time is the President of the Church. He selects two other apostles as his counselors (LDS, 2012b).

**Fragmentation:** A concepts that occurs when knowledge is deconstructed into its parts but the learning experience fails to help students make connections to see the relationships between the individual components of the whole process. The result of compartmentalization is fragmented learning (van Merriënboer, 2009).

**General Authority:** A member of the senior ecclesiastical body of leadership within the LDS Church, serving in worldwide positions. Members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are General Authorities.
Hermeneutic Circle: There are five stages to the hermeneutic circle as it relates to phenomenological research. These stages include 1. Create a transcription of the interviews. 2. Read the transcription. 3. Form an initial interpretation through writing to describe the initial view or theme. 4. Seek to validate the interpretation through structural statements. 5. Revise the interpretation by comparing it to the researchers’ understanding as found in the review of literature (Lieberman & Mace, 2009; Roberts, 2009). Finally, the process is iterative and requires repeating until the horizons become apparent (Giles, 2008; McPhail, 1995; Moss, 1994; Prytula, 2008; van Manen, 1997; Wimmer, 2010).

Hermeneutics: A method of interpreting a written text such as the expression of an individual’s meaning for a phenomenon (Hekman, 1983; Moss, 1994; Ormiston & Schrift, 1990). The main principle of hermeneutics is that interpretation requires multiple looks and repeated reflections to see the varied horizons portrayed in the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). For instance, Gadamer explained the process through the study of works of art (Davey, 2011). With each passing view and act of reflection the viewer engages with the art as an interlocutor. An interlocutor is something or someone with which a person has a conversation. As an interlocutor, art presents elements of composition that engage the viewer and require him or her to ask questions. In turn, the viewer returns to the art to find the answers.

Holy Ghost: Spirit herein refers to the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit. “The Holy Ghost is a member of the Godhead. He acts under the direction of the Father and the Son to teach, testify, reveal, guide, enlighten, comfort, and sanctify the hearts of the children of men” (S&I, 2001, p. 12).

“We further wish to pursue a course that shall be acceptable to our God and Father; having partaken of a portion of His Holy Spirit we are desirous to be taught more perfectly the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, we are desirous of cultivating His Holy Spirit, and to draw from the fountain of light and intelligence; from the spirit of revelation that flows from God; and the spirit that dwells in us, comfort, consolation, and intelligence; that we may feel that we are the sons and daughters of God, that we are walking in the light of His countenance, that we are doing the things that are pleasing and acceptable in His sight, that our own consciences are producing satisfactory evidence to our minds that our conduct and acts are acceptable before the Lord, and that the Holy Ghost also bears testimony to us that we are His children, doing His will, walking in the light of His countenance, helping to establish His kingdom on the earth, and to fulfil [sic] the varied duties we are placed here upon the earth to attend to. These are some of the ideas and feelings which all good men and women entertain in relation to the past, the present, and the future” (Taylor, 1864).

Hence, LDS doctrine sees the Holy Ghost as a form of evidence received as thoughts and feelings through which practitioners verify many different intentionalities.

Horizon (Theme): Reflects the idea that a person develops differing vistas that describe
what it is like to see the phenomenon (van Manen, 1997).

**Horizontalization:** Developing themes and creating a holistic interpretation happens through a process called horizontalization. Husserl described it as a composite of principles including developing horizons, supporting them through textural description, revising them through imaginative variation or structural description, prioritizing horizons, and writing a composite description. Finally, researchers must insure that there is a standard of quality and verification in their analysis procedures.

**Human sciences:** They reflect the study of what it means to be human and include such fields as biography, ethnography, history, phenomenology, psychology, and sociology.

**Hyle:** It means primary matter, as in the original stuff from which the Greek’s believed the universe was constructed (OED, 2010). Husserl used the term to represent the primary substance by which people perceive the objective world through the senses (Russell, 2007). The natural sciences would refer to hyletic data as photons for seeing, sound waves for hearing, chemicals for smelling and tasting, and neuron pulses for feeling. A person perceives the sensations of the external world and through acts of consciousness he or she creates a noema for the experience (Poleshchuk, 2009).

**Imaginative Variation:** A form of reflection that involves the creation of the possible meanings a phenomenon that could represent the participants’ experiences.

**Institute:** Institute programs are taught for college age students in buildings adjacent to a university, whereas seminary is primarily a junior high and senior high school program. At the request of S&I administration, institute programs lie outside of the scope of this study.

**Intentionality:** Meaning is defined as a person’s intentionality. The process of the human consciousness justifying why one thinks, feels, and believes the way one does about a given phenomenon (Russell, 2007). Furthermore, van Manen (1997) described meaning as the rationale for thinking something about a phenomenon (cf. Moustakas, 1994). In other words, phenomenological studies can reveal lived experience with epistemological change and development.

**Joint Enterprise:** A collective body of people who are engaged in a common enterprise with the purpose of negotiating what it means to do the work of the enterprise. As a local community defines the objectives of their practice they work together to form a joint enterprise. It involves the idea of community coherence. It is a “collective process of negotiation” not as the creation of organizational standards such as TLE, but the local negotiation of how to implement such standards (Wenger, 1998, pp. 77-78). To become a member one must be fully engaged in the work of the enterprise. Standards are set to determine membership. (See also Communities of Practice, Negotiate.) Thus, every community member is responsible to contribute and determine how to accomplish the global objectives of the organization depending on their practice situation, whether global
or local.

**Leont’ev’s Hierarchy of Interactions:** see Actions, Activities, and Operations.

**Metacognition:** the study of what and how people think about thinking (Prytula, 2008).

**Metaphysics:** The study of being. While metaphysics has a long history of a variety of topics and meanings (van Inwagen, 2010), within this dissertation it is defined as the study of being that exists beyond the reach of the natural sciences and experience with the five senses. (Blackburn, 1994).

**Mind-Body Dualism:** The essence of the mind-body problem focuses on understanding the meaning of mind and its interaction with the external world. First, the term body here represents not only an individual’s physical entity but also the outwardly observable nature of things external to the mind. In other words, the body represents the external, objective world. On the other hand, the term mind represents the obscured, inward, and unobservable thing that makes up the psychological consciousness. Certainly the mind is real nevertheless it seems to exist beyond the reach of physical science and experience with the five senses. One cannot see, taste, smell, touch, or hear mind.

**Mutual Engagement:** This concept involves learning through a community of participants engaged jointly in the same enterprise. In other words, they are working together to accomplish the same professional purpose. Through the process of negotiation the members of the community develop the practice.

**Negotiate, negotiation:** This concept is part of Communities of Practice theory. It defines the process of how members of the community create the essence of the practice. Negotiation occurs as members of the community discuss what must be done, create reifications to accomplish it, and then share those reifications. These actions define the practice and ultimately create standards of performance. Negotiation of standards occurs through interaction between boundary practices within the joint enterprise.

**Noema:** It is a thought or perception of the mind (OED, 2010). For Husserl noema is a mental construct that is related to an object that people perceive. It is not the actual object but it is a person’s perception of it (Moustakas, 1994). This means that noema is a mental thing or an intentional object that people create to represent the physical thing with which they have interacted (Beyer, 2011).

**Noesis:** In this context it means to understand or to intend (OED, 2010). Husserl described it as the process of human thought regarding the noema (Beyer, 2011; Russell, 2007). In other words, people create concepts for external things through the mental processes of noeses. Thus, noema is the object created by the mind and noesis is the intentional act that created it.
Ontology: From the phenomenological perspective it is a central concept defining whole person or identity change. It reflects peoples’ reasoning or cognitive justification for who they are—what they do, what they think, how they feel, and what they believe.

Openness: Gadamer defined openness as being able to see “the otherness.” Seeing the otherness means critically examining one’s Preunderstanding and presenting it openly. Openness allows researchers to avoid presenting projective interpretations. Nyström and Dahlberg explained that projective means the idea of imparting one’s unexamined opinion in the form of an interpretation. In other words, openness is the effort to avoid considering the evidence based on a narrow horizon or perspective. Hence, when researchers bracket their Preunderstanding, they may not be able to completely suspend judgment (Moustakas, 1994; Nyström & Dahlberg, 2001), but they can consider their Preunderstanding in contrast to a careful examination.

Operations: These are routine changes, such as a new process for recording hours that a seminary teacher has worked. This is a concept of Leont’ev’s hierarchy of interactions.

Patriarchal Blessing: A personal revelation given to an individual that provides them with the important possibilities in one’s life if the direction in the blessing is obeyed (Faust, 1995).

Paul Johnson: Serving directly under the Church Board of Education and Board of Trustees, the Commissioner of Education directs the operations of all CES schools, organizations, and programs. At the time I conducted this dissertation, Elder Paul V. Johnson of the First Quorum of the Seventy was assigned to serve as the Commissioner of Education.

Phenomenology: A research methodology that can be used to reveal research participants’ ontologies. The word phenomenon literally means things that appear, such as heavenly bodies, a table, or a person (OED, 2010). Moustakas explained that revealing the human phenomenon of any experience is an attempt to combine the external or objective sense of reality, or a person’s actions, with the subjective or internal thoughts that coincide with those actions. Phenomenology is the study of things that manifest themselves to human consciousness. It reveals the reasoning or thinking that underpins whatever phenomenon is being investigated (Giorgi, 1999). Researchers use phenomenology to reveal the meaning people create from the perspective of someone who is knowledgeable about the phenomenon being investigated (Creswell, 2007; Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenon: According to Moustakas (1994) a phenomenon is the appearance of something in human consciousness. It includes any human experience for which people create meaning.

Positivism: A philosophy originating with Auguste Comte (Bourdeau, 2011) that has
since developed into the philosophical foundation of a research perspective that claims that knowledge is gained through the tools of the scientific method, that “true knowledge exists outside of human thought,” is measurable, and known only through “positivistic experience,” namely the five senses (Hoshmand & Polkinghorne, 1992, p. 56).

Preunderstanding: This concept describes what a person knows prior to collecting data from the study participants. The point is, if researchers can look beyond their Preunderstandings, then they are more likely to formulate a sound conclusion, rather than one based on supposition. This is what it means to transcend oneself. Researchers accomplish this by participating in a process of bracketing their perspective to reach a state of epoché.

Priestcraft: “Priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion…. But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish” (2 Ne. 26:29, 31). In other words, priestcraft means to preach for some purpose other than the spiritual welfare of the person you are teaching. The rewards of priestcraft could include either receiving monetary gain or praise.

Principle: A principle is an enduring truth or rule individuals can adopt to guide them in making decisions (Scott, 1993a, 1993b, 1998). Gospel principles are universal and help people apply the doctrines of the Gospel to everyday living. Elder Richard G. Scott taught “Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application” (S&I, In Press).

Prioritizing Process: This process occurs as researchers determine which themes are essential and which are incidental. Researchers accomplish this by asking the question, would you still call this a description of the phenomenon if this theme were eliminated? If the answer is yes, then the theme is incidental and can be removed. Likewise, researchers must ask, is this theme unique? One can determine this by asking, how is this theme different from previous themes? What does it add that is not expressed in previous themes? And what are the essential differences? One can eliminate any elements that are overlapping and reduce the description to the unique elements of the phenomenon. The final step is for researchers to construct a written description of the essence of the experience being examined.

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: the second-highest ecclesiastical body in the LDS Church (next to the First Presidency, which is the highest) (LDS, 2012c).

Reflection-in-Action: According to Schön (1983) this kind of reflection occurs as practitioners ponder on their actions, asking questions like, what objectives am I trying to accomplish; what evidence supports my thinking; what assumptions have I made; what principles am I drawing upon; and how will I test my solution and evaluate the results? After reflecting, practitioners then follow through with their plans for implementing the strategy and testing the results, repeating the process until reaching a satisfactory
conclusion. Through this iterative process Schön argued that practitioners produce sound results for solving novel professional problems. In turn, the results of these solutions form the substance of practitioners’ characters or identities.

**Reification:** To reify means making something abstract into something concrete (OED, 2010). A reification is an idea or tangible thing created through metaphor and used by the CoP to communicate with community members how to accomplish the practice. In sum, reifications are concepts turned into objects for explaining how practitioners perform their practice. Through participation with reifications, practitioners develop meaning and identity. Shared resources are the aids that allow practitioners to talk about and participate in their practice. They make up the substance of the repertoire.

**Scripture:** Within the LDS Church, four books form the scriptural canon: The Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants.

**Seminary:** “A four-year religious education program held each weekday for youth (generally 14–18 years of age) during the school year. The instruction rotates between the following four scripture courses:

- Old Testament
- New Testament
- Book of Mormon
- Doctrine and Covenants and Church History” (S&I, 2011, p. 1).

**Seminaries and Institutes of Religion:** “Part of the Church Educational System operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints…In 1912 the first seminary class was taught to a small group of high school students in Salt Lake City, Utah. This was the beginning of what would become an extensive seminary and institute program for students in many countries and territories throughout the world” (S&I, 2011, p. 1).

**Seminary subdivisions:** Seminary is subdivided into different programs based on who teaches the course and where it is taught.

- **Released-time Seminary:** Released-time seminary differs from stake seminary. Released-time seminary is taught by professional teachers during school hours in buildings typically adjacent to public school facilities.
- **Stake Seminary:** Stake seminary is staffed by volunteer teachers and occurs in areas where student populations are too small to justify a full-time, professional teacher.
- **Daily Seminary (formerly known as Early Morning):** Daily seminary is the most common form of seminary within the stake programs. S&I administration has requested that I do not involve any stake programs, including daily seminary teachers in this study.

**Shared Repertoire:** This concept is involved in a CoP theory and consists of the
resources the community creates to communicate about and accomplish the work of the community. Wenger (1998) explained that practitioners create shared resources through a process called reification.

**Situated Cognition:** Learning theory of Bandura (1986; Bandura, 1989) that attempts to “reflect the fundamentally social nature of learning and cognition” and how practitioners learn to perform within the context of professional practice (Kirschner & Whitson, 1997, p. 1). In other words, it describes how people learn to perform their professional practices in their specific context.

**Social Configurations:** This idea is part of Communities of Practice theory. It consists of the inter-relationships within the community, including apprentices, newcomers, old timers, mentors, coaches, trainers, administrators, inservice leaders, principals, and so forth, who interact in a variety of ways to perform the work of the community and define roles within it.

**Sociocultural Learning:** An associated application of situated cognition (Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leont’ev, 1974; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998). Sociocultural theory includes Lave and Wenger’s concept of Communities of Practice (CoP) and Vygotsky and Leont’ev’s concept of sociocultural learning. Kirshner and Whitson (2000) nest CoP theory and sociocultural theory under the umbrella of situated cognition, separating it into two primary divisions—critical anthropology represented by Lave and Wenger (Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and sociocultural theory represented by Leont’ev (1974) and Vygotsky (1978). However, M. J. Packer (2001a) and Packer and Goicoechea (2000) do not differentiate this way. Instead, they combine all four theorists under the heading of sociocultural theory. This is confusing and reflects a degree of concern for M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s position. However, in the end it seems to amount to nothing more than a matter of terminological difference. For convenience in referring to M. J. Packer and Goicoechea’s definition of ontology, this dissertation will adopt their use of the term sociocultural theory, noting that it overlooks Kirshner and Witson’s important distinction. One of the central goals of sociocultural learning is to explain how people develop their ontologies or identities.

**Spirit:** “That part of a living being which exists before mortal birth, which dwells in the physical body during mortality, and which exists after death as a separate being until the resurrection. All living things—mankind, animals, and plants—were spirits before any form of life existed upon the earth (Gen. 2:4–5; Moses 3:4–7). The spirit body looks like the physical body (1 Ne. 11:11; Ether 3:15–16; D&C 77:2; D&C 129). Spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure than mortal element or matter (D&C 131:7).”

“Every person is literally a son or a daughter of God, having been born as a spirit to Heavenly Parents before being born to mortal parents on the earth (Heb. 12:9). Each person on earth has an immortal spirit body in addition to a body of flesh and bone.”

**Spirituality:** Spirituality is a personal choice to overcome the weaknesses of life and learn to listen to the communication from the Holy Ghost (McKay, 1936)” (LDS, 2012d).
also Holy Ghost).

**Structural Analysis:** Is created by researchers as they reflect on the textural description and develop possible interpretations. In other words, horizontalization and imaginative variation begin by describing the participant’s experience, continue by revealing additional insights as researchers reflect on the description of the experience, and then support those conclusions with statements or excerpts that support the interpretation.

**Tacit:** Knowledge that is hidden from the person yet is essential to their performance of their profession. It must be examined by people have who not considered it or have taken such knowledge for granted.

**Teaching and Learning Emphasis:** Represents a refinement of the teaching fundamentals within the Seminaries and Institutes of religion. It defines the objective of S&I and seven statements that define outcomes that lead to student conversion.

**Technical Reflection:** Involves decision making regarding immediate behaviors or skills as interpreted through the practitioner’s personal worries and prior experience.

**Testimony:** “Knowledge and a spiritual witness given by the Holy Ghost. A testimony can also be an official or legal declaration of what a person perceives as truth (D&C 102:26)” (LDS, 2012e).

**Textural Descriptions:** As horizons are developed researchers begin to group them, forming textural descriptions of the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) explained the idea of the texture of the phenomenon as being what the participant actually experienced. After reading the interview transcript, the researcher would provide verbatim extracts from the transcript to support the initial interpretation of the participant’s experience. van Manen (1990) explained that researchers should include things like quotes, phrases, keywords, etymologies, metaphors, and analogies to portray textually what the participant said that supports the interpretation. Researchers might also include artifacts that represent an idea participants expressed. These artifacts could include pictures, posters, lesson plans, and so forth that represent the experience.

**Training Council:** Within S&I an administrative body of individuals organized “under a leader who has decision-making authority” (S&I, 2003, p. 22). Typically, a training council is comprised of local leaders such as principals or assistant principals on a faculty. The purpose of the training council is to train personnel and to give direction to individual teachers.

**Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction:** The process of data reduction and interpretation is transcendental because it seeks to rise above mere supposition and subjective opinion to provide a justified interpretation of the phenomenon. It is phenomenological because it emphasizes looking at the phenomenon, albeit it through the
eyes of people who have experienced it. It involves a process of reduction as the essence of people’s experience with the phenomenon is turned into themes or horizons that eventually are formed into a blended or holistic interpretation.

Transcendental Subjectivity: The name Husserl gave to his theory of the creation of meaning (Blackburn, 1994; Russell, 2007). Transcendental subjectivity is the idea that people have the ability to rise above their subjective selves and interact with the objective world; in other words, Husserl attempted to explain the interaction between subjective experience as it produces meaning for the external world so that other people can understand a person’s lived experience in a productive way, in a way that transcends mere subjectivity. It is divided into three concepts, noema, noesis, and hyletic data.

Whole-Task Practice: Breaking down all of the components of a complex process into “meaningful clusters of constituent skills”; then sequencing the introduction of those parts as a modified version of the whole task, building over time to increasing levels of complexity, and possibly introducing part-task experiences to gradually build to full complexity (van Merriënboer, 1997, pp. 173-192, 323). Concepts such as whole-task practice could lead to overcoming compartmentalization and fragmentation.
Appendix B

Teaching and Learning Emphasis Documents
A Current Teaching Emphasis in the Church Educational System (Version 1)

The CES objective indicates that Church education has a significant responsibility in strengthening the youth of the Church and inviting them to come unto Christ. Preparing students for missionary service and temple ordinances has always been a focus in Church education.

By implementing the following emphases and adjustments, CES will more directly prepare young people for effective missionary service, to receive the ordinances of the temple, and to emulate and teach Gospel principles throughout their lives. This will also help deepen their faith, testimony, and conversion.

1. We are to learn and teach by the Spirit. We are to encourage students to learn and teach by the Spirit.

2. We are to emphasize more strongly the importance of reading the scripture text for each scripture course of study. We are to help students develop a habit of daily scripture study.

3. We are to help students understand the scriptures and the words of the prophets, identify and understand the doctrines and principles found therein, and apply them in their lives in ways that lead to personal conversion.

4. We are to help students learn to explain, share, and testify of the doctrines and principles of the restored Gospel. We are to give them opportunities to do so with each other in class. We are to encourage them to do so outside of class with family and others.

5. We are to emphasize the mastery of key scriptural passages and help students understand and explain the doctrines and principles contained in those passages.

   a. In seminary this means we will emphasize scripture mastery so that students better understand the doctrines and principles in the one hundred scripture mastery passages and are encouraged to memorize those passages.

   b. In institute this means we will build upon the foundation of the one hundred scripture mastery passages and foster a depth of understanding of other key passages of scripture, with encouragement to memorize such passages.

6. We are to help students identify, understand, believe, explain, and apply basic doctrines and principles. These include the Godhead; the plan of salvation; the Creation and the Fall; the Atonement of Jesus Christ; dispensations, apostasy, and the Restoration; prophets; priesthood; the first principles and ordinances; covenants and ordinances; and commandments.
Teaching Emphasis for the Church Educational System

The CES objective indicates that Church education has a significant responsibility in strengthening the youth of the Church and inviting them to come unto Christ. Preparing students for missionary service and temple ordinances has always been a focus in Church education.

By implementing the following emphases and adjustments, CES will more directly prepare young people for effective missionary service, to receive the ordinances of the temple, and to exemplify and teach gospel principles throughout their lives. This will also help deepen their faith, testimony, and conversion.

• We are to learn and teach by the Spirit. We are to encourage students to learn and teach by the Spirit.

• We are to emphasize more strongly the importance of reading the scripture text for each scripture course of study. We are to help students develop a habit of daily scripture study.

• We are to help students understand the scriptures and the words of the prophets, identify and understand the doctrines and principles found therein, and apply them in their lives in ways that lead to personal conversion.

• We are to help students learn to explain, share, and testify of the doctrines and principles of the restored gospel. We are to give them opportunities to do so with each other in class. We are to encourage them to do so outside of class with family and others.

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• We are to help students identify, understand, believe, explain, and apply basic doctrines and principles. These include the Godhead, the plan of salvation; the Creation and the Fall; the Atonement of Jesus Christ; dispensations, apostasy and the Resurrection; prophets; priesthood; the first principles and ordinances; covenants and ordinances; and commandments.

14 November 2007
Teaching Emphasis for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (Version 3)

Teaching Emphasis for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion

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- We are to emphasize the importance of reading the scripture text for each scripture course of study. We are to help students develop a habit of daily scripture study.

- We are to help students understand the scriptures and the words of the prophets, identify and understand the doctrines and principles found therein, and apply them in their lives in ways that lead to personal conversion.

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15 August 2008
Teaching Emphasis for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (Version 4)

TEACHING AND
LEARNING EMPHASIS

The objective of seminaries and institutes of religion includes the following:

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.

TEACH

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.

TEACHING AND LEARNING EMPHASIS

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 prophet.
Identify, understand, and apply gospel doctrines and principles.
Explain, share, and testify of gospel doctrines and principles.
Master key scripture passages and basic doctrines.
THE TEACHING AND LEARNING EMPHASIS TRAINING DOCUMENT

This training document contains the “Teaching and Learning Emphasis” and some corresponding statements of principle that the emphasis is based upon. Please elaborate on these statements by finding and discussing relevant scriptures and teachings by modern prophets and by adding other statements of principle that increase our understanding of why each fundamental of the Emphasis is important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher and Students should:</th>
<th>Statements of Principle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teach and learn by the Spirit.</td>
<td>Gospel teaching and learning take place by the power of the Holy Ghost. He reveals, testifies, converts, comforts, and sanctifies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivate a learning environment of love, respect, and purpose.</td>
<td>When we love and respect the Lord and one another, learning is enhanced. A shared sense of purpose focuses efforts and expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study the scriptures daily, and read the text for the course.</td>
<td>Daily personal scripture study provides us a consistent opportunity to learn the gospel, develop testimony, and hear the voice of the Lord. Each of the standard works and the words of the prophets contribute to a greater understanding of the gospel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the context and content of the scriptures and the words of the prophets.</td>
<td>Understanding the context and content of the scriptures and the words of the prophets prepares us to recognize the messages of the inspired authors. It clarifies gospel principles illustrated in the experiences and teachings of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify, understand, and apply gospel doctrines and principles.</td>
<td>Identifying and understanding doctrines and principles helps us liken the scriptures and words of the prophets to our own lives and guides us in making decisions. Applying gospel principles brings promised blessings, deepens understanding and conversion, and helps us become more like the Savior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain, share, and testify of gospel doctrines and principles.</td>
<td>Explaining doctrines and principles, sharing relevant experiences, and testifying of divine truth clarifies our understanding, improves our ability to teach the gospel, and strengthens the testimony of both the speaker and the listener.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master key scripture passages and basic doctrines.</td>
<td>As we treasure up eternal truths in our minds and hearts, the Holy Ghost will bring these truths to our remembrance in times of need and give us courage to act in faith.</td>
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Appendix C

Bracketing Interview
Bracketing Interview

I accomplished the purpose of the bracketing interview in three phases. In phase one I was interviewed by a respected colleague. In phase two I responded to a selection of biographical questions given to me by my committee chairman, Dr. Nick Eastmond. In phase three I wrote in my field journal regarding my experience coming to understand and implement the TLE. The majority of relevant content is included in Chapter III. However, the following are pertinent responses to some biographical questions about me that may help in framing the context of the researcher.

Background Information about the Researcher

I was born into an LDS family. My mother was a member of the LDS Church; however, my father was not. They divorced when I was very young, six months old. In spite of this fact, my mother remained an active Latter-day Saint and raised me in the LDS faith.

I attended 2 years of seminary in 9th and 10th grade. At that time, I was struggling in school and because of credit problems, so I had to drop seminary. However, in college I attended Brigham Young University where I enrolled in religion classes. I attained the equivalent of graduation from an Institute of religion.

After high school, I moved to California to live closer to my father. While living there, I planned to attend UC Berkeley as an English major. However, I learned after arriving in California that Berkeley only admitted transfer students in their junior year. I had attended two semesters of college at Utah Valley State College. As a result, I transferred to City College of San Francisco to complete my general education requirements in preparation to transfer to Berkeley. While attending CCSF I enjoyed a great educational experience. I learned how to learn. As I was approaching completion of my Associates Degree, I began filling out my transfer application to Berkeley. I had all of my letters of recommendation in hand, my transcript, and my application completed, but I felt very uneasy about the situation.

At that time, I began feeling the need to serve an LDS mission. Instead of enrolling at UC, I submitted mission papers and was called to serve an LDS mission to the Ohio Columbus mission. I served in Ohio from March of 1990 to April of 1992. On completion of my mission, I wanted to return to California and enroll in UC Berkeley. However, I felt impressed to go another direction. Instead, I enrolled at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. It was while attending BYU that I began thinking about teaching seminary for the LDS Church.

Becoming a seminary teacher is an extensive process. It involves earning a bachelor’s degree in a chosen field of the prospective teacher. There are two college courses that potential seminary teachers must take, one in teaching theory and one in teaching practice. After completing the two courses those who are serious about pursuing a seminary teaching position, can apply for a student teaching position. If their preservice
trainer approves of their request, they will participate in a 10-day teaching experience at a local seminary. If the student teacher’s evaluations qualify him or her, then a student teaching position is offered.

I student taught at Spanish Fork senior seminary from 1994-1995. During that year of teaching, preservice trainers make multiple evaluations of the teacher by the students, the principal at the building where the student teacher is teaching, by preservice trainers, and by the manager of preservice. If the student teacher meets the necessary qualifications, an LDS Church General Authority interviews him or her. After the student teacher completes the year teaching if all of the evaluations are positive and meet the necessary criteria, the teacher could be hired. The year I was hired nearly 350 students enrolled in the training courses at BYU. Of those 350, only 48 of them were hired to be student teachers. Of those 48 student teachers, 18 of us were hired to teach full-time. It is a very stressful and competitive experience. Not that the student teachers are competitive with each other, but that the need to perform at one’s highest abilities is paramount.

During the summer before I began student teaching, I married Tricia Schaeffer. She is also a Latter-day Saint. She served a proselyting mission to Houston Texas from 1990-1992. We met shortly after her return from Texas while she was living in my student ward. Although she was not attending BYU, she lived in student housing while she worked at Novell in Provo. We were married August 16, 1994 in the Salt Lake Temple. She and I have been part of the S&I family since we first were married.

Tricia and I were hired full-time in 1995 to teach at the Woods Cross senior seminary in Woods Cross, Utah. We had our first child during my first year of full-time employment. It has been both a wonderful and a challenging experience for us teaching seminary. Teaching seminary is a family affair. Some refer to it as living in a glass house. Because I teach the Gospel as my profession, it requires that I live the Gospel to the highest possible standards. Because family is central to the mission of the LDS Church that means my family is extremely important to my employment. In fact, if my wife and I were to divorce, S&I would immediately terminate my teaching contract. Living the standards of the Gospel is very important to being a seminary teacher. It is more than a job; it is a way of life.

I began pursuing a master’s degree in Instructional Technology from Utah State University in 2000. At that time, my wife and I had two children, Michaela and Hannah. Upon completion of my master’s degree I immediately enrolled in a doctorate program at USU in what was then the newly titled Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences program. Church, seminary, and school have been a significant influence on my family. For instance, Tricia and I have had five children since I first enrolled at Utah State. My oldest was 5 years old. In other words, most of my seven children have only known their father as a full-time employee and a graduate student. It is a wonderful thought that I am finally concluding my studies. Needless to say my wife has been tremendously supportive throughout my schooling. She has coped with a husband who has worked full-time and raised seven children during that process. I have held numerous part-time jobs
to afford the family and schooling. I have also served in many demanding callings in the LDS Church while attending school—from Elders Quorum president, two times as stake high councilor, young men’s president, and two times as a counselor in a bishopric. It has been one hectic ride.

Through all of the process of my schooling, I have had mixed support from varying groups of people. My wife and children have been tremendously supportive, my extended family also. Most people within S&I have supported me. Although, at times I encountered the occasional leader who thought pursuing a PhD was either not important or a distraction from my family. One person in particular made comments about how much time I was spending away from them, as if to say I was focused on the wrong priorities. I took exception to his comments. I don’t think anyone can decide for someone else what his or her priorities should be. My wife and I had always believed strongly that God wanted me to pursue this degree. I believed I could use my school to benefit the LDS Church and potentially improve in some way the S&I program.

During my seminary teaching career I have held numerous assignments. I have taught for 11 years in the senior seminary and for 5 years in the junior seminary. In the senior seminary, I served as seminary student council advisor, assistant principal, faculty inservice training supervisor, and computer network administrator. In the junior seminary, I have served as principal of two different seminary buildings. I have also been involved in numerous summer projects. Because seminary teachers are employed on twelve-month contracts, there are extensive opportunities to get involved in special summer projects. In 2003, I conducted a needs assessment for the Davis Area (the equivalent of a school district in S&I). In 2005, I was part of a team who conducted an evaluation of the Teaching and Learning Emphasis to write preservice curriculum for S&I. That same summer I was also part of a curriculum team who were converting the Seminary and Institute manuals into XML. During the summer of 2006 I participated in an eight person team to evaluate a doctrinal test administered by the LDS Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah. In 2009 I taught a college level religion class as an adjunct Institute teacher at the Ogden Institute of Religion. And most recently during the 2011 summer I was a team leader for a curriculum writing assignment for the LDS Leadership Pattern project. I believe my experiences in school at Utah State have contributed significantly to the extensive opportunities I have had in S&I.

I am uncertain how my PhD will influence my future in S&I. S&I is an unusual organization. There is no “corporate ladder” so to speak. What I mean is if a principal’s position becomes available, no one knows about it. There is no application process. Instead, it is an assignment made by administrators. That assignment is considered temporary. I know many teachers who have served as principals only to be reassigned back into the field to teach. However, there is a survey that teachers fill out each year with areas of interest within S&I. My first area of interest is teaching. I love the students. I have been studying for the last 11 years how to improve my teaching. I think I have improved considerably. If I remained a classroom teacher in S&I for the remainder of my career I would be happy.
However, I have other interests. I would like to work in preservice. I think it would be exciting to help new teachers understand how to understand and implement TLE. I also think it would be exciting to work in the Central Office Building in the training division. I have learned a great deal about how to improve training and I would like an opportunity to use what I have learned. If I cannot be involved in training, I would like to be involved in training on a local level within an area. I have also considered teaching at an Institute. The problem is I do not control any of these opportunities. I will have to wait and see what assignments I am given. It is exciting to think of the possibilities.

I have also considered teaching at a university. I would never want to leave S&I. I love the LDS Church and I want very much to continue building this program. That is why I focused my study on an area that would improve S&I. However, I would also like the opportunity to teach what I have learned about sociocultural learning, situated cognition, and transformational learning. I would consider an adjunct teaching position at a local university, possibly at LDS Business College, the BYU Salt Lake Center, Weber State University, or even the University of Utah. I have also thought about Western Governors University. All of these opportunities sound intriguing.

Finally, it has been a very interesting process pursuing my degree through an experimental distance education doctorate program through Utah State University. If USU had not offered the distance education doctorate degree, I would have never been able to earn my degree from the Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences Department. For me that would have been very difficult. What I have learned has benefitted me tremendously. However, being a distance education student has at times been a very lonely process. I have sat in my office entirely alone and isolated from the university reading whatever I could get my hands on. While the experience at times has been very lonely and difficult, I believe it has made me very strong in my personality. Very early on, I had to learn that if anything was going to happen, I had to do it myself because there was no one at hand to which I could turn. As I have completed my studies and begun my dissertation, I have grown much closer to my major professor and learned a great deal from our conversations. I am thankful for my experience in the distance education doctorate program.
Field Journal Bracketing Experience

As a fulltime released-time seminary for over 16 years with S&I I have experienced teaching before and after the Teaching and Learning Emphasis was introduced. Prior to the implementation of TLE I had taught seminary on three different faculties for nearly 8 years, including my student teaching year. I had experienced a culture of teaching that included some very spiritual moments of testimony development, as well as a fair amount of fun and games. S&I teaching seemed for most of the teachers I observed, including myself, to be a mix of both seeking to develop students’ knowledge of the LDS scriptures, developing their testimonies, and providing an enjoyable, maybe even entertaining, experience for the students. I taught with a variety of teachers—those who were seasoned veterans, as well as those who were newly hired. While I intently studied the scriptures to understand the spiritual insights I thought would influence students, I also regularly asked myself, how will this experience be fun for my students? My attitude and approach to teaching did not seem out of place with those of my colleagues. In fact, many of the “educational games” I learned from other teachers and I gained a great deal of the scriptural insights I had learned from teachers during weekly and summer inservice meetings.

In summary, I would describe my teaching before TLE as entertaining and scripturally based. In my lesson preparation I focused intently on what I was going to share from the scriptures, but I always thought about how I would make the lesson engaging and fun for the students. I would intentionally select passages of scripture that I thought would catch the students’ attention, and I wanted very much for them to know that what I was teaching would influence their lives if they lived it.

My intentions for teaching the way I taught were two fold. As an active member of the LDS Church, I believed that what I was teaching was truth. My experience living the teachings of Jesus Christ changed my life. I wanted the youth to experience the joy I experienced from living the Gospel. However, I also found that not all students felt the way I felt. Many students came to seminary because someone else wanted them to come, a parent or family member, a priesthood leader, or a friend. As a result, I often felt I had to approach teenagers in a way that was fun. In addition, there were some very engaging teachers on my faculties who knew how to create very enjoyable lessons. It did not take long for me to realize that in the minds of the students, I was competing with their past experience and with the word-of-mouth opinion of many of their friends regarding some very enjoyable teachers. It did not take many experiences of having students compare my teaching to brother so-and-so who was “way more fun” than I was in their minds to encourage me to talk to that teacher or watch him and try to figure out why students enjoyed being in his class.

I also felt a sense of pride or satisfaction when students liked being in my class. It was enjoyable to have meaningful spiritual experiences learning the Gospel, but also times when the students were laughing and having fun because of what we were doing in class.
I think I was seeking both for the Lord’s and for the students’ approval. I could see by the students’ smiles, attention, comments, and general levels of participation whether they were enjoying their experience. I was also trying to learn to feel what I perceived as spiritual confirmation that what I was doing pleased the Lord. I would look for moments when I felt God’s presence or when I felt like the message was sinking into the students’ hearts and minds.

There were also moments when I knew I was not pleasing the students. I could tell by their general disinterest in what we were doing in class that my lesson just did not reach them. I could tell when many would not open their scriptures, or they would talk to other students instead of listening to the lesson, come late to class, or have multiple unexcused absences that they were not enjoying the class. Often, I felt frustrated and inadequate to reach some of my students. I also had moments when I questioned the purpose of some of the games or activities in which I had my students participate. While the students were having fun, at times I questioned if the purpose of the activity was purely for their entertainment or for their spiritual education.

There was a conflict inside of me between wanting the students to like being in my class and wanting to draw them to the Lord. I knew I should always be more interested in bringing my students to God and helping them develop spiritually, but facing a classroom of unhappy teenagers was sometimes more influential.

Prior to the publication of the original TLE document in 2003, two events began to change my perspective dramatically. In 2001 I was moved to a new teaching assignment. One of the teachers on the faculty was more knowledgeable about the scriptures than anyone I ever knew before. He taught with very little entertainment, yet his past students showed a level of respect for him that I had not seen before. At the same time another teacher presented a lesson on scriptural content to our area during a summer inservice meeting. He taught us from the scriptures so powerfully. I realized he knew more about the scriptures than I ever knew was possible. His teaching style was very simple. He used nothing flashy at all, yet I felt what I perceived were very deeply spiritual feelings from the Holy Ghost. His teaching motivated me to want to know more about the scriptures and to want to help my students to feel what I had felt in his classroom. Because of these two experiences, I began to rise early in the morning and study the scriptures more intently than ever before.

Approximately 1.5 years later in 2003 the original TLE document was published. I had already begun to change my teaching practice. I found some very limited success in what I was doing, but I wanted to teach more powerfully like other teachers I was seeing. I also had listened to a number of talks by LDS Church leaders about teaching that I had thought about. When I first read the TLE document, as a graduate student of Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences at Utah State University, I was immediately intrigued by it from the perspective instructional technology. It was unlike anything I had seen in S&I training. First, it required students to engage in some very specific in-class activities.
I was uncertain whether I knew what they meant or what was expected of me to learn to implement them. For instance, I did not know what it meant for students to “identify” a doctrine or principle.

Second, I was uncertain that I even knew what a doctrine or a principle of the Gospel was. I had one experience where I presented to my students the idea of identifying doctrines and principles, and a female student asked me, “What is the difference between a doctrine and a principle, because I’m confused by that?” I had to admit to her that I did not know the difference. To complicate the matter even more, when I asked other teachers on my faculty what a doctrine and a principle were, they did not know. This caused me some confusion trying to understand how we could teach something we could not define and our students did not understand.

Over the course of the next 3 years, from 2002 to 2005 I began to change the way I was teaching. It was deeply painful. I wanted to return to the old way I had taught, when I would share very entertaining and enjoyable lessons. I found whenever I wanted to turn to that kind of teaching, I felt very uncomfortable. It seemed so out of place for so many reasons. The teaching and learning emphasis seemed focused on producing a different kind of student. It seemed I was being asked to help them become more spiritual and find greater guidance from the scriptures. I also kept thinking about what I had felt when I had been taught by those wonderful teachers who had relied so heavily on the scriptures, rather than relying on games and gimmicks to get students’ attention.

At the same time I was studying more the words of modern prophets who were assigned to teach us how they wanted us to teach. I found myself delving into their words. I read so many talks by the Brethren that led to me to see that I was supposed to be doing more than I thought before. I began to experiment in my classroom. It was interesting because at the time I was teaching on a large senior seminary faculty. I had a number of teachers including my principal asking me what I was doing. I was noticing a change in my students. It did not happen quickly, but apparently other teachers were noticing it as well.

The most pronounced difference came in two events. The first was a moment when we had been working intently one day to understand some passages in the Book of Mormon. I had planned that after we worked for a period of time we would work on scripture mastery while playing a scripture mastery game. This is a common way of getting students involved where they are competing with each other to find scriptures from some kind of memory clue. We had played the game for about five minutes or so when a young female student raised her hand and said, “Brother Mason. Could we stop playing this game now and just go back to feeling the Spirit.” That was as dramatic of a shock as I needed. I realized that the games were fun, but that at least one student noticed the decrease in the Spirit as we were focused on considerably lighter activities.

A second, but similar experience happened that same year. I was in a classroom with a retractable wall. The wall collapses so the adjoining classrooms can be combined into one
large assembly room. The walls are not very sound proof. As a result students can often hear what is happening in the rooms through the walls. One particular day both classes on each side of my classroom were playing very raucous games. The students were yelling and shouting. There was loud music that accompanied the activity they were doing. The noise was overpowering. In our class we were watching a video segment from Elder Henry B. Eyring as he was testifying of the power of the temple and what he had felt inside of it. The Holy Spirit was strong in class. Instead of asking me why we were not playing those same games, many of my students made comments that they were annoyed with how disruptive the other classes were being and that they wished they would stop yelling. It was such a dramatic contrast.

I began to accept that I needed to change my perspective on teaching seminary if I was going to continue moving my students in this new direction. I started changing my focus from what will make this lesson fun today, to what will help my students to feel the Holy Ghost? I began telling myself that the students were getting plenty of play in their lives. What I realized is what they were not getting was plenty of the scriptures and the Holy Ghost in their lives. The students would make sure they had enough play time in their day, but I became convinced that they would not likely make sure they got adequate time in the word of God. In the past I had found myself saying things like, “We’ve been working so hard, we need a break from all the hard work.” I began asking myself, “When do the students need a break from the Holy Ghost?” They’re getting breaks from the Spirit too often already. That’s what the world is offering them! I am here to help them see the side that is most likely being neglected in their lives—the influence of the Holy Ghost.

At the same time I was having thoughts like these, I was asked to move to a junior high seminary. I was thoroughly excited. I thought, “Finally! I’m alone. I can do whatever I want without any other teacher to be compared to.” I quickly found that I was not as good of a teacher as I thought I was. I was good at telling students about the scriptures, but I was not so good at figuring out how to get the students to find what I had found in the scriptures. I began applying everything I could from my Instructional Technology studies. That helped but it was not enough.

I found what needed to happen was just plain old fashioned humbling. I had students who did not like being in my class. I had some really painful experiences with this. There were some long hours sitting in my office after work trying to figure out why things weren’t what I wanted them to be. I continued reading and listening to conference talks and BYU devotional addresses. I also listened to talks by General Authorities to S&I.

About this time I was invited to work on a summer project in the central office with Chad Webb and Bryce Dunford. We were responsible for analyzing bullet-point three of the Teaching Emphasis. I spent the summer working with them to define what the bullet-point expected from teachers. The next summer I worked with Ken Plummer to evaluate the MTC’s doctrinal competency test. Each time I was involved in a work project like
these I grew some more in my understanding of what TLE meant. I was exposed to thinking that I had not heard before in the field. I was able to talk with great teachers and get my questions answered.

After some time working on implementing what I had learned, in 2008 I was assigned to mentor a new teacher named Brian Parker. To facilitate his transition into S&I we met daily during lunch to talk about how the day was going, what was working and what was not working. We also talked about why we thought it was or was not working. As we would talk we would formulate a plan to change things up for the remainder of the day. Then we would go into class and try teaching with the alterations to see how things worked. After school ended we would evaluate our day’s experience and then talk about the next day’s lesson. We would speak in general terms, focusing more on what the content taught and how it might relate to students. We might come up with a few good lesson ideas, but then we would leave each other alone to create the next day’s lesson. Amazingly, our lessons were very different from each other. There were some important similarities in what we would focus on, but each of us was free to choose our own way and implement what we had learned on our own.

Another important change happened. The school had overloaded some of our classes so the numbers were very high. Then they had significantly limited the numbers of students in one period when we both taught. As a result we had two classes of approximately 15 students each. This seemed to be a problem because seminary requires students to share and talk and if there are too few students and a significant portion do not want to be in seminary, then we would potentially have a very poor experience in one of those smaller classes. With the approval of our area director, Brian and I combined out 15 person classes into one 30 person class that he and I team taught.

Team teaching was one of the greatest experiences of my career. We observed each other every day. We could easily give each other feedback on why we thought things were going well or things were failing. We regularly commented on what we liked and what we thought we could improve. Subsequently, those two years were the years of greatest growth in my entire career. I learned more about teaching those 2 years than any other years before or after. I wish I always could teach with someone as humble and open as Brian was. As a result we helped each other improve in our teaching.

To me what is important about my experience is that I had to undergo a significant transformation to learn to understand and implement the Teaching and Learning Emphasis. I had to examine myself and my character. This required deep humility and pain, so I could repent for the way I was teaching my students that really was wasting their time with frivolous activities that did not convert them. I had to study intently the words of prophets and leaders to understand what I was supposed to do. I had to learn to trust that students really did want to learn the scriptures and not be entertained. I had needed to have mentors (Bryce Dunford and Chad Webb) and be a mentor to Brian Parker to learn how to understand and implement TLE. I needed to be observed, to
observe, and to give and receive feedback. Many times that feedback was verychallenging both to give and to receive as it was quite pointed. In summary, I experiencedtransformational change as I questioned the foundational assumptions of what I thought itmeant to teach seminary. This change led me to expand the way I was teaching to driveme to higher levels, in fact, to places I not only had never been before but that I did notthink were possible.

The fruit of these changes came when I was teaching students who needed my help. Whatlet me know that I was significantly improved in my teaching is I began to notice a dramatic shift in students having conversion experiences while in seminary. I watchedstudents change their lives, come unto Christ, and find the strength to overcome sin, develop testimonies, commit to go on missions, invite their friends and parents to change, and share their testimonies in powerful ways. I witnessed what the Teaching Learning Emphasis said should happen, students were deepening their conversion, coming unto Christ, and learning to rely on the teachings and the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

What I began to wonder was if other teachers were experiencing what I was experiencing. Because the transformation for me was very painful and time consuming and required me to work closely with other teachers, I wondered if failing to understand the nature of the change TLE required was a barrier for other teachers to learn to understand and implement it. However, I needed more than anecdotal evidence that transformational change might be involved.

In trying to identify my biases and bracket them, I have had to examine these experiences and consider that I am biased in thinking that all teachers might need to make a transformational change to implement TLE. I also realized that I still do not know everything that I thought I knew. There are many teachers who see things very differently from me and I continue to need to engage in social learning to understand my biases still. Finally, I realized that coming to understand and implement TLE is not the goal of S&I. The goal of S&I is to assist students in deepening their conversion as they come to understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ. In other words, my bias was that I thought that TLE was the cause for the change in teachers. What really is the catalyst is learning how to assist or help students to become converted to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. TLE is not all that is required for this process to occur; it is only what we are currently being asked to emphasize. Hence, the catalyst for change in me was not the implementation of TLE, but the desire to help students become converted in more significant ways.
Appendix D

Approval from S&I Educational Research Committee
5 March 2008

Mark Mason

Dear Broher Mason,

The CES Education Research Committee has approved your research project under the following conditions:

1. The collection of data will be limited to those efforts outlined in your proposal.
2. Any changes to your instrumentation or procedures will be submitted to the committee for approval.
3. You will contact your research subjects and their supervisors well in advance to permit maximum flexibility in managing their schedules.
4. You will obtain CES approval to publish or present any of your research findings.
5. You will provide CES with an electronic copy of your research report upon completion of your degree.

We look forward to learning from your research and using it to improve CES programs.

Sincerely,

Randall L. Hall
Associate Administrator

50 E. North Temple St. • Rm. 901 • Salt Lake City, Utah 84150-2700
Appendix E

USU Internal Review Board Ethics Approval
MEMORANDUM

TO: Nick Eastwood
   Mark Mason

FROM: Richard D. Cordin, Acting IR3 Chair
      True M. Rubul, IRB Administrator

SUBJECT: Examining the Transformation of Professional Identity of Released-time Seminary Teachers as Instigated by the Introduction of the Teaching and
           Your proposal has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board and is approved under
           expected procedure #7

X There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.

   There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

   This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file for the period of one year. If your study extends beyond this approval period, you must contact this office to request an annual review of the research. Any change affecting human subjects must be approved by the Board prior to implementation. Injuries or any unanticipated problem involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board.

   Prior to involving human subjects, properly executed informed consent must be obtained from each subject or from an authorized representative, and documentation of informed consent must be kept on file for at least three years after the project ends. Each subject must be furnished with a copy of the informed consent document for their personal records.

   The research activities listed below are expedited from IRB review based on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human research subjects, 45 CFR Part 46, as amended to include provisions of the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, November 9, 1998.

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, culture beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.
USU IRB Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT

Examining the Transformation of Professional Identity of Released-Time Seminary Teachers As Instigated By The Introduction Of The Teaching And Learning Emphasis

Introduction/Purpose Dr. Nick Eastmond in the Department of Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences at Utah State University is conducting a research study to find out more about the change experienced by released-time seminary teachers because of the implementation of the Teaching and Learning Emphasis (TLE). You have been asked to take part because you were recommended as someone who is effective at understanding and implementing TLE. There will be approximately 6 total participants in this research. Mark Mason, a graduate student in the Department of Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences at Utah State University, will assist in conducting this study.

Procedure: If you agree to be in this research study, you will participate in an in-depth audio recorded interview concerning the changes you experienced as you learned to understand and implement TLE. It is anticipated that the initial interview will last approximately one hour. You will also receive an electronic copy of the transcript of the interview to check for accuracy. Reviewing the transcript will be done independent of the interview and should require no more than half an hour. You could be asked to clarify your responses to interview questions through either an additional phone or email contact. It is likely that you will be asked to participate in a second follow-up interview lasting approximately one hour. Finally, if traveling to your location is prohibitive the interview from occurring and your participation is essential to the study, we will conduct the interview via a video chat tool like Skype or one with which you are familiar. If the interview is conducted via video chat, the interview must be conducted with both the participant and the interviewer in a secure location such as a locked private office.

Risks: Participation in this research study may involve some added risks or discomforts. There is a small risk of loss of confidentiality but we will take steps to reduce this risk and protect your confidentiality.

Benefits: This research could directly benefit you as a participant. The benefits include a clearer understanding of your experience learning to understand and implement TLE. Furthermore, it could benefit the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion by improving in-service training, teacher/administrator relationships, and individual teachers’ abilities to understand and implement TLE.

Explanation & offer to answer questions: Mark Mason has explained this research study to you and answered your questions. If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may reach Dr. Nick Eastmond at (555) 555-5555 or

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. If you wish to withdraw from this study, please contact either Nick Eastmond or Mark Mason to inform either of them of your decision.

V7 06/15/2011
INFORMED CONSENT

Examining the Transformation of Professional Identity Of Released-Time Seminary Teachers As Instigated By The Introduction Of The Teaching And Learning Emphasis

Confidentiality Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Direct quotations from your interview transcript might appear in the final document, however there will be no personal attribution to your name. Furthermore, there will be no mention of the specific location where you each. However, a general description of your location will be associated with your quotation to provide context. Only the investigator and Mark Mason will have access to the data which will be kept in a locked file cabinet or on a password protected computer in a locked room.

To protect your privacy, personal, identifiable information will be removed from study documents and replaced with a study identifier throughout the duration of the research. Identifying information will be stored separately from data and will be kept until May of 2012. All transcripts of interviews, audio recordings of interviews, records connecting your personal name to the pseudonym associated with your responses will be destroyed or deleted by May 30, 2012.

IRB Approval Statement The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at Utah State University has approved this research study. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights or a research-related injury and would like to contact someone other than the research team, you may contact the IRB Administrator at (435) 797-3566 or email IRB@usu.edu to obtain information on how to file a complaint.

Copy of consent You have been given two copies of this Informed Consent. Please sign both copies and keep one copy for your files.

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."

Dr. Nick Eastmond, Principal Investigator

Mark Mason

Signature of Participant By signing below I agree to participate.

Participant's signature Date

V7 06/15/2011
Appendix F

Contact, Interview, and Descriptive Statistics Protocols
Dear Brother [Insert Name],

I have approval from the S&I Education Research Committee to interview teachers for my dissertation. What I am looking for is seminary teachers you would consider effective at implementing the Teaching and Learning Emphasis (TLE). The study focuses on teachers who have experienced a change in their practice since TLE was introduced. I would love to talk with you about some potential participants. I anticipate the initial interview will last approximately one hour. I also anticipate that I will interview participants one additional time for approximately one hour. I want to re-emphasize that I am looking for teachers who are effective at implementing TLE. Furthermore, I am looking for teachers who were hired within certain date ranges: hired between 2001-1997, between 1996-1988, and from 1987 or earlier.

When is the best time to call you in the next few days? Or, if you would like to call me, I am free from 10:00 am to 11:45 am and after 3:00 pm. The best number to reach me is on my mobile phone listed below. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Mark Mason
Protocol for Initial Phone Contact with Research Participants

- Explain what the participant’s involvement in the study includes, that I am looking for their description of the change that has occurred in their teaching since the introduction of TLE.

- Explain that strict confidentiality will be preserved.

- The interview will likely take about one hour.

- There will be a follow-up evaluation of the data for member checking.

- There will be an additional interview after reviewing the transcription of the original interview, taking no longer than one additional hour.

- Explain the potential benefits of the study, that it will likely positively influence teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions of what is necessary to implement TLE.

- I will also provide them with an electronic copy of the finished product when the study is complete.

- The interview will be conducted face-to-face. If necessary, the interview can take place via Skype.

- Send an email with an invitation for a Doodle Poll and the informed consent form.
Interview Protocol

Lead Interview question: “How would you describe your experience learning to understand and implement the Teaching and Learning Emphasis?”

1. Practice patience and silence, listen intently, and remain relaxed to allow the participants to reveal their experience.

2. Practice effective communication skills by listening carefully and restating what you think you heard the participant say.

3. Remember the primary research question: What is the nature or meaning of the change experience of a sample of released-time seminary teachers who are considered to be effective at learning to understand and implement TLE? Consider how the details of the conversation will lead to answering this question. Redirect if the conversation loses focus.

4. Ask participants why they described something the way they did or why they think something is the way they described it.
Dear [Insert participant’s name],

I need some basic biographical information about you and your teaching assignments. This should not be long. I need to provide some brief context for the people I have interviewed. When the information is presented in the dissertation it will not be connected to any individual. For instance, it will read the participants were between the ages of 35-55 etc. Please answer the following and return the information to me. Thank you.

- How old are you?
- For how long have you taught seminary?
- In what year were you hired?
- Describe the student body at the schools you have taught at since the Teaching and Learning Emphasis was published (Economic status, ethnic groups, traditions of excellence, etc.).
- Describe the faculty (or faculties) at the schools you have taught at since the Teaching and Learning Emphasis was published (Attitudes toward TLE. Numbers of people who teach there. Older or younger teachers).
- How long have you taught at your current assignment?
Appendix G

Data Analysis Checklist
Data Analysis Checklist

☐ Transcribe the interview

☐ Read the transcription

☐ Develop initial themes

☐ Create textural description (What did they describe?)

☐ Revise theme with structural description (Why do they think, feel, or believe that way?)

☐ List possible themes (imaginative variation)

☐ Support description with evidence (intentional acts, feeling acts, words, phrases, etymologies, metaphors, analogies, etc.)

☐ Revise to plausible themes

☐ Prioritize into essential and incidental themes (If eliminated, would you still call it the phenomenon? How is this theme different from others? What are the essential differences?)
☐ Group into theme clusters

☐ Have I read the transcript sufficiently?

☐ Have I written sufficiently to clarify the theme?

☐ Combine all theme clusters into a composite description of the phenomenon

☐ Focus on the overall research question: What is the nature of the change experience of learning to understand and implement TLE?
Appendix H

Textural Description
Textural Analysis of Participants’ Lived Experiences

Aaron’s Experience

Aaron has taught released time seminary for 24 years. He fits in category 3 (hired from 1987 and earlier). He had taught seminary for 16 years before TLE was introduced in 2003. He described his recent experience as teaching middle class Caucasian students, many of which come from broken homes (perhaps 40%). He predicted that under half of his students will not attend a university, and that the remainder of them will take a few college classes but not earn bachelor degrees. In many ways they seem to be passive learners. The average neighborhood has less than 50% church activity.38

Since TLE was introduced 2003 Aaron has taught on a variety of faculties. His second principal was very motivated who focused on developing TLE skills. However, his current principal is more relaxed in his focus. Aaron explained that over the past 8 years he has seen a varying degree of interest among his co-workers in learning to understand and implement TLE. Some are seeking to embrace it; others he feels think they are implementing it but really are not; while some love the concepts of TLE, but are having difficulty consistently applying them. He has observed that on the faculty there have been days of frustration and days when teachers feel they can see progress.

He described the current faculty he works with by saying:

There is some discussion regarding the TLE methodology [see document in Appendix B]. In faculty meetings we mostly skip from one specific bullet point to another and how we are utilizing it in the classroom. [There is] not much depth, but a consistent effort to remind teachers to use it, and follow it. There is an effort

38 Church activity is a measure of members’ attendance of sacrament meeting. Sacrament meeting is the main church meeting on Sunday. For an area in the Wasatch Front (from Ogden to Provo) this level of activity would be moderate to low. The 50% statistic represents Aaron’s opinion of the activity rate, rather than a statistical measure of record keeping.
to incorporate more discussion to all the bullet points and to general teaching issues rather than a focus on one or two bullet points and expectations. The principal follows the direction of the area director. Overall, the teachers prefer this approach because they like a blend of how to improve teaching rather than a single focus. The more experienced teachers do not share [their insights or] teaching methodology like [our] other faculties in the past [at this building]. However, two mentors are sharing with the two recently hired teachers.

Aaron is the only study participant who is not serving as a principal of a senior seminary. He has, however, been involved as an inservice leader in numerous training experiences in his area and on his faculty.

A Progressive Change

Aaron described his experience of learning to implement TLE as progressive, meaning gradually increasing in understanding and involvement. Over a period of 7 years, Aaron engaged in certain acts of knowing. After the initial introduction of TLE (2003) Aaron began examining the document for understanding. He felt that he had grasped the meaning of TLE as a whole rather quickly. He defined it as “to assist the students to be able to do more responsible learning. That’s its objective.” However, he said, “Understanding the different parts of [all of the bullet-points] and how the students are to do their part with that specific one is where I’ve had to spend more time.” For Aaron, understanding the individual bullet-points was a difficult, lengthy process.

Acceptance

Prior to developing his understanding, Aaron seems to have made an important decision through a feeling act. He accepted the change TLE brought to his practice. He described his decision as being based on his experience with previous changes in S&I. He
said, “More people had troubles with what they wanted and why they wanted it than I had. I personally didn’t have much trouble with it all, because [I was] coming from previous experience where they had changed emphasis.” He then described different events where S&I had changed its organizational focus: there was a wheel that identified attributes of an effective seminary teacher, a move from concept lessons to sequential scripture teaching, and the development of progression in a lesson from readiness, involvement-participation, to application. However, he said he likes TLE because the focus is not as much on what the teacher should do but what the students should be doing. Later in the interview, Aaron said that having the focus be on students allowed him to create a structure in his mind to determine whether he was being effective at helping students become more responsible for their learning or not.

Aaron described one significant moment of acceptance as a sacred experience. Earlier in his life he received his patriarchal blessing. A patriarchal blessing is a personal revelation given to an individual that provides them with the important possibilities in one’s life if the direction in the blessing is obeyed (Faust, 1995). Aaron feels his patriarchal blessing is essential to his attitude of acceptance regarding TLE. He said:

There is something that has guided me in my patriarchal blessing that helps me to keep an open mind. [Aaron became very hushed and subdued at this point.] That is very helpful to me. Many will put up a wall and reject or challenge or ignore the new idea or way, and will say, “What are you doing?” Or they will say, “This will change and we will come back, because S&I has done that quite a bit.” For me [long pause] I have been given some very pointed information in a patriarchal blessing that said…”Keep your mind open to what others may be teaching you.” Some [co-workers in S&I] are hesitant or object to change because they say I don’t know why they want us to do this. Not me! I want to know why they are trying to get me to do this so I can give my full support to it and enjoy the blessings of doing it.
This moment of accepting and valuing seems to have strongly influenced Aaron’s attitude toward learning to understand and implement TLE.

**Personal Choices and Human Relationships**

He also described having a very open relationship with his principal. He said, “He and I had a relationship where we could openly talk and challenge each other to make sure what we were doing was in harmony with the Teaching and Learning Emphasis.” This relationship was not shared by everyone on his faculty. Some would come to Aaron privately to talk about their concerns with things they thought were wrong about the way the principal was doing things. Aaron’s attitude was, “He is trying to help us.”

However, understanding did not come quickly. On his part it required numerous personal choices and interactions with other people. He had to examine carefully the contents of TLE. He accomplished this through reading assignments given to him by his principal, independent study of additional talks written by General Authorities of the LDS Church, and contents on the S&I web site. This was aided by an important refinement of the document itself (S&I, 2009a). Improvement required Aaron to face difficult, challenging moments of changing his practice. Ultimately, Aaron became an advocate, helping other teachers to learn to understand and implement TLE.

The following reveals an important rational explanation for Aaron when discussing a major change experience he had when coming to know how to implement TLE.

**Researcher:** If you were to say, what the meaning of that change experience was…What would you say?
Aaron: Part of it is you have to have an outside source who comes to you and says, here’s what I see.

Researcher: Do you mean, like the principal was for you?

Aaron: Exactly. A trainer, some individual who sees when they watch you teach, this is not the Teaching and Learning Emphasis and this is.

Aaron’s faculty had a principal who spent a summer working with the faculty to teach them a particular nomenclature as Aaron referred to it. The principal had systematized elements of TLE into a way of thinking about the outcomes. Then he taught that nomenclature to the faculty. They worked that summer in particular on learning to identify principles and write them as statements of meaning. Aaron said that was very difficult for others and for him. “I found I wasn’t good at it. I found that I was much better at doing a different part of the Teaching and Learning Emphasis.” To overcome this weakness he described needing, “another pair of eyes” looking at his teaching. The person needed to be “somebody that you trust” rather than just any person. They needed to be candid and give open feedback.

After examining his own teaching, being observed, and receiving feedback Aaron would frequently turn to written resources. He read General Authority talks, went to the S&I website and read what was available there. These resources were in addition to what the principal had given the faculty to read. One talk in particular that influenced him was given by Henry B. Eyring (2005). In the talk Elder Eyring described high-jumping and needing to raise the bar. From that conversation and his experience with his principal Aaron realized that the bar was a standard that everyone understood. He said he realized that teachers need a standard “to measure our performance in the classroom. We needed
to figure out when we met the standard and when we did not.” By providing the nomenclature the seminary principal had helped provide that standard. Then, when Aaron and other members of the faculty talked, they could “agree that this is it and this isn’t it.” Having that standard allowed them to give each other feedback, both positive and corrective.

Having developed the understanding from what his principal had taught him and from his personal reading, Aaron then would go to other teachers and say:

Do you understand what I am understanding? And then, if he or she was to say “No that’s not it,” then I would try to massage or to correct it and go through to work it out. That peer review or to be able to invite feedback or to process with another individual was very essential to helping me to be able to understand the TLE to the degree that I understand it now. But they have to be able to give you information that you both agree with. If I am going to say that I am doing the “identify” [portion of the TLE], then they both have to agree that “identify” is done in this way. If you cannot agree on the standard, then we cannot help each other; hence, the summer when we sat down together to figure out what it means to identify principles. One year went by, with frustration after the first few months. But after the end of the first year I walked into another teacher’s classroom—and we were encouraged highly to observe other teachers. We were not necessarily to come in and say, “I am here to give you feedback” and tell them “you are doing it or you are not doing it.” We were supposed to come and look at ourselves and see if we were doing it, specifically on this one little sliver of identifying principles from the scriptures.

It was important that the people observing and giving each other feedback trusted each other. Aaron said,

It is essential that somebody that you trust or that you give license to come in and say, “You’ve done it” or “you have not done it,” because there were men on this faculty who did not recognize that they were not hitting the standard. They were not getting there.

Being able to give constructive, pointed feedback was necessary and required a solid relationship of trust.
Conflict

One particular conflict developed on the faculty. The teachers and principal focused exclusively on practicing to identify and understand principles from the scriptures. They worked throughout the summer learning to state principles. When the school year began, after a few months the teachers noticed the students did not like the change. Aaron explained, “So they stepped back and said, ‘We don’t like what we’re doing. The Teaching and Learning Emphasis is not helping my teaching.’ That was the result of just focusing on this one part of the Teaching and Learning Emphasis.”

As a result, Aaron and the faculty had a major breakthrough. They realized that “they were thinking this is the only way to teach, instead of balancing it with the other bullet-points that were there (i.e., taking a more holistic view). In the end, you still have to teach by the Holy Ghost.” This is an important point because learning by the Holy Ghost is another expectation of TLE. Aaron described how over time he realized that all of the areas of TLE are important and must be blended together to be effective at implementing it. In contrast, he has seen teachers who think that “explain, share, and testify” are the backbone of TLE and they focus solely on that particular aspect, thinking that is implementing TLE. He also said some think “pair and share” is doing TLE. From his moment of conflict he said, “I broadened myself out,” trying to blend all aspects of TLE into his teaching.

Self-Evaluation

Aaron acknowledged that part of the problem he and his faculty faced in those early months was also the fact that they were not good at helping students learn to
understand, identify, and state principles. As a result, he would evaluate himself. He said:

I would write the principles down. I would try to see what was going on in the scripture passages. I would try to get through the details as much as I could to get through to the principles. I found I wasn’t good at it.

Through self-examination Aaron described how he could identify principles and then illustrate them better than he could explicitly write statements capturing them. Once he could illustrate the principle he would “work backwards.” He said:

If I can think of an example that illustrates the principle for me, then I can see it. So I would take a story from general conference that illustrates it in a really clear way, then I would ask, ‘How does this story illustrate the principle?’

Through that process Aaron described becoming good at writing clear statements of principle.

Identify Weaknesses

Throughout the conversation Aaron often focused on the importance of helping students learn to identify principles. I wondered why he consistently left out doctrines, because the expectation of TLE is for students to identify doctrines and principles. It was important to distinguish between whether Aaron was overlooking an important aspect of TLE or whether something else was occurring.39

39 There has been a degree of debate among S&I teachers seeking to define doctrines from principles. In the past there has been no official definition given to designate a doctrine from a principle. However, administrators are currently rewriting the Teaching the Gospel handbook (S&I, 2001). The new edition addresses the issue. It reads,

A doctrine is a fundamental, unchanging truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A principle is an enduring truth or rule individuals can adopt to guide them in making decisions. Gospel principles are universal and help people apply the doctrines of the gospel to everyday living. Elder Richard G. Scott taught “Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application.”

At times the distinction between a doctrine and a principle can be difficult to discern. Elder Henry B. Eyring shared the following: “I wouldn’t spend a lot of time, by the way, trying to distinguish between a principle and a doctrine. I’ve heard conversations of that kind that weren’t very fruitful” (S&I, In Press).
Researcher: Right now I can really see a huge emphasize on principles. What about doctrines? How do you see them figuring into the Teaching and Learning Emphasis?

Aaron: Doctrines were not my weakness. In my approach to teaching, doctrines has not changed from the way I was teaching before the Teaching and Learning Emphasis. That is the problem for many people with the Teaching and Learning Emphasis. I think many people believed it was a wholesale change of what they did in the past. It was not. It was simply an addition to help them focus better in certain areas. Where’s your weakness? Where’s your strength. I had to go through the bullet-points and figure out where I needed help. Explain, share, and testify is another one of my weaknesses. Doctrines, however, was never one of my weaknesses. I could teach the doctrines without much challenge at all.

“A Rich Experience”

Aaron said the result of all of his effort is seen in the kind of experience his students are having now. He said with TLE now “there is a more positive or edifying experience in the classroom.” However, he was quick to point out, “Not that we weren’t having edifying experiences before. We did have them. But this provides, maybe I use a different adjective, a rich experience.” The following discussion clearly reveals the nature of the change for his students from Aaron’s perspective:

Researcher: If you were to contrast the way that you taught before and the way you are teaching now, how is this kind of teaching different from what you were doing before?

Aaron: Almost always, once I thought they had the message it was, “Ok, now how do you apply that in your life?” As soon as they gave one answer, we moved on. Once we kind of assumed that, “Okay! That means I should listen to my bishop,” then, “Okay! Good! Let’s go on”…. I was very much focused on the facts, the content, the context of the book of scripture….As I would read the scriptures I wanted to help the student understand definitions and things so that they could go, “Oh! I know what this is saying.” Verses now I’ve tried to understand what is the Gospel message here?

Researcher: What would you say the goal is now?
Aaron: The goal is that they figure out the whys of what we are doing. For example, why would we pay tithing? What is it behind paying of tithing that makes it significant?..That approach of analyzing the scriptures, figuring out if this was what the Lord was trying to teach those people at that time, how do I see what the Lord wants me to do in my particular situation today, using the same basis of that book of scripture or that passage of scripture.

However, Aaron then explained that alone students do not “fish well.” Here Aaron is alluding to a talk given by Elder David A. Bednar (2006) where he challenged seminary teachers to help their students learn to “fish” rather than teaching them by “giving fish to them.” Aaron learned that accomplishing this process requires a mutual relationship between the students and the teacher. He said, “They do not do it alone. We do it together.”

When asked to describe how he thinks TLE helps bring about this rich experience for students he said:

I think we are at a stage now, and I clearly see the General Authorities doing this kind of teaching, that we can’t be always asking for a more Law of Moses type of approach to the Gospel where we’re simply told what to do and then we go do it. We are to be much more faith and trust driven people to getting answers, revelation, and understanding from the words of the prophets and the Holy Ghost.

**Blending it all Together**

When asked to describe what is required from teachers to facilitate this rich experience of learning he said, it requires teachers to help students accept greater responsibility for learning and help them learn to apply the scriptures. He said, “You have to have multiple parts of the TLE to accomplish that. This isn’t all new stuff. But you have to have it all blended together to accomplish that.” When asked to describe the process of blending it all together he said:
Hmm [long pause]. You might have to pause the recorder. I don’t know if I can put my finger on it. Well, let me say it this way. It’s like Isaiah teaches: Line upon line, precept on precept. As I have gained and learned and seen, I just build on, and build on. I really can’t tell you that an event or a multitude of events has brought it about. It’s just my continual drive inside to say, am I doing it the way that S&I desires me to do it? Continually asking that question and then having that mirror to see, “Yeah! It’s happening” or “no it’s not.”

Aaron then described what he thought were two influential moments when he can look into the mirror. First, it happens when he is preparing lessons. He has created a document that summarizes for him the essential elements of implementing TLE into his lesson plans. He evaluates all of his lessons, both past and present according to this guiding document.

Second, he described the following:

Aaron: I’ll also stop in the classroom and be thinking and pondering, is this where it should be? I’ll pray. I’ll often say a prayer, “Heavenly Father it just doesn’t seem to be jellin’ right now.” I don’t know what it is. Someone could come in and point it out to me—and I like it when they do—but I don’t know it on my own. But I’ll make a modification, I’ll feel inspired, or think [long pause]

Researcher: Will you do that on the fly, right there in class?

Aaron: No, usually afterwards.

Researcher: So when you have a break or a prep hour you’ll do it there?

Aaron: That’s correct. That’s not unusual. I did that before the Teaching and Learning Emphasis. But the Teaching and Learning Emphasis gives me a structure of what I should focus on. Before it was Readiness [long pause] uh, I can’t remember [pause] application was the last one [pause] involvement! Readiness, involvement, application! Then I saw, “You know what? There was such a confusion of all those three. You never knew what you were doing, when you were doing them, or what order they were supposed to go in.” Then I realized, “You know what? They’re all incorporated in the TLE. It’s just how they fit.” Oh, you know we used to call this readiness. Now, it’s just helping them learn by the Spirit. Different names, but I still think we’re doing the same things. I don’t think the Teaching and Learning Emphasis is so different that individuals have to discard the great things they were doing previously. It’s just seeing how
they fit with what you used to do and what you are expected to do currently and how you could do it better. It’s a culmination of years!

We had a foundation when I first began teaching seminary, then this was added in. And it’s helped even more. I had a great foundation that S&I has been training me with for years, and then they came in and added the structure of Teaching and Learning Emphasis in there and that was very helpful to me to be able to see what I feel is some of the greater teaching the Lord expects us to do.

Benjamin’s Experience

Benjamin has taught seminary for 26 years. He fits in category 3 (hired from 1987 and earlier). He had taught seminary for 17 years before TLE was introduced in 2003. He described his recent experience at his current teaching assignment as teaching a student body that is mixed between affluent and lower income. The population is ethnically very diverse. The students are generally strong in scholastics, sports, music, and drama. There is a lot of school spirit. The class officers, cheerleading, and pep club are very important to the students. The parents express mixed attitudes toward seminary.

Since TLE was introduced he has taught on a variety of faculties. Some were larger with as many as eight teachers, while the smallest had only two. Attitudes on his earlier faculty were “split toward TLE.” However, his recent faculty experiences have been that everyone is “on board.” Benjamin currently is assigned as the principal of a senior seminary.

A Process of Change

Benjamin described his experience as a process that began long before TLE was published. He described the process with words like distilling, growing, and gleaning
over time. He described a social learning experience with a strong group of peers that helped him develop his personal philosophy or teaching identity. This process involved him changing his character and developing his practice over time to become effective. While he already had developed many attributes, skills, and attitudes of an effective teacher, he explained how TLE had expanded his view of teaching. Finally, TLE has influenced him to help other teachers develop their character and practice.

**Over Time**

Benjamin summarized what he thinks his change experience was like.

It’s something that’s taken some time. But for me personally, I believe and I didn’t realize it while it was happening, but I think that the principles which are behind the Teaching Emphasis are the things that I began to slowly comprehend. But you see, I’ve been teaching for 26 years. But how long has TLE be around? Eight years. Almost 26 years ago, they began to distill on me. I had no idea that they were going to be part of some future Teaching Emphasis. As far as I was concerned it was just good teaching based upon sound, fundamental principles of truth that were found in the scriptures and in the words of the prophets.

**“A Group of Teachers”**

When Benjamin was a new teacher, he was assigned to a faculty where there was a group of teachers who worked closely with him to help him develop. These teachers had a profound influence on helping him create what he called his “philosophy of teaching.” He said:

Really, when I think about it, I was blessed to be with a group of teachers, perhaps three or four key instructors that understood these principles. And through inservice, through discussions, through teaching, through observations, through example, through what I could observe through these teachers and what was happening in their classrooms and what the results were, it began to grow within me.
Benjamin said that his experience with these teachers was formative. “I began to glean from these teachers, through observation, through the Spirit, I began to glean what it was about their teaching that in my mind reflected these true principles and what seemed to really work.”

“Spiritual Self-Reliance”

Over time Benjamin began to understand a central concept that this group of teachers were focusing on, a concept called spiritual self-reliance. This idea was not something these men developed. Benjamin said it was a common topic among General Authorities during his early career, particularly from Elder Boyd K. Packer. When asked to define it, Benjamin said:

What does that look like in the classroom? If you say to yourself, I’m going to train spiritual self-reliance in these students: Help them to become absolutely independent so that when they leave the classroom, I don’t leave them without anything. So they are equipped, they are trained, so that when they are put into a difficult position they are independent and on their own spiritually. What does that type of training look like in the classroom? That’s the TLE to me.

However, as Benjamin said it was not an easy experience learning to teach students to be spiritually self-reliant. He described many factors contributing to his success.

Humbled

First, the change involved a number of difficult experiences where Benjamin was humbled. Becoming a new teacher was difficult. He had taught student taught one class for only five weeks when he was hired. Then he was given 160 students and five classes. “It was a baptism by fire. And I was humbled. I was humbled to the dust. There were many days where I would go home and tell my wife that I just don’t know if I can do
As a result of being humbled, Benjamin said he felt that his “heart was right.” He turned to the group of experienced teachers on his faculty for help.

It was the right time, it was the right moment, and my heart was right and it was the right group of men to be with and it mentored me to the point where I really started to gain understanding of how these principles worked. I became converted. I was convinced and converted that this was the way and this was good teaching.

“Love the Students”

Another significant event occurred when Benjamin realized he did not truly love his students. As a new teacher he found that some of his students “were dropping out of my classes.” As a result, he began to examine himself. He realized:

I didn’t love them. I thought I did. I went into teach thinking I loved the students. The first few months into it I realized, man, I didn’t love these guys. They drive me crazy. I knew that if I did not find that love, I was dead. I was doomed as a teacher. I could not do the work without the love.

He began to pray earnestly to love the students. He said, “I knew that if I did not see these kids through the eyes of the Savior that I would not have the ability to teach.” He went on to say:

I can’t say when it happened or exactly how it happened, but with deep gratitude and appreciation to my Savior I was given the gift of love for my kids. And with that ability I began to see the students—I began to see their futures. I began to see a student as who they were going to become rather than who they were at the present. I saw their futures laid before me and that was humbling. As a result of seeing who they would become, it changed my teaching. I wasn’t teaching teenagers. I was teaching in such a way to assist in what I could see they needed to become. So, rather than teaching lessons that were just little conceptual, compartmentalized lessons, I began shifting completely towards training. In other words, I am teaching in a way because they must be self-reliant. In order for them to become who I see that they need to become, I know I must teach in this way. It wasn’t teaching for the moment any more. It was teaching for the future, which thing I hadn’t seen before. All I could see at that moment, when I was struggling,
was obnoxious teenagers. They were rude, they were disrespectful, and they were being brats. I couldn’t see who they were becoming. That changed my whole philosophy. I started teaching them as who they could become.

“A Higher Mission”

During this difficult time when students were not responding well to his teaching, Benjamin said he faced an important choice. He could have turned to playing games with the students, giving them food, or telling them jokes to win them over to him. Yet he chose to go another direction. When asked why he choose the way he did, he responded:

Everybody wants to be liked. Everybody likes to feel like that they’re liked and appreciated, and so I’m sure we’re all guilty of moments where we’ve done things in the classroom where we hope that the kids will respect us and that kind of thing. I’m sure that we’re all guilty. But I just had a feeling that there’s a higher mission. There’s a higher purpose.

I’ll tell you, there’s a talk that was giving that had a significant impact on me. It was given my Howard W. Hunter. It’s called “Eternal Investments.” In that he said when your students have left your classroom, and the charisma of your personality is gone, what are you going to leave them with? Don’t leave them with nothing. That’s paraphrased. That talk instilled in me a higher purpose.

Oh, and he mentioned, you do not need personal disciples. [Benjamin pounded the desk here.] I thought, am I teaching in a way that establishes personal discipleship? Am I drawing them to me or to the Savior? I remember that had a huge impact on me. So, I remember from that point forward, I tried to develop an attitude to teach in a way that draws the students to the Savior.

Benjamin went on to explain that he sees spiritual self-reliance as the answer to focusing students on the Savior because “to me its independence…their do not rely on another person” to come to Christ. He continued, it is “independence with testimony which means they have the ability to recognize and understand the promptings of the Holy Ghost.” He explained that from his perspective, that means, rather than drawing them to their teacher, students need to have their own spiritual experiences, learn to understand
the scriptures, and take the Spirit as their guide.

**Dissecting and Labeling**

At one point in his career Benjamin realized he was doing things personally that were developing self-reliance in himself but he could not identify them overtly. Furthermore, he realized he could not effectively teach his students to be self-reliant if he could not explain the process.

I started dissecting and labeling things. “Benjamin,” I asked myself, “what is it that you do? Ben, are you spiritually self-reliant?” In other words, “do you feel that if you were the only person on this planet, would you have a testimony? Would you understand the workings of the Spirit? Could you identify it? Would you be able to receive revelation, independent of any other person?” Yeah, I realized that I could do it.

So I started analyzing my behaviors when I was alone that illustrated that I was spiritually self-reliant. Did I pray? Did I worship? Did I serve? Did I pray for the students? What is it you do when you study the scriptures? As I analyzed that process I started to realize there were twelve or fifteen different things I did that were techniques or habits. Then once I had identified what I was doing—this took a long time—then, I started saying to myself, if this is what has happened to me, and I’ve become self-reliant, then shouldn’t this be what I am trying to do with my students? I was already doing it but now that I had identified it I felt a little bit better equipped and armed in the classroom to begin to train. I literally go into the classroom, and I still do it to this day, I teach in such a way that when you leave the classroom you are equipped with the necessary tools to do exactly what I’ve learned how to do in my office and what all of the other people who are spiritually self-reliant do when they are alone.

**“A Beautiful Harmony”**

In light of TLE being introduced, I asked Benjamin how he saw it fitting in with his personal philosophy of teaching. He said:

To me there is just an absolutely beautiful harmony. And I hope that I haven’t taken my former belief and tried to fit the emphasis into it. You know what I’m saying? My philosophy is right and now it fits in there.
Benjamin continued by describing how he sees the way TLE has influenced his personal philosophy. At one point Benjamin described TLE as a catalyst for change in his career. He described it as expanding his career. It pushed him to keep growing.

I had that philosophy in place which served me well for many years. Then as the emphasis came out I think it helped to expand that philosophy and that understanding. It served as a jumping off point almost to what you might term a new adventure. My philosophy was in the early stages limited. It was good, it was right, but it was limited. When the Teaching Emphasis was introduced it expanded my horizon; it expanded my understanding and gave me new things to think about and work on; new principles to try to understand and then in turn incorporate more fully into my teaching.

**No One Masters It**

Even with all of the success Benjamin had with developing his own philosophy of teaching, he does not feel that he or anyone else has mastered teaching seminary with TLE. He explained his reasoning by saying:

I think what happens is that we can understand something in our heads but for whatever reason we get into the classroom and we don’t always do what we actually understand to be right. I think the reason we do that is because we fall into bad habits. We revert back to former ways. For whatever reason we get stuck in a rut on things.

I have discovered in my own teaching that even though I know the principles of the Teaching Emphasis I’m not perfect at it. There are still moments where I find myself—and it’s an occupational hazard that we all deal with—I find that the more I learn the more I feel like I want to share it. I get excited about it. Even though I know that my purpose is to help students become spiritually self-reliant and all the things we have talked about. Through my enthusiasm I still have to check myself and be cautious not to go into a stand and deliver mode because of the amount of time I have been teaching. I guess what I’m trying to say is I think that even though there are teachers out there who understand the Teaching Emphasis, we have to continually be under a system of checks and balances. Or we can so easily fall back into bad habits.

Benjamin then described what he thinks those checks and balances are. He said from his
experience he needs to be observed and assessed. He needs feedback. He needs “a fresh set of eyes to see what you are doing.”

**Helping Others**

Benjamin for the past 14 years has been assigned as a principal. He knows he can help students through what he has learned over the years, yet his administrative assignments have changed his perspective. He said, “My whole philosophy has changed in the sense that one of the greatest things I can do and can contribute to this seminary is to help these other teachers who happen to be pretty young in this building.” Referring to something he read from Elder Bednar, Benjamin said, “the greatest lessons in life are caught not taught.” He believes that learning by doing and seeing how others do it has been one of the most important influences to change him. That is how he seeks to help others learn to understand and implement TLE. He said, “I try to set an example. We observe. I assess. They come in and watch me. I think a teacher learns more in one hour of observation than they do in a dozen inservices, because you catch things.”

**Jacob’s Experience**

Jacob has taught seminary for 19 years. He fits in category 2 (hired from 1996-1988). He had taught seminary for 10 years before TLE was introduced in 2003. He described his recent experience as “teaching mostly middle class students with minor ethnic diversity. [At his particular building] seminary is well established and the students [seem to] love to come and learn.” However, this has not always been his experience. Jacob also taught at another school since TLE was introduced, which he described as “a
poor school with a great deal of ethnic diversity. The students did not show much school
pride there, but my experience teaching at that seminary was wonderful. The students
seemed humble and willing to learn. I really enjoyed them.”

Since TLE was introduced in 2003 Jacob has taught on two faculties. The first
faculty consisted of younger teachers. He described them as all having “great attitudes
toward learning the new emphasis.” His most recent experience is teaching with a large
faculty who are a wide variety of ages. He feels all of the teachers [he is currently
teaching with] believe in the emphasis and seem to have great attitudes towards it.
However, some of the student teachers, as well as one senior teacher who has taught over
30 years, have struggled to implement it effectively. Jacob is currently assigned as
principal to his faculty.

“Teach Like the Master”

By far Jacob’s experience is the most detailed account of specific actions he has
taken to learn to understand and implement TLE. Jacob’s experience could be
characterized by his desire to understand the General Authorities and S&I leader’s
instruction regarding teaching. He also emphasized relying on learning through practice.
To develop himself he described a lengthy and wide ranging experience of self-
examination both of his character and of his practice. In addition, he described essential
experiences of learning through social interaction.

Overall, after a lengthy interview of the process Jacob went through to become
the teacher he has become, I asked him, “Based on everything you have said, what would
call your experience of learning to teach according to the Teaching and Learning
Emphasis?” He responded:

It’s the process of learning to teach like the Master. It’s learning to teach the way the Savior taught. I think we can still call it the Teaching and Learning Emphasis. I think it’s a good title for it. It’s what we emphasize as we teach. But to me it’s teaching like the Savior teaches and becoming master teachers like the Savior. I feel like [since TLE came out] I’ve got the gospel now. Now I’m just trying to live it and prove. I’m not groping around lost. I’m a convert. I’m a believer. Now, I’ve just got to live it.

**Biking with the Brethren**

Jacob described one of the essentials to his change experience as he listens to talks from the Brethren. Jacob said:

I bike to Elder Bednar. That’s probably a weird thing to do, but I workout to the Brethren. You know, I listen to podcasts. I get on to a good talk and I’ll just throw it on my phone and listen to it at home, and just about everywhere.

Jacob described himself as an auditory learner. He prefers listening over reading talks. He listens to approximately 12-15 talks per week played back on double speed on his iPhone. Sometimes he listens to the same talk four times in a row in one sitting. He described a pattern he follows as he listens. He said from his perspective the pattern is based on TLE style learning. He starts by trying to “identify and understand” what the speaker is trying to communicate. After listening to the talk he will ask himself, “How does that really work?” After listening repetitively Jacob said, “I start to see it. Then I can go apply it.” However, he feels he does not fully understand the talk…until I feel like I can explain it to somebody. Once I get to that point, then it’s more natural for me to come and apply it as I’m preparing a lesson or as I’m talking to someone about it.

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40 The Brethren is a colloquial expression among Latter-day Saints when referring to the senior leadership of the Church, specifically the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. These 15 men form the highest body of ecclesiastical leadership for the Church.
Trying it Out for Myself

After TLE was first published, Jacob explained that he listened to the S&I summer training broadcast in 2003 about TLE and immediately was thinking, “This is good, but I don’t really think I am grasping it.” In addition, over the next 3 years he attended area and local inservice meetings and spent time studying the TLE documents on his own. He said those resources helped. Jacob also said an important resource was watching the Teaching Emphasis DVD. “When it came out I think the administration had realized that this thing needed a little more clarification. The DVD was a helpful model, especially the classroom instruction part.”

Jacob explained that ultimately:

The best part for me was just going into my own class and trying it for myself. It just made a difference. I just wanted to get my hands around it. The understanding came through experiences. I tried it and tested it and then I tweaked it. I taught it to my students pretty earlier on, just to show them what we were after. They started to see that this was to help them, not to try to do anything drastically different. We were just trying to emphasize a few areas. After we did that it started to bless more lives, mine and the students’.

Figuring out How Kids Learn

About 5 years prior to the introduction of TLE the school district in which Jacob was teaching changed to the A/B schedule. This meant instead of teaching 45 minute class periods, teachers would prepare 90 minute lessons. Jacob described spending that summer developing more hands-on lessons so students would be more involved in the learning process. He felt change was necessary if he was going to hold students’ attention for the lengthy 90 minute periods. What began to develop for him, however, was a re-evaluation of his teaching style. Over the next few years he continued the process of
evaluating his lesson plans during the summer, asking question like “How could I have taught that better?” He also began evaluating each day’s lesson in his office immediately after teaching it. He began analyzing the methods he was using and noting, “This worked because of this or it didn’t work because of this.” After a few years of evaluating his teaching he said, “I started to see a pattern. The most effective lessons were the ones where the kids were actively engaged in the learning process verses me up there lecturing to them.”

In addition to his self-evaluation, Jacob also sought for student feedback. He said:

Sometimes I’d pull kids aside and ask them, “Hey, that lesson, give me some feedback on it.” Most of them wouldn’t say anything, but if I picked the right kid, they’d tell me. “You know, that was boring. And I’d say, “How come?” They’d reply, “Because you talked the whole time.” And these were sometimes lessons where I thought it was pretty good.

Over the course of the 5 years before TLE and into the years when TLE had been introduced, Jacob began developing a list of indicators of an “effective lesson.” He developed the indicators through his experience of evaluating his in-class performance. These indicators were based on student observations and on perceived reactions of students to their experience with the lesson. He said, “I think a lot of it was just the feel at the end of the lesson.” For instance, “The way they would talk about the lesson during the closing prayer was telling. You know if they gave a generic prayer or if they referred to some specific things they learned.” He also described a general feel to the lesson. He said:

I tried to assume based on their faces and the feeling that was in the class. You know, as we had the lesson I paid attention to the look in their eyes, if that makes sense. I think you can kind of tell if we are hitting the mark or missing it. The ones that I could see it [in their faces I knew it] was working. Then I could say,
“Okay, that one; that’s a good one. How do I do that one again?”

Finally, he said he could tell if things went well “if I am feeling the Spirit and learning new insights too…It is Doctrine and Covenants 50, both are edified and rejoice together. It’s when both parties can feel the spiritual energy that is going on in the room.”

“I Got to Talk and Share”

In an attempt to repeat his past successes, once Jacob began identifying what he thought were key student responses to what he had done or principles he had taught in the lessons, he said he began looking for the methods used by and the focus of the teacher that might inspire the students’ responses. He noted that lessons seemed more effective when students “actively participated in the process instead of just being talked to.” More particularly, he recognized more enjoyment came as students “were teaching what they learned to someone else, rather than sitting in their classroom learning about it.” During the interview Jacob began calling this idea the principle of engagement. Engagement is illustrated by the following.

I pulled one of my most troubled kids aside and we talked about boring and good lessons. And he picked a lesson that we’d had a few days earlier that I would have probably labeled as a bad lesson, but he loved it. I asked him, “How come you liked it?” He said, “Because I got to talk and share.” He was engaged. This was probably my second year of teaching. I said to myself, “Wow! That’s interesting. I guess kids learn differently than I thought.” But he was with me that day. He had a different attitude than maybe a day or two before.

That particular student had labeled as kind of a Wildman. At the time we were in a two man seminary and his previous teacher had kicked him out of class and said to me, “You take this kid. I don’t want him.” But as I worked with him I’d say, “What’s a good lesson for you?” At least for this kid, who was maybe a little ADD, it was getting up out of his desk and talking and engaging with other students versus just sitting and being lectured to or reading 50 or 60 verses of scripture. Not that we were taking the scriptures out of the lesson mind you. I just
realized that you’ve got to have a balance between focus on the scriptures and a student’s need for engagement.

In other words, the change required to implement TLE style lessons for Jacob meant learning how to engage students.

**Find the Substance**

Jacob found that another principle of effective teaching is to understand the nature of relevance. The following interchange between Jacob and me reveals what he learned about relevance.

Jacob: Over time I realized that this particular principle seemed to ring true to the kids, whereas this principle that I loved was not what engaged the kids, even if it was a very hands-on, [engaging] lesson. I have had to learn to trust from past experience that there are more relevant principles than others. The kids want to talk about certain things verses others. I just needed to take note of what they wanted to talk about, at least on that particular day. I found that typically they want to talk more about themselves. Typically it’s a selfish thing that drives them; you know they are an ego centric lot. That’s what I started to find is that if the lesson pertained specifically to them as opposed to talking to them about something that is 10 years down the road, that long-term topic didn’t have the same power as talking about getting along with their brother today. So I tended to focus a little more on the short-term topics verses ones that are a year or even worse years down the road.

Researcher: It seems like you pulled out a principle that you discovered. It sounds like that principle was relevance.

Jacob: Right.

Researcher: Were you saying, even though this is a true principle, for instance you need to prepare for your marriage which is 10 years away, that they might not necessarily see that as a relevant principle?

Jacob: I think they can even see marriage as being relevant, but it might not interest them enough to say, “I’ll make changes in my life today for 15 years from now.” [However, as teachers we can see that] being kind to your brother today can equate to being kind to your wife later. It’s something that they are experiencing on a daily basis. They might even have had a fight with their brother
that morning so it’s fresh meat, if you know what I mean, as opposed to holding up some change in front of them that they have no experience with that is 10 years away. That’s over half their lives away. That’s almost untouchable to them.

**Changing Hearts and Minds Today**

The last point Jacob emphasized about changing what students do in his classroom developed through the following interchange. This occurred as he began describing how engagement and relevance interact with each other.

Jacob: I think relevance trumps engagement for me. For me relevance is way more important because even if I’m lecturing 100% of the time but it’s on a relevant topic they are going to be with me more than if my lesson focuses on something that is irrelevant but the activity is really engaging. They can be engaged and having fun but it’s not changing hearts and minds. They will be saying, “Yeah, this is kind of fun. We’re having a good time learning some scriptures.” But is it really going to impact them this afternoon or next week?

Researcher: We’ve been talking about relevance and engagement and how they compare with each other, but now you are talking about an overall goal for learning. You just said the goal is…?

Jacob: Change at home today, you know what I mean? It’s conversion while they are with us and not conversion in 18 or 20 years, which is nice but it’s what they do today in my opinion that gets the ball rolling so they can have the experiences. That’s so they can get the experiences and start stocking them up in their little bank of spiritual experiences now. If they start having these experiences when they are 15, 16, or 17 instead of waiting until they are 25 when they are getting ready to be married then they have this huge account that they can draw on when they are finally there.

The conversation continued as we discussed how much he thought those experiences of change occur in the classroom versus how much they occur outside of it. Jacob concluded with this important insight.

I think it’s very limited what students can experience with us in the classroom—I mean the actual application of a Gospel principle in their lives. But if they can even taste it a little bit in class, those seem to be some of the best lessons where they are feeling what charity feels like in class. They taste it a little bit and then
they think, “Wow, I can take this home and then I could use this.”

Jacob concluded this sequence of thoughts by referencing Neal A. Maxwell. He said, Elder Maxwell (1970) taught him that students must have “first hand experiences with principles of the Gospel and application” of it beyond the classroom, which “will give our young people a storehouse of spiritual experiences on which [they] can draw.” Then Jacob referred to Elder Bednar (2006) who taught him that students must learn to “act instead of be acted upon.” In essence, Jacob explained that within the classroom we can help “create these experiences and help students begin building up a storehouse now, while they are with us.”

More Scriptures and Less Fluff

Jacob described the difference between his teaching when he was first hired, and what it is like now that TLE has been introduced. He said:

I think my first few years, I felt like people learned if they were enjoying the class. If they are happy and enjoying it. It was all about the environment, if we could get the Spirit in there. Now it’s more about students understanding the scriptures, if they can understand the principles and the scriptures. It’s probably become more scripture based and less fluff. Maybe that’s a bad word; I might be beating myself up a bit there. Yet I think in the past I would have been quicker to drop some of the scripture parts of the lesson, whereas now the first thing to go, if I’m looking at the clock, is going to be the video, or the activity. We are going to hang on to the doctrine. We’ve got to hang on to the real meat of this lesson.

I’ve seen that the stuff that’s going to change the heart, it’s going to really make a difference in the end, is if the students can get their fingers around the sound doctrine. Then I can say, “You were fed today, instead of just entertained or whatever.” The doctrine is the anchor of the lesson instead of the exciting or the decorative ornaments. Thinking this way has allowed me to “blow off some of the chaff,” so to speak. “That doesn’t work! That’s just a bad practice. You can catch yourself when you’re starting to get lazy or cheat you way through a lesson because you think, “This really worked last time.” You avoid the temptation of thinking, “I really don’t need to pay as much of a price on this one.”
After relating these comments, I asked, “What do you think happened inside of you to become this kind of teacher?”

When I see that I’m an instrument to help change hearts and to bring about conversion, then all of a sudden it’s not about, “Did they like my lesson?” It’s about, “Did I help them be a better person today? Did I help them feel the Spirit so that the Spirit can teach them?” As soon as the focus is off of ourselves and shifts to “How can we really help these kids?” I think we want to prepare our lessons differently. I think we change our whole goal to “What’s going to be the most affect way to bless their lives?” not “What would make them think I’m a great teacher?” and I’m going to be teacher of the month.

I then asked Jacob if he could remember an experience when this kind of change was taking place in his life. He said:

I remember in one of my earlier years of teaching I had a class that just wasn’t going well at all. I kept praying that they would like me. I was upset because they didn’t like me and my lessons. I wasn’t upset at all that they weren’t getting testimonies and edification. I was praying more that they would soften their hearts and listen to me, instead of softening their hearts and listening to the Spirit. Things started to change when I realized “This isn’t even my class.” Then I felt even worse because I realized that it’s His class and I was blowing it. Then my prayers really changed. Then I started thinking, “Quit worrying about my class. It’s His class! I want them to love Him not me.” This isn’t a new idea. No one’s going to say, “Oh really, I’m not the teacher, God is?” But to set aside our pride and to say, “This is His class,” there’s just a big difference when your heart is really on what we know it should be instead of being selfish.

If My Heart Really Cares

Jacob connected the way he reads the scriptures and the amount of dedication he gives to his lessons to the feelings that he has for his students. He said, “If my heart really cares about that kid, then I’m going to give him the best I’ve got.” When asked what it means to give his students his best, he said he learned how to love his students from talking to a seminary teacher he deeply respects. During the devotional that teacher would go desk by desk thinking, “What do I love about this kid?”
Some kids you look at them and you think, “Nice shoes!” Sometimes it’s just tough. But not really; we’re mature. As I would go through my class, by the time I get through during the devotional, I almost want to hug that tough kid. You just think, “I love that kid just because he’s coming today. He didn’t have to. His mom and dad aren’t teaching him.” Almost you start to feel like you are seeing them the way the Savior sees them. When the lesson begins you’re on a spiritual high. You’ve had this experience of looking at the very best in people. It’s a powerful thing. It’s helped me in a class that seems unlovable. As soon as they can feel that you love them, they are going to lower all sorts of walls. Now we can get somewhere. To me the idea of “cultivating a learning environment” in the Teaching Emphasis is huge. I mean really huge.

That also goes back to our idea of relevance a little bit too; I think it’s also connected to loving the students. It’s not going to be a very good learning environment if what you are teaching is not relevant to the students. The teacher shows, “I love you so much,” but the student thinks, “The lesson does not pertain to me. It just isn’t clicking.” I think it’s got to be a combination of, “I really like you guys and in fact, I love you. God loves you. Here’s some stuff out of His words that is relevant to your lives. We’ve got limited time, so let’s talk about this.”

Preparing Lessons with Other People

When asked to describe what it means to help a new teacher to become the kind of teacher he has become, Jacob was quick to answer.

If you are a new teacher, we are going to prepare our lessons together every day. It’s not me teaching you. We’re going to figure it out together. I just think that for them to discover relevant principles—and sometimes I may see more than they see and they might also share—but they need to get a chance to see, “Where’s the meat in this block? Where’s the Savior in this block?” There’s just this synergy, I think there’s also a feeling, that I see them as an equal. I don’t want them to think, “I’m your mentor and I’m going to guide you.” As soon as they can feel, “Hey, I’m a part of this creative process,” they gain some confidence in their own teaching as well. For me that’s been the best thing. Better than inservice meetings; better than saying, “Hey, go read this talk.”

I love to have them create a lesson and then go watch it being taught [by one of the group]. “Let’s all go watch. We’ve just created this little baby; let’s go watch how it turns out.” Then as you sit there you can say, “Well, that isn’t the way we planned it is it? But “it’s working better” or “it’s not working that good.” Sometimes I’ll watch with someone and as we sit by each other I’ll say, “Did you
see that? What do you think?” or I’ll look at the energy level in the class: “Did you see that? It was really high and now why do you think it’s going down?” If he doesn’t know, I’ll explain, “I think it’s because these kids are not engaged and they feel like it doesn’t pertain to them.” We’ll talk about the fact that somehow the scriptures became the boring part. He needs to realize, “They didn’t get that the scriptures are the answer to their questions.”

I think just it all comes together as we identify what is working and what is not when we watch the lesson. Then, as you continue to prepare together, as they start to own the block and they start to talk about it, you can feel the excitement when they find nuggets of gold. Then they say, “This is some good stuff.” We try to avoid talking about how we are going to teach what we find for as long as possible. I think the tendency of new teachers is to ask too quickly, “How am I going to teach that?” I just keep reminding them, “Well, that’s about an hour away.” Instead, the more we talk about what are the principles and doctrines, there’s just a spirit that comes into our preparation. Then the “how” we are going to teach comes naturally. It’s inside of you and you are excited about it. Then after all of the discovery comes the question, “How do I teach this?” “Well,” I might say, “how are you feeling inside? How would you get there? What would help us get to this level?”

I think this process clarifies it all. To me it helps the problem of your third lesson is always better than your first or second lesson. Some people talk about their “guinea pig class” or their “JV lesson.” I believe if you pay the price to understand the doctrine and principles—really owning the block—the problem of a practice lesson goes away. So, often for a new teacher or even an older one for that matter, it’s the third or maybe even the fourth time that the lesson gets good. “We’re there finally!” I think it’s because they finally understand the principles and the doctrine. Now they can understand the application. I think if they would have paid the price upfront and worked with somebody else, they would have seen it before they went into the classroom.

To me, I think that the Teaching Emphasis is happening for us during our lesson preparation. As teachers, we have to identify, understand, and apply, even as we’re going through the planning process of creating our lessons. We need to explain, share, and testify to each other. Then we can see the application. As a result, our lessons become, “How we are going to recreate that experience for our students in the classroom?”

Furthermore, Jacob did not see this process as being necessary only for new teachers. He also described an older teacher with over 30 years of experience who was getting involved in preparing lessons with others. He described the process for this older teacher
as “being like a new convert who has just been baptized.”

Jacob: He has to accept these new teachings and trust them and apply them. Before he changed he was really struggling with the Teaching Emphasis for a while. He’s got a soft enough heart that he’s really doing better. After 30 plus years of teaching, if you asked him he’d say, “Last year was my best year of teaching.” He’s still having better and better experiences because he’s brought all of the experiences that made him good in the past plus added things from the Emphasis.

He was reluctant to do it for several years, but he’s now starting to seek help. [In fact,] he’s starting to come in [to me] and say, “Hey, what are some thoughts on this.” I’m thinking, “You’ve taught twice as long as I have, and you’re asking me for ideas!” I just love that! The humility and the willingness to just try—and not that I have all the right ideas. He’s asking a group of four or five teachers sometimes, sometimes even a first year teacher. “What did you do that worked really well here to engage the kids?”

Researcher: So do you feel like you’ve arrived at being able to do all that is required from the Teaching Emphasis?

Jacob: Not even close! These are true principles, but I’m still trying to figure them all out. Some days after class I say, “That was a home run!” Other days I say, “You barely got a double or a single even.” But it’s getting better. I don’t know. I think it gets better over time if you keep the intensity and the drive and really the desire to improve. I really believe that your teaching can improve every year.

Joseph’s Experience

Joseph has taught seminary for 15 years. He fits in category 2 (hired from 1996-1988). He had taught seminary for 7 years before TLE was introduced in 2003. He described his recent experience as teaching lower-middle class students “with great deal of ethnic diversity in the student body. They are a very humble group of kids. I see them as very teachable, great youth. I think many of them strive for excellence.” Joseph has taught at a wide range of schools since TLE was first implemented. He first taught in two very affluent communities, followed by more middle and lower-middle class schools. He
appreciated all of his assignments and found each group of students “great youth to work with.”

Since TLE was introduced in 2003 Joseph has taught on three faculties. The first faculty consisted of younger teachers; however, “TLE was not really focused on.” The second assignment was a large building with many teachers. “Some were first years and some with S&I for 20 years or less.” This was the first assignment where Joseph saw the teachers show interest in TLE. His most recent experience is teaching with a small faculty, with more experienced teachers. He describes them as having “very positive attitudes toward TLE.” Joseph is currently assigned as principal to his faculty.

“It’s a Gradual Thing”

Joseph described his experience learning to understand and implement TLE as “a gradual thing.” To begin with, Joseph described his change experience as he learned to define what TLE meant to him. First, he recalled:

I remember when TLE was introduced; they called it the Current Teaching Emphasis. I can’t remember the year that happened, but it was just such a dramatic shift in perception and in what we were trying to accomplish in CES. I remember trying to wrap my brain around it and what it was. I remember sitting in a training meeting as a junior high principal. One of our administrators was talking about it. He said something like, “We’re still trying to figure out what it looks like. We’re still trying to figure out what it is. It’s kind of like making a cake. There are all sorts of different cakes, but you know it’s right when it tastes good.” He was describing this ambiguous thing saying, “When you go and observe or when you are planning or teaching it’s hard to describe it, but you know it when you’re there because you can taste it, like the cake.”

Clearly, from Joseph’s perspective TLE was something undefined in the mind of the administrator he referred to in the story, but it also seemed to be unclear in Joseph’s mind as well. Joseph described further acts in which he engaged to define further what TLE
meant to him. He said:

Something came out of that meeting that helped me wrap my head around it even more. It was that the TLE is to help the youth become spiritually self-reliant. That for me was kind of a turning point in my understanding of what it is. It’s not a new program. It’s not a methodology. It’s more of a principle. The whole thing is a principle designed to help the youth and even adults become more spiritually self-reliant.

“You have got to Own This”

It took time for Joseph to learn to implement TLE effectively. As he began studying the TLE documents he practiced implementing what he learned. Over time he could see how TLE was leading him to success. He said:

For me it was a gradual thing. At one point in our area we were encouraged, and I think even Chad Webb encouraged us, to study the TLE document and to own it. I know our area director said, “You have got to own this.” So I began to study. And I’ll admit I haven’t been diligent in studying the document per se. But what I have done is to try to understand and implement it. I’ve reviewed it. I don’t review it all of the time. But with the help of my faculty we are all moving in the direction of learning it and implementing it.

[Now, after years of experience with it,] I’m finding that the more I do it, the easier it becomes. It’s practice. That’s what I do. You know, I don’t have one way that I necessarily practice. But I can tell when I am successful with it. It’s like the cake analogy. It may not be the prettiest cake, but it still tastes good. It’s right. I’m not saying that I’m perfect at it. But there are some days, especially when the Spirit’s with me and it tastes good.

“Start with the Fundamentals”

Through continued practice Joseph began identifying the nature of what he called spiritual self-reliance, which helped him clarify his definition of TLE’s purpose. He explained that from his perspective spiritual self-reliance was the major goal of TLE.

My understanding of spiritual self-reliance is knowing how to access the Lord or the scriptures for answers. I am thinking about when I was teaching 9th graders.
My experience with 9th graders taught me not to assume anything. Don’t assume that they know how to use the study helps or that they know how to pray. Don’t assume anything really. Start with the fundamentals and then build on those fundamentals so they are all on the same page. Then introduce little changes. [For instance,] as we’re studying the scriptures together in class, don’t assume that they know what the words mean.

I’ll do that still today [in the senior seminary]. We’ll stop and talk about, “What does that word mean?” And we’ll stop right in the middle of the verse. I’ll say to the kids, “Have you ever been reading the scriptures and you come across a word, and you can pronounce it, but you don’t have any idea what you’ve just read?” And they’ll say, “Yeah.” And I’ll say, “That’s me too.” I’ve tried to help them understand that you if you don’t understand what you are reading then you are not going to be able to understand and apply it. This leads to the TLE [fundamentals], to help them to “understand the context and content of the scriptures” and to help them “identify and understand Gospel doctrines and principles.”

I’ll pause sometimes and show them how to use the scripture [study helps] so that we’re not just coming in and storytelling. But we’re having a practice in the classroom of skills and things that they can do on their own so that they can be spiritually self-reliant. Now when they’re on their own reading the scriptures then they can remember, “Hey we did that in seminary. I’m going to go look that up. I’m going to find that definition” or “I’m going to use that footnote to help them understand what it means.” That way I think they are becoming more spiritually self-reliant because they don’t need a seminary teacher to show them how to unlock meanings of the scriptures. I think that is part of my role as a teacher is to help them learn to become spiritually self-reliant. Helping them have experiences in the classroom is like we’re practicing. Then they leave the seminary and they’re going “to play the game” for real. Hopefully they’re getting enough of the fundamentals so they can go do these things on their own.

“I’ve Just Moved that Way”

When asked how Joseph developed his understanding of TLE he said there were a number of acts that encouraged him in the direction he went. Personal study of TLE documents, talks given to S&I by administrators and General Authorities, and general conference talks all assisted him. Inservice training on TLE also helped. “Just being exposed to it over the years, I think I’ve just moved that way.” One event, however,
seemed to stand out. As we were talking Joseph pulled out a half sheet of paper with the S&I objective printed on it, the “Teach” paragraph, and the TLE fundamentals listed below (see Appendix B). All over the page front and back were notes written in red pen. Joseph explained:

Our assistant area director came in one day to observe me. He sat down in my classroom and afterwards he pulled one of these out [see Figure I-3 in Appendix I]. He had all of these notes on it. This was his feedback to me. He went through the objective and all of this and he made comments of what he saw and maybe some comments and suggestions of how I could improve. I loved it!

[From this and other experiences] I realized that the TLE is so much more than the bullet points or the fundamentals. It all ties back into the objective. I’m totally sold on helping the kids “understand and rely on the teachings and the Atonement of the Savior and qualify for blessings of the temple and prepare for eternal life.” And all of these things here are just principles, if you will, ideologies of how to get there [meaning the TLE fundamentals lead to accomplishing the objective].

This experience was an essential step, not only for Joseph to connect TLE fundamentals to the S&I objective, but also to learn to implement an effective strategy for giving feedback to his faculty. As a principal, Joseph said he made numerous copies of the TLE document and began using it to give feedback to his faculty. He likes it because it keeps the S&I objective and the fundamentals of TLE fresh in his mind and in the minds of his faculty. It also directs the feedback to principles, rather than opinions.

“Common Prep”

Joseph and his faculty have implemented an important strategy for working together to learn to understand and implement TLE. He said for him it started with a

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41 The objective states that “Our purpose is to help the 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 family, and others for eternal life with their Father in Heaven.” In other words, Joseph sees the fundamentals of TLE as being the acts students are to participate in to lead them to accomplish the objective of S&I.
colleague. The two of them had a common preparation hour together. This arrangement lasted for a couple of years in a row. “We would hang out in each other’s office and prepare our lessons together. It was so much fun to do because we were great friends but also because we were able to pool our minds together.” Some time passed and Joseph was transferred to his current assignment. At Joseph’s new assignment he found that the whole faculty was meeting together for a common prep hour. As the new principal Joseph felt the common prep was a great asset and he has encouraged them to continue the tradition.42

We’ll inservice during that time, prepare lessons together, talk about concerns, and other things that help us grow as a faculty. It’s been a good experience for us and for our students. This is our second year together as a faculty. So we know a lot of these kids. It’s been nice. Sometimes a teacher may have a concern about a student so together we can counsel about things. That’s really been a great experience. We’ve also created a common shared Dropbox.43 If someone has an idea, then we just throw it into Dropbox. It’s kind of a law of consecration idea. “I’ve got it. Let me share it with you. Here’s an idea here and there’s an idea there.” I think it’s been helpful.

[In addition,] during the summer part of our local inservice we came up with ideas that we are going to do for the school year. One example is for the centennial celebration that is coming up we sent a letter out to the stake presidents inviting them to invite all the adult members of their stakes to write a letter to the seminary about their experience in seminary.

“Focus on Involving the Savior”

From Joseph’s perspective, as his faculty and he have connected the S&I objective to the fundamentals of TLE, they have adopted a particular attitude about

42 The faculty to which Joseph is assigned is small, consisting of only 3 or 5 members. The size makes a common prep hour for the entire faculty feasible.

43 Dropbox is a data cloud service that allows users to link a folder on their computer with other users who have been granted permission to access the shared folder. Any files added to the Dropbox folder are automatically distributed to all of the linked computers, thus allowing for seamless file sharing.
teaching. “We as a faculty last year were really trying to focus on involving the Savior in our lessons. We were really trying to help our students understand and rely on the teachings and the Atonement of the Savior.” This attitude seems to have become particularly influential for Joseph. He described a number of important moments of showing Christlike love.

Last year this young lady started talking about a struggle she was having. She said, “Last week I was struggling. I gave into temptation.” She’s very open with her struggles. She didn’t share anything inappropriate. Not long ago she was sitting in my office for parent teacher conference with her mom, dad, and brother. Her mom said, “She’s doubting a lot of things about the Church.” And I asked her, “Are you studying the scriptures every day?” And she said, “No.” So we talked about how important that is to hold fast to the rod of iron and she said she would. And she does, when I invite her.

Well, recently she quit coming to seminary for a few days. Then I saw her outside the building. So I asked her, “Where were you?” And she said, “Well…I…don’t know.” “Are you reading your scriptures?” “No,” was her reply. “Will you read tonight?” She committed, “Yeah.”

She finally came back to class and I asked her if she’d read. And she said, “You know, the only time I read my scriptures is when you ask me to do it.” And I said, “Okay. Well, will you read tonight then?” And she said, “Okay.” So the next day I asked her, “How did your reading go?” And she said, “I did it!” You know, she’s got to have that prompting. But I’m finding that the more I do it, the easier it becomes.

This experience was one among many of Joseph reaching out to students in Christlike love to encourage them to develop a stronger relationship with Jesus Christ. Helping a young man who was struggling with developing a thought during his devotional, attending a swimming meet and encouraging the youth there, visiting with students in the halls at the high school, asking about games or activities that students were participating in, and talking to a young woman about her sick mother were all examples of Joseph’s exercising his desire to love his students and create a sense of purpose in his classroom.
When asked to describe the meaning of his relationship with his students, Joseph said,

They are wonderful. They’re great. I see them as young people who are trying to do what’s right; who are trying to live the right way. I can think of an experience in parent teacher conference that happened recently. A young woman was sitting right there where you are sitting. Her mom was sitting right there, [pointing to the chair next to me]. Her dad was standing right there at the door. And her brother was sitting right there on that stool.

Mom had just gone through the temple a year before for herself to receive her endowment and dad is dragging his feet. He hasn’t been to the temple. And mom was telling me is “All that this young lady wants, all that her daughter wants for Christmas is to go to the temple with her family.” And I watch this girl struggling with all of this in her life, and I think, “With all that she is going through in her life, what a blessing that would be for her to have the temple covenants in her life. What a strength that would provide for her.” To me, they’re not just students. They’re real people. They are children of their Heavenly Father who are trying to do their best. I love them. [Joseph had tears in his eyes at this point. I paused while he got a Kleenex to wipe his eyes.]

It just thrills me when I hear that so and so is going on his mission. I just feel, “Oh, I’m so glad” or when I hear that someone is getting married in the temple or things like that. That’s the payment for this job. Of course we get the paycheck to put food on the table, but that’s when I’m really glad, when I see those kinds of things happen in their lives.

Throughout the interview Joseph described things he does to show love for his students. He continued by saying:

I pray for them. I put their names on the temple prayer roll. I try to think about students who are struggling. It becomes more of a personal thing. Now, I’m not trying to take any credit for what’s happening in my classroom. But when I learn about things that are happening in their lives and I pray for them, it changes how I feel about them. It increases my love for them. If I can know them more individually, that really has an impact on my love for them and my desire to help them.

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44 The temple is where the most sacred religious rites are conducted for Latter-day Saints. One of those rites is husbands and wives being “sealed” or married. This act is important to LDS doctrine because the Church teaches that marriages that are sealed in temples will endure into the next life. This means that husbands and wives, who live the requirements of such an agreement, will still be married to each other after they have died and throughout the next life.

45 Patrons of LDS temples may submit names of people for which they are concerned. Prayers are offered for those whose names have been submitted (Blessings of temple workship, 2001).
Adam’s Experience

Adam has taught seminary for 12 years. He fits in category 1 (hired from 2001-1997). He had taught seminary for 3 years before TLE was introduced in 2003. He described his recent experience as teaching in a suburban senior seminary with middle to upper-middle class students. There is little ethnic diversity there. He sees the students as being highly motivated and with many traditions of excellence. Adam has also taught at a wide range of schools since TLE was first implemented, from an urban downtown school with a great variety of ethnic diversity and lower socio-economic status, to a school with predominantly Caucasian students who come from upper middle class families. He said he feels he has found success in all of his assignments.

Since TLE was introduced in 2003 Adam has taught on four faculties. The first faculty had from 6 to 8 teachers on it with a mix of those being younger and older. He feels they were “very open to collaboration, change, and improvement” and from his perspective “the majority of them embraced the Teaching Emphasis and had a desire to understand and implement it.” The second faculty assignment was a single person junior seminary. The third and fourth teaching assignments included mostly younger teachers, with the exception of one who had taught for over 40 years. He feels that all of his colleagues have been very open to the Teaching and Learning Emphasis. Adam is currently assigned as principal to his faculty.

“I’m Still Trying to Figure it Out”

Adam described his experience of learning to understand and implement TLE as
“a loaded topic.” The controversy from Adam’s perspective surrounds whether S&I teachers and administrators fully comprehend the purpose of TLE and how to implement it. He includes himself in that category of those who are still trying to figure it out. He said:

I think we’re still trying to figure it out. I know I’m still trying to figure it out. I don’t even think the groups that are identified by their peers as high implementers of TLE fully understand it. [In fact,] I would call into question why I or anyone else might be identified as one [who understands it]. [For instance,] I think some people confuse the Teaching and Learning Emphasis with student participation, meaning if they are a type of teacher who really has students involved they must be a really good TLE teacher. And I don’t think that’s at all what it is about. It’s part of it, but not the whole thing.

Adam’s emphasis on understanding the whole TLE as opposed to only understanding part of it was revealed in more than one comment he made. One clear example comes from a description of an experience he had in an area46 inservice meeting. A guest teacher was presenting during the inservice. One of the other teachers in the area raised his hand before the presenter started for the day and asked, “How come you guys [meaning the administration] are telling us to do all this pair and share and student involvement stuff but he [meaning the presenter at the inservice] doesn’t do any of that?” According to Adam this one teacher’s comment also reflected the opinion of other teachers in the meeting.

Adam said the teacher’s comment bothered him. He explained:

The reason I brought that up is because people were saying he wasn’t doing the Teaching and Learning Emphasis, yet if you go off of the different elements of TLE I think they were wrong. You have “Teach and learn by the Spirit.” He was

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46 An area represents the geographical boundary in which a large group of seminary instructors teach. They are supervised by an Area Director. For instance, in Utah, because of the higher concentration of students, an area includes the public school district; whereas outside of Utah, an area includes a much larger geographic space.
definitely doing that. You have “Establish a learning environment of love, respect, and purpose.” He was doing that. You have “study the scriptures and read the text for the course.” He was definitely doing that. You have “Identify and understand doctrines and principles.” He was definitely doing that. You have “Understand the context and the content.” He was probably doing that better than anybody I know. And he himself was doing “explaining, sharing, and testifying.” Now, obviously we as listeners weren’t doing that, but he definitely was. Then you have obviously “master key scriptures and basic doctrines.” And he was teaching basic doctrines. The thing that made me laugh about it was, here you have him probably overtly teaching five or six of the seven elements, and yet simply because he wasn’t doing “group work” or “pair and share” or just because there wasn’t a lot of back and forth discussion going on between him and the audience, people thought he wasn’t doing TLE. So, I bring that up because I’m not sure as a system yet that we grasp what TLE is.

To me the natural question seemed to be to ask Adam, “Then what do you think TLE is?”

He laughed and replied, “I’m not saying that I know what it is.” He then proceeded to describe what he has learned so far.

First of all TLE consists of statements of principle not methods. Anytime people start talking about methods, they are talking about the wrong thing. They are principles of teaching that have been effective in facilitating the Holy Ghost. [In fact,] I think a lot of what’s happening with TLE teaching might not be overtly observable, to an outside observer anyway. And I think there are a lot of teachers who might be labeled as non TLE teachers who are actually doing it quite well.

“There is Conflict About It”

When asked to describe the nature of his experience learning to understand and implement TLE and why he is seeking to understand it better, Adam said:

I would say it’s because there is conflict about it. There is conflict about it inside of teachers. When I say “Conflict within a person” obviously I am only speaking from my own experience. I can have some classes where the Spirit is very strong and some powerful things happen. [As teachers] we’re all spiritually mature enough to know when we’ve had a powerful, impactful class. If students were rating it on a scale of zero to ten, those that are spiritually dead to the world would say, “Holy cow, that’s a ten!” The conflict internally for me is that some days I do things that I think are very by the book TLE style and my lesson just for lack of a better word, “It just bites!”
Adam continued describing the conflict he has experienced. From his perspective he has observed that most teachers think of TLE style teaching as increased social interaction. Yet, he has noticed that is not always the case.

There are other days when certain elements of the TLE are not used at all, and I’m not saying all of them [are left out]. Let’s take probably the most prominent one, which is “explain, share, and testify.” [From my perspective] teachers seem to think if they are doing “explain, share, and testify” that they are doing wonderful things. Personally, that’s one area where I think we are way off base. I have classes where students don’t really do much explaining, sharing, and testifying at all, but you can tell they are having a powerful experience because other elements are happening. They’re in the scriptures and they are analyzing things. They are having quiet time to ponder, and the lesson is really relevant or really interesting or they watch a powerful piece of media that strongly influences them. [All of these actions] are connected to a principle that we have studied about. But the students didn’t do any explaining, sharing, or testifying yet the Spirit was there powerfully and it acted upon them and our objective was fulfilled. So when I say there is internal conflict that’s what I mean.

**Learning to Collaborate Effectively**

Adam described what for him was the nature of resolving the conflict he was feeling. For him it has meant engaging in a number of practices. The first was to work collaboratively with a group of other teachers to understand what TLE meant.

I taught for three fulltime years before the emphasis was rolled out and to be totally honest with you I didn’t even know what TLE was in 2003. That first year it came out I don’t remember hearing a word about it. But in 2004 I remember seeing it for the first time and looking at it kind of on my own. A few other teachers and I collaborated a lot. I was on a multi-man faculty. We started having some discussions back and forth on “what does this mean? How do we implement that? How do we do that? How does that change our approach and our teaching? And what are they saying about it?” To be honest with you it was not driven by our principal or by our area. I don’t remember any area things happening until about 2005 when it was, “Hey, we’ve got to understand this.” From my perspective it took the system a few years to even open their eyes to admit that it was out there, let alone to realize that it would become a landmark or a turning point or shift in the Seminaries and Institutes.
Anybody who doesn’t collaborate is dead in the water in my opinion. It’s just the old adage, “Two plus two equals five—the concept of synergy. Two heads are better than one.”

Adam described what the benefit of collaboration meant to him when he said:

Not only are you friends with [the people you are collaborating with], in terms of a collegial friendship where you enjoy talking and working with each other; but also, I think you have to have similar teaching approaches or thoughts about teaching. I have a lot easier time working with teachers who are just open. They want to be the best teachers possible. They are open to new ideas. They aren’t just rehashing old lesson plans or thinking, “I’ve already got it.”

It’s very different to collaborate on a block of scripture when some of the group think they already have it figured out. It’s very difficult to collaborate with somebody who’s like that. I think a principle of effective collaboration is open acknowledgement that, “There maybe things here that I’m missing; approaches that I’m missing that are more effective.”

To sit down with a teacher and say, “What do you think is the intent of this chapter? Why did he include this story here?” That generates a great discussion to think about the inspired intent.\(^{47}\) Then you can build on that.

You have to approach that with an open mind, with the thought that there are things here that you haven’t considered.

“**They assumed I was a TLE Guru**”

The second event occurred when Adam was asked to participate in a training DVD produced by the central S&I administration. After teachers saw him in the DVD he said:

People would come up to me and ask me lots of questions about TLE and because I was on that DVD they assumed that I must be one of the Teaching and Learning Emphasis gurus. I had a ton of teachers and I mean a ton who would call me up

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\(^{47}\) For seminary teachers one of the objectives of teaching a passage of scripture is to focus students on “the inspired intent of the author” (S&I, 2001). This concept of inspired intent is intended to help students realize that the author was seeking to communicate a specific message. Sometimes understanding that message might be veiled for instance in imagery or poetic language. It might require a great deal of effort by the teacher first to understand the inspired intent of the author before he or she can devise a plan of how to teach the content.
and say, “Can I come watch your class?” I would say, “Sure.” And they would ask me all of these questions about TLE and how I’m interpreting it and why I did that or why I did this? So, those conversations naturally led to me continue to want to try to understand it a little bit better. A lot better actually!

In addition to being included in the training DVD, Adam’s area director invited him to join the area training council. The training council is a group of administrators in an area that are responsible for guiding and creating local training. He said that experience was formative because he spent a year working to explain to others how to understand and implement TLE. He said:

We spent a year discussing, “What are we going to do to help people understand the TLE? How are we going to help them implement it? And how will we help them better understand what its principles are?” That had a great effect on me being part of that training council.

He explained that when they finally presented the training, during the sessions he had to demonstrate effective TLE teaching. He got to watch how people reacted to it. Ultimately, he had to defend it to some teachers who were convinced that it was not an effective way to teach.

Finally, Adam became a senior seminary principal. He described that experience as very influential to his understanding of TLE.

Being a principal on a multi-person faculty, it is a challenge to constantly be observing other teachers’ classes and providing them with feedback. So I’ve decided to base all of my feedback on the Teaching and Learning Emphasis. I just go in there looking for evidence and indicators of that. That’s shaped a lot of my understanding of when it’s happening and when it’s not happening.

**Analyze your Performance**

I asked Adam to describe what he would do if he taught a lesson that did not work the way he wanted it to. In essence, he was asked to explain how he would go about
resolving that conflict. What resulted was a lengthy description of a process that he follows. In other words, he described the nature of what improving his practice means to him.

Adam: I just say, “Well either I didn’t do it right or I don’t understand it right.” So that’s how I deal with it. I say, “You know that lesson didn’t go well, but what are the reasons why? Well, we did this, we did this, and we did this, but I’m not sure if I did X, Y, or Z correctly.”

But I don’t just look at only at me, I also watch other teachers. I spend an hour or two every day as a principal observing other teachers and providing feedback for them. Sometimes they are like, “Why didn’t that go well?” or “why did my lesson bit so bad today?” It just makes you analyze it.

One of the ways I deal with it is I say, “I guess I need to understand it better.” So I think some more about it and analyze it and try again tomorrow.

Researcher: So when you say, “I need to understand it better,” what do you turn to?

Adam: I turned to my own experiences, number one, in terms of analyzing my own experience with my classes. I might ask, “Why is it working well in that class on this day?”

I also go to the scriptures. I also look at general conference talks. Who just gave that conference talk, a member of the Sunday School presidency? Matt Richardson, he gave that awesome conference talk and he said, “We need to teach after the manner of the Spirit. We need to conduct our classes after the manner of the Spirit.” As a result, I’ve gone in my scriptures and analyzed, “How does the Spirit teach?”

I’ve also asked myself, “How did the Savior teach?” I even wrote an article that analyzed how Jesus involved other people in His teaching, whether he was a lecturer or a participatory teacher. “When did he use lecture? When did he use active mental, physical, and spiritual engagement? What were His means?” I was interested in that so I wrote an article.

I talk to other teachers and I say, “Hey have you noticed that this doesn’t work very well?” or “Have you noticed that this works really well?” And “Why do you think this happened today?” I collaborate with a lot of other teachers.

After Adam described what resources he turns to, I asked him what he does next.
He said, “I go try something the next day, the next class! I try a new approach. I test it out.” He said he has developed his tests as a result of watching himself and other people teach. Then he considers ways of solving the problems he observes. For instance:

I noticed that students get disconnected and disengaged really quickly upfront. And that’s because we’re not showing them the purpose of what we’re studying or the relevance of it upfront. A lot of times before we can get students to realize the point we are trying to make we’ve got six heads down, or some of my teachers do. So I’ve thought, “You wanna know what? Some of the best classes I’ve seen, even looking at people like Elder Bednar, instead of using an inductive approach, their using a deductive approach. Instead of some big reveal at the end, “So what’s the Aesop’s fable, moral of the story?” [For instance,] I’ve noticed that Elder Bendar will start off and say, “Today we’re going to look at why it’s 100% necessary to…” whatever. He shows us the relevance right up front. And then he tells us exactly what we’re going to study. And then he says, “I’m going to illustrate it for you and show you what’s in the scriptures. Let’s go.”

After Adam tests his experiments he said he looks for indicators of success. “Then I test it out. Does there seem to be more excitement? Are they with me more? Do they seem to go the scriptures with more purpose and effort? I just do little things like that all the time.” He then explained:

It all comes back to the spirit of discernment. At the heart of what we’re doing as teachers is trying to discern whether we’re having spiritual impact or not. What I’m saying is “Am I seeing that they are with me? Am I seeing that they are excited? Are they going in with more intensity? Am I seeing more notes being taken?” For instance, in a class of 25 when I say, “Alright, now let’s go in. Here’s what we’re going to learn about. Take a peek at verse 10” and then I say, “What’s the first principle to get to heaven?” Am I seeing 24 of the 25 kids go in there with purpose?

**Desire to Become Effective**

When asked what motivates him to work hard and continually seek to improve, Adam explained an important attitude that he has developed.

I just want to be as effective of a teacher as possible. And I’m just not satisfied
with having a paycheck and having a steady job and mediocrity. In the sense of, if I teach blugh-blugh kind of average, par classes and go home, it bugs me. You know! I want the angel Moroni. I want my students to have a king Benjamin experience where I get done with my discourse, so to speak, and say, “We’ve had a mighty change wrought upon us because of the Spirit of the Lord and we have no disposition to do evil.” I have as of yet to have an entire class say that to me. So I know as of yet I still have some improving to do. So I would say the nature of the change is a desire for improvement and more effective and powerful teaching. So that’s what causes the analysis I would say, my internal analysis anyway. I would say the reason I would turn to the Teaching and Learning Emphasis is because I trust the administration that they know what they are doing and the board of education that they know what they are doing. So, if inside of me I say I want to be as effective as possible and I begin to analyze myself and then I say, “So what are our leaders saying it means to be effective?” That’s why I want to understand the TLE is because that’s what they want us to do.

I think the motivation is just to want to do your best. To use scriptural language it is “to lay your gift on the altar” as best as possible; to progress and to improve, to be more Christlike, to be more godlike. That requires evaluation, repentance, change, and improvement. The older I’ve become the more the desire to be better and improve is hopefully more connected to benefitting other people, not just myself: the students I teach, or the program I’m in charge of, or anybody I influence in my life, especially my own family.

**Daniel’s Experience**

Daniel has taught seminary for 12 years. He fits in category 1 (hired from 2001-1997). He taught seminary for 3 years before TLE was introduced in 2003. Daniel explained that his teaching experience since TLE was introduced was similar in both schools. “I have taught at two very diverse schools. In each there were the very rich and the very poor. You have those with great spiritual depth and a long family history in the church to those who are new converts. There are students who have General Authorities of the Church in their family and those whose parents are in prison. I cannot think of a more diverse teaching situation.”
Daniel also described two faculties he has taught on since TLE was introduced. Both were smaller in size with 4-6 teachers. The attitudes of both faculties were similar. He feels that most teachers generally thought well of TLE and “were very positive about it.” The teacher’s time in service ranged from 5-15 years. Daniel is currently assigned as principal to his faculty.

Desire to do Better

Daniel characterized his experience learning to understand and implement TLE as follows.

It’s been great. It’s made me a better teacher. I think that one of the most important things for me is desire, examining what you are doing and asking yourself what you can do better. Then you can compare. I can look at what I am doing and then I can say, “Okay, I could have done this better. I could have done this better, and this, and this.” That’s huge! If you don’t have a desire to learn you’re not going to implement TLE, period! Once you are ready to learn and you are ready to implement what you learn, then you start getting the keys and you start having success.

As you’re heart changes, your performance changes. As you have experiences, your desires and your beliefs change, then your actions change and your results changes. And so as my heart changes, I’m going to change my actions because I’ve changed inside. Once my belief structure changes, once I change inside I am going to go forward and I am going to change more. Um, I think that works both ways. As I start hardening and don’t change, I’m going to change the other direction because my belief structure is different. Anytime I change my heart, change my internal belief structure, my actions and my results are going to change. And so if they want me to change according to the TLE, I first have to change my belief inside and understand what they are talking about, so that then my actions and my results can match what they want.

These comments seem to reflect the general feel of Daniel’s experience. What followed after this description was a series of thoughts and experiences that described the various aspects of Daniel’s desire to change.
“I’m a Feedback Nazi”

One of the strongest aspects of Daniel’s experience is the variety of means of and his attitude toward seeking feedback.

I’m what I call a feedback Nazi. I love feedback. If anybody walks into my room I ask them, “What did you see? What did you feel?” I love them to tell me what they saw and felt. I do that with my students. At least once or twice a quarter I ask them, “How are feeling in seminary? What are you liking? What’s making a difference? How could it be better? What lessons have hit you or what techniques have worked for you?” That way I can see what is working for this group. That’s one thing I think is important about the TLE is that each class is a different class and should be taught in the best way for that class, whatever that way is. Maybe it is pair and share, or them talking and discussing as a class, or maybe this class needs a lecture this time, and this class needs to read the scriptures silently and then talk about it. It could be any or all those things, because when we teach and learn by the Spirit we do those things as per the class’s needs. As I get feedback I adjust to what the class needs.

In fact, I still give an SOAS at least twice a year, the one they used in preservice. I want to see where I am at, to see where I am supposed to be compared to where [preservice] expects me to be to get hired. I want to make sure that [the students] are having the kinds of experiences in class that are changing them.

From his comments Daniel described turning to other teachers and students for information about his teaching to see what he was doing well, how he could improve, and how he could tailor the experience to the needs of his students.

“I Started Going to Talks”

Another source of feedback and direction for Daniel was turning to talks from the General Authorities of the Church. He said, “I started going to talks and looking at things to see what was happening in my own teaching.” Throughout the interview Daniel referred to numerous talks from church leaders that influenced him.

I think one of the biggest things is one of the talks that I read. Elder Eyring said, “What we’ve done 5 years ago won’t be enough.” It’s not enough. I’ve studied a
lot, not just writings about seminary, but the world. I’ve noticed how quickly the world is changing and how quickly the students’ lives are changing. Just in the 10 years that I’ve been teaching, the students’ lives are totally different from the students’ lives when I started. So, if I’m not changing and evolving as a teacher then I can’t be effective for them, even if I was effective 10 or 11 years ago. And if I was effective 30 years ago and I’m not changing now, there’s no chance. Thirty years ago we had kids who were growing up in mostly agrarian societies. They knew what the farm was. We don’t have that as much anymore. Ten years ago they didn’t have Twitter and all this other kind of electronic stuff and if you’re not evolving, knowing, and comparing—which is what the TLE is teaching us to do—then you are not prepared to help them the best you can.

The interview was taking place in Daniel’s office. At this point he reached into the desk draw immediately to his left and pulled out a stack of approximately 25-30 talks that he had read and highlighted. He began fanning through them in his hand.

That’s my Teaching Emphasis packet of talks. I’ve focused on Grant Anderson’s talks; “The Power of the Word” by President Benson was a huge one; “Raising Expectations” by Elder Eyring in 2004; “Raising the Bar” by Elder Eyring in 2005; “We must Raise our Sights” in 2001; “The Divine Commission” by Elder McConkie in ’79. That was another thing. This Teaching and Learning Emphasis wasn’t new. They just defined it a little bit better. There are so many talks that are TLE centered in their principles. The principles of good teaching haven’t changed; the S&I administrators have just defined them a little bit better and helped us focus on them.

“Break Them Down to True Principles”

After explaining how he has relied on messages from General Authorities, I asked: “Once you have found these talks, what do you do with them?” Daniel described how he first reads the talks and then “I break them down to true principles.”48 For instance, he described a true principle of effective teaching as:

What I did last year is not enough for what I should be doing this year. It’s always

48 Principles are defined within S&I as a rule that governs people’s behavior. They are typically described as an explanation of what a person is supposed to do given certain conditions that are always true, for everyone (Bednar, 1998; Scott, 1993a, 1993b).
true. It’s always going to be true, especially now. So, if I’m stagnate, then the Adversary\(^{49}\) is always getting better and devising more means to get at the kids. So if I’ve always got to be getting better. So I have to be improving.

From this point on in the interview Daniel began defining specific teaching principles that had influenced him significantly.

“Verity, Relevancy, Urgency”

On Daniel’s wall there was a sheet of blue paper with the words “Verity, Relevancy, Urgency” written on it with a short description beneath each term (see Figure 6, Appendix I). I asked Daniel to explain the idea behind it and where it came from.

This came from a talk that Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1983) gave. Verity means something that is true, a principle, idea, belief, or statement. In my lesson preparation, I always want to be true—not my supposition, not my thinking, but something that is true.

Relevancy means that I always need to make sure that what I am teaching is relevant to the kids. If I teach some really, really cool thing about [pause] Isaac and Rebekah for instance, but the students have no interest in it, it was a cool thing that they forget the second that they walk out of class. It always has to be relevant. So, it’s got to be true and it’s got to be relevant in my lesson preparation. And that’s one of the reasons that we have to change so much, because their life is literally changing year to year in what’s relevant to them. Whereas, if you go back to my parents’ life and what was relevant to them, or to their parents, I think it would be pretty different from what is relevant to the kids today.

I look at my daughter; she’s 10. And we’re having a baby in January. The way we are going to raise those two kids is different from each other. We raised our daughter with no cell phones. My 10 year old…we’ll there were cell phones out there but we didn’t have a cell phone. The internet then was not nearly what it is today. You didn’t have all of the social networking and all of this other kind of stuff. Now, my son 10 years from now, who knows the way Twitter and everything else will change the world.

There was a study that I just read that said, I think it was 46% of 8 year olds are using PDA’s or phones. They have their own phone! Really? [Incredulously].

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\(^{49}\) The Adversary is a scriptural term for Satan or the devil. In LDS theology there is a belief that the devil is “the enemy of righteousness” and he is trying to destroy God’s children (LDS, 2012a).
That was unheard of not that long ago. Relevance is huge.

Then of course the last point is being urgent. What I teach needs to be something that students want to do right now; not something that is forever off in the future. It needs to be something cool with a sense of urgency about it. “I want to pray more tonight. I want to read my scriptures better today. I want to be more moral now. I want those kinds of things now.” So that’s why that’s on my board. It’s for my lesson preparation. Whatever I teach, I want it to be true, relevant, and urgent.

“Being Quick to Observe”

Daniel said that one of his main focuses in teaching has been being able to “teach and learn by the Spirit,” which is one of the Teaching and Learning Emphasis fundamentals (S&I, 2009a). Daniel explained what he thinks has been the process for developing this ability.

When I go into the class, there are usually three or four different ways we can get to where we need to be. And each class will take me to those different places. But we’ll always end up there. So I’ve made all of the preparation, but I’m never stuck to a specific plan, even though I’ve prepared.

Daniel then connected his ability to teach this way to a talk that he read from Elder David A. Bednar.

Elder Bednar’s (2005) talk, “Quick to Observe,” is huge in developing this skill. You have to discern—shouldn’t say have to—you are most effective if you are able to discern what your students need or what the class needs. And sometimes what the class needs is focused on one student and sometimes it is focused on the whole class needs all at once, but you’ve got to be able to discern that.

Daniel then explained how he thinks he has become a discerning teacher.

You have to ask for it. You pray. You say, “Please help me to get this.” The gift of discernment is a gift of the Spirit.50 But it is something that you have to ask for. As teachers of the Gospel it is something that we have the right to, but we have to pray for it and ask for it. Then we can get it. However, God isn’t one that usually

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50 LDS theology teaches that the Holy Ghost or the Spirit can give certain abilities or gifts to people if they ask for them in faith. The gift of discernment is one of those gifts.
says, “Here you go. Now you’re great.” He’s one that says, “Alright, you want that, now practice. I’ll give you some guidance, but you gotta step into the dark a little bit. Trust me on this.” And that’s one thing when I teach teachers how to teach, whenever it is that I am doing that, I tell them you are going to have to step into the dark.

There are going to be times that you are going to have a thought that says, “I need to do something,” and it’s going to scare you to death. And you’re going to have to step into the dark and the Lord is going to prove to you what he is saying, that He’ll give you the gift of discernment.

That has happened to me so many times. That is Elder Bednar’s idea that faith is the assurance of things hoped for. Then you have faith. Then it happens and then you have the assurance that you’ll be able to do it again. You have to practice discerning things about people, looking people in the eye, knowing what they need and what will help them, and then actually taking action to do that thing. Then you get more confidence to be able to do it more.

Elder Bednar says the precursor to the gift of discernment is being quick to observe. He gets that from Mormon who as a child was quick to observe. So when you read about who Mormon is and why he was able to what he did, it’s because he watched everything around him. It’s amazing what the kids will tell you in their actions, in what they are talking about, and in everything else. So, if I’m quick to observe that a kid comes in a little more tired than he normally is, I can go ask him about it. Or if I’m standing there and these two girls are talking about something and I hear some stuff or I observe them, now I can discern some things about their situation. So you practice this. And as you practice you get more power or ability, just like anything you practice, and you are able to get better and better at it.

Daniel then shared an experience where he practiced being quick to observe and discerned the needs of a young woman in his class.

Last year there was a girl that was in my class and she looked a little down—being quick to observe—so I just held her after class. I said, “Hey! Stick here for a minute. Are you alright? Is everything okay?” And she said, “No.” So she

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51 This is a reference to a talk by Elder Boyd K. Packer (1983) where he described faith as a process of coming to the edge of the light and realizing that you have to step into the dark, only to find that your path is lit just a few steps ahead of you.

52 Daniel is making reference to another talk by Elder David A. Bednar (2006), which connects faith to a process of acting when the person is unsure of the outcome. He or she acts in faith and then receives evidence and assurance that his or her faith was justified.
started talking to me about her friends. Then I had a thought in my mind to say, “How can I help you with that problem?” [Long pause] How in the world am I going to help here? I didn’t think there was anything I could do, but it felt right to ask. She even said, “I don’t think you can help me with this problem.” It turns out she had a couple of friends who were inching their way into drugs, starting to justify some drug abuse and stuff like that.

Then the thought came to me, “Talk to her about telling their bishops.” [Long pause] I said, “Hey, what if you went to their bishops?”53 She said, “There’s no way I can do that.” I said, “Will you tell me their names so I can go to their bishops?” And she said, “Yeah!” So she told me their names and I called their bishops. Two weeks later both girls came in and thanked me.

That was not something I would normally do. I mean that series of events is very unusual, all because I observed that she was down a little bit that day and I was willing to pull her aside, willing to ask the questions that came into my mind, and willing to call their bishops. “Bishop, someone told me that this was happening; just wanted to let you know.” Those two girls then progressed with their lives, and they had a great senior year. And currently, they are doing very, very well. But both of them came in and said, “Thank you very, very much because I was on a path to do the wrong thing.”

There’s an example of being quick to observe. I had no idea where it was going. It was one of those times, if not the only, when I called a bishop on the word of somebody else, but it was the right thing to do. I think you have to be willing to step into a teaching situation ready to do something unexpected. You have to be willing to get out of the boat.54 Maybe this is a great analogy to Elder Bednar’s talk. You’ve got to step into the dark. You’ve got to get out of the boat. You’ve got to be willing to say, Spirit, I trust you more than my preparation. I trust you more than I trust myself. And so I’m going to do it.

53 A bishop is a local LDS ecclesiastical leader. The bishop has the responsibility of working with local members who need to overcome personal challenges such as involvement with drugs. Most often this is a voluntary matter instigated by the individual who has the problem. It not normal protocol for a person to talk to the bishop for someone else without his or her consent and have the bishop call the person into his office for a worthiness interview. While this situation is not unheard of, it represents unusual behavior.

54 This is a reference to another Elder Bednar talk that was given during the summer just prior to this interview. Elder Bednar (2011) had discussed being willing to do the unexpected in the classroom and act in faith. He had compared such moments to Peter getting out of the boat on the Sea of Galilee and walking on the water to meet the Savior.
Love Like the Savior

The last attribute or attitude that Daniel described was to love like the Savior. He said that it was influential to his development and learning. He described his experience as being important because he had to redefine what he thought it meant to love people. This redefining process occurred over years of experience, starting as early as his junior year in high school, through his missionary service\textsuperscript{55}, and continued as he developed as a seminary teacher. The following experiences capture the essence of what happened to Daniel. He said:

Daniel: There was one student who was disrupting class consistently with questions that were very inappropriate. I could tell that he didn’t want to be in seminary. He wanted to change…no, he wanted to highjack the class. Afterwards one day I just looked at him and I said, “You can’t do this in this class. And if you are going to continue, you have got to leave.” And he left. I never saw him again. And we didn’t see him in seminary again.

Researcher: What was the effect on the class?

Daniel: It was great. A good situation for the class, but I don’t know if it was for him. I had another situation 2 years ago here in this building where I had a young man who left class. He wasn’t really bad, but his influence was negative in class. And he’d been gone three days before this particular day. The class had gone really well while he was absent. When he came back to class, he left during class to get a drink and I met him downstairs. I said, “You know what? The last three days when you were gone, class was great. And today we’re having a hard time.” He looked at me and he almost started crying and he said, “Really? You can’t be saying that!” And I said, “I am saying that.” Then he came back into class.

He stayed in seminary for rest of that school year, but the next year he got kicked out of a different class because he wouldn’t behave. Now this year he’s back in seminary and he’s doing fine. I truly believe that if the intent of your heart is to bless and to help and you are really acting on what you believe are inspirations from the Spirit and you have the right intentions, it will work out right. But it can seem to you like what you have done has backfired.

\textsuperscript{55} As Latter-day Saint young men turn 19 they can voluntarily participate in the experience of being a proselyting missionary. This missionary experience lasts for 24 months where the young man is dedicated to teaching the gospel full time during that period.
Now if you are doing it for the wrong reason, it will backfire every time. If you are doing it for the wrong reasons, it *will* backfire every time. But if you are really truly trying to help your class and help that student come unto Christ, sometimes it will seem to backfire and it will be brutally hard and they may never come back, but it was the right thing to do if your intention was true. It’s hard...you step in the dark; you jump out of the boat.

As Daniel and I discussed these stories, I observed that Daniel’s demeanor changed. During the earlier discussions he was very academic, confident, and strong in his presence. However, during this conversation the tempo of Daniel’s pace slowed, his voice lowered, and he became more thoughtful. Pointing out this change to him he responded, “It wasn’t anything fun I would all fun. But you still do it because you want to get better and you want to affect and help as many people as possible.” At this point the conversation took a very important turn.

Researcher: In this instance, why was this change harder for you than the others you have described?

Daniel: Because you are doing something that goes against what you would normally think would help somebody.

Researcher: Ah. It didn’t make sense to you how this was an act of love?

Daniel: It doesn’t make sense to what we believe is the natural order of things. However, if you look in the scriptures God says, “I chasten those I love.” This was one of the best scriptures for me. He says, “I chasten those whom I love.” And so, if I truly love them and I discern that they need a certain thing that isn’t easy for me to say, if I really love them, I’ll say it anyway. If I don’t tell them then I won’t be showing that I love them. So I had to ask myself, “Do I really love my students? Do I reprove betimes with sharpness and then show an increase of love? Or do I just sit back and let them do whatever they want? Do I chasten because I love or do I show that I don’t love by sitting back and avoiding the hard situation?” These were hard situations. And so I read those verses in the scriptures, I mean those are truths that you’ve got to rely on if you really want to show love in these kinds of situations. But if you don’t have the power of discernment and your intentions are not right, that can backfire on you. But if you do, and you know that you are following the Spirit and your intentions are true, that chastening, that increase of love will help them. Some of my best friends as
students who have graduated from high school are some of the students that I was hardest on because of their situation.

“Becoming the TLE”

In the final vignette Daniel described in summary what he thinks his experience has meant as he has come to understand and implement TLE.

Daniel: TLE is not a methodology of how to teach. It’s a process of how to become a master teacher. If you can look at the fundamentals and the objective and do those things, you will become the TLE rather than do the TLE. I think that is where you gain a lot of power in the classroom. [For instance,] a lot of times people will come and watch my class and they’ll say, “You didn’t do anything differently than I do.” And I’ll say, “No! I didn’t. I don’t do anything differently teaching wise than a lot of people do. But my desire, my study, my understanding of where we are because of the talks I’ve read, gives me…Let’s say it this way, I’m more practiced at ‘becoming’ than you are.” Maybe that’s it, because for 9 years now I’ve worked on becoming a TLE teacher rather than doing the TLE.

Researcher: That’s a subtle difference isn’t it, becoming a TLE teacher rather than doing the TLE? What’s the difference between the two?

Daniel: In a word it is conversion. Elder Bednar just gave a talk at our regional stake conference. He talked about the difference between testimony and conversion. He said, “Lots of people have a testimony and they believe the Gospel is true, but conversion is when you become and it becomes your nature to do something.” And so people say, “I believe that the Church is true,” but they need to realize “if I’m converted then I go to church and I do the things I am supposed to do. I’m committed to what I’m doing.”

You know a great example of this is the basic doctrines test. You know it has “the believe” and “the apply” sections. We just did that here. And in my classes the belief section was off the chart. I mean, almost completely every student scored high on the belief section in almost every doctrine. [However,] the apply section [Daniel made the sound of an airplane noise diving] almost completely down for every student in all of my classes. That’s the difference between testimony and conversion.

“Am I doing the TLE? Yeah, I believe in it.” But becoming the TLE is “I am not

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56 S&I has developed a Basic Doctrines Assessment that teachers are expected to administer to their classes at least once during the school year. One of the components of the assessment consists of a self-report section about the participant’s beliefs and application of the basic doctrines of the Church.
doing it because I have to. I don’t even think about it anymore.” Some people say, “I’m going to cultivate a little bit better today in class.” But cultivating an atmosphere of love and respect is what I do in everything that I do in my classroom. Some say, “Today I’ll work on helping students identify doctrines and principles.” But I don’t have a day that we are just going to do doctrines and principles. Everything we do is doctrinally based with actions as part of it. And the kids understand that and that’s what the class becomes. And they love it! I think you become a TLE teacher when everything you do is based on it, is aligned with it.
Appendix I

Artifacts
Figure I-1. Aaron’s wall sign: Is the Holy Ghost present?
Figure I-2. Daniel’s wall sign: Verity, relevancy, urgency.
The objective of seminaries and institutes of religion includes the following:

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.

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.

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 scripture 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.

Figure 1-3. Joseph’s TLE feedback form.
Adam’s 25 Questions for Guiding Lesson Preparation

25 Review Questions to Help Prepare

Teaching & Learning Emphasis Centered Lessons

The following 25 questions are meant to assist in preparing lessons that are centered on the S&I Objective and elements of the Teaching and Learning Emphasis. It is not intended that each item on this list be included in each lesson, but as a tool to help review lessons to ensure Teaching and Learning Emphasis principles are consistently incorporated in our lesson preparation and presentation. Review these questions before/after you teach designated sequential scripture blocks.

S&I Objective

✓ How does this lesson help lead my students to the Savior, and help them to understand and rely on his teachings and atonement?
✓ How does this lesson help my students qualify for the blessings of the temple?
✓ How does this lesson help prepare my students and their families for eternal life?

Teach and Learn by the Spirit

✓ Am I striving to live worthily of the spirit, repentant and in a spirit of humility? (see D&C 112:10)
✓ Did I pray as I prepared my lesson today to seek new ideas and ask/confirm with the Lord what to teach? (see D&C 42:14)
✓ Am I well prepared to enable the Spirit to direct me as I teach? (see D&C 11:21; D&C 84:85)
✓ Am I teaching pure and simple doctrine, avoiding speculation and personal interpretation? (see 2 Nephi 33:6; 3 Nephi 19:8)
✓ Are my lesson activities in harmony with principles of edification (D&C 50:23) and treating spiritual things with sacredness? (see D&C 100:7-8)
Cultivate a learning environment of love, respect, and purpose.

✓ Does my lesson show love and respect for the Lord and my fellowman? (see Matthew 22:37-40)
✓ Does my lesson cultivate high expectations of spiritual, mental, and physical participation from my students?
✓ Am I excited to teach this scripture block today? (see Jeremiah 20:7-9)

Study the scriptures daily and read the text for the course.

✓ Does this lesson keep students centered in the assigned sequential scripture block covering multiple verses?
✓ Does today’s lesson avoid “theme” based lessons centered on just a few select verses?
✓ How does today’s lesson encourage students to read the scriptures on their own?

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

✓ Have I read the scripture block multiple times to help understand context and content?
✓ Are the doctrines and principles I am teaching consistent with the context of the inspired writer?
✓ How am I using the context of the scripture block to clarify Gospel doctrines and principles?

Identify, understand, and apply Gospel doctrines and principles.

✓ Can I clearly and simply state the doctrines and principles I am teaching in this lesson?
✓ How does today’s lesson encourage students to identify doctrines and principles, instead of me just telling them?
✓ What will students DO because of today’s lesson? In other words, how does this lesson invite students to act on and apply what is learned in their daily life?

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

✓ How are students being given the opportunity to explain doctrines and principles to one another in today’s lesson?
✓ Do I have specific questions prepared that will facilitate student sharing of
relevant experiences?
✓ What divine truths will I specifically testify of today, and how will I invite students to testify of the same?

**Mastery key scripture passages and basic doctrines.**

✓ How does today’s lesson help students to master key passages and basic doctrines?
✓ Which of the 11 basic doctrines can be emphasized in today’s block?
✓ Which of the 100 scripture mastery verses can I use as cross references to doctrines and principles taught in today’s block?
Appendix J

Article About Seminary
Seminary Program Celebrates Century of Teaching Mormon Teens

Published electronically by the LDS Newsroom at www.mormonnewsroom.org
(Seminary program celebrates century of teaching Mormon teens, 2012).

January 19, 2012

In 1912, adjacent to Granite High School in Salt Lake City, Utah, Thomas J. Yates assumed the challenging task of organizing and teaching the first seminary class of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon). Yates, a Cornell University trained engineer and a power plant employee, rode his horse at midday from his full-time job to teach the 70 students enrolled in the fledgling program.

Yates recognized the demanding nature of the new educational pursuit. “This was a new venture,” he stated in his autobiography. “It had never been tried before. We could see wonderful possibilities; if it were successful it would mean a complete change for the Church.”

Yates was correct in his prediction, and Elder Paul V. Johnson, Commissioner of the Church Educational System, concurs.

“The most important factor in the 100 years of seminary is the hundreds of lives it has touched over those years,” Johnson adds. “It is the individual lives that have been affected as young people have a chance to learn the Gospel and to apply those teachings in their lives.”

Seminary, or the study of religious history and scripture among high school students, grew from the original 70 students in one location to nearly 370,000 enrollees in more than 140 countries today. Students study 4 years to complete the program; courses include Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History.

“The curriculum gives students a chance to understand sequentially what the scriptures teach,” says Chad H. Webb, administrator of Seminaries and Institutes for the Church. “They discover the stories, the people, the backgrounds and the history of those volumes of scripture. It’s a process that allows them to find answers to questions in their own lives.”

Contemporary students study Church scripture and doctrine in a variety of methods.

In geographic areas with high concentrations of Church members, a “release” from the regular public school curriculum is legislatively granted and students attend seminary as a part of a normal school day. In communities with fewer members, students generally attend daily or early morning seminary classes, courses taught prior to the regular school
day and often beginning by 6:00 a.m. Some students attend seminary classes after school. Another option, in remote areas, allows enrollment in a home study course where students prepare their lessons independently.

Scheduling time for seminary requires sacrifice on the part of the students, explains Elder Johnson. “In the early morning settings or after school settings, they have to give up some time outside of their school day to get up early and study and to be involved, and students who register for released time sacrifice one of their academic courses at school to enroll,” says Elder Johnson. “That sacrifice is a powerful tool to help mold and to shape their lives.”

Such dedication to religious study seems unusual in the contemporary teenage world, but it demonstrates the strong foundation that results in the lives of Mormon teenagers. A recent Pew Forum study found Church members tally some of the highest scores in the United States when describing core teachings and history of religion, including knowledge of the Bible.

Individual examples, such as former competitive surfer Sean Kimball of Laguna Beach, California, illustrate such dedication. When surfing practice and early morning seminary offered conflicting schedules, Sean chose to continue his surfing, attending seminary on occasion. But Sean realized when he missed seminary, his days “weren’t as good,” he told the Church News. After a year, Sean decided to switch early morning surfing with regular attendance at seminary. “I knew seminary was more important than surfing,” he said. “I’ve never regretted making the decision to put seminary first.”

Eventually Sean was able to resolve the conflicting time commitments to resume surfing as well. An understanding coach scheduled Sean in surf heats and practice later in the morning allowing Sean to pursue both interests.

Sean is now serving a full-time mission for the Church in the Dominican Republic.

Highly recruited basketball player Jabari Parker of Chicago, Illinois, currently attends daily early morning seminary classes and then begins a regular school day followed by an intense basketball practice and game schedule. An article that appeared in the New York Times explained how Jabari’s dedication to attend seminary — where he was studying the Old Testament at the time — helps him on the court and in everyday life:

As the accolades and adulation mount — along with the stakes and scrutiny — Jabari said he relied on his religious faith to buttress his confidence. He recalls the Genesis account of Abraham’s willingness to obey God’s command to sacrifice his son Isaac, a sacrifice cut short by divine intervention.

“It shows how strong his faith is, that he’s willing to do anything,” Jabari said of Abraham. “I use that as an example in life and in basketball.”
“In some ways,” says Chad Webb, “seminary hasn’t changed a lot in the 100 years. Elder Joseph F. Merrill, who was a faculty member at the University of Utah, a Church leader in the Granite High School neighborhood and the pioneer of that first class, hoped for the same results in the lives of young people that we hope for today. Merrill and Yates, the first teacher, helped their students to study, to learn the scriptures and to love the Lord. We hope that is what will happen in every seminary class today and forever.”
CURRICULUM VITAE

MARK D. MASON

EDUCATION

Utah State University
Ph. D. Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences 2012
Dissertation: “A Phenomenological Study of Professional Identity Change in Released-Time Seminary Teachers”

Utah State University
M. Ed. Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences 2003

Brigham Young University
B. A. Philosophy 1995

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Davis County, Released-Time Seminary Teacher
Instructor 1995-Present
Religious education instructor for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Junior Seminary Principal 2006-2009
Supervised three junior seminary faculties

Computer Support Specialist 2004-2006
Administrator for seminary building network and faculty computer trainer

Assistant Principal 2003-2005
Assisted senior seminary principal in supervising seminary faculty and staff

Faculty Inservice Trainer 2003-2005
Responsible for inservice training for senior seminary faculty

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, Curriculum Team
Curriculum Field Writer Jun 2012 – Present
Assisting members of the fulltime S&I curriculum team

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, Curriculum Team
Curriculum Writer’s Workshop December 2011
Selected to participate in S&I curriculum writer’s workshop

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Human Resources
Curriculum Writer  Jun 2011 – Aug 2011
Wrote curriculum for LDS Church and the Leadership Development Program

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion
Team member of an evaluation committee for doctrinal accuracy and test validity for the LDS Provo Missionary Training Center’s doctrinal competency assessment

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, Curriculum Team
XML Conversion Team Member  2005
Worked a curriculum project to convert curriculum text to XML

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, Preservice Curriculum Team
Consultant for Preservice Curriculum Writing  2005
Team member of committee that developed curriculum packet for preservice training regarding the Teaching Emphasis

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Mark D. Mason. “What was the nature of the change that 6 effective released-time seminary teachers went through to understand and implement the Teaching and Learning Emphasis?” Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Research Forum, Salt Lake City, UT.  2012

PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS

Shane DeMars, Mark D. Mason, Jose Gomez, Corbin Bell, Preston P. Parker, Shelley Henson, J.N. Eastmond. “Report of the Needs Assessment – Phase 1 – for the USU Department of Instructional Technology,” Instructional Technology Department, Utah State University  2004

LANGUAGES

English – Native Language
German – Requires review, somewhat conversant

MEMBERSHIPS

Alpha Gamma Sigma Honor Society, lifetime member