EDITORIAL

Graeme Perry

Recognition of the climate change crisis has forced the issue to transform from a political, ideological disrupter, to the socially discussed opportunity for making a personal difference creating a conceivable, certain and secure future. Chats have moved on beyond the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) (2016) mantra of "Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle", from which many daily habits have already been altruistically formed—including reducing or eliminating use of plastics, repurposing discarded resources, and household/organisation water conservation.

Developing global awareness of the amount of water required to 'grow' different types of food (UN, 2003, p. 17), among other issues, focussed the UN to initiate an International Decade of Action 'Water for Life' 2005 to 2015, from which emerged the Sustainable Development Goals including Goal 6, "Ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" (UNDESA, 2015). This supported existing humanitarian NGO activity that captured charitable donors and offered some participation in 'solving the problems of the world'. The need persists (UN, n.d.).

A new trend seems to assertively hover in social circles. Perhaps an extension of the climate debate to the notion of reformation of food lifestyle practices to contribute to the 'life of the planet' (Water, 2021). An increasing splatter of symbols, clarified by a descriptive key, has proliferated on the menus of our favoured eating places—perhaps GF (gluten free), V (vegetarian), VE (vegan) or VO (vegan option available). Specific dietary requirements for wellness, a contributor to wellbeing, have had a long history. Some are directly related to unique medical conditions—allergies, intolerances like coeliac, or diabetes and obesity, while others improve general health—eat more vegetables and fruits (a plant-based diet) adding fibre. Other diets are chosen for religious, ethical or cultural reasons. Of increasing impact are animal welfare perspectives, which if linked with wellness arguments and sustainability concerns, affirm a food choice of veganism (Sherman, 2020), shifting human ecology to increased compatability with global plant and animal ecological principles of sustainability.

Veganism, like some religious convictions, race characteristics and unconventional opinions, identify minority groups whose uniqueness becomes socially subjected to 'cancel culture' (Neill, 2021, p. 6).

> In its current form, cancel culture is anonymous, fuelled by a politically correct mentality that relies on the "thought police" to direct its behaviour [often on social media], it is intensely polarising – "I am right, you are wrong." It teaches us that if someone does something wrong, or champions someone or something that we may not like or agree with, then we must stop supporting them immediately.
> (Mintz, 2021, para. 12)

Cancel culture is a potential 'cancer' within Christian schools too. Effective treatment depends on the radiation of compassionate understanding, but also incisive expressions of love and mercy that ensure eradication and restoration of a 'healthy tissue' of relationships.

As this issues' authors assert, confirming and affirming relationships is an essential element of teaching Christianly. TEACH

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[Photography: Glenys Perry]

Macquarie College teacher Joshua Brown leading students on a coastal experience. Photography: Joshua Brown

Connection, direction, teacher effectiveness and wellbeing

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Preamble

Visiting as a consultant in a number of schools in recent months, an observed key element for success in schools is teacher effectiveness. It is amazing to observe the breadth of connection across teachers from a multitude of training pathways and length of teaching (and other) experience. Recently, Dr Adelle Faull, Lecturer at Avondale University shared Chris Starrett's submitted assignment on this topic. In my view Starrett has delivered an astute summary, and the insights and conclusions are deserving of a wider audience. The conclusions and future directions for professional development and successful learning are worthy of serious reflection. After consultation Starrett has agreed for his paper to be published. I recommend it to you!

"the capacity of the teacher to combine and translate these elements (inputs, processes and outputs) into something that inspires students to strive and grow."

Introduction

Teacher effectiveness is a multifaceted concept, which sits at the heart of successful educational programs. A balanced approach to evaluating and analysing teacher effectiveness must incorporate recognition and discussion of hard teacher skills, such as curriculum planning and procedural professionalism, and soft teacher skills, such as the capacity to build rapport with students, deliver content and instruct in engaging ways, which are all essential to effective teaching (Clinton, et al., 2018). Goe, et al. (2008) define teacher effectiveness through three categories: inputs (teacher quality), processes (teacher action) and outputs (outcomes achieved) (p. 4). This paper will focus primarily on the first two of these categories, inputs and processes, which will be reframed as:

Inputs
- Boundaries – standards and expectations set for both teachers and students
- Stimulus – planned, organised, relevant curriculum and content

Processes
- Connection – rapport between teacher and student, which facilitates learning and a safe environment
- Direction – the effective and engaging delivery of stimulus content

Previously (C. Starrett, 2021), teacher effectiveness has been defined as;

> *the capacity of the teacher to combine and translate these elements (inputs, processes and outputs) into something that inspires students to strive and grow. It is the intangible influence and impact that a teacher has on their students beyond the confined structures of the classroom and education system" (p. 1).*

Using the four frames outlined immediately above, this definition could be more descriptively expanded to include: a quality schooling experience, and all effective teaching that occurs within this context, specifically a balanced combination of boundaries, stimulus, connection and direction.

These lenses will be used to gain further insight regarding how models designed to facilitate improved teacher effectiveness play out in reality - in the classroom. This paper will analyse and

compare the NSW Department of Education (DET) Quality Teaching Model (2003; Collins, 2017) and the Four Domains of the Framework for Teaching (The Danielson Group, 2013) as "inputs", which provide both boundaries and stimulus. The paper will then discuss Faull's Dispositional Cluster Model (2008) and teacher effectiveness processes for teacher connection and direction, with reference to wellbeing programs such as the Invictus Wellbeing Program (2020) and the BITE BACK program (2020). These models will be evaluated and analysed in relationship to their general effectiveness, and their varying levels of implementation over recent years within the contexts of Agtech[1]— a rural technology school in country NSW and Zidon[2]— a K-12 school located in northern suburbs of Sydney, NSW.

Inputs: Models for boundaries and stimulus

Inputs are defined by Goe, et al. (2008) as "teacher background, beliefs, expectations, experience, pedagogical and content knowledge, certification and licensure, and educational attainment" (p. 4). These elements combined with the policies mandated by state, faith system or school bodies, generate the boundaries and stimulus that teachers work with and use as tools in the classroom each day. 'Boundaries' encompass the professional boundaries and expectations maintained by the effective teacher, and the boundaries regarding school policies and expectations as they are dictated by the school or governing entities. The key aim of both personal and organisational boundaries is to create a safe, inclusive and productive learning environment.

'Stimulus' inputs comprise elements such as curriculum, pedagogical content and teacher knowledge of content. This information is dictated, to a large extent, by national and state level curriculums, which are formulated and passed down by government education bodies, and school administrations. Teachers must take the prescribed stimulus, organise the information into effective sequences, including units and lessons that synthesise the content with the student's context and the world that is evolving around them.

The input elements of boundaries and stimulus are evident in both the New South Wales (DET) Quality Teaching Model (2003; Collins, 2017) and the Four Domains of the New York Department of Education Framework for Teaching Components (The Danielson Group, 2013). These models are outlined in Table 1 and Figure 1 below.

[1]Pseudonym for the rural technology school.
[2]Pseudonym for the Sydney K-12 school.

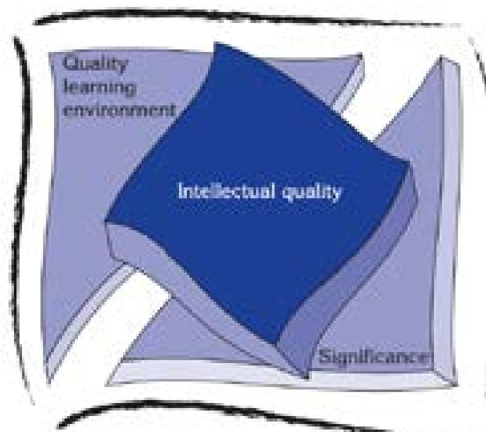
The two models provide corporate frameworks for how education and teaching should function from an institutional perspective, and the models share numerous parallels. Both models emphasise the need for an environment conducive to learning, for the preparation of quality content and the need for this content to be instructed in a meaningful way – the basics of education. The models are not significantly flawed if they are analysed from a purely corporate and thematic perspective; each model outlines core elements that are well established as required elements for any successful educational system.

Table 1: *New York Department of Education Framework for Teaching Components* (The Danielson Group, 2013, p. 5)

The Four Domains - Education Framework for Teaching Components
1. Planning & Preparation
2. Classroom Environment
3. Instruction
4. Professional Responsibility

> *Teachers must take the prescribed stimulus [and] organise the information into … lessons that synthesise the content with the student's context*

Figure 1: *NSW Quality Teaching Model (NSW, DET, 2003)*



The Four Domains are categorised, with Domain 1 (Planning and Preparation) and 4 (Professional Responsibility) being viewed as activity external to the classroom, and Domain 2 (Classroom Environment) and 3 (Instruction) being activities that occur within the classroom (The Danielson Group, 2013, p. 4). This framework provides a broader

perspective than the NSW (DET) Quality Teaching Model, which focuses primarily on the classroom and teacher activity within this context. Although the full explanation of the NSW Quality Teaching Model refers to a broader school context and some teacher activity outside of the classroom, the three-phase model itself uses broad brush strokes, which appear to miss some of the key nuances of truly effective teaching.

For example in 2020, the NSW (DET) Quality Teaching Model (2003; Collins, 2017) remains a staple element in the professional training and development of teaching staff. As recently as this year, the administration at Agtech, were using the model as the basis for teacher professional development, with the aim of addressing a significant decay in the safety and productivity of classroom environments, and subsequently, the intellectual quality being explored and achieved within the classroom. Given the context of the school; low socio-economic demographic, significant domestic trauma and criminal activity in the community, high levels of truancy, limited welfare support and a poorly planned and implemented behaviour management policy - the gross over-simplification of the issue as being a teacher-based problem served as a significant discouragement to teaching staff at the school. How are individual teachers expected to fix a totally broken learning culture across an entire school? How are individual teachers expected to generate a sense of significance about learning when the community and culture surrounding the school shows disregard for education in general? The NSW Quality Teaching Model was not the appropriate tool to address these community and school wide issues, nor is it effective in equipping teachers with functional ways to navigate the challenges of teaching in this environment.

> *the gross over-simplification of the issue as being a teacher-based problem served as a significant discourage-ment to teaching staff at the school.*

In contrast, on the Zidon Sydney suburban campus between 2016 and 2020, the NSW (DET) Quality Teaching Model (2003; Collins, 2017) has not been referred to or intentionally addressed at any point during professional development or staff meeting sessions. The Sydney campus is a private school, which sits in the higher socio-economic demographic of northern Sydney. The school does not face anywhere near the number of community based challenges that Agtech faces, however, the staff would greatly benefit from teacher effectiveness training and development, which could start with the NSW (DET) Quality Teaching Model, and build from that point. In the higher socio-economic context, it can become easy for teachers to take the attendance, compliance and motivation of their students for granted – thus overlooking the need to work hard at establishing quality learning environments, significance and intellectual quality. The affluent context, invested parents and competitive academic environment can lead teachers and administrations to "rest on their laurels", rather than continuing to innovate and strive for excellence – which has certainly been the case at Zidon.

Another factor impacting the success of teacher effectiveness models in the Zidon context is the significant overload of corporate level "input" models within which teachers are expected to comply: NSW Educational Standards Authority (NESA) compliance and the Adventist Schools Australia (ASA) added layers, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Ledership (AITSL) teaching standards, Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) requirements, Quality Adventist Schools (QAS) Framework, Association of Independent Schools (AIS) recommendations and NSW (DET) Quality Teaching Model—there are multiple layers, a significant amount of overlap and yet a total lack of clarity or communication as to how teachers should navigate and use these models for their intended purpose—to serve students as learners in the classroom.

The NSW (DET) Quality Teaching Model, unpacked in more detail, is comprised of 18 elements, which sit within the three initial

Figure 2: Expanded NSW (DET) Quality Teaching Model (2003; Collins, 2017)

	Intellectual Quality	Quality Learning Environment	Significance
Elements	Deep knowledge	Explicit quality criteria	Background knowledge
	Deep understanding	Engagement	Cultural knowledge
	Problematic knowledge	High expectations	Knowledge integration
	High-order thinking	Social support	Inclusivity
	Metalanguage	Students' self-regulation	Connected-ness
	Substantive Communication	Student direction	Narrative

The NSW Quality Teaching Model has 3 dimensions and 18 elements

dimensions (Figure 2).

While this expanded model for teacher effectiveness contains relevant inclusions, adding 18 layers to an area of teacher management that is already overcrowded means that much of the language and its intended purpose is rendered ineffectual. The model is still overwhelmingly concerned with inputs, specifically regarding boundaries and stimulus. The concepts outlined are valuable, however, like the Four Domains Education Framework for Teaching Components (The Danielson Group, 2013), the model still misses key teacher processes relating to *connection* to students, and the way this facilitates engaging direction and delivery within the classroom.

Effective implementation is the key issue pertaining to both school and teacher effectiveness when assessing the value of models such as the NSW (DET) Quality Teaching Model (2003; Collins, 2017) and the Four Domains of Education Framework (The Danielson Group, 2013). Teacher effectiveness frameworks continue to expand and espouse increasing levels of corporate and institutional jargon, however, if the teachers in the classrooms are not trained, developed and mentored to implement quality processes in ways that connect with and direct their students effectively, the overarching models for effective teaching become inoperable ideologies.

Processes: Models for connection and direction

Processes are defined by Goe, et al. (2008) as "the interaction that occurs in the classroom between teachers and students" (p. 4), however, it could be suggested that effective teacher processes extend outside the confines of the classroom. The teacher's capacity to make connections with students, to "Know students and how they learn" (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2017, p. 4, 6, 10-11), must go beyond the classroom for teachers to be effective in the modern school setting. There is a link, which cannot be ignored, between teacher connection to students and teacher capacity to give students direction. Connection is the ability of the teacher to build a professional and authentic rapport with their students – to develop respectful and understanding relationships across the classroom, which lead to a healthy and productive learning climate. Direction is the fruit of this labour – healthy teacher and student connection leads to effective and engaging instructional teaching.

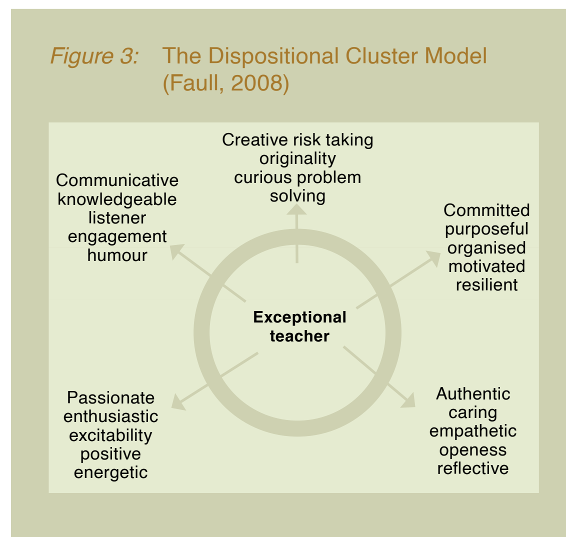
The Dispositional Cluster Model (Faull, 2008) provides significant insights regarding the essential nature of the teacher's capacity to develop connection with their students. The Dispositional Cluster Model has a focus on five key traits possessed by exceptional teachers; the model is presented in Figure 3.

The elements of the Dispositional Cluster Model could be defined as a combination of "teacher inputs" and "teacher processes" (Goe, et. al, 2008), which primarily serve the purposes of connection and direction. Authenticity, passion and commitment are professional qualities in a teacher which lead to healthy connections with students (Chin Yin, et al., 2019). The first three elements combined with creativity and communication provide an excellent 'formula' for engaging direction of learning in the classroom. More specifically creativity provides "interest" and "the hook" ensuring motivation, while communication is a foundational essential teaching process that is dependent on the other four personal trait elements to effectively ensure learning. The processes a teacher employs to connect with and direct their students is the keystone to linking the corporate teacher effectiveness models—such as the NSW (DET) Quality Teaching Model—which are focused on inputs, boundaries and stimulus, with the diverse range of human beings that occupy seats in the classroom.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of training and resources available to improve teacher connections with students – the only real filters exist at the interview stage of job applications, at which point administrators attempt to gauge the temperament and character of applicants. When it comes to professional development, more often than not, the priority lies with courses focused on boundaries, stimulus and direction. This ignorance of professional connection building skills as an essential element of effective teaching can lead to extremely unhealthy outcomes in the classroom.

> *Connection is the ability of the teacher to build a professional and authentic rapport with their students … Direction is the fruit of this labour*

Figure 3: The Dispositional Cluster Model (Faull, 2008)



For example, in the volatile Agtech context, the staff appeared to be divided into three separate groups: those who had befriended the students to survive, those who ignored the students to survive and those who engaged in the challenge of building professional rapport. The faction of staff who had resorted to befriending the students appeared to have amicable conversations and exchanges with the students, however their capacity to shift out of this zone and give directions and explicit instructions was compromised. The faction of staff who survived by ignoring the students, operated to deliver boundaries and stimulus, but had essentially abandoned attempts at connection and any meaningful direction. The final group, those battling to find the balance, were constantly juggling efforts to build rapport without losing the capacity to uphold boundaries and direct students through content.

This challenge is also present in the Zidon school context, where certain factions of staff have built unhealthy connections with students that deviate into the realm of friendship, while ignoring other students who are less academically successful or socially dominant. This culture, fuelled by a poorly constructed attempt at streaming, has led to a scenario where some students appear to be favoured while others are overlooked, and teachers become recognised by their students as social figures, rather than professional educational instructors and mentors. This discrepancy in teacher's understanding of what it means to connect with students in a professional and productive manner leads to factions within the staff, also causing inconsistent boundaries and expectations for students. This toxic culture has even been observable from an administrative perspective, where those staff that have engaged in what are essentially teacher – student 'friendships', are affirmed for their "nurturing" attitude, while those staff who attempt to maintain professional boundaries have been viewed as harsh and lacking empathy.

administrative oversight has fuelled the attitude among some factions of staff, that popularity among students is the currency of teacher success, rather than professional-ism and quality teaching.

Perhaps most damaging is the fact that this administrative oversight has fuelled the attitude among some factions of staff, that popularity among students is the currency of teacher success, rather than professionalism and quality teaching. The impact of these factors is that teachers who have attempted to maintain professional connections risk losing their capacity to direct and teach effectively due to student perceived limited support and affirmation from administration. Meanwhile, those teachers who have unhealthy connections sacrifice their ability to teach effectively in exchange for an easier time in 'getting along' with the students. This is a lose/lose scenario for the core business of schools, quality learning and education.

A final factor that contributes to these issues is a poorly implemented Middle School model at the Zidon Sydney campus., which sees the students treated more similarly to primary school students than high school students from year 5 through to year 8. The lower boundaries and expectations allowed over such a significant portion of the student's school experience leads to an outcome where students are grossly unprepared for the rigorous academic demands of senior high school and the realities of professional adult relationships as they enter their later teen years.

There needs to be far more emphasis placed on training and developing teachers to foster professional and productive connections with students. This key personal and professional skill is essential to facilitating effective direction in the classroom, linking the underpinning ideologies and structures behind teacher effectiveness to the reality of what is achieved in the classroom on a daily basis.

Outputs: Teacher effectiveness and wellbeing

The third component of Goe, Bell and Little's assessment of teacher effectiveness is "teacher outputs" (2008, p. 4). The desired outputs, or "outcomes achieved" as they are further defined, are important metrics for educational leaders to consider, a clear understanding of effective quality teaching will then inform the way outcomes are used to define effective teaching and learning. The outcome that is most valued will become the 'currency' by which teachers function, thus shaping what the most effective teachers will look like. As discussed previously, in the Zidon campus context, teacher popularity and capacity to nurture are the traits most valued and rewarded, therefore this culture of 'currency' spreads among the staff. In other school contexts, the most valued outcome is often academic success, in which case staff will come to focus heavily on their content and delivery of stimulus. For this reason, it is essential for educational policy makers and administrators to be mindful of what outcomes they 'push' teachers to achieve.

A recent movement in education has seen a significant focus on wellbeing.

> In the last five years, three in five parents (60%) believe the expectations they place on their child's school to support student wellbeing have increased (significantly/somewhat/slightly). This is up 12 percentage points from 48% in 2019.
>
> (Renton & Stobbe, 2020, p. 12)

This focus provides administrators and teachers with a valuable and important outcome by which

both school and teacher effectiveness can be evaluated. Wellbeing models and programs also provide an excellent resource for training and developing teachers in how to build professional and healthy connections with students, without crossing boundaries and lowering expectations.

In the rural technology high school Agtech, the BITE BACK (2020) wellbeing program was instituted once a week in the school timetable. This once weekly period generated *significantly* more engagement, meaningful discussion and healthy student–teacher connection than any other aspect of the school program. The program provided both students and teachers with resources, a common language to use when discussing personal and social issues, all aiding in creating a safe environment in which both students and teachers could discuss these issues and connect. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that this program and the student–teacher connections that it aided in creating were essential to being an effective teacher in this school context. Due to the challenging and traumatic backgrounds experienced by many of these children, the students need to trust and feel connected to adults in their life before they will follow their guidance.

The Invictus Wellbeing Program (2020) is an initiative that is in the process of being implemented at the Zidon school. The program revolves around yearlong modules titled: Network, Journey, Mastery and Serve. These modules are being integrated across various aspects of the school. An Invictus wellbeing lesson is timetabled once a week. The modules are mapped alongside the school camp curriculum purposes. Modules are integrated alongside themes in the Religious Studies curriculum and all staff have attended professional development so that they are aware of the purpose of the Invictus program, the language it uses and the ideas it explores. Programs such as this provide teachers with an excellent platform for professional, productive and healthy connection building with students.

Conclusion

Teacher effectiveness is an area of education that is clearly divided in two different segments; the inputs, boundaries and stimulus prescribed, and the processes, connections and direction that bring the former elements to life. The challenge facing education governing bodies, school administration and teachers is how to facilitate a balance between these core elements of education. There is obvious value in the overarching models for teacher effectiveness, such as the NSW (DET) Quality Teaching Model and the Four Domains Education Framework, however further work needs to be done to increase training and development that equips and empowers teachers to reflect the traits outlined in Faull's Dispositional Cluster Model. While wellbeing programs, such as the Invictus Wellbeing Program, do not directly address this gap in teacher training and education, and are certainly not a 'fix-all', they do provide a framework, language and setting in which teachers can generate healthy, professional connections with their students – which appear to be a key factor in unlocking teacher effectiveness. In planning the future of education, policy makers, administrators and educators need to strike the balance that they expect teachers to find between boundaries, stimulus, connection and direction. TEACH

"Due to the challenging and traumatic backgrounds experienced by many of these children, the students need to trust and feel connected to adults in their life before they will follow their guidance."

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Teaching and Christian worldview: The perceptions of teachers

TEACH[R]

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Key words: Christian schooling, Christian worldview, faith and learning, Christian pedagogy.

Abstract

The distinctive of Christian schooling is commonly expressed in terms of worldview. Despite the prevalence of Christian worldview language in Christian schooling, there is little research into how worldview is understood and practiced. This paper is based on teachers' perceptions of Christian worldview. Specifically, it sought to understand how teachers integrate faith and learning utilising a Christian worldview, how they assess student understanding of Christian worldview, the barriers they face, and how they believe schools can better support the practice of worldview integration.
This study found that despite evidence of worldview integration, few teachers were assessing the extent to which students understood a Christian worldview. Respondents suggested schools could better support worldview integration through exemplars of practice, more opportunities to share and learn from each other, and professional learning that supports biblical literacy.

Introduction

Christian schooling is distinctive from other approaches to education. One of the ways this distinctiveness is expressed is through worldview language. *Worldview* is a term that "has become increasingly prevalent in Christian school education" (Schultz & Swezey, 2013, p. 227). Whether it be on a website or in a prospectus, it is not uncommon for Christian schools to suggest connection to a biblical or Christian worldview. The mission or vision statements of Christian schools, for example, often suggests "that they will focus on academic excellence *and* a Biblical worldview in their students" (Schultz & Swezey, 2013, p. 228).

This study sought to investigate Christian worldview from the vantage point of the teacher. Despite the popularity of Christian worldview language in Christian schools there is little research into how this often poorly defined term (Dowson, 2014) is understood and fostered by teachers. An aim of this study was to gain insight into teachers' understandings of a Christian worldview, provide examples as to how they taught from, and assessed understanding of, a Christian worldview, the barriers they faced, and their perceptions as to how schools could better support their practice.

Worldview, a translation of the German *weltanschauung* (Goheen & Bartholomew, 2008; Sire, 2015; Wolters, 2005), has been defined as the "comprehensive framework of one's basic beliefs about things" (Wolters, 2005, p. 2). A worldview is "what we presuppose. It is the way of looking at life…our orientation to reality" (Ryken, 2013, p. 19). While it may be that a person can identify and articulate aspects of their worldview, a worldview can also be held unconsciously (Sire, 2015). Another way to understand worldview is through worldview questions. Questions that can expose worldview commitments include: Who am I? Where am I from? What is wrong? What is the remedy? (Walsh & Middleton, 1984). A worldview, then, concerns our basic beliefs about life, "a fundamental orientation of the heart" (Sire, 2015, p. 141).

> *A worldview, then, concerns our basic beliefs about life, "a fundamental orientation of the heart."*

A Christian worldview is, understandably, founded on the Christian view of reality. Central to the Christian worldview is the Trinitarian God of the Bible. God exists, and this is God's world (Goheen & Bartholomew, 2008; Naugle, 2002; Ryken, 2013). For the Christian, God is "the supreme reality at the centre of all reality" (Ryken, 2013, p. 36). One of the chief means by which we know of a Christian worldview is through the Bible which presents the story of "the way the world really is" (Goheen & Bartholomew, 2008, p. 3). A Christian worldview is also "a biblically faithful worldview" (Anderson et al., 2017, p. 143). Commonly, a Christian worldview is discussed by way of categories such as creation, fall, redemption, restoration (Anderson et al., 2017) which are said to outline the acts of the biblical story.

A review of the literature on Christian schooling reveals that Christian or Biblical worldview language is used in a number of ways including in relation to core beliefs, school culture, Christian formation,

stakeholders, and in relation to teaching and learning.

Christian schools are said to be based on "fundamental different worldviews" (Boerema, 2011, p. 42) to their government school counterparts. A Christian view of reality, or Christian worldview "motivates people to sacrifice both their time and their means for the establishment of Christian schools" (Etherington, 2008, p. 132). Christian schools "reflect" (Horan, 2017, p. 62) or "foster a Christian worldview" (Christian & Beamish, 2018, p. 26) such that if a biblical worldview is not providing significance to its daily operations the school could be described as merely a "Christian adaptation of a secular school" (Murison, 2018, p. 96).

Among multiple goals, Christian schools educate, or equip, students for Christian discipleship (Van Brummelen, 2009). The development of a biblical worldview is "one of the most critical components in the discipleship process" (Finn et al., 2010, pp. 9-10), understood as "an essential component of carrying on the faith" (Schultz & Swezey, 2013, p. 228). Central to the development of a biblical worldview is the teacher. In the classroom, teachers display their worldviews through their actions, words, and attitudes (Moore, 2014). As they build relationships, set an example, and deliver learning Christian teachers are well positioned to foster a biblical worldview in students (Mooney, 2018).

> *"No research has been located that examined how teachers understand a Christian worldview, how they embed it into … practice, the barriers they face, and how … the school can better support them."*

The Christian school curriculum should be aligned with a biblical worldview (Edlin, 2014; Fennema, 2014; Van Brummelen, 2002). To many teachers embedding a Christian worldview into their teaching does not come easily (Ashton, 2017). To support teachers some schools have utilised biblical frameworks to connect the Christian worldview to the curriculum (Murison, 2018). While there are variants, one commonly used framework is a creation-fall-redemption-restoration worldview schema (Fennema, 2014; Thompson, 2014). Regardless of framework, the practice of integrating the Christian faith with the curriculum using worldview has been described as "the key distinctive of a truly Christian education" (MacCullough. 2016, p. 34).

Christian Education National

This study was conducted within Christian Education National (CEN). CEN is a group of predominantly parent established and governed Christian schools that affirm "the lordship of Christ over all of life", and "the gospel rather than cultural forces as the shaper of how we think and live" (CEN, 2021a, para. 1). CEN has long advocated the use of worldview. A worldview being understood as something that originates "in a grand story" (Goheen & Bartholomew, 2008, p. 23). The worldview CEN promotes is a "transformational Christian worldview where Jesus' love, power, and authority inform and guide all practice and community life" (CEN, 2021a, para. 2). Consequently, CEN argues against notions of dualism where life is divided into the sacred and the secular. Instead they seek to foster a holistic, integrated approach, to Christian education where a Christian worldview shapes all aspects of school culture including within the classroom. As part of their education students are exposed to a Christian worldview across the curriculum and provided opportunities to "develop their skills to critically assess the alternative worldviews within their culture" (Parker et al., 2019, p. 29).

CEN schools have commonly used a creation-fall-redemption framework in the development of curriculum that is consistent with a Christian worldview. While this method is still promoted, it has been argued "this worldview approach to Christian perspective has been taught and practised within CEN to the extent that for some it has become 'tired'" (Dickens, 2013, p. 249). In more recent times, CEN have introduced "threads" or biblical themes as another way to integrate faith and learning (Dickens et al., 2015).

This study is part of a larger project related to the perceptions and practices of those employed in schools associated with the CEN network of Christian schools. While it is noted that Christian worldview is not a new topic within Christian schooling, there have been few studies associated with how a Christian worldview is understood and fostered in Christian schooling. Christian and Beamish (2018) explored the perceptions of pre-service teachers as to the degree to which school practices aligned with a Christian worldview in Christian schools. In CEN Justins (2002) investigated teachers' perceptions as to the extent they taught from a Christian perspective. No research has been located that examined how teachers understand a Christian worldview, how they embed it into their classroom practice, the barriers they face, and how, if at all, the school can better support them.

Methodology

This study investigated teachers' understanding of a Christian worldview, how they embedded a Christian worldview into their classroom practice, the barriers faced in teaching from a Christian worldview, and how they understood the school could better support them. Consequently, a qualitative research design was chosen because this type of inquiry "probes issues that lie beneath the surface" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018, p. 288) and has the potential to provide rich descriptions of a phenomenon. The study posed:

- What do you understand by the term "Christian worldview"?
- Give an example of a way in which you might (or have) adapted a lesson to ensure that it represents a Christian worldview
- How do you know students in your classes have understood (your teaching from) a Christian worldview?
- In your opinion, what barriers prevent Christian teachers teaching from a Christian worldview in the classroom?
- How could the College better equip staff to teach from a Christian worldview?

Sample

The data for this study was collected from the larger research project on the perceptions of employees of member schools regarding the beliefs and practices of CEN. This stage of the study was confined to teachers within seven CEN schools, each with classes from Foundation to Year 12. These seven schools employed four hundred and forty five teachers at the time of data collection. Three hundred and ten teachers (70%) responded to the online survey questions.

Instrument

Data was collected using an online survey comprised of open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were chosen as they are exploratory in nature, providing participants with an opportunity to elaborate on their experiences and understandings of Christian schooling in their own words (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

Analysis

The data analysis was guided by the Constant Comparative Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This method allowed the collection, analysis and interpretation of data to occur concurrently (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This method was chosen as it aligns well with qualitative research and provided a means to compare the data, and allowed theory to be developed based on the understanding of participants rather than preconceived theory.

Findings

Teachers' understanding of Christian worldview

CEN has a heritage of "recognising the value of worldview" (Dickens et al., 2015, p 15). Worldview has been used to mediate between the Christian faith and learning, and demonstrate how the Bible is relevant to all of life (Dickens, 2014). CEN suggests that education is not neutral. All teachers have worldview 'glasses' that influence how they teach (Parker et al., 2019). In CEN "the Bible becomes the lens in which students view what they are learning" (CEN, 2021b, para. 2).

A finding of this research is that respondents demonstrated an understanding of worldview and a Christian worldview similar to that espoused by CEN. In describing *worldview* one respondent suggested, "Everyone has a worldview, whether consciously or unconsciously, that underlies personal values, beliefs and reasoning for interactions and goals within life" (Respondent 18). Seventy of the three hundred and ten respondents used the word "lens" in their descriptions. A worldview, for example, was described as "the lens used to view life" (Respondent 149). Respondents also demonstrated familiarity with worldview questions such as, "Who are we? Where did we come from? Why are we here? What has gone wrong with the world? How can it be fixed?" (Respondent 205).

When defining a Christian worldview respondents suggested it was viewing life through a certain "lens" such as a biblical or scriptural lens, the lens of Jesus, or a Christian lens. One example being:

> A Christian worldview refers to understanding all things through a biblical lens. Decisions about what is truth, what our purpose is, our attitudes to the environment, in fact, every decision we make needs to be filtered through God's Word. This requires constant re-evaluation and examination, checking that our own opinions and perspectives align with the Bible. (Respondent 55)

"How do you know students in your classes have understood (your teaching from) a Christian worldview?"

Respondent answers also associated a Christian worldview with Scripture. A Christian worldview was grounded in the "grand story of the Bible" (Respondent 50), or the "overarching narrative centred in Scripture" (Respondent 179). Fifteen respondents specifically mentioned the creation-fall-redemption-restoration schema, which is commonly used in CEN schools.

Examples of how teachers represent a Christian worldview in the classroom

CEN promote an approach where all aspects of a Christian school, including classroom practice, are to be shaped by a biblical worldview (Parker et al., 2019). Respondent answers suggested that the majority of teachers embedded a Christian worldview across the curriculum. Examples provided by respondents included the use of a creation-fall-redemption-restoration schema as well as "biblical threads". As one respondent offered, "By weaving key biblical threads into discussion, questioning, observation, comparison using *Transformation by Design* … I select one or two threads and put them in my planning and look for opportunities across the curriculum to weave them through" (Respondent, 68).

Only twenty of the three hundred and four teachers who responded to this question suggested they formally assessed student under-standing of worldview.

A popular theme was that of "creation". While creation was mentioned in relation to evolution, more often than not, teachers focused on the "intricacy and design" (Respondent 99) of the created world. Similarly, in Mathematics, creation was discussed with reference to "pattern and order in our world" (Respondent 58). Another major creational theme was that of stewardship. Teachers taught students "how we are called to be good stewards of God's creation" (Respondent 310), including "what we spend our money on" (Respondent 28). A number of teachers discussed how consumerism distorts a biblical view of life. An example being, "we discuss the sin of consumerism and lack of concern for our planet. We question why humans put personal wants (e.g. branded shoes) above the needs of the world's poor (e.g. a living wage)" (Respondent 165).

Other themes included loving God and neighbour, community, service, seeking justice, gifts, and hospitality. With respect to hospitality a respondent offered:

> In the classroom discussions we investigate why God calls us to practice hospitality, what does it look like, how is hospitality different for the Christian, how can we express hospitality in a creative manner? …The students are given opportunities to serve the school as an expression of their thankfulness. (Respondent 251)

Not all the responses evidenced worldview integration. In a handful of examples the Christian faith was variously on display, through Christian practices such as prayer or teacher behaviours, but not worldview integration. One teacher simply did not integrate (Respondent 191).

How teachers assess students understanding of a Christian worldview

In CEN schools, students are invited to develop a "lens that enables them to see all of life as shaped by the Bible's big story that centres on the cross—to see the world how God sees it" (Parker, 2015, p.12). A Christian worldview approach to integration includes the curriculum planning, engaging activities within lessons, and assessment of worldview thinking (MacCullough, 2016).

Only twenty of the three hundred and four teachers who responded to this question suggested they formally assessed student understanding of worldview. One teacher assessed "in a similar way that I would assess other aspects of their learning" (Respondent, 287). Another suggested there were "criteria embedded in most assessment tasks that require students to respond to the Christian concepts or threads covered in the unit" (Respondent 2).

A majority of respondents, two hundred and seven, assessed worldview verbally, through student questions, conversations with students, and/or class discussions. One teacher offered, "I will often engage them in discussion about these issues, so I can tell based on the response that they give. However, this is not always possible as some students are very quiet" (Respondent 260). Another assessed "through discussion. Though for some students it can actually be quite confusing, particularly those from non-church backgrounds. It is the hope that you plant the seed that may one day flourish" (Respondent 225).

Twenty four teachers suggested they did not assess worldview. To one teacher it was "something I'm still wrestling with" (Respondent 44). Another offered, "I don't and would view myself as encouraging and 'sowing' or even 'watering young plants'" (Respondent 167).

Curiously, fifty-one teachers suggested that they are able to assess student understanding through monitoring the behaviour of students, including how they responded to teacher direction and engaged with their peers. As one teacher suggested, "Through classroom discussion…Ideally, through the growth of their character (i.e. behaviour - more like Christ) (Respondent 237).

While CEN suggests that "the Bible becomes the lens in which students view what they are learning" (CEN, 2021b, para. 2), it is evident that few teachers are actually assessing the degree to which students have understood a Christian or biblical worldview. Further, some teachers are confusing assessing for behaviour consistent with a Christian worldview (evidence of Christian discipleship) with an understanding (or knowledge) of a Christian worldview. Assessing student understanding of worldview is a key element of Christian worldview integration (MacCullough, 2016; White, 2017). The lack of assessment is consistent with previous research into CEN schools in which leaders expressed uncertainty as to whether students understood a biblical worldview (Prior, 2017). Simply, without assessment there is insufficient evidence as to whether students have developed an understanding of a biblical worldview.

Teachers' perceptions of barriers to teaching from a Christian worldview

In the literature it is evident that teachers can find it challenging to integrate faith and learning using worldview (Dickens et al., 2015; Fisher, 2012). For many teachers embedding a Christian worldview into their teaching is not a natural process (Ashton, 2017). It adds another layer that takes time (Murison, 2018). As one respondent noted,

> To develop quality content and teaching at a high level in accordance with national curriculum requirements

> takes time. To then extrapolate, disseminate, evaluate and redesign that from a Christian worldview takes additional time. Time we don't often have, or are not afforded. (Respondent 303)

One hundred and thirty-three respondents mentioned workload issues, or a lack of time, as a barrier to teaching from a Christian worldview. Workload issues included administration, compliance, and reporting. The main barrier, though, was an "overloaded curriculum" (Respondent 302), particularly in senior schools.

Teachers lack 'know how' was also described as a barrier by respondents. Reasons included a lack of habitual practice, little training, and biblical literacy. Further, a high proportion of teachers in Christian schools were trained in secular institutions. It was also suggested that teachers often adopted aspects of a secular worldview, and consequently struggled to see connections between their faith and the subjects they taught (Respondent 205). Additionally, there was a lack of "good role models of Christian teachers who teach from a Christian worldview perspective" (Respondent 13).

Respondents also suggested that a diversity of views within the school community presented a barrier to teaching from a Christian worldview. As one teacher suggested, "Differences in opinion between denominational beliefs within the community" (Respondent 118). Another offered,

> We need to be cautious and careful of the other church beliefs. Something that would be natural to me e.g. praying in tongues, may not be natural for others. You need to be very careful that you don't upset anyone's faith or church. (Respondent 207)

Concern about how students would respond was also a barrier. Teachers recognised classroom environments often present a "diverse range of students and levels of Christian maturity" (Respondent 264). Students "are not always Christians and are not always receptive to a Christian perspective" (Respondent 243). Fear of not being able to appropriately respond to student questions also appeared to trouble some teachers.

Nineteen respondents suggested there were no barriers to integrating faith and learning in their school.

Teachers' suggestions as to how schools can better equip teachers to teach from a Christian worldview

Despite a history of championing worldview to mediate between faith and learning, the practice of worldview integration has been inconsistent across and within CEN schools (Dickens, 2013). While several teachers were happy with the support provided by their school, typically teachers offered multiple suggestions as to how practice could be improved.

Given the recognition of workload as a barrier, teachers argued that schools were busy places and leaders needed to prioritise the integration of faith and learning. As one teacher noted, "a teacher's workload is very crowded. Most work after they have left the school grounds, at home for several hours. …When something new is added, maybe think about removing something else" (Respondent 252).

Practical support was a common theme. Whether it be through the sharing of ideas, mentoring or coaching, teachers suggested there needed to be an emphasis on "modelling effective Christian teaching" (Respondent 236). Alongside of focused times to collaborate, teachers thought schools could better support them with videoed illustrations of effective Christian classroom practice or opportunities to participate in classroom observations. With respect to professional learning greater emphasis needs to be placed on improving biblical literacy. Providing support for Christian postgraduate study was also mentioned.

> *"Whether it be through, the sharing of ideas, mentoring or coaching, teachers suggested there needed to be an emphasis on modelling effective Christian teaching."*

It was noted that improving practice was not, solely, the responsibility of the school. Teachers, themselves, need to take responsibility. As one shared, "This is a very difficult question because I feel that we as Christians have a personal responsibility to develop Christ-centred principles in our own lives" (Respondent 68). Another respondent suggested,

> Personally I think it's up to the individual. The more time spent reading the Bible, praying and spending time in the presence of God the deeper the relationship will be. … This then overflows not only into Christian teaching but into everyday relationships with staff, students and parents. (Respondent 279)

While there was emphasis on building the capacity of teachers, respondents also suggested that schools could better support practice through clearer communications. CEN schools represent "a wide variety of Christian denominations and theological persuasions. Families represent a similar variety and many have no religious affiliation at all" (Dickens, 2013, p. 142). Schools need to be clearer as to their expectations (Respondent 71). To one teacher there was a need for "clear guidance on the college position on Christian education" (Respondent 105), and affirming of effective Christian practice (Respondent 248).

Additionally, respondents suggested practice could be improved through greater "accountability" (Respondent 91). Schools needed to place more

emphasis on classroom observations (Respondent 85), audit planning documents (Respondent 147), and conducting regular appraisals (Respondent 42).

Concluding comments

This research was concerned with Christian worldview. Specifically, it sought to garner CEN school teachers' perspectives as to how a Christian worldview is understood, how it was embedded into classroom practice, the barriers presented when teaching from a Christian worldview, and how schools could better support Christian teachers in their integration of faith and learning.

Participants' understandings of a Christian worldview (Research Question 1) were consistent with those espoused by CEN. Respondents suggested that everyone has a worldview which whether consciously or subconsciously acts as a lens by which they encounter the world. They understood a Christian worldview needed to be consistent with the biblical story. A creation-fall-redemption-restoration framework was suggested as a helpful tool for expressing the overarching narrative of the Bible.

> *Participants … suggested barriers to integrating faith and learning through worldview included a lack of time, a lack of expertise, and differing opinions in their school communities.*

CEN advocates for the Bible to be the lens through which students learn. Through worldview mediated practice students engaged with the biblical concepts across the curriculum. Previous research has suggested the integration of faith and learning utilising a Christian worldview has been inconsistent (Dickens, 2013; Prior, 2017). While, for the most part, answers evidence the integration of faith across the curriculum (Research Question 2) this should not be understood as a sign of consistent integration. Respondent answers were examples rather than evidence of consistent practice.

While, for the most part, respondent examples were consistent with that espoused by CEN (Research Question 2), practice remains inconsistent.

A goal of Christian schooling is for students to be introduced to, and develop, a Christian or biblical worldview. Effective worldview integration includes curriculum development, classroom practices, and the assessment of student understanding. A finding of this research is that few teachers formally assessed student understanding of a Christian worldview (Research Question 3).

Participants in this research project suggested barriers to integrating faith and learning through worldview (Research Question 4) included a lack of time, a lack of expertise, and differing opinions in their school communities. These findings are consistent with the literature on faith and learning in the Christian higher education space (Harris, 2014).

Teachers suggested that to improve the integration of faith and learning in CEN schools (Research Question 5) there needs to be a greater emphasis on collaborative learning, examples of practice, and a focus on biblical literacy.

In conclusion, this research has given voice to Christian teachers involved in integrating faith and learning through worldview. This research found that CEN school teachers understood a Christian worldview, were able to provide examples of how to integrate faith and learning through Christian worldview, suggested barriers to integrating faith and learning, and how worldview mediated practice could be improved through targeted collaboration. It also found that, often, teachers were not formally assessing the degree to which students understood a Christian worldview. Given that a goal of Christian schooling is for students to develop a Christian worldview it is recommended that CEN schools develop mechanisms to measure the extent to which this goal is being achieved. TEACH

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Growing wellbeing

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I had the unique experience of growing up on a farm. From a young age I was taught soil health equals plant health. However, in the wake of the green revolution struggling crops likely receive a dose of spray or fertilizer rather than the soil care that is needed. It is common to address a visible symptom instead of its cause, which tends to be complex and systemic.

We see this with climate change, rather than reducing carbon emissions, it is easier to build sequestration plants. We see this in medicine, instead of prescribing a salad and regular exercise we prescribe cholesterol medication. Treating symptoms does not require a painful overhaul of the behaviours that are creating the problem. Humans will go to great lengths to maintain the activities we enjoy or have become reliant on, even if those activities are unsustainable in the long run. As a species we seem to crave the summit without the struggle, answers without doubt and maturity without sacrifice. In terms of time theory (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008), our collective disposition is arguably more inclined towards present hedonism than future optimisation.

> *Perhaps going upstream from the symptoms of stress and anxiety, enhancing autonomy could be a preventative measure*

If we are to take this lens and apply it to the wellbeing of adolescents in the 21st Century, it raises a number of important questions. We must consider the extent to which modern life is actually arranged to facilitate human flourishing. This is an extremely confronting question that if taken seriously, would transform the metrics that governments, policy makers and educators use to make decisions. One example of a step in this direction is the "Gross National Happiness" (Lepeley, 2017) metric used by the government of Bhutan to measure its success as an administration. Bhutan's lead may be one worth following. Alternatively, we continue with business as usual and keep treating the symptoms of declining mental health as they arise.

The 2017 NAB report found that "globalisation, the future of work, housing affordability, cost of living pressures and climate change" were key contributors to the low hum anxiety that has become commonplace for teens (Oster, Pearson, De Iure, McDonald & Wu, 2017, p. 1). Instead of strengthening local communities, establishing pathways into meaningful work, creating affordable housing and addressing climate change we put more funding into counselling, wellbeing programs, new apps, hotlines and medical interventions. We are focusing on the urgent at the expense of the important. We jump into action when a crisis arises but fail to prevent the crisis from happening in the first place.

In his book *Drive* Daniel Pink highlights the link between autonomy and wellbeing (Pink, 2011). Perhaps going upstream from the symptoms of stress and anxiety, enhancing autonomy could be a preventative measure in schools. An external locus of control contributes to stress and poor health outcomes (Tsey, 2008). Martin Seligman's book Homo Prospectus goes so far as to claim that a positive forward-looking disposition defines humanity and that "evaluating future possibilities for the guidance of thought and action is the cornerstone of human success" (Seligman, Railton, Baumeister & Sripada, 2016, p. 6). The concept of "Homo Prospectus" re-frames mental illnesses as being more akin to "diseases of despair" (Case & Deaton, 2017), in which an individual has limited (subjective) positive prospects for the future. Those in despair are out of alignment with a core purpose of human psychology; to look forward. Hope theory operates in this space also, by providing a framework to understand "the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways" (Snyder, 2002, p. 249). Therefore, it can be seen that young people need to see a way forward, not just for the treatment of their immediate mental health symptoms, but more importantly, a pathway towards the

Figure 1. Macquarie College Outdoor Club provides for a choice to be in the bush.

> *a positive sense of belonging operates as a protective factor against … physical and mental health conditions.*

dismantling of the systems that are causing the problems in the first place.

In addition to a lack of adolescent autonomy, loneliness is a further example of a systemic problem that needs to be addressed. Rates of loneliness and single person domestic occupancy are increasing in Australia and elsewhere. Drawing upon census data, Hugh Mackay notes that "the largest single category of household type in Australia, and it's also the fastest growing category, is the single-person household, now accounting for about 27 per cent of all households" (2014, p. 5). Ergo the need for COVID "singles bubbles."

Arguably the 20th century saw the "privatisation of the self" (Oestereicher, 1979) and the early 21st century has given rise to "i-Gen" (Twenge, 2017).

These psychosocial shifts, along with rapid technological change, have resulted in a more isolated and relationally depleted expression of human life, particularly in developed western countries (Pinker, 2014). However, a positive sense of belonging operates as a protective factor against a wide range of physical and mental health conditions (Booth & Crouter, 2001; Pinker, 2014; Waldinger & Schulz, 2016).

So, without casting the net too wide, let's take a small sample and consider what can be done about these two societal challenges; loss of autonomy and loneliness. How can we respond to the cause rather than the symptom? When it comes to praxis I can only speak from personal experience and will borrow from Thoreau to excuse this self-reflection, "I should not talk about myself so much if there were anybody else whom I knew as well" (2018, p. 4). At Macquarie College we encourage teachers and students to meet in special interest groups or 'clubs'. These groups are completely voluntary and open to a range of ages to encourage cross grade integration. In recent years I have been facilitating a Bonsai Society with approximately 20 students from grades 7-11 who meet once a week and care for their trees, propagate new cuttings and build their own display hardware. A colleague and I also started an Outdoor Club for any students who wanted to do more hiking and get out in the bush.

These groups provide a safe place for like minded individuals to spend their time. There

is no particular program, outcomes or syllabus. The lack of formality creates an atmosphere of playfulness and relaxation that are absent in more traditional, mandatory or large group settings.

Students are primarily interested in one another, for teenagers everything else seems secondary. Joining a village sized group within the city of their school allows students to be known. The crowd becomes a clique. Shoulder to shoulder conversations open up when we are working side by side on a shared project, this posture removes the teacher from a position of aloof authority and reconceptualises them as a guide and mentor.

> *Joining a village sized group within the city of their school allows students to be known.*

Similar feelings are regularly expressed by students in sports teams, music groups and other extracurricular activities that allow people to feel like an 'insider.' The secret ingredient is student choice, if it's optional you know they want to be there, they arrive in a completely different mindset. In addition, the new skills being developed in these groups creates a sense of mastery and therefore a heightened internal locus of control. Students have a say and flourish as they build connections within the group. Without intending to, we may have accidentally recreated some of the richness of school that used to just happen incidentally in a less busy world. Perhaps this is one part of what it looks like to grow wellbeing from the ground up.

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Figure 2. The "MC Bonsai Society" sign was designed and produced in Macquarie College's MCX Lab by Year 9 student Macy Lane.

TEACH[R]

School leader identification: Perceptions of Australian faith-based education system employees

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Keywords: School leadership identification, faith-based education, educational administration, teacher leaders, school leadership.

Abstract

This article aims to contribute to the literature on school leadership identification. It adopts an Australian faith-based education system case study to explore classroom teacher and school-based administrator perceptions of both current and future school leadership identification practices. This research utilised a qualitative research design, adopting semi-structured interviews to collect employee perceptions. The respondents identify six areas of importance for school leadership identification. These include: 1) defining what constitutes excellence at classroom, school, and system levels of leadership; 2) formalising school leadership identification processes; 3) conversing with early career teachers around school leadership aspirations; 4) improving processes to communicate interest in school leadership roles; 5) heightened levels of communication between school principals and system administrators regarding high potential teacher leaders; and 6) providing school-based opportunities for school leadership development.

> *While much has been made of the 'leadership crisis' that exists in educational settings … the literature remains clear that identifying teacher leaders is key to educational system sustainability.*

Introduction

The literature around school leadership identification is somewhat of a nebulous space. One consistent feature, however, is that the attributes a teacher possesses can be used to identify their potential to succeed in teacher leadership roles (Barnes, 2010; Killion et al., 2016; McCall, 1998). While much has been made of the 'leadership crisis' that exists in educational settings (Bennett et al, 2011; Fink, 2010; Fink & Brayman, 2004; Teasdale-Smith, 2008), the literature remains clear that identifying teacher leaders is key to educational system sustainability. This is because teacher leaders positively impact teaching and learning programs, improve educational climate, create positive conditions where students can achieve, and contribute strongly to school development and improvement efforts (Bowman, 2004; Cranston, 2000; Killion et al., 2016).

In Australia, the NSW Department of Education defines a future school leader as "An identified teacher leader who is prepared to undertake a leadership development program" (2020a, p. 2). While much of the school leadership identification research lacks for clarity around exactly how future school leaders and teacher leaders are systematically identified. It is evident that effective education systems have the need to be continuously identifying teachers that have high potential for school leadership, and to be planning and providing the necessary leadership development training and opportunities to assist their preparation for school leadership positions.

Previous research in the faith-based education system that is the context of this research paper has identified that school leadership aspirations are at low levels, with only 1.8% of system-wide education staff indicating they were actively seeking school leadership positions (Williams & Morey, 2018). In light of such low levels of active aspiration, the question has been raised 'How does this faith-based education system identify future school leaders?'. The purpose of this article is to explore the perceptions of current and future leadership identification processes held by classroom teachers and school administrators in an Australian faith-based education system. It will outline a number of key considerations that may assist in the future identification of school teacher leaders.

Literature review

Teacher leadership is the term used to describe teachers "whose sphere of influence extends beyond themselves and their own students and impacts positively at a year or stage, school or even a system level" (NSW Education, 2020c). These teacher leaders encourage and influence their colleagues to broaden and enhance their teaching and learning

practices by imparting their knowledge, skills and experiences (Lumpkin et al., 2014; Snoek, 2014; Wasley, 1991).

In literature exploring teacher leader attributes, Snoek (2014), described teacher leaders as those demonstrating "specific skills and knowledge related to building trust with colleagues, understanding organizational context and dynamics, managing change processes, supporting adult learning, designing curricula, and participating in action research" (p. 20). Collaboration has also been a hallmark of teacher leaders, acting as change agents to help improve educational practice by working collaboratively with peers (Lumpkin et al., 2014; Muijs & Harris, 2003). McCall's (1998) research outlined 11 characteristics that may be used to identify teacher leadership potential (cited in Creasy et al., 2004, p.47).

Table 1: *McCall's (1998) teacher leadership potential characteristics*

Teacher leadership potential characteristics	
• seeks opportunities to learn	• is insightful – sees things from new angles
• with integrity	• has the courage to take risks
• adapts to cultural differences	• seeks and uses feedback
• is committed to making a difference	• learns from mistakes
• seeks broad business knowledge	• is open to criticism
• brings out the best in people	

In the teacher aspirations literature, Townsend and MacBeath (2011) performed a study across 60 different countries with the findings emphasising that school leadership must be attainable to young, aspiring leaders. It is important that aspiring leaders are provided opportunities within their school setting in order to facilitate opportunities for growth and development. Lacey (2003) found that the length of teaching experience appeared to affect career aspirations, as teachers with less than five years' experience were more likely to aspire to the role of principal, while those with more than ten years' experience are more likely to want to remain in the classroom. Lacey's research also found that although there was a significant increase over time in the number of teachers aspiring to the assistant principal position, 50% of younger teachers who had aspired to the principal position at the beginning of their careers no longer did so.

A body of literature also exists that explores formal and informal school leadership roles. Whilst teachers may exhibit leadership in a number of differing ways, some teacher leader roles are formalised and involve specific responsibilities, while others take on more informal roles which emerge as these teachers work alongside and interact with their teacher peers (Fitzgerald et al., 2006). Formal leadership roles are generally appointed through an official selection process and recognised with an official title and clear parameters, whereas informal leadership positions involve the delegation of leadership tasks in an unofficial capacity. These informal leadership roles provide teachers with the opportunity to develop their leadership skills, however where they are not supported or provided with the relevant training and guidance it can be seen that it can also dishearten future leaders. As a result, the teacher can be left feeling overwhelmed and discouraged from nominating for a formal leadership position when the opportunity arises, due to feelings of inadequacy and lack of confidence in their ability to perform the role. Often these teachers feel they weren't adequately supported in their unofficial leadership role and therefore do not feel ready to pursue further advancement in their career development (Flückiger et al., 2015).

Research literature identifies that school principals are uniquely positioned to play a vital role in the identification, development and support of teacher leaders (Bredeson, 2000; Johnson et al., 2014). As stated by Creasy et al. (2004, p. 24), "Leadership is more likely to develop where the overall ethos of the school is supportive and encouraging". As such, the role of principal in shaping the culture of the school is crucial, as "the most powerful means of developing leadership is to create an organisational culture that values the sorts of learning that are most likely to enhance the capacity of individuals to lead" (Creasy et al., 2004, p. 8). Such support provided by school principals can contribute meaningfully to both leadership and school development. Simon (2015, p. 62) suggests that the impact of current leadership can be significant on the aspiring leader's growth, with the aspirant relying to a significant degree on being in a school where "the principal encourages them generally regarding leadership ambitions, supports them specifically in their taking on opportunities for growth and delegates to them appropriate leadership responsibilities throughout their educational career progression".

Myung, et al., (2011) put forward the strategy

"*the most powerful means of developing leadership is to create an organis-ational culture that values the sorts of learning that are most likely to enhance the capacity of individuals to lead.*"

of 'tapping', an informal identification mechanism with the goal of progressing teacher leaders who demonstrate leadership potential, to take on school leadership roles. Their research found that a majority of principals report that they were 'tapped' by their school principal when they were teachers. The following quote captures the viewpoint well:

> Current school leaders may be well suited to recruit potential principals from their teaching ranks, as they are acquainted with the demands of the job. Furthermore, through day-to-day interactions with and observations of teachers, school leaders are uniquely positioned to identify and foster the intangible leadership skills in teachers, which are necessary to successfully lead a school but are particularly difficult to capture on standardised tests or resumes alone.
> (Myung, et al., 2011, p. 699)

"literature suggests a phenomenon known as 'cloning' can occur, where people tend to groom successors who have similar traits to themselves, notably in the areas of appearance, background and values."

Additionally, Myung et al. (2011) found that 'tapping' can positively impact the likelihood of teacher leaders to join the school leadership ranks. As principals recognise they have the ability to motivate teachers to consider school leadership roles in the future, the principal themselves may 'tap' more, but they may also be more disciplined about who they 'tap'. It is likely that these teachers will have some school level leadership experience, whether that be in formal roles such as having acted as heads of departments, or informally in other areas of school wide demonstrated leadership (Myung et al., 2011). It should be noted also, however, that literature suggests a phenomenon known as 'cloning' can occur, where people tend to groom (and thus identify) successors who have similar traits to themselves, notably in the areas of appearance, background and values (Lacey, 2003; Loughlin, 2000; Rothwell, 2010; Thomson, 2009).

Education systems in Australia have sought to address school leadership identification and development needs. The NSW Department of Education School Leadership Institute (2020b), developed the Leadership Identification Framework (SLIF) to identify and develop future school leaders in the education system. The first step in the SLIF process involves identifying a teacher leader who has the potential to develop into a future school leader. This process involves the teacher leader engaging in self-reflection and subsequent discussion with their supervisor as to their:

i. Performance in terms of their leadership behaviours (referring to capacity as a teacher, as 'one cannot be an effective teacher leader if one is not first an accomplished teacher'); and
ii. Preparedness (teacher leaders must also be prepared, or willing, to engage in leadership development) to become a future school leader and undertake leadership learning. (NSW Department of Education, 2020b, p. 4).

As a result, the NSW Department of Education School Leadership Institute (2020) has developed the School Leadership Development Continuum, the purpose of which is to:

> provide the foundation for a cohesive strategy to develop the leadership capacity of all school leaders at each stage of their career. The Continuum articulates opportunities for leadership learning through a well-defined and sequential pathway. At each stage, the learning focus is on developing skills and capabilities to enhance leadership impact to enable leaders to expand their sphere of leadership influence on the learning of teachers and students in NSW public schools. The Continuum also identifies key transition points into broader leadership roles (NSW Department of Education, 2020a, p. 3).

Such frameworks can assist in the identification of potential school leaders and build education system leadership capacity, improving both the quality and quantity of applicants for school leadership positions.

Methodology

This qualitative study utilised semi-structured interviews to collect data and adopted grounded theory methodology for the analysis of these interviews. The study is directed by the following research question: **In what ways can talented individuals be identified for future leadership roles within this education system?**

The data for this study was collected as part of a larger research project exploring the perceptions of elements of school leadership development held by those working within this faith-based education system. Approval was granted to approach employees within a particular geographic region of this education system. Data was also accessed relating to the perceptions of a number of school-based administrators. Interviews were conducted in a face-to-face setting at a number of school locations, with the interviews lasting approximately 30 – 40 minutes in duration. The interviewees provided written consent for the interviews to be audio-recorded. Twelve employees, from seven of the ten schools within this education system district, were invited to participate in the open-ended interview process, all of whom agreed to be involved in this research study.

The interview data was first transcribed from the audio recordings, and then subjected to grounded theory processes. Grounded theory is an inductive process, "based on concepts that are generated directly from the data" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 411). This allowed the textual data to initially be broadly coded, then these codes were refined into

a smaller number of categories, and finally, these categories were mapped into substantive themes (Byrne, 2017).

Findings and discussion

Leadership identification

There was a perception held by some respondents that future leadership identification is a *"major fail point" (R7)* in this education system. Interviewees reported that they did not currently see an intentional, proactive process in place which captured how future school leaders are identified in this faith-based education system. Comments such as *"I think primarily, it's more based on people who willingly put their hand up for [leadership] rather than people necessarily being deliberately targeted and mentored into that" (R5)* identify a perception that intentionality is missing with regard to identifying future potential school leaders.

Other respondents, however, noted that in recent years they had observed changes relating to leadership identification, with more opportunities being presented for staff who have demonstrated themselves to be teacher leaders. Comments such as:

> I think over the last few years, there's been a little bit more pro-activeness in that space. Prior to that, I recall a leader of mine in my first couple of years reminding me that as much as I was doing great as a teacher, there was no room to move in that leadership space…So that really unsettled me in feeling I could progress through [into leadership]." (R11)

From interview analysis it emerged that a perception difference existed between the larger schools and the smaller schools. Respondents from bigger schools identified that more opportunities were being offered for staff to grow their leadership capabilities, while staff in smaller schools noted fewer opportunities existed in their school contexts. Staff in smaller schools also believed that it was harder to be recognised for their leadership potential, with a view presented by some that education system personnel may be somewhat disconnected to the day-to-day running of some of the smaller schools in this geographic region, and as such, may not be well placed to identify those potential leaders coming through the ranks. Comments included:

> I think we're fairly removed from the [regional] office here…I don't know that the staff at the [regional] office would really be able to get to know our teachers up this far anyway, to know if they would make good leaders." (R3)

Further, *"I think the people at [regional] level are too removed to really know who potential leaders may be" (R5)*. Both respondents reflect this thinking, while also highlighting that a role exists for school principals to assist this identification.

Interview respondents identified that there appears to be an intentional trend within the larger faith-based education system schools in this region towards broadening the middle layers of leadership. This is providing stepping-stone opportunities for staff to grow and get a sense of the responsibilities of leadership in a way that allows skills to be developed. Staff in these schools can identify that this is intentionally taking place. Comments such as *"I think one thing that is key, is to provide them with opportunities. I think individually, you don't necessarily fully appreciate or understand what you're getting yourself into until you have a trial [in a leadership space]" (R10)* identify this need to provide staff with opportunities at a school level first as a developing ground for leadership capability. Such viewpoints mesh with literature (Creasy, et al., 2004), suggesting that providing such varied opportunities aides in the development of leadership:

> Developing leadership potential over time requires placing individuals in a variety of roles, with an expanding range of responsibilities and accountabilities. Historically, larger schools offered more scope for a variety of leadership experiences, whereas smaller schools often relied upon lateral movement. However, the expansion of initiatives such as networking and extended schools offers a number of new leadership opportunities in both small and large schools. (p. 41)

Current Identification of School Leaders

The use of an annual staffing form, used to confirm the intentions of staff with regards to returning to their employment or registering interest for leadership roles, was acknowledged by a number of respondents as the predominant current way of individuals self-identifying as having interest in leadership positions. This was, however, viewed by some respondents as not being appropriate for communicating leadership interest as there was a perception this may not be picked up on at regional level. Comment suggested:

> Well, the only way [to indicate interest in school leadership] from my perspective, is you use a staffing form every year you tick leadership, but in my experience and I know others, they've ticked it and nothing's happened. So, I don't really know if those staffing forms have any weight. I don't know how valuable that information is to them [system administrators]. (R2)

This suggests that staff have the opportunity to identify interest in leadership roles using this staffing form, but there was not a high level of confidence that this process is followed up on, with some staff acknowledging having indicated interest in leadership positions with no follow up from system

"I think primarily, it's more based on people who willingly put their hand up for [leadership] rather than people necessarily being deliberately targeted and mentored"

administration. This may be hampered by the involvement of potentially two layers of education system, one at the regional level, and one at the national level.

There was also a view that those who wish to pursue school leadership roles actively make it known to relevant others. Given the relatively close-knit nature of this faith-based education system, it was acknowledged that informal conversations between leadership aspirants and regional system personnel can often take place, during which leadership interest may be conveyed. These informal conversations were seen to be an accepted practice, allowing aspirants to voice their desire or willingness to be considered for school leadership roles. This proved to be something respondents were keen to see continuing to take place. Such forms of self-nomination practice are also identified in the research literature, however, a body of literature exists which suggests it is not good practice to rely on individuals self-selecting as potential leaders, instead, they suggest education systems have processes to both identify and promote high potential teacher leaders (Bush, 2011a; Bush 2011b; Myung et al., 2011; Thomson, 2009). Additionally, respondents identified that word-of-mouth practices regarding individuals who exhibit leadership potential were assumed to be taking place, likely involving discussions between system administration personnel and local school principals, again highlighting the role of principals identified within the research literature.

“*You know what, I think that person has shown potential. Let’s tap them on the shoulder and elevate them.*”

A number of respondents raised the possibility that educational qualifications and additional study programs may evidence school leadership readiness, and thus assist leader identification processes. These qualifications, however, were not necessarily seen as a pre-requisite for gaining leadership roles. Comments identify the uncertainty that having completed further study has upon school leadership identification in this education system:

> I don’t know if they [system personnel] assess the people that are doing their Master’s degree and specialising in leadership. In today’s day and age, it would obviously be a good thing to have a Master’s degree, and then out of that process, you’ve got potentially the skill set to do [school leadership] but I see many leaders in our system in leadership roles that don’t have that. So, I don’t know how much weight having your Master’s actually holds in gaining those roles. (R1)

Respondents also intimated a view that new school leaders are regularly selected on the basis of willingness alone. Comments such as *“I think primarily, it’s still often just – ‘There’s a need. Oh, this person’s willing. Let’s put them in there’, sort of thing” (R5)* and *“I think oftentimes it’s a case of people being selected simply because they were the ones that said, ‘Yes’, or they were the person who made themselves available” (R8)*, echo this sentiment. This appears to be both accepted and a source of frustration to these respondents, with the issue of transparency seemingly the difference between the two perspectives.

Transparency around school leadership identification was frequently raised, as some respondents identified uncertainty around how people are both identified and selected for leadership positions.

> I think it’s ‘see a need, fill a need’. I know that there has been some work [at system level] and I know that a few people have been identified as future leaders and they’ve started that over the last couple of years. But I don’t know where that comes from. I don’t know who gets nominated for that. I don’t know what the process is. So, currently, what I see is the practice is that – ‘oh, someone’s moving on, someone’s retiring, someone’s going to a different position or a different school, and now we have a vacancy’, and it’s basically whoever’s in that administrative space, they’re the people that go, ‘You know what, I think that person has shown potential. Let’s tap them on the shoulder and elevate them.’ (R9)

This suggests a leadership identification and selection process that lacks transparency to those faith-based education system employees looking on.

Future identification of school leaders

Self-nomination is still seen as important to these respondents. Those who have leadership aspiration desire to see a process by which they can formally register their interest. However, it was acknowledged that there is a significant drawback to this, and that a role for regional administration personnel exists in curtailing the aspiration of those who are believed to not be suitable for school leadership roles. Additionally, there appears to be a shift in thinking taking place amongst staff from the older model of ‘calling’ (where both individuals feel ‘called’ to leadership positions and the education system ‘calls’ individuals to roles) to one involving more of a ‘self-nomination’ process.

It was also perceived by respondents to be worthwhile to tap into New Scheme Teachers (early career teachers undertaking mandatory accreditation processes) at the very start of their teacher accreditation process, and engage with them to see if school leadership was a ‘space’ they could see themselves having interest in. This was seen as a good starting point for new entrants into this education system, and this was something that could continue to be reviewed, including conversations as they progress in their careers so as to flag continuing school leadership interest or intention. Steps could be actively implemented to provide development and growth opportunities. Considering the literature covered earlier, targeting these early career teachers

prior to any potential decrease of school leadership aspirations over their teaching career, would seem important to educational system leadership sustainability.

A view was presented that going forwards, a higher level of consultation between the education system administrators and school principals needs to take place. This was seen as a logical process that may assist the identification of future potential leaders, a typical comment being:

> I think you'd probably just need to speak to the administration within a school because they probably very quickly notice the people who have the aptitude and skills for [school leadership] … I guess primarily they'd just need to be speaking to the admin of our schools and getting from their perspective who they're seeing as potential leaders. (R5)

Further, *"… at a system level, I think to work with your school leaders who are on the ground and know their staff, their colleagues best, that trickle-up effect" (R10)* will support this ongoing dialogue between education system and local school levels. It would appear that these faith-based education system employees still largely espouse the view outlined below: *"I think it still remains—the most effective way to identify potential leaders is through observation, conversation, working beside teachers and seeing their personality traits, attributes that are well-suited for leadership and having those conversations" (R10).* This remains the case *"even more so than people necessarily applying for positions or putting their hands up for positions - that doesn't necessarily guarantee that they've got the attributes necessary to be an effective leader" (R10).* This again emphasises the role principals can play in the identification of potential school leaders.

Related to this was a view that the attributes of the current school principal played a significant part in the growth opportunities presented to staff, directly impacting on their chances of being identified for future school leadership opportunities. Comments such as:

> I don't really know how to articulate it well, but I think sometimes principals are the current leaders in schools and admin teams and I don't know if they all have the skill sets of being good leaders. But then they are the ones assessing the new leaders and I think sometimes there's a disconnect from the principals always being the person[s] that are earmarking the talent coming through. I think things like their job security and seeing people that could come through as a threat, and so on, could actually be factors. I don't know if some of the current principals have the skill set to be good people to train people. Obviously, some are. I think it would be better to have someone at the [education system] level who has the skill set to guide, encourage and train leaders. Even past principals like a recently retired principal that have been good or effective. If that's his skill set, then by all means he could mentor and nurture potential new principals or new leadership. (R1)

Such comments suggest that not all principals may be well suited to identify and nurture potential future school leaders, and that this may directly impact on the opportunities potential school leaders experience at the local school level. As identified elsewhere in this paper, the support provided by the school principal must be intentional, because as Fluckiger et al. (2015) note, "Teacher leadership needs to be fostered, supported and developed and not left to chance" (p. 60).

Respondents spoke of not only having dedicated roles such as deputy principals or heads of departments, and coordinators for example, but of creating opportunities for teaching staff to take on something akin to a project management role. In this role they focus on specific projects, providing the school with an opportunity to observe and support individuals as they develop leadership in specific areas within the school setting. It was asserted that this can provide further opportunity to assess individuals on their leadership capability and potential, leading to identification opportunities. Such opportunities link to research findings in the literature, and were asserted by respondents to facilitate school improvement initiatives. Matching people to projects of interest was deemed to heighten the likelihood of successful outcomes.

"I think things like their job security and seeing people that could come through as a threat, and so on, could actually be factors. I don't know if some of the current principals have the skill set to be good people to train people."

Interestingly, a theme emerging from respondents related to differences in leadership identification based on school size. Some smaller school respondents noted that there are fewer school-based leadership opportunities for staff to evidence leadership readiness than in larger schools where more positions exist (Stage Coordinator for example), positions that can provide growth opportunity for potential future leaders. These respondents raised the perspective that being in a smaller school often meant they had more scope to exhibit leadership in the roles they were in, but they appeared to form a view that this was not otherwise recognised, and indeed, education system personnel may have had no awareness of how these extra opportunities contributed to their enhanced leadership abilities. It may well be that broader faith-based involvement beyond the scope of the smaller schools could also be considered, such as involvement in Church-run activities or Children's Ministries, which may further evidence leadership ability and be factored into leadership identification processes.

Importantly, there appears to be some desire from these respondents to see the development of a minimum set of standards to assess the

appropriateness of any identified potential future leader. This would provide a basis for a transparent and structured approach to leadership identification and succession. In Australia, AITSL (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership) is funded by the Australian Government to provide "excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership" (AITSL, 2012, p.13). They "work with the educational community to: set and maintain standards to promote excellence in teaching and school leadership; lead and influence excellence in teaching and school leadership; and support and recognise excellence in teaching and school leadership" (AITSL, 2012, p.13). The AITSL Principal standard was acknowledged by respondents to be a good indicator of this leader readiness, as meeting that standard was perceived to allow potential school leadership candidates to then be considered on a needs basis as it would no longer be a question of their leadership capability, but rather position suitability.

Another view expressed around any potential process of identifying future school leaders in this faith-based education system revolved around their suitability from a 'special character' perspective – that is, the ability of the individual to lead out in the school community spiritually. There was a perception amongst interviewees that effective leadership in the school setting must take spiritual leadership into account, with some respondents lamenting they saw this to be lacking in this faith-based education system as they reflected on differing levels of leadership.

> *There was a perception amongst interviewees that effective leadership in the school setting must take spiritual leadership into account, … lamenting they saw this to be lacking*

Lastly, there is the major 'takeaway' point that while these current faith-based education system employees see an evolving model that is progressing from the traditional faith-based 'calling' model towards a more current industrial model, there is still importantly a role to be played by the education system itself with regard to future leadership identification. A number of employees felt that they themselves had leadership potential, but acknowledged they would never self-nominate, still clinging to a view that if they were asked to consider a school leadership role it would be because they were seen by the system as being capable and competent. Thus, a perception still exists that the employing entity is to play a role in identifying those with leadership potential with comments such as *"I guess I like the idea of trusting in the employer, trusting in the workplace, that they can identify potential and have the conversations" (R2)*, clearly espousing this view. It is significant that while respondents did not emphasise the leadership attributes they saw as crucial to effective future school leaders, they did believe that this faith-based education system had the role of determining this.

Emerging identification themes

There is little doubt that a key to education system sustainability lies in the identification of future school leaders. While school principals remain important contributors, a number of other systemic interventions are identified by these respondents as being significant in future school leader identification. Firstly, there is a need to define the leadership qualities required in this faith-based education system, at classroom, school and system levels. Defining what constitutes excellence in leadership at each of these levels will allow for easier identification of the leadership talent pool within this education system, and more transparency within the process.

Secondly, there is an acknowledged need to formalise leadership identification processes. This may mean the adoption or creation of a framework which clearly stipulates how teacher leaders in this faith-based education system will be identified and which then outlines a plan for their continued development and growth. This, when combined with the earlier recommendation which would allow the distinctions between knowledge, skills and experiences at differing levels of leadership to be clearly seen, would enhance the effectiveness of the plans formed for these future leaders' focused engagement with further leadership development.

Thirdly, conversations with early career teacher leaders are considered a crucial component of identification, particularly where the accomplished early career teacher leader has had opportunity to reflect on their performance and exhibited leadership attributes, as well as their willingness to engage in leadership development. Identifying any such individual aspirations and assessing the strengths and development needs of these candidates would be a significant step towards growing a pool of future leadership talent.

Fourthly, given that these faith-based education employees do not believe that the currently used staffing form is sufficient for communicating self-nominated interest in school leadership positions, it remains important that a formalised process is implemented that allows for this to take place, and equally important that those who register such interest receive feedback as acknowledgement that their interest has been received. Such a process would enable expressions of interest in school leadership positions at any stage of their career – a point that is particularly important given much of the literature identifies a focus on early career teacher leaders.

Fifthly, both the literature and respondents suggest a crucial role in school leader identification is played by school principals. Given the perceptions of some smaller school staff regarding the challenge of identifying leaders, there is a need for heightened

levels of communication between principals and system administrators regarding high potential employees. Identification and development of future school leaders must be the responsibility of many rather than lone leaders who tend to want to 'clone' themselves.

Lastly, these faith-based employees also wish to see more school-based leadership opportunities for future school leaders—formal or informal. This may involve the use of temporary teams or specific projects run by teacher leaders, with such opportunities seen as a breeding ground for the skills and experiences required of developing school leaders. Importantly, school-based support is seen as crucial to ensure leadership aspiration is fostered. School size has been identified as a potential hurdle in the provision of such opportunities, and thought is required as to how such school-based opportunities can be provided equitably across the varying sized school settings presented in this faith-based education system. TEACH

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"employees … wish to see more school-based leadership opportunities for future school leaders [involving] the use of temporary teams or specific projects run by teacher leaders"

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TEACH[R]

Do tertiary institutions' goals change? A Delphi follow-up study

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Abstract

This research investigated the 'use-by-date' of Delphi study outcomes—an area overlooked in Delphi literature. The findings signposted the continuing relevance and importance of high priority goals (HPGs) formulated for an educational institution more than two decades ago. *Excellence and service* featured as foremost values, among others, embedded in or associated with HPGs. The results of the study point to the long-term durability of value-laden goals in Delphi studies; particularly as goals relate to a prevailing worldview.

Introduction and background

In the 1980s a Delphi study was conducted in view of the decision by the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church to establish a new tertiary institution in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Historic, educational, and demographic reasons contributed to the SDA Church having taken such a course, including the positive comments of anthropologists (Groves, 1934a, b), politicians (Somare, 1976) and educators (Hunter, 1976) regarding the Church's longstanding contributions to PNG education. The 56-member diverse, representative, participating Delphi group identified 66 goals (including those ranked as high priority goals) that should guide the establishment and operation of the faith-based, post-secondary institution (Rieger, 1984); which was ultimately set up.

> *[Goals] provide focus, direction, a source of legitimacy to members, clues about the nature and character of the organisation, and a standard for performance.*

Goals: importance and challenges

Establishing a tertiary institution from 'scratch' is a formidable undertaking. As part of the initial planning process, the seminal importance of setting goals has long been recognised (Platt, 1970; Barney & Griffin,1992; Quain, 2018). Goals are outcomes or states for which a plan or design is made. Reasons for their significance that have been posited include that they provide focus, direction, a source of legitimacy to members, clues about the nature and character of the organisation, and a standard for performance (Kashyap, 2018). Also of note, is that goals help to determine priorities (Haynes, 2019). Furthermore, it should be understood that goals are value laden. They "… are primarily commitments to certain values, norms and ideologies" (Hasenfeld & English, 1977, p. 9); and by extension, they reflect and comprise worldviews. Values are fundamental beliefs, principles and motives that signify priorities and guide actions (McNiff, 2013); integrally, they describe the desired culture and connect with the mission of the institution (Kenny, 2014).

The connection between goals and values is elucidated by Creative Business Inc. (2018):

> Goal setting processes should always remain aligned with your company's [institution's] core philosophy and values … Core values are the essential and enduring principles that define what your company [institution] stands for. They are the bedrocks upon which your entire company [institution] runs.… Think of your Core Vision and Values as a compass …. [They] should always be there. (p. 1, emphasis supplied)

It is thus evident that the formulation of goals becomes a necessary and essential step for planners in the establishment of an educational institution.

However, goal setting is not a straight-forward endeavour. The Achille's heel of goal statements is that they are often, "little more than idealistic rhetoric" Patterson (2001), as perceived in relation to tertiary education institutions. Juxtaposed, some goal strategies (often those adopted from business management and the public admin. sector) emphasise measurability, specificity, attainability, monitoring and evaluation, and the allocation of time and monetary resources (van der Hoek et al. 2018; Chowdhury, 2017; Copeland, n.d.). In the latter case, stating *qualitative goals* to achieve *quantitative* objectives is likely to become problematic (if not a paradox). Goal setting thus becomes an endeavour that requires perceptiveness, prudence and pragmatism, keeping in mind *foremost* the overall institutional purpose, values and culture, and balancing these with quantitative outcomes.

Purpose of the present follow-up study

Despite an organisation or institution espousing a particular vision and certain values, with the passage of time, goal displacement and goal distortion may occur. In both cases the official goals and values of the organisation have been supplanted; in the former case by the interests of influential individuals or groups, while in the latter the organisation's activities have become centred around or governed by operations and procedures.

Alternatively, existing goals may have 'decayed', been achieved, or become irrelevant, as argued by Kashyap (2018):

> Goals are framed by people in a particular environmental setting.… goals are formulated in the midst of environment—economic, technological, social, and political—which is bound to undergo a change in the passage of time. Consequently, the goals formulated in the earlier environmental setting may prove irrelevant in the new setting. (p. 3)

Given the tertiary institution has been functioning for some decades, there is therefore justification for revisiting organisational and institutional goals, as this study sought to do.

The present follow-up Delphi study posed the following research questions about goal importance, longevity, and attainment/achievement, to guide the investigation (in light of the institutional goal statements originally formulated more than two decades earlier):

1. Which high priority goals (HPGs) *retained/lost* their ranking?
2. Which goals (if any) newly gained high priority ranking status?
3. What are the likely implications of the ranking stability/changes of the above goals?
4. At what *levels of agreement* were the above goals rated?
5. Is there a significant gap between the rating and achievement of HPGs and what are some possible implications?

Findings in relation to these posited questions should not only contribute to the Delphi literature knowledge base but, equally important, be helpful to current administrators and faculty of the institution.

In the follow-up study it was assumed, as in the original, that participants are able to make valid judgements, observe independence of responses and that personality differences have no significant effect on outcomes. A limitation of the follow-up study is that the Delphi panel may lack some of the diversity of the original study's panel, while a *delimitation* of the follow-up study is that it focuses on high priority goals only.

Review of Delphi literature

Following declassification by the U.S. Airforce in the early 1960s (Dalkey & Helmer, 1962), the futures-oriented exercise, dubbed "Delphi" after the ancient Greek oracle, went through several developmental growth stages — obscurity, novelty, popularity, scrutiny and continuity over a period of 20 years (Rieger, 1986). After use in many hundreds of dissertations and thousands of applications across education, business, industry, nursing, law, among others—as data bases can attest—the use and acceptance of the methodology suggests it has veritably reached the stage of *orthodoxy*.

Linstone and Turoff (2002, p. 3), the doyens of Delphi literature, assert: "Delphi may be described as a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem". Linstone (1978) had earlier pointed to the suitability of the method in investigations where,

1. The problem does not lend itself to precise analytical techniques but can benefit from subjective judgements on a collective basis,
2. Individuals who need to interact cannot be brought together in a face-to-face exchange because of time or cost constraints (p. 275).

The overall aim of a Delphi panel is to reach *the most reliable agreement* on a specified issue or problem regarding which they have expertise, knowledge, or experience. Participants are asked to respond (usually on a Likert scale) to statements in a(n) e/mailed questionnaire format over several rounds, and are provided with controlled feedback, until a stable level of agreement is determined statistically. Anonymity, a feature of the process, negates the risk posed by group-think and the possible influence of powerful individuals (von der Gracht, 2012). Delphi is also open to the possibility of procedural adaptation, depending on the research context (Hirschborn, 2019).

Within the available Delphi literature relatively few studies have researched aspects of the technique itself and there has been an almost complete absence in the literature of examples of long-term follow-up studies, where Delphi functioned as a preference probe. An example of an exception is Kruus' (1983) study that compared the long-term aims of a Delphi process, to actual developments in the decade that followed. Filling in a conspicuous gap in the literature thus provides added justification for the present study.

Hinton's (2012) comments on the merit of a Delphi study outcome delivering input for integrated planning, provides an apposite 'wrap-up' on the

"*Anonymity, a feature of the process, negates the risk posed by group-think and the possible influence of powerful individuals.*"

> the IGRMS of all 66 goals was lower in the follow-up study … indicating an overall greater … importance attached to goals investigated.

above precis of relevant Delphi literature:

> [The input from a Delphi study facilitates] the linking of vision, principles, people, and the physical institution in a flexible system of evaluation, decision-making and action. It shapes and guides the entire organization as it evolves over time within the community. (p. 3)

Methodology

The *original* Delphi study (O) followed accepted Delphi conventions and principles. It included, for example, a representative 56-member panel; questionnaire design, construction, and piloting procedures; design of rounds; and the use of appropriate statistical treatments (Rieger, 1985).

In the *follow-up* study (FU), 50 members comprised the Delphi panel. It was characterised by a balance of gender, staff/faculty/student ratio, country of origin, and a spread of educational completion levels ranging from under-graduate to doctorate. The questionnaire instrument from the original Delphi study was being utilised and it was sent to, and returned by participants; additionally, participants had space to rate perceived goal achievement. Individual ratings for each goal statement were aggregated and the statistical group mean response calculated, giving rise to a goal rank. Focus on the latter is decisive in comparing the original with the follow-up Delphi study, because actual goal rating score means may not be valid *comparative* indicators of importance. Also, agreement levels for goals were calculated according to Dajani et al. (1979) and compared; 22 goals (one third) were designated to be high priority goals, comparable to the original study.

Results and discussion

Data collection was enabled by a useful return rate of almost 80%. Multiple Delphi rounds were not required in the follow-up study given the very high levels of agreement on goal importance (to a somewhat lesser degree on goal achievement).

A comparison

The institutional goal rating mean scores (IGRMS)—on a six-point Likert scale of importance, e.g., 1 = extreme, 3 = moderate, 6 = reject—of the original study's participant group were 'higher' than those in the follow-up study, for 60 individual goals; a lower IGRMS equating to a *greater* importance. The attribution of greater importance to goals, overall, in the follow-up study was evident on two counts. First, goal 7.13 (Curriculum—Teaching) had a goal ranking of 7, in *both* studies, with a IGRMS of 1.60 in the original study, but a IGRMS of 1.36 in the follow-up study. Second, the IGRMS of *all* 66 goals was lower in the follow-up study (M_O = 2.101, SD_O = 0. 465 and M_{FU} = 1.806, SD_{FU} = 0.384) indicating an overall greater, but less dispersed, importance attached to goals investigated. Furthermore, a need for cautious interpretation of the difference in the groups' mean rating scores is highlighted, for example, by the data for goal 12.2 (To promote a non-elitist spirit). It was given an identical IGRMS of 1.86 by both groups but had a goal ranking differential (GRD) of 24 in the follow-up study, with its participants ranking it as less important, at 44, dropping from a rank of 20 (see Table C). It is evident that the rank order of goals is a critical indicator in comparing the importance of goals in the two studies.

Statistical analysis indicated homogeneity of variance between the two groups, $F(1,130) = 1.442$, $p > 0.01$, supporting an independent groups t-test (equal size and variance) with output statistics, $t(130) = 3.943$, $p < 0.01$, (Runyan & Haber, 1977) that on interpretation assert M_O is statistically, significantly greater than M_{FU}.

Accordingly, which goals were affected by any changes of perceived importance?

High priority goal ranking retained

To begin, which institutional goal statements (IGS) in the original Delphi study retained their high priority ranking (HPR) in the follow-up study? Also, what values are embedded in these IGS? Table A provides relevant information for appropriate analysis and discussion. In proceeding, it seems an advantageous strategy to cluster the proposed values inherent in or associated with the various goals rather than dealing with them individually and separately in their distinct goal categories. As a result, a kind of values 'mosaic' emerges from the goals that have been 'carried over' from an original HPG list. A perusal of, and reflection on the data shown by Table A suggests a discussion (that follows) of the values inherent in or associated with goals.

Excellence

Participants in both studies considered it requisite that educational institutions demonstrate excellence as an underlying value. In the follow-up study, participants re-endorsed the importance of excellence, with some items at a higher ranked priority. Excellence—the notion of quality—is valued not only as an end in itself, as it relates particularly to academic matters (goal 11.1, GRD = +15; a *positive* value indicating an *up*grading in ranking), but its significance and pervasiveness stretches across a number of goal categories and institutional endeavours. An example is the perceived quality of staff employed—their professionalism, competence, expertise, (goals 6.1, GRD = -3; a *negative* value indicating a *down*grading in ranking), and commitment (goal 6.2, GRD = -5), and how the institution is perceived by the wider

community and in the region (goals 11.2, GRD = +6; 11.3, GRD= +2).

A minor change in goal ranking order either way (because of close clustering of goal mean rating scores) should not necessarily be interpreted as a noteworthy change in importance. What *is* noteworthy is any major disparity between perceived *goal importance* and perceived *goal achievement*, as *indicated by the respective (F-U) mean rating scores*. A case in point is goal 6.1, relating to staff qualifications and experience, which impacts excellence. Perceived achievement was *below* perceived importance by a difference of 1.37 in rating mean scores! More will be said about achievement (or lack thereof) under the heading, Expectation and Performance.

At the institutional level, excellence should extend to and be at the forefront of renewal, educational innovation, research and knowledge advancement, scholarship, and taking advantage of opportunities. This might be facilitated by connecting with organisations beyond PNG, such as the Higher Education Private Provider Quality Network—HEPP-QN (Fernandez, et al., 2019).

In participants' perceptions, excellence not only contributes towards community and regional respect and recognition, in relation to the institution's reputation and public image, but also augments recognition of graduates' qualifications, and by extension increases their job opportunities. With the latter in mind, follow-up study participants perhaps judged that the institution should focus on offering courses at the *degree* level only; this was identified as a new HPG, with diploma and certificate study awards being ranked only as 63 and 66 respectively, in goal importance.

In addition, valuing excellence indirectly impacts other goals (a phenomenon that will receive further attention in the article). Examples are goal 2.3—To project what the church stands for—and goal 11.3—To serve as a model for post-secondary education. Perhaps it could be a model for faith-based and secular institutions in developing countries in the South Pacific.

On a larger scale, limitations of human and financial resources, particularly in developing countries, present a real challenge to attaining excellence in educational endeavours (not to mention other essential services). The situation is exacerbated in times of economic, political, social, environmental and health crises (COVID-19 being an example of the latter).

Service

Service is another value embedded in some HPGs, as evidenced particularly by goal 8.1, but at a slightly lower rank (GRD = -2). The value is further amplified in the curriculum areas, where Teaching and Theology (both retained their HPG status) together with two new HPG status courses—Administration and Nursing—fall into the Human *Services* classification of vocations. For Christians, unsurprisingly, service is a theme found throughout the canon of Scripture stretching from Genesis to Revelation. It is more than a humanitarian ideal, but a deeply biblical concept, with references to Jesus' mission (Luke 22:27; 19:10), and his invitation to his disciples: "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:18, NIV).

Furthermore, tertiary education institutions do not exist in an academic bubble. The expectation for Christian faith-based ones is that a learning community should function, *inter alia*, as 'salt', 'leaven' and 'light'. It can be argued that in developing countries particularly, an institution should directly benefit the community where it is located (hence HPG 8.1 of responding to the real needs of faith communities located in developing countries of the South Pacific), but not *only* the faith community to which the institution belongs. The target should also include wider community needs, as these become apparent and can be matched with resources available to the institution. This raises the question of how service learning—knowledge *applied* for the benefit of society at large and the immediate community—might be incorporated into a tertiary curriculum, whether in a formal or informal mode.

> *the rationale for service, as a prized value, should be beyond a socio-political agenda of rights, equity and justice … [it] is motivated by grace and love; without display or expected reward.*

Within the framework of a Christian worldview, the rationale for service, as a prized value, should be beyond a socio-political agenda of rights, equity and justice, important as these are and that they find ready and fierce expression in the warnings of Old Testament prophets. Even more important, authentic service is motivated by grace and love; without display or expected reward. Through service, God's love is internalised *and* externalised, demonstrating a recognition of the value of human beings, as God is encountered simultaneously on the vertical and with neighbour on the horizontal dimension of Christians' personal lives.

Excellence and service are thus two preeminent values that are embedded in institutional goal statements that have retained their high priority ranking over more than two decades, while two new HPGs in the curriculum category also align with service.

Religion and culture

The data show that two of the 15 HPGs, which retained their *original* HPR, come under the category of Religious and Cultural Orientation. (They were

"Faith and spirituality are perceived as significant values … they should be instrumental in shaping and defining the faith-tradition's identity and public image."

TABLE A: ***Institutional Goal Statements (IGS) from the Original Delphi Study that retained their High Priority Ranking in the Follow-up Study***

Data showing –

1. IGS from the Original Delphi Study (O) that ***retained*** their High Priority Goal Ranking in the Follow-up Study (FU), together with their **Importance Goal Rating Mean Score [IGRMS]** and **Importance Goal Ranking [IGR]**... [The suggested embedded and/or associated values—listed in alphabetical order below each goal *—were not included in the Original Study questionnaire, completed by participants.]
2. The **Importance Agreement Level [IAL]** reached for goal statements in the Original Study (O) & Follow-up Study (FU).
3. The **Achievement Goal Rating Mean Score [AGRMS]** and the **Achievement Agreement Level [AAL]** in the Follow-up Study (FU).

Key for Level of Agreement

Unanimity (U) 90-100%; Consensus (C) 75-89%; Majority (M) 51-74%; Bi-Polarity (B-P) 50%; Plurality (P) < 50%

Calculated as the highest Likert scale data cell combined with the next highest *adjacent* one, expressed as a percentage of all cell totals (Dajani, 1979).

Goal Category & Goal Statement		IGRMS		IGR		IAL		AGRMS	AAL
GOVERNANCE		**O**	**FU**	**O**	**FU**	**O**	**FU**	**FU**	**FU**
1.1	To respond to the control of a representative governing body selected from within the church organisation [*accountability, authority, community, belonging, loyalty, power, trust]%	1.75	1.66	11	22	U	C	2.06	C
RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL ORIENTATION									
2.1	To build a philosophic foundation that emphasizes the biblical view of man, culture and society, work, art and technology. [*faith, hope, spirituality, vision, worldview integration]%	1.41	1.38	2	8	U	U	2.29	M
2.3	To project what the church stands for [*community, fairness, faith, integrity, learning, ministry, nurture, service, well-being]	1.87	1.42	22	10	C	U	2.50	C
CLIENT ENTRY CRITERIA									
5.4	To accept applicants who are desirous of being in harmony with the principles, ethics and guidelines of the institution [*belonging, compatibility, harmony, self-discipline]	1.75	1.60	11	19	C	U	2.84	M
STAFF SELECTION CRITERIA									
6.1	To employ staff who possess qualifications and experience relevant to educational needs in developing countries in the South Pacific [*credibility, complementarity, effectiveness, expertise, identity, knowledge]	1.62	1.44	8	11	U	U	2.81	M
6.2	To appoint staff who identify with the goals and programs of the institution [*commitment, cooperation, empathy, harmony, service]	1.54	1.40	4	9	U	U	2.42	M
CURRICULUM									
	To provide education and training in the following areas:								
7.13	Teaching [*commitment, excellence, knowledge, learning maximization, professionalism]	1.60	1.36	7	7	U	U	1.74	U
7.14	Theology [*agape love, authenticity, biblical knowledge, faith, ministry, spirituality, worship]	1.56	1.28	5	4	U	U	1.94	C

Goal Category & Goal Statement	IGRMS		IGR		IAL		AGRMS	AAL
SERVICE	**O**	**FU**	**O**	**FU**	**O**	**FU**	**FU**	**FU**
8.1 To respond, in particular, to the real needs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the developing countries of the South Pacific [*altruism, applied knowledge, empathy, loyalty, service, usefulness]	1.49	1.33	3	5	U	U	2.61	C
MANPOWER [HUMAN RESOURCES] REQUIREMENTS								
9.3 To produce qualified individuals who are personally committed to serve the community and the church in South Pacific developing countries [*commitment, community, goodness, love, service]	1.56	1.27	5	3	C	U	2.18	M
EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE AND INNOVATION								
10.1 To promote a balanced work-study approach to education, which emphasizes the development of the whole person [*balance, holistic living, life experience, personal growth, responsibility, well-being]	1.35	1.26	1	2	U	U	2.14	C
10.4 To demonstrate the principle of self-reliance to the church and the community [*initiative, inventiveness, resourcefulness, skill]	1.78	1.59	13	17	U	U	2.80	M
EXCELLENCE								
11.1 To uphold a high standard of academic excellence [*excellence, merit, quality]	1.83	1.22	16	1	U	U	2.33	C
11.2 To graduate students whose qualifications are recognized by developing countries in the South Pacific [*approval, credibility, recognition, status]	1.86	1.53	20	14	C	U	2.16	M
11.3 To serve as a model of post-secondary education in developing countries In the South Pacific [*diligence, exemplariness, idealism, optimism, quality]	1.85	1.59	19	17	U	U	2.22	M

goals 2.1 and 2.3 respectively; see Table A). To underscore the raised profile of this category, participants' ratings in the follow-up study put goals 2.2 and 2.4 also in the new HPG group of 22 (see Table B). A biblical view of life in its various dimensions work, art, technology, and society and culture thus remains a driving force for the institution. *Faith* and *spirituality* are perceived as significant values, being key elements in Christian belief and as new HPGs (2.2 and 2.4) suggest, there should not only be advocacy for these inherent values, but that they should be instrumental in shaping and defining the faith-tradition's identity and public image. To some degree, this higher ranking is not altogether surprising as most follow-up study respondents belonged to, were associated with, or were employed by the institution's sponsoring faith tradition. On the other hand, one should not overlook a possible concurrent countertrend, as indicated by goal 1.1 (GRD = -11) almost losing its original HPR, as discussed under the relevant heading below.

Governance

What should be underscored is the changed HPR (from 11 to 22) of goal 1.1—To respond to the control of a representative body selected from within the [SDA] church organisation. This rating seems to run *counter* to participants' expressed values affirmations and organisational alignment noted in the paragraph above and in view that most respondents were connected to the institution's sponsoring faith tradition. What explanation can be offered for this apparent discrepancy?

Participants continued to see the institution under the control/sponsorship of its parent faith tradition (see Goal 1.1, Table A, Agreement level = C). However, the goal barely qualified as a high priority goal, having lost 11 ranks. One could speculate that this shift in perception may be a desire for greater institutional autonomy, increased government funding, or an expression of patriotism rather than regional interests and organisational cooperation; perhaps an indicator of a growing national assertiveness and independence. Some, or all of

> *To respond to the control of a representative body selected from within the [SDA] church organization … barely qualified as a high priority goal, having lost 11 ranks.*

these factors may have contributed to a perception of considerable lessening in importance of goal 1.1. One can more fully appreciate the reason for the biblical 'stones object lesson' and accompanying instructions given to Joshua on Israel's crossing of the Jordan River, prior to entering the Promised Land, recorded in the Old Testament (Joshua 4:1-9).

Participants and organisational alignment

Goals 5.4, 6.2 and 9.3 bring together a set of values including belonging, commitment, cooperation, and service. These values are at the heart of any well-functioning open community or organisation. Moreover, the said values encapsulate the notion of *espirit de corps*, defined by the Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus as, "a consciousness of pride in belonging to a particular group with a sense of shared purpose and fellowship." *Espirit de corps* is both the driving force and 'social cement' that facilitates the smooth and orderly operation of such an institution's academic, socio-economic, and spiritual life. Further underpinning the perceived shared sense of purpose and fellowship is the institution's religious and cultural orientation and, importantly, staff and students' personal Christian faith and practice.

> *underpinning the perceived shared sense of purpose and fellowship is the institution's religious and cultural orientation … staff and students' personal Christian faith and practice.*

Educational practice and innovation

Goals 10.1 and 10.4, belonging to the Educational Practice and Innovation category, were two more goals in the set of goals that retained their HPR designation. Values such as holistic living, well-being, life experience, resourcefulness, and initiative being held in remarkably high regard, is thought provoking.

It is not standard practice for tertiary institutions in South Pacific developing countries to combine work and duties as part of students' overall study programs. In this case study, the goal—To promote a balanced work-study approach to education which emphasizes the development of the whole person—was highly ranked (first and second in successive studies). Students' expected work contributions and experiences were located on the campus or further afield, ranging from locations such as a library, residence hall, office, school, or kitchen, to a farm, laundry, village, waste disposal site/depot, landscaping facility and hospital, among others. Experiences at these locations or facilities may be part of, or external to their study program. An example typical of this program—one through which 'values became clearly visible'— is reported by Litau and Bridcutt (2016):

> Students took part in a service initiative called Community at Excellence Development Training, which has been integrated into the academic program at PAU's School of Arts and Humanities.
> One of the service projects involved building an incinerator — the first of its kind for the village, which had previously struggled with lack of waste management facilities… .
> The second project has benefited the 700 children enrolled at Tubuseria Lower Primary School, where nine PAU students catalogued and set up a library of more than 100 [donated] books … (p.8).

On campus, such a program facilitates the interaction of staff and students on a personal basis in extended roles—beyond academia—thus, importantly, contributing not only to students' personal growth, the taking on of responsibility and developing a work ethic, as well as enhancement of their skill sets, but also the reduction of institutional expenditure being an added bonus.

Arrangements of this kind generally work well at a tertiary institution where all students are housed in on-campus residences. However, providing work experience opportunities for all students will require administrative creativity for HPG 10.1 to be realised. This will be a particular challenge when an increasing number of the institution's enrolees are "day students" who commute from nearby quasi-suburban areas on buses or private transport and who might question their need for a work-study approach to tertiary education; their expectations being based on other tertiary institutions' *modus operandi*.

As already noted above, there has been some *re-ordering* in the ranking of HPGs as a result of the follow-up study. Importantly, what should not be overlooked, however, at this point, is the Level of Agreement at which 14 from 15 HPGs in Table A were validated in the follow-up study, i.e., *unanimity*. The discussion now turns to goals that newly gained high priority ranking.

Goals newly gaining high priority ranking

Institutional goal statements that *gained* high priority ranking in the follow-up study (previously not on the HPG list) are included in Table B, informing further analysis and prompting the discussion that follows. It asks, what values are embedded in these IGS?

Evangelism

Participants in the follow-up study rated goal 2.2—To perform a practical evangelizing function—much higher than the original Delphi group, changing its ranking from 43 to 21. The reason behind the change might be that the institution's faith tradition carries out this ministry across a widening spectrum, addressing PNG people's needs. Examples are programs dealing with domestic violence (Kama, 2017), literacy (Woruba, 2018b) and the environment

TABLE B: ***Institutional Goal Statements (IGS) from the Original Delphi Study (O) that newly gained High Priority Ranking in the Follow-up Study***

Data showing –

1. IGS from the Original Study (O), their ***former*** ranking, and their ***newly gained*** High Priority Goal Ranking in the Follow-up Study (FU), together with their (O) and (FU) **Importance Goal Rating Mean Score [IGRMS]** and **Importance Goal Ranking [IGR]**. [The suggested embedded and/or associated values—listed in alphabetical order below each goal statement*—were not included in the Original Study questionnaire, completed by participants.]
2. The **Importance Agreement Level [IAL]** reached for goal statements in the Original Study (O) & Follow-up Study (FU)
3. The Achievement **Goal Rating Mean Score [AGRMS]** and the **Achievement Agreement Level [AAL]** in the Follow-up Study (FU)

Key for Level of Agreement
Unanimity (U) 90-100%; Consensus (C) 75-89%; Majority (M) 51-74%; Bi-Polarity (B-P) 50%; Plurality (P) < 50%
Calculated as the highest Likert scale data cell combined with the next highest adjacent one, expressed as a percentage of all cell totals (Dajani, 1979).

Goal Category & Goal Statement	**IGRMS**		**IGR**		**IAL**		**AGRMS**	**AAL**
RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL ORIENTATION	**O**	**FU**	**O**	**FU**	**O**	**FU**	**FU**	**FU**
2.2 To perform a practical evangelizing function. [*community, creativity, interdependence, nurture, passion, support, tradition, vision]	2.09	1.65	43	21	C	U	2.39	C
2.4 To foster an integrated values and cultural structure that should be characteristic of Seventh-day Adventist Christian communities in the South Pacific islands. [*community, creativity, interdependence, nurture, passion, support, tradition, vision]	1.94	1.49	28	12	C	U	2.62	C
CURRICULUM								
(i) To provide education and training in the following areas:								
7.01 Administration [*accountability, ethics, leadership, planning, professionalism, transparency	2.00	1.56	33	16	C	U	2.71	M
7.10 Nursing [*altruism, commitment, compassion, competency, human dignity, social justice]	2.59	1.65	57	21	M	U	2.22	C
7.16 Degree [*competence, excellence, knowledge, quality, skill]	1.92	1.33	25	5	C	U	1.65	U
SERVICE								
8.4 To provide youth with saleable employment skills [*achievement, advancement, personal fulfillment, human dignity, self-improvement]	2.11	1.49	44	12	C	U	2.12	C
EQUALITY								
12.1 To give, in its programmes, recognition and elevation to the status role of women in developing countries in the South Pacific [*acceptance, empowerment, equity, fairness, integrity, respect for others]	2.00	1.63	33	20	M	C	2.53	M

> *what should not be overlooked … is the Level of Agreement [unanimity] at which 14 from 15 HPGs in Table A were validated*

(Kapamu, 2018). The programs also include diabetes and personal health/hygiene education, community projects (Nalu, 2017) and prison visitation (Yasaking, 2019)—besides a time-honoured spiritual outreach—thus coalescing with goal 8.1, (see Table A) in meeting people's real needs: physical, social, mental, emotional, and spiritual.

This commentary may explain why this particular

curriculum area has now a demonstrably higher profile of importance, climbing from rank 33 to 16.

Curriculum: Nursing

It seems likely that Goal 7.10, Curriculum/nursing, showing the highest increase in importance (GRD = +36), joined the HPG category because the nursing course had been transferred to the institution from its prior geographical location. Also, earlier targeted Australian development grants may have been a factor. The grants funded personnel (academic lecturers/tutors), classroom and dormitory buildings—all linked specifically to a perception of the Nursing program, particularly Midwifery, as a significant contributor to improvement of public health in the nation. However, the change in rank may also be perceived as neatly fitting into a 'parcel' of symbiotic goals that embody altruism, commitment and service and is consequently seen as highly important in relation to institutional goal alignment.

"elevation to the status and role of women in … the South Pacific, from rank 33 to 20 should be an encouragement for advocates of gender equality."

Curriculum: Degree level only

Goal 7.16—To offer courses at the *degree* level —has already been commented on in relation to excellence. Looking beyond excellence, however, (and in a broader national context) is of interest in that available data indicate that on average, across all careers and locations, the difference between a diploma and a degree qualification in PNG, leads to an expected 24% increase in salary (Salary Explorer, 2020). Hence respondents, perhaps with a view to students' future employment, apparently see no valid reason for a tertiary education institution to provide courses at a lower level.

Curriculum: Saleable skills

The upward movement of goal 8.4—To provide youth with saleable employment skills—from rank 44 to 12 (GRD = +32), the second highest rank change, is particularly noteworthy. It reflects a continuing competitive salaried employment situation in PNG, where the country's 15-24 age group, representing 20% of the population (Index Mundi, 2020) and forming a large cohort of job seekers, is faced with limited opportunities in an economy that has a basic hourly minimum wage equivalent to US$1.00 (Trading Economics, 2019). The World Bank (2019) regards the need for setting the PNG non-resource economy on a more robust growth trajectory as essential, to absorb this substantial number of young job seekers. The rise of goal 8.4 also raises the issue of competing (and possibly conflicting) values inherent in goals 8.1 and 8.4 respectively—with altruism and service on the one hand, and self-fulfillment and advancement on the other. Again, more will be said about this matter further on in the article.

Status of women

The move of goal 12.1—To give, in its [the institution's] programmes, recognition and elevation to the status and role of women in developing countries in the South Pacific, from rank 33 to 20 (GRD = +12), should be an encouragement for advocates of gender equality. It represents an increasing recognition of the values of equity, empowerment, fairness, and respect for others.

At this juncture, it is fitting to re-visit and comment briefly on the list of *all* the posited high priority goals. A 'rear-vision mirror' look clearly shows that the follow-up group, almost unanimously (at a 90-100% level of agreement), continues to espouse an overall honorific view of the institution. The institution is expected to make a niche, quality, service-oriented contribution to community, church and national development in critical, essential areas. This includes spiritual, intellectual and ethical guidance and leadership in education, health, administration and business, among others. The challenge, however, will always be for aspiration to be matched by achievement.

The entry of the above-mentioned new goals into the HPG list, correspondingly connotes the exit of others. What are these goals?

Loss of high priority goal ranking

Which institutional goal statements (previously on the HPG list) lost their high priority ranking in the follow-up study and what values are embedded in these IGS? Table C provides information to assist analysis and discussion of these changes.

Client entry criteria

The category, Client Entry Criteria, lost two HPGs. They were goals 5.2—To admit students who are motivated by service to others—and also goal 5.5—To give enrolment preference to students from South Pacific developing countries. Regarding goal 5.2, there is some apparent negation of the notion of service and commitment. However, one participant's written observation in the comments section of the questionnaire noted that it should not be an *entry*, but a likely course *exit* expectation. Another participant noted: "It is hard to identify what actually the [students'] motives are." Conversely, it might be argued that the ethic of service (as mentioned in relation to goal 8.1 and new HPG 8.4) is being counteracted by a spirit of personal fulfilment perhaps career advancement, suggesting a situation of potentially/actually competing or conflicting goals, previously referred to. For clarifying such

TABLE C: ***Institutional Goal Statements (IGS) that lost their High Priority Ranking in the Follow-up Study***

Data showing –

1. IGS from the Original Study (O), their ***former*** High Priority Goal Ranking and new, ***lower*** *Non*-HPGR in the Follow-up Study (FU), together with their (O) and (FU) **Importance Goal Rating Mean Score [IGRMS]** and **Importance Goal Ranking [IGR]**. [The suggested embedded and/or associated values—listed in alphabetical order below each goal statement*—were not included in the Original Study questionnaire, completed by participants.]
2. The **Importance Agreement Level [IAL]** reached for goal statements in the Original Study (O) & Follow-up Study (FU).
3. The **Achievement Goal Rating Mean Score [AGRMS]** and the **Achievement Agreement Level [AAL]** in the Follow-up Study (FU)

Key for Level of Agreement

Unanimity (U) 90-100%; Consensus (C) 75-89%; Majority (M) 51-74%; Bi-Polarity (B-P) 50%; Plurality (P) < 50%

Calculated as the highest Likert scale data cell combined with the next highest *adjacent* one, expressed as a percentage of all cell totals (Dajani, 1979).

Goal Category & Goal Statement	IGRMS		IGR		IAL		AGRMS	AAL
CLIENT ENTRY CRITERIA	**O**	**FU**	**O**	**FU**	**O**	**FU**	**FU**	**FU**
5.2 To admit students who are motivated by service to others (the constituency of the church, the community, the region) as opposed to self-interest [*altruism, community, sacrifice, selflessness]	1.80	1.82	15	38	C	C	2.96	M
5.5 To give enrolment preference to students from the South Pacific developing countries [*differentiation, merit, fairness, interdependence, mutuality]	1.84	1.80	18	36	C	C	2.12	M
CURRICULUM								
(i) To provide education and training in the following areas:								
7.03 Agriculture and the environment [*biodiversity, conservation, cost-benefit, food security, stewardship, sustainability]	1.69	2.02	9	52	C	C	3.91	M
7.07 Health Education (Preventive) [*proactiveness, knowledge, quality of life, temperance, wellbeing, wholeness]	1.71	1.71	10	26	C	U	2.88	C
MANPOWER [HUMAN RESOURCES] REQUIREMENTS								
9.1 To prepare national personnel to assume responsibilities presently held by expatriates [*accomplishment, advancement, autonomy, enablement, power, success, trust]	1.83	1.82	16	38	C	C	2.98	M
EQUALITY								
12.2 To promote a non-elitist spirit [*equality, humility, justice, unpretentiousness]	1.86	1.86	20	44	C	C	2.57	U
FACILITIES								
13.2 To utilize an architectural style that takes into account Pacific cultures, climatic conditions, cost-effectiveness, and possible expansion [*beauty, comfort, cost-effectiveness, foresight, purpose, simplicity, traditions]	1.79	1.84	14	41	C	C	2.75	C

“Available data indicate[s] … the difference between a diploma and degree qualification in PNG, leads to an expected 24% increase in salary.”

relationships between and among goals, Hudspeth (1974) recommends the use of the Cross Impact Matrix Technique (its application lies outside the scope of this research study).

Giving enrolment preference to students from South Pacific countries (goal 5.5), surprisingly dropped from rank 18 to 36 (GRD = -18). The explanation may be that other entry qualifications are perceived as more important than geographical, economic or cultural background. Additionally, well-founded concerns of other Pacific Islands societies about PNG's high crime rate, making PNG unsuitable for their students (females in particular), may shape perceptions impacting this goal's decreasing importance.

Agriculture, the environment and elitism

Goal 7.3—To provide education and training in agriculture and the environment—registered the steepest loss in rank of any institutional goal (rank 9 – 52, GRD = -43)! This ranking is in stark contrast to the World Bank's (2019) observations of payoffs in economic diversification in the PNG agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors, which are highly inclusive of young people and women. When goal 7.3 is seen in conjunction with the dislodgment of goal 12.2 (To promote a non-elitist spirit) from the HPG list, one may conjecture that it is no longer *avant-garde* to study a subject that is usually associated in PNG with subsistence farming. Consequently, it is not surprising that goal 12.2 has been dropped from rank 20 to 44 (GRD = -24). Faith-based organisational planning may consider prioritising vocational education in agriculture to the campus of an associated PNG sister institution.

Another goal (13.2) recorded a steep drop in ranking from 14 to 41 (GRD = -27). Utilizing an architectural style that takes environmental, social, and cost effectiveness factors into account, was no longer considered a HPG once the institution had been built, although some 'free comments' referred to the perceived need for comfort, e.g., air-conditioning in some areas, and additional residential accommodation.

Health

Goal 7.07—To provide education and training in health education (preventive)—registered a considerable loss in ranking from 10 to 26 (GDR = -16). Such a drop in perceived importance is worrying given the very high recorded rates of tuberculosis, malaria, infant mortality and diabetes in Papua New Guinea and the precarious state of health services throughout the country generally, and in remote areas particularly. Perhaps, in their rating, participants considered that Nursing encompassed preventive Health Education. That is a misapprehension and goal 7.07, given existing real needs in PNG, actually merits a HPG rating.

Levels of agreement

What must not be overlooked (see Table A and B, in particular) as part of the discussion, is the exceptional level of agreement reached (Unanimity, 90% and above) in the follow-up study for 21 of 22 HPGs. This applies to the goals that *retained* their HPG ranking and also to those that *newly gained* it. Similarly, there is evidence of an elevated level of agreement (Consensus, 75%-89%) for the ranking of each of the seven goals that lost their high priority status (see Table C).

Although, agreement levels on goal achievement consistently did not reach such raised levels, in 19/22 cases agreement was above 70% (see Table A, B & C), indicating, overall, that an additional Delphi round was not necessary.

On all counts, these outcomes suggest a most encouraging level of internal group coherence and consistency. The discussion now turns to what might be the gap between importance and achievement—between expectation and performance—as perceived by participants.

Expectation and performance

To presume that performance will match or even exceed expectation might be unrealistic, given no set criteria or indicators were provided to participants in the Delphi exercise. The data show relatively small 'gaps' in the rating mean scores between *goal importance* and *goal achievement* (ranging from 0.32 to 0.66) for high priority goals 7.10, 7.13, 7.14, 7.16, 8.4, 11.2, and 11.3 in the follow-up study (see Table A and B).

However, in contrast, the 'gaps' for HPGs 5.4; 6.1; 8.1 and 10.4 are substantial, as evidenced by a rating mean score difference of 1.20 or greater (see Table A and B). The difference between aspiration/expectation and perceived performance may partially be driven by the very strong emphasis on excellence. Data such as those above should be a focal point for faculty/administration and draw attention to a *non*-HPG with only a rank of 29—To establish and operate a continuous programme of self-monitoring and evaluation for the institution—because excellence is contingent on evaluation; both being part of an essential practice for organisations and institutions in reflecting on their *raison d'etre*.

“*draw attention to a non-HPG with only a rank of 29—To establish and operate a continuous programme of self-monitoring and evaluation for the institution—because excellence is contingent on evaluation*”

What may be concluded from the research findings?

Conclusion

A considerable proportion (2/3) of the 22 high priority goals of the original Delphi study *retained* their high priority ranking. Of the seven goals that *did lose* it, only three dropped below rank 40, from a total of 66 formulated goals. There was no

evidence of serious high priority goal displacement, excepting relative to agriculture and the environment and building architecture. Given the noteworthy levels of agreement and acceptable achievement levels reached, this outcome essentially upholds and re-endorses the identification and ranking of high priority goals more than two decades previously. Regardless that institutional leaders and administrators may come and go, with many core values being intact and upheld, there is little or no indication of James Burtchaell's (1998) *The Dying of the Light* syndrome. Furthermore, the results also point to the *continuing* relevance, importance, and durability of Delphi study outcomes (a finding that contributes to an issue seldomly dealt with in Delphi research and literature) regarding value-laden institutional goals; particularly as goals relate to worldviews that incorporate religious and cultural orientation.

Values that seemed unaffected by any 'drift' and were deeply embedded in a number of high priority goals, were excellence and service as these pertained to scholarship, staff and student performance, relationships with the community, the institution's reputation and the knock-on-effect for future student employment. What reasons may be offered for these results?

The resilience of goals may be explained in terms of the continuing quality, commitment and faithfulness of administration, faculty and staff to Seventh-day Adventist Christian education in general and keeping in mind the institution's mission and vision in particular. High priority goals have stood the test of time because they reflect and/or are underpinned by time-less biblical principles. The quinquennial institutional accreditation processes, organised through the South Pacific Division Education Department of the SDA Church, might be an additional reason.

With the emergence of new high priority goals, an increased emphasis on some values has resulted, namely spiritual outreach, leadership, equity, fairness, and self-fulfilment, and a corresponding decrease in others, relating to exiting high priority goals. However, this should not be regarded as the 'prevailing situation'. There are continuing, significant changes in the international tertiary landscape that also affect developing countries, and which give rise to meta-structural goals. These changes relate to and include government regulations and requirements to do with quality assurance; national goals and tagged funding; church governing procedures and the skilling of boards; and also, the research–teaching profile of tertiary institutions.

Potential new 'internal' institutional goals may be about the further democratisation of students' voice, the non/implementation of compulsory worships, chapels or work-lines and similar programs. All of these issues will test the skills, resourcefulness and creativity of administrators, particularly as the number of non-residential and 'non-committed' students increases. Whether these challenges turn out to be threats to prized institutional values or opportunities for witness and evangelism will depend on the approach taken by administration and faculty, together with their reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit to change lives.

So far, nothing has been mentioned about the huge challenges triggered by COVID-19 and the resulting 'new normal'. This may subsequently lead to altered or radically new goals, methods, and means of learning and teaching and the 'delivery' (not only) of tertiary education, in the not-too-distant future.

> *COVID-19 and the resulting 'new normal' … may subsequently lead to altered or radically new goals, methods, and means of learning and teaching*

In review, this research presents planners with creditable evidence, in claiming that Delphi study outcomes may have a long life, as in this case study, where a representative, diverse group of knowledgeable participants was involved in providing opinions, preferences, and making value judgements. Moreover, the research suggests that it is incumbent for administrators, faculty, staff and decision-makers, of faith-based educational organisations and institutions in particular, to re-visit and examine current policies, practices and performance on a regular basis and in line with their bodies' *raison d'etre*. There are considerable benefits from incisive, regular 'health-checks' that seek to ascertain whether core values are reflected by, and embedded in policy documents, board decisions, human resources procedures, curriculum content and instructional practices (among others), and which can reveal mis/alignment with one's compass and GPS—one's avowed institutional mission and vision.

In the final analysis, future administrators, planners and decision-makers, engaged in goal setting for an institution of Christian higher education, must take into account both external and internal environments, and also be very clear about the institution's purpose, values, character and culture, and how it is expected to contribute to its faith community and the wider public good. What logically follows for practising Christian educators to accomplish in the total learning-teaching environment, is the challenging task of 'walking the talk', turning words into *actions* and ensuring on-going quality assurance. TEACH

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Classroom confirmation panels: Facilitating feedback in communities of practice in classroom learning groups

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Abstract

This article explores a pilot project in innovation peer-assessment strategies to create and support lifelong learners. It proposes that the confirmation panel—a formal progression requirement of a postgraduate degree—can effectively facilitate feedback, function as an assessment tool, and meaningfully induct both secondary and undergraduate tertiary students into a community of practice. The confirmation panel provides immediacy and richness of feedback, promotion of accountability, empathy, confidence, content knowledge, and—importantly—the transfer of tacit knowledge specific to a community of practice. Other important results include: building and (re) structuring metacognitive frameworks, facilitation of self-reflection, and the forming of a creative , collegial environment where standards are clarified and learning is scaffolded.

The context

Tertiary education specialist David Boud (1987), wrote: 'it is my hope that the generation of my grandchildren will emerge from schooling as highly skilful autonomous learners…tertiary educators of that era will be primarily educational brokers with responsibility mainly for linking autonomous learners with appropriate learning resources' (p. 5). More than three decades later, secondary education has joined the tertiary sector in acting "as the 'producers' of human capital driving the new knowledge economy", meeting "the needs of national economic agendas and shifting higher education policy" (Sampson & Comer 2010, p. 277; Stringfield et al., 2012). Developments in teaching include movement away from the transmission of knowledge in the "empty vessel" model (Yucel et al., 2014) towards a "cognitive apprenticeship" (Sweet & Michaelsen 2012, p. 10) that emphasises autonomy and critical thinking skills. Such shifts reflect the need for students to become "lifelong learners" (Boud & Falchikov 2007, 402). Students should develop the capacity for critical reflection (Dochy et al., 1999); the ability to self-assess and self-regulate, and to manage relationships in a learning environment (Yang & Carless, 2013); to experience empathy for others (Topping, 2009); communicate clearly (Liu & Carless, 2006); develop tacit knowledge (Bloxham & West, 2007); to learn from their peers, judge others' work, and to be involved in the creation of knowledge (Yucel et al., 2014). These attributes can be gained through education tasks that resemble professional practice, including formative assessment within the context of 'communities of practice.'

> *my grandchildren will emerge from schooling as highly skilful autonomous learners... tertiary educators of that era will be primarily educational brokers*

Assessment practices in tertiary and secondary classrooms

It is difficult to overstate the impact of assessment practice on student learning. Research growth in this field is a result of widely published global findings that many students are dissatisfied with the written feedback they receive (Dowden et al., 2013). Multiple studies highlight the challenges and rewards of implementing peer assessment and feedback into classroom practice (for example Liu & Carless 2006; Topping et al., 2000).

The difficulties of implementing innovative assessment tasks have been well documented, including time and workload pressures, reliability, lack of expertise and disruptions to power relationships (Liu & Carless, 2006). Others are the

problem of 'social loafing' and non-investment in the process, bias amongst friendship groups, and lack of confidence in peer feedback (Falchikov & Goldfinch 2000, p. 316; Yucel et al., 2014, p. 972). However, the issues inhibiting the full potential of student learning through peer-assessment often have the same root cause which, when addressed, may substantially alter the dynamics and hence the outcomes of problematic peer assessment practices.

The model of the teacher as 'educational broker' or 'middleman' between investors (students) and holders of intellectual capital (the academy) helpfully acknowledges the role of educator as facilitator rather than the proverbial 'sage on the stage', but can obscure the role that the community plays in producing autonomous learners. Teachers and students can be conceived as co-participants in a community of practice, and mobilise effective assessment tasks that reflect this philosophy, thus altering the dynamics that inhibit productive communities of practice.

> *the teacher is to facilitate assessment experiences that 'go beyond measuring the reproduction of knowledge' … and train students to be autonomous, creative and original in their … study.*

While many studies reported positive metacognitive outcomes by students, they also noted that peer assessment was often labour intensive, power-laden, anxiety-inducing and, at times, 'competitive' (Liu & Carless 2006, p. 282). It is often conducted too late to be useful, and not taken seriously by participants or teachers, who devalued student feedback by not according it a grade or comment. The aim of this research project was to design an assessment experience that addressed as many of these issues as possible.

The key concern in our assessment design, however, was to foster an environment that communicated to the students tacitly—that is, visually, intellectually and affectively—that they are already part of a community of practice, with intellectual capital to offer their peers. Our ideals for this assessment were to facilitate immediacy, accountability, reflexivity, empathy, confidence, metacognitive processes, content knowledge, and—importantly—the transfer of tacit knowledge specific to our community of practice.

Communities of practice

The term 'community of practice' has its origin and primary use in learning theory, a concept inspired by anthropologists and sociologists such as Anthony Giddens (1986), and Michel Foucault (1980). Three defining elements of a community of practice have been identified as: a commitment to the domain of interest; an interacting, engaged and mutually helpful community; and the common practice members are engaged in (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Importantly, key characteristics also include "autonomy, practitioner-orientation, informality [and] crossing boundaries…[which are] characteristics that make them a challenge for traditional hierarchical organisations" (p. 4). As conceived in this paper it can be described as a community in which "[n]ovices are inducted into the culture, language and practices…by (legitimate peripheral) participation in its processes, experiences and relationships" (Bloxham & West 2007, p. 78). This notion of inducting is central to this project: to induct is to welcome a novice into a community as a participatory member, by sharing the tacit knowledge scholars bring to, and develop in, their respective fields. Tacit knowledge has been defined by O'Donovan et al. (2004) as "that which is learnt experientially or in terms of its incommunicability—knowledge that cannot be easily articulated and is elusive" (p. 328). Both tacit and explicit processes must be undertaken for the transfer of meaningful knowledge about and for successful assessment to occur. It is crucial, then, that students are given opportunity and access to develop the tacit knowledge and skills related to their field. "Making … purposeful peer assessment" can give rise to "a body of unseen, unarticulated and often unheralded know-how of the intricate relationships between the appraisal elements and how they are applied" (Sadler, 2010, p. 546). Accordingly, a key consideration for time-effective assessment design "is to provide students with substantial evaluative experience not as an extra but as a strategic part of the teaching design" (p. 542). The project also underlines the importance of explicitly identifying and articulating metacognitive processes while students are accumulating tacit knowledge, helping them shift awareness to the cycle of moving from assisted to unassisted learning and back again (Orsmond et al., 2013, p. 248). For many students this cycle of assisted learning to autonomy depends on metacognitive reflection and assessment events which facilitate the transference of tacit knowledge.

Pilot project rationale and design

An important role of the teacher is to facilitate assessment experiences that "go beyond measuring the reproduction of knowledge" (Dochy, Segers, and Sluijsmans 1999, p. 332) and train students to be autonomous, creative and original in their fields of study. Facilitating 'discoveries' depends on 'organizational structures' that help create "social and intellectual space in which theoretical 'thinking work'…can be done" (Sampson & Comer, 2010, p. 287). These organisational structures and intellectual spaces may be conceptualised as existing within "communities of practice" (Boud & Falchikov 2007, p. 405) which can be fostered in the classroom.

The pilot project undertaken in this study aimed to

destabilise the traditional power structures inherent in teacher-student relationships in the classroom by reimagining this group as a community of practice, via an assessment structure already in place in postgraduate programs: the confirmation panel. It is not just an assessment tool, but also—importantly—an induction into a community of practice. The confirmation panel feeds forward into the candidate's research process, igniting ideas about possible research directions and refining the scope of potential projects. The feedback provided by the panel can be characterised as immediate, nuanced, dialogic, multi-faceted, formative, critical, and above all, constructive. We contend that these elements make the confirmation panel a valuable mechanism for innovative assessment at the secondary and undergraduate level. By positioning students as 'experts' in the field, and facilitating feedback to their peers in an open forum—in a capacity equal to their teachers—students are encouraged to reflect on their own capacity to evaluate the scope and sequence of a task and the content of fellow peers' work, developing confidence-building practices such as problem solving, constructing an argument, mapping knowledge and identifying gaps (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner 2015, p. 3).

One of the most promising aspects of this practice is its potential to convey to a novice the tacit knowledge belonging atypically to teachers, namely how to assess another's work, developing skills in knowing "what quality performance involves and entails" (Carless, 2015, p. 965), and participating "in all stages of assessment and marking" (Bloxham & West, 2007, p. 80).

Participants

The results of 63 studies on peer reviewing suggests it is most effectively implemented with senior students, with the most common issue with less experienced students being a tendency to over or undermark compared to the lecturers. However, this in itself can form the basis of valuable learning experiences for students by having follow-up processes to discuss the outcomes of the peer evaluations. Peer assessment is particularly valuable as formative assessment, and the level of expertise and confidence grows as students practice the skill multiple times (Dochy, Segers, & Sluijsmans, 1999). While the study for this paper was undertaken with methods specific to an interdisciplinary English-History 300-level tertiary unit, the principles can be adapted to other learning contexts at secondary level as well. The unit was a one semester class, with a small cohort of 23 students, comprising two tutorial groups over the two years of the study.

Design of the task

The confirmation panel task was embedded within the research essay of the unit, worth 10% of a total of 40% for the research essay, and allocated, not to the students making their submission to the confirmation panel, but rather to each student panel member who was, along with the tutors, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the presentation as a basis for a research essay. This was in response to a number of studies that show "students are driven by the extrinsic motivation of 'the mark'" (Davies, 2006, p. 70), and that students should be rewarded for the quality and effectiveness of their feedback.

The task required students to review peer presentations of a research proposal to a panel composed of two tutors and one peer, scheduled in regular class sessions. Each presentation took approximately 10 minutes, followed by a 3-5 minute discussion of the presenter's outline, content and literature review led by the panel members but also including other students in the class. No additional time was taken either before or after the class to review drafts. Feedback sheets with relevant criteria were distributed to all students in preparation for their role as panelist.

Proposal presenters shared their self-generated essay question, a thesis statement, a short literature review, and an outline of the proposed essay structure, delivered to their peers and panel members in an oral presentation accompanied by a literature review handout. The whole group was then invited to give feedback on the presentation, identifying perceived strengths and weaknesses, followed by questions and comments by the panel members. All questions needed to be addressed immediately by the presenter, if only to acknowledge that the issue needed to be considered. Discussion could then take a number of courses: students could suggest potential resolutions or ways forward, or the thread may be laid to rest. In addition, each presenter received individual written reports from the three panel members which made detailed comments leading to one of three recommendations: that the student proceed without changes; proceed with minor revisions; or proceed only with major revisions. The student panelist's oral and written responses formed the basis of the assessment of the quality of their feedback.

> *promising aspects of this practice … convey … knowledge belonging atypically to teachers, namely how to assess another's work, … knowing 'what quality performance involves and entails'*

Results

Student feedback on the efficacy of the panel was captured through semi-structured interviews after the assessment took place. The results that follow have been gathered into three domains that have been identified by Yang and Carless (2013) as forming a dialogic feedback process: the content of feedback;

social and interpersonal negotiation; and organisation and management (p. 287). Students were not coached on the aims of the assessment design. The questions were designed to invite metacognitive reflection on the value of confirmation panels as an assessment task. They are as follows:

- Did you find the confirmation panel process valuable? Please explain your response.
- What did you learn about the process as applied to different disciplines? (History and English)
- What were some of the strengths and weaknesses about being the presenter in this forum? What were some of the learning outcomes?
- What were some of the strengths and weaknesses about being the examiner? What were some of the learning outcomes of undertaking this role?
- What were some of the strengths and weaknesses of being the audience? What were some of the learning outcomes?
- What effect (if any) does the fact that many of you know each other have on how you deal with the personal/emotional effects of the process?
- What improvements might be made in the process?
- On a scale from 1-10 (1 being ineffective – 10 being highly effective), how would you rate the overall confirmation panel experience for positive learning outcomes?
- Is there anything else you would like to add about this experience?

When asked to rate the exercise out of 10, the average rating for the first group was 9.25, with no score below 8 and two scores of 10. On the other hand, the second group gave it an average rating of 6.9, with a high score of 9 and a low of 5. The qualitative data is discussed below.

The cognitive dimension of feedback

Student responses to the cognitive dimension of the feedback identified a range of specific beneficial items, including revising the proposed essay question for clarity and purpose; adjusting the scope of questions to create a manageable response within the word limit; and pointing out the need to review and revise structure. Students identified that their peers from different disciplines fed into each other in both broad and specific ways, despite not having 'expertise' in the other discipline. As one student noted, the opportunity to comment on structure "was a really helpful thing; you could see if things went off on different tangents even if you weren't an expert."

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Another benefit in this domain was the range of ideas to which students were exposed during the panels. While peer-assessment typically occurs between two or three students, the students in this trial were exposed to all of their peers' work. This gave the panel process a creative dimension that had not been anticipated. Students described getting ideas for their own paper from other students 'all the time', sourced from the criticisms of others' presentations, even when they were not a formal panelist. Comments on 'the scope of ideas' indicate that students recognised that they were observing how a community of practice works while actively participating in it. This was a socialisation process that developed a shared understanding between students and staff, shaping perceptions in order for learning to develop (Orsmond et al. 2013, p. 242).

But perhaps the strongest responses in this domain were reserved for the metacognitive advances made. The greatest perceived benefit of the panels included increased understanding of scholarly processes, research skills and a greater understanding of discipline-specific discourse. Comments typical of the student experience highlighted how listening to others "created an awareness of most productive ways of essay writing", creating an enjoyable "verbal draft", and while some found the process "kind of a bit of a struggle", it "has become heaps clearer".

This feedback suggests that confirmation panels are sites where learning communities can initiate novices into professional practice. They facilitate legitimate participation in processes, experiences and relationships (Bloxham and West, 2007) specific to a discipline, allowing students to "familiarise themselves with the specific canons of practice… moving towards the building of discipline specific knowledge" (Sampson & Comer, 2010, p. 278). If the aim of peer-assessment is "to induct students into sufficient explicit and tacit knowledge of the kind that would enable them to recognise or judge quality when they see it and also explain their judgements" (Sadler, 2010, p. 542), these confirmation panels were demonstrably successful.

The social and interpersonal negotiation of feedback

Yang and Carless (2013, p. 289) write of the social-affective dimension of feedback, identifying it as "a social practice in which the management of relationships represents a source of emotions influencing learners' ways of studying", recognizing the students' social role and emotional engagement in the learning environment. The literature on peer feedback and assessment highlights the risks inherent when mobilising power dynamics in relationships between peers, and that competition

needs to be balanced with collaboration. To this end, creating a "non-threatening, collaborative atmosphere enables students to learn better because it prompts them to think more critically" (Liu & Carless, 2006, p. 288). The nature of the class in this study has been described by the students themselves as "intimate" and "safe" because many of the students were already known to each other and had previously worked in groups within their own discipline. Obviously, different group dynamics call for different management strategies and types of preparation for interpersonal negotiation of feedback. Student responses in this area fell under three main themes: accountability, affective experience, and confidence.

Accountability

When negotiating peer-to-peer feedback, accountability was both an opportunity and a potentially sensitive space. Key concerns fell into two main groups: the responsibility of the presenter to the audience to convey their project with clarity and detail ("unclear presentations make it difficult to think of ways to improve it/presenter needs to step up"), and the responsibility of the audience to give the presenter constructive critical feedback. There appeared to be a consensus that everyone took their role as a critic seriously and 'played out' the panel process appropriately. Responses also indicated that the 'integrated multi-stage assignment' provided a helpful scaffold to improve student accountability. Students identified that the proposal process improved personal planning by forcing them to begin work on the project much earlier than usual, concluding that "it's good to think about it earlyish".

The accountability issue is important not only in producing quality work, but also because it signals that students perceive themselves to be part of a community of practice, and alert to the responsibilities and rewards that come with such a membership.

Affective experience

The dynamics between peers in the sessions clearly needs to be negotiated well; students who are familiar with each other will manage the feedback process differently than those who are less comfortable with each other. In this case, students widely reported the familiarity as being a benefit rather than a drawback. Some considered that "intimacy encourages balance between being nice and being useful", making it "a safe place for people to bat [ideas] down because it's all constructive," a "safer setting" where they were "not prejudged" as opposed to a class of strangers which would be "quite intimidating". Others felt "It goes both ways," as unfamiliarity could encourage you to "tear their essays to shreds," whereas "if you know them, you know their strengths; you can be more sensitive about how you word things." One student concluded that the process was "confronting but very productive," while another found it "comforting" that all students went "through the same process."

The recurrence of the term 'safe' is encouraging as it indicates that teacher-student and student-student power relationships were well managed. When asked directly about whether it was hard to critique their peers, no student identified this as a problem. Their concern was more, "you do want to give them something constructive back." Students perceived themselves to be working in a 'collaborative' rather than competitive or polarizing environment. Managing this affective experience was intentional on the part of the tutors to reduce the imbalanced power relationships "which can impede students from becoming active agents in the feedback process" (Yang & Carless, 2013, p. 289). Students reported feeling as though they had been "taught by the presenter" but this was balanced by the opportunity to feed back into the presenter's research process.

There were some negative aspects reported in this domain, however. Some students reported feeling overwhelmed or potentially disadvantaged in presenting, including "smart people [who] are hampered by articulation and self-confidence", and feeling "in over my head because I didn't know what I was supposed to be commenting on" with an English topic. Another "felt confused about listening/writing/speaking; felt like I wasn't as useful as I could have been," and "more stressed and confused than I was before." As a one-off learning experience, there was little opportunity for appropriate follow-up and no chance to further practice the skills to address these issues.

> *"When asked directly about whether it was hard to critique their peers, no student identified this as a problem. Their concern was more, 'you do want to give them something constructive back.'"*

The structural dimension

Through participation in organising and managing feedback, a role usually reserved for teachers (Yang & Carless, 2013, p. 290), students recognised the efficacy of formative feedback, particularly in relation to the scope of their essay and revisions to their question. Reflecting on the timing of the task after the panels had been completed, one wrote, "I felt really scared about what would have happened if I hadn't been through this process," another adding, "We might have written a good essay answering the wrong question." Another student perceptively noted, "We couldn't have really been marked on the validity of the question if we hadn't been through this process."

While students always negotiate with lecturers when asked to generate their own research

"unusually great to have the feedback of the entire class and the two lecturers. ... Participating in the panel also 'helped with self-criticism'; the listeners could 'reflect on their own essay.'"

question, receiving peer feedback before receiving teacher feedback reinforces that students do have the ability to make complex judgements about their peers' work, predicting problematic areas and deriving concrete critiques from abstract ideas. In this way students are "constructed as much more active players in the assessment process than is implied by summative or formative assessment" (Boud & Falchikov, 2006, p. 402).

Students also commented on the amount and usefulness of the feedback, saying it was "unusually great to have the feedback of the entire class and the two lecturers." Participating in the panel also "helped with self-criticism"; the listeners could "reflect on their own essay." Writing comments about other presentations led one into "comparing the feedback I was writing down to also thinking retrospectively about my presentation, and the kind of ideas that I stumble into when I'm doing my presentation." The favourite part for one student was actually "working outside my discipline; it's good to mark stuff outside your discipline." This is consistent with other research projects which found that peer assessment promotes self-reflexivity, and that being an assessor often produces the most useful learning outcomes (see Snowball & Mostert, 2013; Topping, 2010).

In this domain, students also identified areas that could be improved in future implementations of the confirmation panel. One observed that having the proposal the day before would have avoided the difficulty of reading and listening at the same time, while another wanted more detail on the feedback sheet about the criteria, "for example what is the difference between a major change and a minor change?" A number of students commented on the need for more time for the panel members to reflect before giving feedback, finding it "really hard to focus on two things at once, by looking at all the things I was supposed to do, but also listen to what they were saying." "You need more thinking time between," another offered, unable to write everything they wanted to in time. What is encouraging is that it reveals that the students were stimulated to think not just about evaluating the assessment task, but also evaluating the assessment procedures, a tacit knowledge again usually reserved for teachers.

The difference in responses between the first and second groups also highlights a need for careful briefing of the students for the process. When conducting the task with the first group, the tutors were implementing the process for the first time themselves and planned carefully, giving the students a much clearer understanding of what was involved. Being familiar with it the second time around, the tutors failed to offer the same level of preparation for the students, and it was reflected in a greater sense of uncertainty from them about their roles. It led to a question from a student about why the tutors used the confirmation panel approach rather than a personal interview with each student. The tutors were reminded of the need to contextualise the educational experience so that students understood its purpose and place in the learning outcomes of the unit and graduate outcomes of the course.

Conclusions

The researchers concluded that confirmation panels for students are highly effective in facilitating immediacy, accountability, reflexivity and increasing metacognitive skills. Importantly, the transfer of tacit knowledge specific to our community of practice was another highly effective outcome of this assessment event. Students were given access to not just a specialised induction process, but also to the range of vocabulary, revisionary and dialogic processes in which scholars participate on a regular basis. Such a 'meeting of the minds' positions peers as valuable intellectual resources, advisors and supporters, while 'sidelining' the teachers who have relatively minimal input in the confirmation process. As one student wrote, "[I]t was really interesting to see what everyone else was doing…we've all sat through the same lectures but gone in such different directions." The value of identifying oneself as a valuable and valued member of a community of practice demonstrably impacts accountability and motivation in a positive way. While students may not always have the capacity for autonomous research, the assessment feedback cycle can acknowledge and affirm the skills and knowledge students do have, building their sense of autonomy from teachers, and value to their peers.

The implications of this study for future research include adapting the principles of the study across a variety of teaching contexts where a major research project is undertaken, and also the need to repeat the exercise to allow for skill development. This will help identify which elements of the confirmation panel process might best be generalised across classes of varying disciplines and ages. The confirmation panel in the classroom, as piloted in this study, suggests that students have a greater chance of developing as autonomous learners in community. If one vision of educators as 'educational brokers' primarily values autonomy, this project has highlighted the importance of community in knowledge construction and intellectual endeavours. TEACH

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"The reseachers concluded that confirmation panels for students are highly effective in facilitating immediacy, acountabilty, reflexivity and increasing meta-cognitive skills"

TEACH[R]

Critical reflection – Impact and implementation considerations in early childhood education and care

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Keywords: Critical reflection, faith and learning, Early Childhood Education and Care, National Quality Standard.

Abstract

The National Quality Standard (NQS) is the benchmark for quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) within Australia. The Australian Government positioned reflective practice at the core of the NQS (ACECQA, 2013) in order to raise standards and inform future planning and decision making (COAG, 2009; Kennedy, 2011). Critical reflection was identified as foundational to good practice with educators expected to engage in a "lively culture of professional inquiry" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 13) with reflection ensuring a way of continued improvement to raise standards.

This paper reports on a research study that explored the impact and implementation of critical reflection as part of the National Quality Standard (NQS) in ECEC. This research identified that critical reflection positively impacts ECEC operations and also positively impacts the learning environment of ECEC centres.

"a way of researching personal practice or experience to develop our understandings of ourselves as knowers or makers of knowledge."

Introduction

The Australian Commonwealth Government introduced the NQS within Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in order to raise standards (ACECQA, 2012) and inform future planning and decision making (COAG, 2009; Kennedy, 2011). Given the focus to engage in a "lively culture of professional inquiry" (Kennedy, 2011, p. 13), in such a way that educators "learn together, use collective knowledge, consider and implement changes" (Kennedy, 2011, p. 7) and "engage in questions of philosophy, ethics and practice" (Kennedy, 2011, p. 13) there was obviously a need to understand how to go about the process of professional inquiry. This paper reports on a study of how one ECEC service used critical reflection to engage in a process of professional enquiry.

What is critical reflection?

ACECQA (2018) explains that through deconstructing experiences and critically examining each aspect of the practice, educators can gather a wealth of information to guide their decisions about what should be repeated, extended, or changed. In other words, critical reflection helps us learn by putting ourselves into an experience that forces us to draw on personal and theoretical knowledge to understand such experiences through different perspectives.

A synthesis of the literature suggests that in education, critically reflective practice is best described as a continuous process that involves educators assessing their practice and the impact of their values on children's learning and development. Critical reflection is thereby a process of identifying, analysing and questioning assumptions underlying the way an educator sees his/her practice, both individually and collectively, in order to develop understanding and knowledge to enhance practice (Williams, 2019). Fook (2002) defines critical reflection as "a way of researching personal practice or experience to develop our understandings of ourselves as knowers or makers of knowledge" (p. 444). Fook explains that understanding how ideas, beliefs and assumptions are partially determined by social contexts, enables educators to make specific

connections between themselves as individuals and the broader social, cultural, and structural environment. By using these processes and engaging in research, practice can be enhanced.

Critical reflection engages educators in thinking critically on the impact of their own background, assumptions, positioning, feelings, and behaviour whilst attending to the impact of the wider organisational, philosophical, and political context. Critical reflection provides a strategic alignment between ideology, knowledge, and practice so that when things are done, they are not done in a haphazard way. Critical reflection underpins practice because if ECEC educators understand what they are doing, and why, they can improve what they do.

The Present Study

This study sought to inquire into the impact and implementation of critical reflection as part of the assessment and ratings process within the National Quality Standard (NQS) in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). The research study was set in one faith based licensed ECEC long day centre. The leader and four educators employed at the ECEC centre, were the participants and focus of the study. All participants were permanent employees with a minimum of a Diploma qualification and at least five years of experience. A qualitative research orientation was adopted because this type of inquiry "gives voice to the participants" (Cohen, et al., 2018, p. 288) and has the potential to provide rich descriptions of a phenomenon. As a case study, document analysis, observation, narrative, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data during an 18-month period in which ECEC staff were engaged in a critical reflective process.

Fook and Gardner's Approach to Critical Reflection

The ECEC centre in the study used a critical reflection approach developed by Fook and Gardner (2007) that focussed on improvements in professional practice (Fook, 2017). Through this critical reflective approach, personal and professional experience is deconstructed and analysed to understand different assumptions, relationships, and influences and how they affect practice. The 'incident' is then reconstructed to develop new understandings.

Fook and Gardner's (2007) approach "involves the unsettling and examination of hidden assumptions to rework ideas and professional actions" and has two stages. During the first stage, led by a facilitator, participants in a group are asked non-judgmental open style questions to gain information about a 'critical' incident being explored and draw upon hidden assumptions and theories. Through this process, Fook and Gardner (2007) argue, the participant can make sense of feelings involved by uncovering assumptions and personal biases. In the second stage, the individual, with the support of the group, is helped to come to an awareness of deeper, hidden assumptions and review their learning from the first stage. This is achieved through the facilitator reflecting upon their assumptions and reasons for their thinking on their own learning from the first stage. By doing this, Fook argues, the participant who has presented and explored their 'critical' incident is now able to identify how their personal theory and practice might need to be adapted (Fook & Gardner, 2007). The new awareness created can be used to devise new approaches to practice.

The Findings

The Impact of Critical Reflection on ECEC Operations

The findings of the study demonstrate that critical reflection in ECEC as part of the NQS contributes to quality outcomes for ECEC. These positive findings demonstrate that ECEC is enhanced when critical reflection is done well. In particular, the study found the following benefits were associated with the use of critical reflection in ECEC.

1. Critical reflection builds authenticity
   As educators engage in critical reflection, they act in authentic ways involving reflection, interaction with colleagues, and sharing multiple perspectives. Through this process, they are perceived as being authentic by their colleagues. Critical reflection builds a community within the ECEC centre as participants collaborate together and are open and honest in expressing opinions with each other. The educators in the study reported that they benefited from being in a team that worked closely together. This created a better workplace environment, and enhanced well-being outcomes that in turn delivered better outcomes for children. These results are consistent with the literature (Ratelle et al., 2017) that suggests deep levels of reflection on professional behaviour result in behaviour change. Authenticity of context and understanding emerges through listening, observing and thinking about how theory is translated into practice (Watstein & Mitchell, 2014) and how practice informs theory. Critical reflection practices help educators to experience the genuine interest of colleagues and enables them to develop

> *"Critical reflection builds community … as participants collaborate together and are open and honest in expressing opinions with each other."*

new understandings and a shared ethos.

2. Critical reflection facilitates collaboration
Educators who critically reflect, will work and learn together. They come together as learners, learn from one another, and form trusting and open professional and personal relationships as they collaborate to improve practice. Educators reported that engaging in critical reflection, increased the amount of collaboration between colleagues, which in turn built a sense of working together, and being on the same team, with all educators helping each other. This ultimately impacts the climate of the ECEC centre and is the type of ECEC environment that contributes to a high level of teacher wellbeing and better outcomes for the children in their care.

> *Through questioning and testing theories in their practice, educators become empowered and encouraged to become researchers, to try new ideas and test theories.*

3. Critical reflection promotes real outcomes
In the present study, educators who engaged in critically reflection were more likely to achieve real outcomes, make a difference, and have an impact. Educators want to see action and real outcomes achieved through the process of critical reflection. When critically reflecting on questions such as; 'What are we doing', 'Why are we doing it?' and 'How can we do it better?' educators are prepared to put time and effort into the process because they know what they say and think will likely impact and significantly improve the outcome.
The educators felt that things happen as a result of the critical reflection process. This empowers them to feel that they have a substantive say in how the ECEC centre is operated. This is consistent with the assertion of Fook, et al. (2006) that the critical reflection process enables educators to look beyond their immediate circumstances to the external factors that influence the choices made and the actions taken. This includes the social context and the broader context of the organisational culture and structure (Thompson & Pascal, 2012).

4. Critical reflection increases new understanding
Through the process of critical reflection new understandings emerge as educators objectively consider an issue, evaluate it, and then collegially share this with other team members. As active learners, educators rigorously question ideas and assumptions rather than accepting them at face value, and then identify, analyse and problem solve alternatives to arrive at the best possible solution. In other words, being critically reflective requires constantly gaining evidence about how effective or worthwhile actions are. Educators reported that in this way they can changed what they were doing, according to the evidence found. As identified by Fook and Askeland, (2006) this is "an ability to recognize our own influence – and the influence of our contexts, the type of knowledge we create, and the way we create it" (p. 45). This builds an integrated knowledge base through an active approach to learning, linking new to existing knowledge. Consistent with the literature, taken together, these capabilities are intrinsic to the development of an educator who is self-aware and self-regulated. Through questioning and testing theories in their practice, educators become empowered and encouraged to become researchers, to try new ideas and test theories (Vale, 2015).

5. Critical reflection facilitates the delegation of responsibility
Delegation is empowering others to make decisions. The findings of this study support the idea that delegation of responsibility is an outcome of critical reflective practices in ECEC. Through critically reflecting as educators, delegation becomes a helpful outcome and tool, because the discussion and reflection process enables the consequent allocation and distribution of team responsibilities and accountability. This encourages the growth and development of team members and their roles; supports succession planning and personal development. The recommendation for ECEC is that all centres should engage their educators in critical reflection because effective delegation improves overall efficiency, effectiveness and productivity. New avenues for creativity are opened and team enthusiasm promoted. Delegation of responsibility for tasks to others provides a leader an opportunity to focus on higher-level tasks. It provides others with the opportunity to learn and develop new skills, develops trust between educators, and improves communication. This enables educators to strengthen their critical thinking skills and increase their confidence, so enabling growth in potential and new leaders, as well as

supporting improvement in the quality of the ECEC provided (Reina et al., 2017).

6. Critical reflection promotes leadership development
The promotion of leadership is an important outcome of the implementation of critical reflection emerging from this study. Through critical reflection, leaders can analyse and adapt their approach to decision making and problem solving whenever the need arises to resolve a challenge. This happens at all levels of leadership and this impacts the performance of the organization. Critical reflection thereby makes desirable business results more likely. As team leaders repeatedly use the critical reflective process to workshop team goals, they develop their own leadership style and work practices to ensure work is completed within time schedules at the quality level required.

Critical reflection and the learning environment

From the previous paragraphs it is clear that engaging in critical reflection enhances ECEC operations. One of the most import results emerging from the study is how critical reflection impacts the ECEC learning environment. This study has found that when educators reflect on an experience with the aim to learn from that experience, new possibilities for learning unfold. As educators engage in critical reflection, grounded in reflective inquiry and reflective evaluation, they can, in turn, teach ways of thinking to others (Rodgers & La Boskey, 2016, p. 71). Reflective evaluation, therefore, has the potential to open up new possibilities for learning. In particular, in this study, educators reported the following:

1. Critical reflection helps educators identify areas of strength
A strengths-based approach requires educators to be engaged in reflective practice (Dept. of Education & Early Childhood Development, 2012). This approach views situations holistically and looks for opportunities to complement and support existing strengths and capacities. A strengths-based approach focusses on questioning strategies to identify what works and how it works within the learning environment so those strategies can be continued and developed. Identifying educator strengths through critical reflection is valuable as it allows the approach to tasks and challenges to proceed with better understanding of how to succeed, and it also facilitates effective communication amongst educators on what they can contribute, and this helps facilitate continuous improvement. Educators reported that they identify areas of strength through critical reflection, they identify gaps and can focus on building complementary partnerships within their team that contribute to success.

2. Critical reflection increases pedagogical awareness of knowledge and skills required for learning
This study had found that, through individual and group reflections, critical reflection increases pedagogical knowledge and skill as educators examine: learning theory, research evidence, educational practice, various educators' experiences, and community expectations and requirements. Critical reflection informs both curriculum (all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events planned and unplanned) (ACECQA, 2012) and teaching in an ECEC centre. Educators felt that the shared understanding developed through critical reflection on pedagogy provides a strong foundation for the ongoing development of a learning environment. This allows educators within an ECEC centre to consider the evidence base underpinning their pedagogy and creates awareness of how they implement pedagogy in ECEC. High expectations for every child, every day, affirmed through critical reflection, can support educators to plan individually designed learning experiences (Arthur, et al., 2008).

3. Critical reflection empowers educators to engage children in learning
Quality experiences for children do not happen by themselves. This study supports the idea that critical reflection supports educators to engage children in learning. This provides educators with insight to inform future decision making. Critical reflection empowers educators to examine their interactions with children, assess the quality of learning environments and experiences, and analyse their own practice. Educators reported that their professional practice was strengthened by using reflection to develop deeper understandings, explore perspectives, working to improve the program and delivering better outcomes for

> *[empowered] educators … become more engaged in learning as they embrace the idea that learning is an iterative process, setting goals, checking their progress and adjusting their actions*

> An educator who models critical reflection in her own practice is a catalyst for critical thinking in children … an important indicator … to judge an educator's effectiveness.

the ECEC centre. By empowering educators, they become more engaged in learning as they embrace the idea that learning is an iterative process, setting goals, checking their progress and adjusting their actions, contributing to each child's outcomes of learning. The implication of this is that all educators should be engaged in critical reflection to engage children in learning to enhance each child's learning outcomes.

4. Critical reflection can be used as a tool with students to optimize the learning environment By engaging in critical reflection, educators reported that they gained a greater depth of understanding regarding each child's needs and abilities. This enables them to implement teaching practices that enhance learning teaching and learning for that particular child. When relationships are built upon a foundation of reflective evaluation, educators and families can work together to create a learning environment that caters for, and celebrates, diversity. As educators engage in critical reflection, they are empowered to build a sense of inclusivity and belonging. This contributes to the co-construction of the learning environment that maximizes outcomes for all children.

   While critical reflection is a foundational element of the NQS (DEEWR, 2009). It is also a pedagogical tool that educators can model to students. As learning is social in nature "children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 34). In pedagogical terms, this growth is facilitated by the creation of democratic learning environments. Educators know that their actions can silence or activate children's voices. They listen attentively to what children say. They deliberately create reflective moments that become the focus of activity. All their actions are explicitly grounded in critical conversations with reference to children's experiences and what they know. An educator who models critical reflection in her own practice is a catalyst for critical thinking in children and for this reason, critical reflection should be an important indicator to look for in any attempt to judge an educator's effectiveness.

Conclusion

The results of the present study support the inclusion of critical thinking in ECEC and confirms the claims of the literature on the use of critical reflection in ECEC settings. When educators think deeply about professional knowledge and practice good things happen. Especially when they come together as a critically reflective community. The overall result of this reflective activity is a strong sense amongst team members that they are working on authentic real-world problems and that this activity makes a difference. Team members collaborate and create new levels of understanding. The leadership of the group is enhanced as the reflective activity facilitates the delegation of responsibility in ways that raise the quality of the ECEC centre. One of the exciting aspects of critical reflective activity is the way that the learning environment is impacted. Areas of strength are identified amongst staff and the increased awareness of pedagogical knowledge and skills helps to maximise the learning environment and engage children in learning.

It would seem that critical reflection involves each educator in a continuous process of assessing their practice that informs collective collegial development of a learning community. The results of this study support the idea that critical reflection has a substantial impact on ECEC for the benefit of both staff and students. TEACH

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Love in the time of corona launched: New creative writing anthology captures life under lockdown

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Keywords: anthology, creative writing, lockdown, love, pandemic

The introspection from living under lockdown to prevent the spread of a pandemic is captured in a new creative writing anthology by students at Avondale. Love in the Time of Corona: Notes from a Pandemic reflects thoughts on distance, isolation, connection and imagination. "It will become, for its writers, a creative time capsule, and for its readers, a creative anthropology," says Lynnette Lounsbury, Head of the School of Humanities and Creative Arts.

She encouraged the communication and English students in her Creative Writing: The Art of Poetry and Short Story class to experiment with forms, figures of language and sounds. She also had them read the work of poets as diverse as Maya Angelou, T S Eliot and Sylvia Plath and storytellers such as Ernest Hemingway, Shirley Jackson and Jack Kerouac.

Class member Kathryn Staples wrote a fictional short story about an older man diagnosed with cancer who, despite the availability of a cure, cannot afford it. Resigned that death will come, he seeks to keep his spouse happy by forbidding any end-of-life talk. "I had someone very close to me pass away from cancer," says Staples, whose writing helped her reflect on this experience—"something to just get off my chest." The arts and teaching student used story as the form because while "it's from the heart, it's something that's outside of you, not your story anymore but someone else's to enjoy. There's a distance between you and the story but still a connection."

Creating the anthology—a "labour of love"—involved dozens of workshops on Zoom and hundreds of posts on a private Facebook group. In an introductory note, Lounsbury, a co-editor with alumna, writer and teacher Charlotte O'Neill, writes that despite the confusion and the uncertainty, "we shared what we loved across our screens and we pushed ourselves to find words to describe what was happening, what we were thinking and dreaming about. . . . We created something from a time that felt formless. We were made expansive as we wrote."

we shared what we loved across our screens and we pushed ourselves to find words to describe what was happening, what we were thinking and dreaming

The book is dedicated to Associate Professor Carolyn Rickett, "a long-time champion of creative writing at Avondale." She has co-edited five previous anthologies in which students at Avondale had work published alongside that of high-profile poets, receiving an Australian Learning and Teaching Council citation in 2011 for her contribution to student learning. "This anthology is a reminder of creative practitioner Karen A Chase's reflection that while 'writing is a solitary endeavour, being an author is not,'" says Rickett. "*Love in the Time of Corona* is a testament to the way creating and publishing texts can continue to build and connect communities."

Rickett co-edited three of the anthologies with poet Judith Beveridge, who won a Prime Minister's Literary Award (2019).

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Editor's Note
Love in the Time of Corona: Notes from a Pandemic is available as a Kindle ($4.22) and as a paperback ($16.32) from Amazon.

Avondale scholarship boosted: Encyclopedia increases research profile

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Keywords: Avondale, encyclopedia, research profile, Seventh-day Adventist

Abstract

Articles written by Avondale academics for the new *Encyclopedia of Seventh-Day Adventists (ESDA)* will significantly increase the university college's institutional research profile this year. The publication record addition is largely thanks to regional editor and conjoint associate professor Dr Barry Oliver, who ensured the peer-reviewed articles qualified for reporting as part of Avondale University's Research Data Collection.

While the South Pacific is only one of 13 divisions of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church, Oliver and his writers contributed about 30 per cent of the encyclopedia's articles. Of these 629 articles, about 70 per cent are from Avondale academics and alumni. "Now just in case you think these articles are just a few sentences, a couple of paragraphs, no way," says Oliver in a video produced for an Adventist Heritage Here for Good Colloquium. "The article on Avondale College, for example, is 25,000 words."

Other articles by academics on staff cover issues such as the Adventist Church and military service in the South Pacific (Daniel Reynaud), Australian indigenous missionaries (Brad Watson) and the theological stream called Brinsmeadism (Kayle de Waal) or profile notable Adventists such as historian Dr Arthur Patrick (Lynden Rogers) and hospital administrator Dr Elwin Currow (Stephen Currow). Church institutions such as Betikama Adventist College (Lynnette Lounsbury) and Sydney Adventist Hospital (Paul Race) are covered, too.

The contribution of the 27 Avondale academics and alumni "highlights their commitment to sharing knowledge that enriches and expands an understanding of key people and institutions shaping the vital work and mission of the church," says Associate Dean (Research) Associate Professor Carolyn Rickett. As Chair of the Research Committee, she invited Oliver to its most recent meeting so members could offer thanks. Vice-President (Academic) Professor Stephen Currow acknowledged Oliver's "longstanding connection and commitment to Avondale" as a graduate (1973, 1985), lecturer (1990-1997) and council chair (2008-2015). "The opportunities you have given to contribute to the encyclopedia are just further evidence of this commitment."

> What is the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-Day Adventists*? ESDA is a global church project which aims at completing approximately 8,500 articles with accompanying photographs, media, and original documents. ESDA is a great tool, ... for those seeking to learn more about the church, ... ESDA Online, the church's first online reference work, launched on July 1st, 2020. This free online resource will continue indefinitely, to be constantly updated and expanded. (ESDA, para. 2)

How can the breadth of coverage of ESDA be maximised? How will the goal of maintaining currency be achieved? The future of the Encyclopedia is open to the involvement of all as contributors. "To contact the main office please write to *encyclopedia@gc.adventist.org*. This is a chance to write about our church in an honest, open, and thorough way" (ESDA, para. 8, 9).

> *ESDA is not only a research reference work, it provides an opportunity to contribute your awareness of historical events to inform others*

ESDA is not only a research reference work, it provides an opportunity to contribute your awareness of historical events so as to inform others and maintain organisational 'memory'. TEACH

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Education for what? An essential question amidst the COVID-19 crisis from an American perspective

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Keywords: Christian education, goals, formation, mission, priorities

Education for what?

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown many schools around the country into turbulent waters. In a short period of time, many K – 12 Christian schools had to transition into the alternate universe known as virtual learning. Many educators have probably dabbled in virtual learning elements as a supplement to their normal pedagogical practice. Ironically, the challenges and questions with which many schools were immediately concerned were perpetually at the doors of many schools, not just Christian schools.

> *the COVID-19 pandemic did not usher in new issues for educators to wrestle with; rather, the pandemic brought to the surface questions which educators must perpetually wrestle.*

As a new secondary principal charged with leading a faculty into uncharted, virtual waters, I found it interesting that many of the most pressing concerns were the same concerns we had been discussing throughout the year. The challenges of online learning vary from challenges of face-to-face learning in degree, not in kind. For example, while we were wrestling with the best ways to keep learning virtually, we had already been investigating together what "learning" means. As we tried to solve the problem regarding virtual assessments, we had already been investigating the pitfalls of traditional, standard assessments while turning our attention to a variety of authentic assessments, such as a portfolio assessment of a student's best work. We were concerned with how to engage our students at a distance as if we had already solved the problem with student engagement when we are face-to-face (I assure you, we have not). We are wading through other challenges as well, but the central point is this: the COVID-19 pandemic did not usher in new issues for educators to wrestle with; rather, the pandemic brought to the surface questions which educators must perpetually wrestle.

Of all the important questions demanding answers, there is one question that demands constant engagement. To what ends are we educating our students? This question is not only central for primary and secondary Christian schools, but for Christian colleges and universities (Dockery, 2019). The question of mission is the most important question schools must answer (and keep answering). While schools wrestle with issues such as equitable access to technology, delivery of resources, changing family structures, possible economic hardship, instructional delivery platforms, and means of assessment, just to name a few, it is possible the mission of the school is pushed to the back burner. It is perilous to ignore a school's *raison d'etre* at the precise time such clarity and focus is paramount.

What Works for What?

Yong Zhao (2020) recently wrote about the essential question's that educators must answer as they make decisions about online learning. In his article "Beyond Does it Work," Zhao asks the following guiding question "What works for what?" I was stopped in my tracks when I read that line. Zhao's (2020) question raises the central issue which schools should wrestle through the long night of education, much like Jacob wrestled with God (Gen 32). Schools must know "for what" they exist. Only then are schools ready to answer the question, "what works?"

Donavan Graham, in his book *Teaching Redemptively* (2009), wrote, "Education is not an end in itself; it is a means to develop a response to our calling in life." (p. 49) Education is a means of glorifying Christ (Col. 3:17) and the process by which disciples learn to think and live like Him. Taken holistically, a K-12 Christian education is about leading individuals out from their destructive, deluded, self-centeredness towards the life of wholeness, fellowship, and joy for which man was created. A Christian education seeks to remediate the fallen, sinful condition of man by pointing him to the source of joy and true, eternal life, Jesus. An education that seeks to bring salve to the whole person need not diminish the role of the intellectual life. However, the mission of Christian schools cannot simply be the accumulation of facts. There are

numerous examples in Scripture and life where an accumulation of facts leads to death. (ex. Mt. 23:15) Although worldly, temporary success can be gained by accumulating facts and academic degrees, it is perilous for Christians to forget that no knowledge is profitable if that knowledgeable person misses Christ. As Ecclesiastes teaches us, success without God in Christ is not success. Christian education, then, fulfills its mission when schools encourage students to pursue true success, or as the Old Testament puts it, shalom (peace) with God.

Mission statements for Christian schools likely vary widely from school to school. Answering the "for what" a school exists is a unique but essential task for every institution. In my opinion, one excellent mission statement for any Christian school is articulated by James K.A. Smith. He (2009) wrote, "education is not primarily a heady project concerned with information; rather, education is most fundamentally a matter of formation, a task of shaping and creating a certain kind of people" (p. 26). In the Christian tradition, education plays a seminal role in the holistic formation of disciples, not merely informing a mind. Education, therefore, is not merely about the accumulation of facts, but rather is about cultivating character and forming habits of the mind, body, and soul. The final *telos* (Gr: purpose, end, or goal) towards which Christian education strives is man's reconciliation with God through Christ. Christian education also seeks to inculcate a life of godliness, wisdom, and simplicity displayed perfectly by Jesus Christ. A clearly defined mission enables more clear answers to pressing questions, whatever they may be.

How might a school with Smith's (2009) mission statement answer pressing issues about online learning, assessment, and equitable access to resources? If a school exists to create a certain kind of person, then the tools they use and the structure for which the tools are used might look different than, say, a traditional "college-prep school" that pursues "rigorous academic preparation." Knowing "for what" you exist is as essential for today's schools as it was for the world's greatest teacher, Jesus.

Knowing "For What"

In Luke 4, Jesus had been ministering around the home of Simon's mother-in-law. One morning, Jesus went to a solitary place while the crowds searched for him. Upon finding him, they implored Jesus to remain with them and continue his work. However, Jesus denied their request. How intriguing! There was good work left to accomplish, but the Son of God chose not to do it. Within this community there were undoubtedly questions people wanted to ask of Jesus. There were probably personal maladies that could have benefitted from the Physician's hand. Yet, the Teacher ended his lesson and moved on. Why? Why not capitalize on the interest of the people and stay a little longer? The answer is simple. Jesus knew "for what" he came. When pressed to stay, Jesus said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." (Lk. 4:43, NIV)

Jesus' singular focus on his "for what" enabled him to make mission-oriented decisions despite the abundant opportunities to do good. Zhao's (2020) article, likewise, mentions many ways schools might employ online learning tools, yet while cautioning the use of good tools for the sake of ease or simplicity. Doing online learning well, or any type of learning for that matter, demands a clearly articulated and communicated mission. The faculty and families of a school need to know the "for what" the school exists. The "for what" of a school will provide the necessary parameters with which to address pressing matters, such as a transition to virtual learning.

> *Jesus' singular focus on his "for what" enabled him to make mission-oriented decisions despite the abundant opportunities to do good.*

While the whole world is focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainties it catalyses, schools continue to educate their students as well as possible. The mission of a school should be the GPS by which the Educational Enterprise sails the storm-tossed sea of uncertainty. With a clear understanding of where a school is going, and "for what" it exists, a school is more effective in deciding which tools, programs, or personnel will work towards that end. As a fellow educator and administrator, I encourage you to keep returning to your mission statement when you are uncertain about the issues you face. Even when the options before us are all good, it is crucial we, like Jesus, are able to say no to good work because we are absolutely convinced what is best for us, namely, that we know "for what" purpose we exist. TEACH

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A tribute to Sharney…her life as Miss Truscott at Prescott Primary Northern

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Keywords: Bereavement, early career teacher, family, learning community, legacy, tribute

My name is Tamara Bernoth - I am one of our Deputy Principals at Prescott Primary Northern, in South Australia. Although heartbroken, it is my absolute honour and privilege to share on behalf of our Prescott family, some memories, and insights of Sharney, Miss Truscott, as a teacher, colleague, and friend.

I first made contact with Sharney in September 2018, when she was considering a job offer to come and teach Year 2 at Prescott. I remember her excitement, her wonder, her genuine nerves of the unknown and her absolute keenness to begin her teaching career - a ministry role that she certainly embraced. We shared conversations about what her role may look like, the team she would be working alongside and just the general move - as this was such a huge step to uproot and move interstate away from her precious family – not an easy thing to consider. However, we were incredibly blessed that Sharney was courageous and made a leap of faith and followed God's leading to become a part of our team at PPN. We often spoke during her time with us and agreed that making this move meant she fell into a family at Prescott. A family that teach together, laugh with one another, and sometimes at one another, cry together, celebrate one another, share frustrations and stresses and journey together as colleagues, but more importantly, family.

> *"God placing Sharney at Prescott was no accident, it was certainly meant to be, not just for her journey, but to touch the lives of the staff as well."*

Teaching was not always easy for Sharney, and she faced some challenges along the way, like any new graduate teacher. Sharney wasn't afraid to come and talk to us about the good and the bad, with her teaching experience but also her personal journey, and she learnt to lean in to her Prescott family. We valued her grit, determination, and teachable spirit to work through these challenges, and grow from them and her willingness to draw on the wisdom and strength of the team placed around her. The growth we saw in Sharney, personally and professionally, in her two years with us was such an absolute privilege to witness. God placing Sharney at Prescott was no accident, it was certainly meant to be, not just for her journey, but to touch the lives of the staff as well.

There are so many beautiful qualities we saw in Sharney and a standout one for many was her heart for her students, particularly those that needed someone in their corner. She used her own life experiences to give her the tools and heart for those students. She was patient with her little ones. She was gentle and calm. She wove her dry and quirky sense of humour into her teaching. She was musical and used her ukulele in the classroom and sometimes in our Chapel band, praising God with her whole heart. She enjoyed dressing up - which tends to happen a fair bit at PPN. She was creative and would put many hours and effort into creating memorable lessons, particularly in science, for her students. Some younger students referred to her as "the chicken teacher" due to the fact that she hosted chickens in her class in Term 4 for her lifecycle science unit. I know quite a few Year 1 students would ask if they could be with the chicken teacher in Year 2! During both Term 4s, I would frequent her room often with a child or two who were struggling with something in their life, and we would spend time with Miss Truscott and hold chickens. Both Sharney and the chickens would have a calming presence for these anxious and upset children. Little did she know that "the chicken teacher" would become the mother hen to her students.

Sharney was a hugger. A willing hug giver and hug receiver! Many on staff miss her regular hugs!!

Sharney had a knack for really celebrating the growth in her students. She would often bring her students to our office to share and rejoice over their growth. I remember one particular occasion, she brought down one of her students, who she fondly referred to as 'my little friend' - he was a frequent flyer in our office for some "not so good" choices, but this time she was excited to bring him down to celebrate him going up quite a few reading levels. This student was absolutely beaming and so very proud. As I looked towards Sharney, this was also reflected on her face - the pride for her little friend was absolutely contagious! Celebrating the big and little moments of growth and joy is a beautiful

attribute of Sharney as a teacher that can inspire and encourage us to do the same.

During World Teacher's Week last year, I interviewed students, including some of Sharney's students, for a video to share with the staff. The common theme of these little ones were her fun lessons and her always being kind, even if they were in trouble or had done the wrong thing. What a legacy!

I spent some time this past week with one of Sharney's past students that was particularly upset about her passing. We shared memories together and I asked her what her favourite thing about Miss Truscott was and her immediate reply was "She was my favourite teacher. She was always kind to me, and she made me feel safe". As a school leader, what more would you want from your teachers. What a beautiful summary of a beautiful teacher!

Sharney's dry sense of humour and quirky one liners will be missed by our team. Our Year 2 teachers reflected upon times when they would chat about their experiences in uni or early career days, and Sharney would cheekily share with them that she had not been born then. She would often remind Angela and Kelly that they were old enough to be her mum! In fact, Sharney "adopted" quite a few mum-like figures in Adelaide - some special relationships that will always be held dear.

A particularly fun memory was when one afternoon, Sharney announced that she had decided to experiment and make her own kombucha and needed to leave at the end of her Year 2 meeting to collect some kombucha starter she had randomly found on Marketplace. She sent photos of this starter to Ange and Kelly, and they spent the entire weekend worried that she would poison herself or blow up her apartment! To this day, we are unsure of whether this experiment was successful, however, we are quite confident she didn't blow up her apartment!!

Sharney was a prayer warrior! Not just for her students, but for many of you here. She would often bring those dearest to her heart forward in prayer during staff worship. Sharney believed in the power of prayer and lived out her faith through the joys and sorrows. As a staff family, we valued her willingness to be raw and vulnerable when she shared about her journey with God during staff worship. There are many songs she shared that spoke to her heart that will always be "Sharney songs" for us.

Sharney missed her family so much, particularly last year with limited opportunities to travel back and forth due to travel restrictions, and she made the decision to "fly our coup" and move back home at the end of the year to be close to her much-loved family. We didn't want to lose her at Prescott as she had very much fit into our family, but in hindsight, we are very grateful that she was close to her family during her final few months.

Although her teaching career was very short, Sharney used her time to make a positive and lasting impact on her students, her team, and the school community. There are little ones that will be forever touched by her kindness, support, and love. Our hearts are breaking that she is gone. It was such an honour for our Prescott community, that we were blessed with her two years of her teaching career and to be a part of her amazing growth and journey as a person and a teacher. We will always remember Sharney for the incredibly gentle-hearted and kind teacher she was, and as a Prescott family, we will lean on one another as we walk through this loss and continue in the teaching ministry that Sharney was so passionate about.

> *I asked her what her favourite thing about Miss Truscott was and her immediate reply was "She was my favourite teacher. She was always kind to me, and she made me feel safe."*

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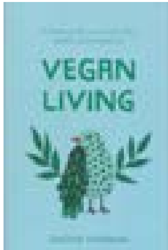
Editor's Note:
In publishing this tribute to Sharney Truscott we honour this young teacher whose life was taken, due to cancer, at the untimely age of 25 years. This tribute response from her school is considered exemplary, modelling within it the traits of a loving Christian learning community. TEACH thanks Sharney's family and Tamara for permission to publish this tribute.

TEACH also chooses to express condolences to all those grieving the loss of their 'teacher', expressing our shared hope and comfort awaiting the resurrection (1 Cor 15 52-56; 1 Thess 4:15-17)

BOOK REVIEW



> Do not let anyone tell you how vegan you should become … Today I am not a perfect vegan and don't know whether I ever will be. But I am trying ... that, I believe, is the best anyone can do.

Vegan Living

Ondine Sherman (2020).
Pantera Press, 277 pages

Graeme Perry

Editor of TEACH, Avondale University, Cooranbong, NSW

***Vegan Living* is a visually appealing recent publication (2020), with creative colour graphics, engaging thought bubbles, and cameo statements that stimulate and maintain interest. With extensive factual text, including recipes and guides it forms a simple but vibrant explanation, based on compassion and conviction, advocating a personally chosen, adapted and adopted vegan lifestyle.**

After sharing its main goals to:

- understand what is happening to animals, climate and the environment,
- start your vegan journey in the healthiest way possible,
- handle shade from your family, friends and the pesky person at the BBQ,

it expounds a vegan apologetic to the 'vegan-curious'. In six chapters it addresses: *currency*—The time is now; *credibility*—Why vegan?, Health and food; *acceptability*—Fashion, lifestyle and advocacy; *place*—Your community; and consequences—The future.

Enhanced attention and readability for the text is achieved by grouping the resources list, and full endnotes for each chapter at the back of the volume. It culminates with acknowledgments and a short author biography. An index is a missing element that would be useful. But, this is intended as a 'good read' rather than a reference work.

Ondine Sherman traces her personal journey from age 7 when she first became aware her food was 'dead animals', recalling that at aged 11 she placed an animal activism poster on her wall that asserted, "The chicken in your freezer has more room now than when it was alive."

Ondine, a co-founder of *Voiceless* (the animal protection institute) with father Brian Sherman, offers an explanation of a vegan lifestyle unashamedly based on animal rights (not animal welfare, p. 41). She claims 74% of Americans consider themselves animal lovers yet they set food animals uniquely apart from pets.

> Because animals are bred for our food, we can treat them worse which is a justification that enables us to kill billions of one kind while cuddling millions of the other. When you pick this belief system apart, the logic doesn't hold. It becomes clear it is cognitive dissonance, a mental block of our own making. (p. 36)

The work is heavily annotated quoting celebrities, scientists, the experienced vegans and some progressing lifestyle adopters. Martina Navratilova shares, "I did it for the animals. How can you have one animal as a pet and eat another one for lunch?" (p. 36). Michael Kirby (Australia's longest serving judge) asserts, "There is nothing so powerful in the world as an idea whose time has come and animal protection is just such an idea" (p. 1).

Ondine's approach is moderate, "Do not let anyone tell you how vegan you should become … there is a huge spectrum where this could take you. (p. 16). "Today I am not a perfect vegan and don't know whether I ever will be. But I am trying … that, I believe, is the best anyone can do" (p. 12).

This work is a useful resource for teachers within several Australian Curriculum areas including: Science, Humanities and Social Sciences; Technologies and Health and Physical Education, since it informs nutrition, sustainability, cultural values, discrimination and isolation, food production systems, health and wellbeing. More specifically it can support the *NESA Food Technology 7-10 aim*— "enabling them to evaluate the relationships between food, technology, nutritional status and the quality of life," informs a *cross cultural priority*—sustainability, and develops *general capabilities*—critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding, intercultural understanding, personal and social capability.

Though awareness for the wellbeing of a student who is struggling with social difficulties because of their unique attitudes and behaviours in food choices might be assisted by sharing this work, a more proactive approach, with broader social benefits, might be the incorporation of an understanding of minority groups through an inclusion of discussions of veganism as an example integrated across curriculum boundaries.

This work is recommended as it provides a updated view of a food movement with a long history and also since its plant base perspectives synchronise with significant contemporary investments being made in the "meatless" protein food industry (Vuppuluri, 2020; Waters, 2021). This trend should be represented as part of any curriculum addressing students "present" experience.

Review continued on page 61.

BOOK REVIEW Vegan Living - continued from page 62

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The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education. 2nd edition

Walter Brueggemann. (2015).
Augsburg Fortress Press, 216 pages. Kindle Edition.
ISBN: 978-1451499582

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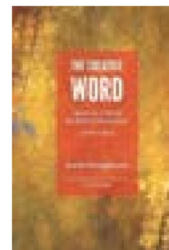
Brueggemann's text (Brueggemann, 2015) is substantial. A skim through on Kindle suggested it was heavily theological - not an easy to read practical guide to Christian teaching. My perseverance with the book, which I have since found very instructive, came from one of the paragraphs I had initially highlighted:

> **The juxtaposition of ethos, which assures, pathos, which wrenches, and logos, which instructs, is crucial. The practices of disclosure, disruption, and discernment all are important in faithful living. The life of faith consists in treasuring the consensus, breaking the consensus with new truth, and valuing new experience in tension with the tradition of experience. (Loc. 2556)[1]**

I could see this aligning with *What If Learning's* (n.d.) strategies of "Seeing Anew", "Choosing Engagement" and "Reshaping Practice" and my interest was piqued.

Brueggemann draws on the Hebrew Bible's canon, its tripartite division of the Old Testament - Torah-Prophets-Writings (Jer.18:18), as a framework for education/formation – for God's words to be spoken afresh and for faithfully handing down the living tradition. He draws on obedience as a common mode of knowledge across the three strands of God's ethos, pathos and logos; that trust and obedience to a holy "Thou" is the locus of education. This should inform faith based pedagogical processes - that they reveal trust and obedience to God whether teaching the treasured consensus – our Biblical foundations; the disruption in thinking that the Prophets encapsulate; or the importance of discernment that the Writings with their wisdom focus encourages. Brueggemann argues each part serves a distinctive theological and educational function.



The Torah treasures consensus providing the sure and undoubted disclosure of God's purpose for his people. This addresses the importance to education of having knowledge to work on and knowledge that is certain. Students cannot build on their learning without foundational knowledge first (Hattie, 2019). Seeing anew is present in terms of the structure of presentation, ensuring that God's word is spoken afresh - not fossilised (Loc. 138). This innovativeness requires flexibility as well as fidelity, a freedom of imagination which operates in context. Choice might be available as to how the story, and it "must characteristically be a story" (Loc. 6750), is contextually framed for it to be engaging. However, the content must be of the intervention of the one true, holy God. The context may require that practice be reshaped to use YouTube rather than a becloaked ancient Israelite leader teaching a multitude in person, but the content must not be altered. This steadfastness helps students define themselves against the other cultures of today, to guard against syncretism (Loc.1053).

> *If I value competition and completion over community and connection, then I need to think anew*

The prophets thinking of, "Yes, but what if …", is where debate comes in. The disruptive word of the prophets, shatters consensus (e.g. royal realities) and leads to a giving of new truth - to exploring a skepticism toward authority and tradition – to thinking anew. In the same way that the prophets speak God's alternative word, education in the prophetic means to nurture people in an openness to alternative imagination which never quite perceives the world in the way of the dominant reality. To recognise, for example, that just because I am a nice teacher with a Christian worldview and teach using the scriptures, does not mean that my pedagogy is faith enhancing. If I value competition and completion over community and connection, then I need to think anew, choosing to be engaging and reshaping practice, accordingly. This is the tension between the Torah and the prophets which Brueggemann considers must always be attended to in education - the tension between

[1]The reason that location numbers are used instead of page numbers is that the user can adjust the size of the text, but that might result in the book being fewer or more "pages," so location numbers are more accurate for locating a particular spot in the book. (Quora, n.d.)

Reflections, Impressions & Experiences

We need to teach that those who say we can 'fathom it all' should be approached with caution

establishing or asserting the consensus, then raising questions which challenge it.

In the writings, the practice of discernment that attends both to the connections and to the incongruities of God's created order, to wisdom, the readiness both to penetrate the mystery of the order of life, at times available and at times hidden, and to live obediently with its inscrutability. This recommends that we study the world, to try to figure out God's creation, but that we recognise the interconnectedness we see is the tip of the iceberg and acknowledge that this hiddenness means we will never fathom it all. We need to teach that those who say we can 'fathom it all' should be approached with caution, e.g. using the internet sagaciously. This speaks to reshaping practice, especially if there is a tendency in our teaching to be constrained by the Torah, by the kind of certitude that believes all of the important questions are settled. Brueggemann encourages that all three modes—ethos, pathos and logos - be equally considered to avoid disequilibrium (Loc. 2921).

Brueggemann concludes by establishing that it is the simple claim of trust and obedience that is the commonality that draws God's ethos, pathos and logos together. Moving from certitude (Torah) to disruption by 'new truths' (Prophets) to settling down with the mundane and the mystery (Writings) (Tan, 2020), all require obedience (Ezek. 36:27) and the compelling wisdom—or this is the fear of the Lord (Job 28:28). TEACH

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