# International Conference for Christian Educators
## 11-13 April, 2018

## *'Modelling Christ's love and hope within professional practice'*

### Hosted by Bethlehem Tertiary Institute (BTI) in association with IAPCHE
### ASB Arena, Mt Maunganui, New Zealand

## Proceedings: Conference peer reviewed papers

### *Edited by Alaster Gibson & Clement Chihota*

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**Editors:**

Alaster Gibson, Ph.D., Senior Teacher Educator
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**Bethlehem Tertiary Institute
Elder Lane
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NEW ZEALAND**

Cover photo: View from Mt Maunganui (Mauao), New Zealand.

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## BTI Welcome

Nau mai haere mai. On behalf of Bethlehem Tertiary Institute (BTI) welcome to all our conference guests from around New Zealand and overseas. I trust the theme of modelling Christ's love and hope in professional practice will be an enriching and transformative experience as you engage with and reflect upon the teaching from our key-note speakers and presenters. As well as catching up with known acquaintances, may I encourage you to look for new opportunities for collegial fellowship and inter-institutional networking. This year's conference is also an opportunity for BTI to celebrate 25 years of service and to thank God for his faithful provision. BTI offers a range of diplomas, Bachelor degrees in Education (Teaching), Counselling and Social Work, as well as Masters of Professional Practice degree. Our website has more details should you wish to know more.  http://www.bti.ac.nz/all-programmes.html.
The following scripture resonates with our conference and the times in which we have our being.

*But let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.* (1 Thessalonians 5:8)

*Dr. Andrew Butcher*
CEO BTI
New Zealand

## IAPCHE Welcome

On behalf of the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE), welcome to this 2018 International Conference for Christian Educators. We are pleased to cohost this important conference with Bethlehem Tertiary Institute, an invested IAPCHE member institution. Together we are working to advance Christian higher education in Asia and Oceania. IAPCHE is a global network of Christian institutions and individuals committed to serving Jesus Christ as Lord by fostering the development of distinctly Christian ideas, purposes and practices in education. IAPCHE members are Christian professors, administrators, chaplains and student life leaders who desire that redemption in Christ and a Biblical framework permeate teaching, research and community service.

When we learn from each other, as IAPCHE leaders, we deepen our knowledge and skill as Christian educators. In turn, this professional development allows us to shape Christian disciples for our times.  As Christians we teach our students, work as scholars, and contribute to our communities because, throughout the world, we ourselves have refined each other's capacities to contribute. IAPCHE is grateful for the leadership of Bethlehem Tertiary Institute in providing an opportunity for all of us to foster ways in which we can model Christ's love in practice both within our own institutions and for our regions. May we enjoy these days together as a time of mutual challenge and encouragement in responding to the true God who creates and sustains each one of us.

*Dr. Shirley J. Roels*
Executive Director

*Dr. J. Dinakarlal*
Asia-Oceania
Regional
Director

**Editorial:**

**Reflections on modelling Christ's love and hope within professional practice.**

*By Alaster Gibson & Clement Chihota*

Modelling our Messiah's love and hope authentically and consistently in professional practice is a very humbling and challenging dual theme for our conference. Loving others connects with codes of ethical practice and embodies the fulfilling of God's law; it works no ill to one's neighbour (Romans 13:10). If we love our colleagues, students and clients in the workplace as we would like to be treated ourselves, we will 'do well' (James 2:8).

*Christ's* love was expressed faithfully through relational presence, vulnerability, selflessness and sacrifice (John 13:1); not merely the absence of ill-treatment. He loved this way, firstly to please God, his father (John 8:29) and secondly, to reveal God's love to us, that we might be saved from our sins and reconciled to God (Galatians 1:4; 2 Corinthians 5:18). Christ modelled love extravagantly (Revelation 1:5) and responsively (Luke 19:5; Mark 10:51-52), yet he did not run around teaching and healing everyone, all the time. Public expressions of his love (John 8:10-12) were juxtaposed against fellowship with his disciples and discreet one-on- one conversations with a diverse range of needy people (John 3:1-16).

To enact such love in our practice requires professional and spiritual self-discipline, such as forgiving and forbearing with one another (Colossians 3:13), speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), bridling our tongues (Ephesians 4:31; James 1:26), and being compassionate (Jude 1:22). Concomitantly, the Holy Spirit provides us, as new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), with a supernatural capacity to love (Galatians 5:22). One thing for sure, 'love is kind and never fails' (1 Corinthians 13:4 and 8).

The scriptures affirm that God's love in Christ has resulted in us being given an 'everlasting consolation (comfort) and *good hope through grace'* (2 Thessalonians 2:16). While we are enjoined to do good works, we can never be justified by them; salvation is by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 4:2 & 5:1). It is Christ's victory over sin and death, his presence at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 12:2) that assures for us an enduring and

unassailable *good* hope; such hope is like an anchor to the soul in the storms of life (Romans 8:30-39; Hebrews 6:19).

From a professional perspective, hope is the expectation that certain preferred futures, or visions, that are not yet fully realised, will come to fruition. This second and forward looking theme of the conference captures an aspiration shared by Christian Educators, which is to confidently outwork Christ's Kingdom and vision through their professional practice. The question at the heart of this aspiration is: 'How can Christian educators continue to sharpen and sustain their own hope for the growth of God's kingdom on earth given a social and epistemological climate that privileges humanist and materialist ideologies? Clearly, this is not an easy task, but "a labour of love" that calls for coordination, collaboration and Christ-like enduring courage (Hebrews 12:2-3).

Modeling hope in professional practice is both a discipline and a disposition. It is a role of leadership but it is equally incumbent on all staff in an institution to model hope. We can easily succumb to negativity, become rudderless and withdrawn. We need to guard our self-talk and be mindful of our capacity to do extra-ordinary things through our extra-ordinary saviour (Philippians 4:13).

This week's conference invites all of us to pause and to consider how we might strengthen our inner sense and outward expressions of hope within our various professional contexts. Let us look for opportunities over the next few days to dialogue together and to encourage each other; reflecting on how love and hope might be strengthened within our professional lives when we return home. Who might we love more patiently and kindly? How might we be more hope-filled and who might we encourage to be more hopeful?

> *Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you* (Philippians 4:8-9).

The following peer reviewed papers engage with our conference theme of modelling love and hope in professional practice through a variety of foci and contexts. For example, the paper by **David Rylaarsdam** provides insight into how Calvin College set up an accredited bachelor's degree in Faith and Community Leadership in the Michigan Department of Corrections. The goals of the programme were to form agents of renewal who will model virtue and mentor other inmates so that violence and recidivism are reduced. The implicit modelling Christ's love and hope to the broken-hearted inmates reciprocally nurtured love and hope in those responsible for delivering the teaching. The paper by **Elizabeth Beech** reports on important research into the transformative effects of the National Institute for Christian Education's programmes on their graduates' worldviews using an innovative photo elicitation methodology to help 'unhide' participants' beliefs. The report affirms the institution's Biblically based programmes in deeply shaping students' views of themselves. The paper by **Andrew Stagg** provides a robust Biblical examination of the way the apostle Paul modelled and discipled Timothy into Christian leadership. Love and hope in Christ were indisputably integrated throughout Paul's ministry and mentoring.

The paper by **Nola Norris** draws on her doctoral studies and extensive literature to discuss the learning characteristics of neurodiverse students including those identified with the autistic spectrum. This timely paper argues that it is imperative to develop teachers' understanding of neurodiversity and the impact it can have on student learning. The paper by **Craig Murison** discusses the concept of revelatory school communities. He discusses how these communities might develop core Biblical understandings for use in curriculum, take corporate responsibility for the spiritual formation of staff members and rely on the Holy Spirit to empower the incarnational nature of Christ within each staff member. The paper by **Maria Lam** focuses on the intellectual virtue and practice of empathy and the significance of redeemed empathy in Christian business education. Her reflective and informed discussion highlights how the theology of creation, fall, redemption, and fulfillment can deepen our gratitude to serve the LORD through the development of students' empathy.

The paper by **Shirley Roels** explores inter-religious challenges and opportunities within the United States higher education context. She argues that American Christians in higher education need to seriously consider how they can facilitate interfaith dialogues without compromising what they believe to be true. The paper by **Kaye Judge** highlights the shortage of

appropriately trained Christian early childhood educators in Australia. The paper discusses the implementation of a Communities of Practice model to develop a united approach towards providing effective solutions to various challenges experienced within this education sector. The paper by **Chris Parker** reflects on some adverse social effects of digital technologies and the implications of these effects on teachers and students in Christian schools. His paper concludes with a call to Christian schools and colleges to avoid a simplistic 'technological instrumentalism' and to equip students to discern, and resist technological determinism.

In their paper, **Lotte Latukefu, Maureen Miner Bridges** and **Liam Webb** discuss an innovative approach to teaching aural perception to tertiary level music students.  The approach involved developing a choir that can sing to seriously ill patients within a nursing home setting. They discuss the transformative impact of this strategy, explaining how it provided an authentic practical context to integrate their learning skills with the Christian values of the educational institution. **Miriam Lili** shares her experience of working with Stage 3 primary students in a Christian school on a play-building task based on an apocalyptic theme derived from Ezekiel chapter 16.  In the paper she also reflects on her experience of writing a play designed to embody challenging and controversial metaphorical imagery for a postgraduate unit. During both processes, Lili engages in a search for God's story and the significance of the metanarrative of salvation and redemption. Finally, **Doug Blomberg** reflectively engages with the theme of nurturing wisdom through problem-posing, pedagogical experiences. He argues that serving God in love, justice and mercy requires questioning the world to discern and actualise what should be.

**Author biographies**

**Elizabeth Beech** (Beth) has been involved in Christian education for nearly 25 years, beginning when she home-schooled her own four children on the mission field while planting a church in a rural Bolivian village. After moving to the city and commencing postgraduate studies, she went on to teach in Christian universities in both Bolivia and her home country, the United States. In 2015, she moved to Australia, married fellow missionary, academic and widower, Geoff Beech, and took up the role of Academic Dean at the National Institute for Christian Education in Sydney, Australia. She is passionate about understanding one's place in God's story and the impact this makes on all of life! **Email:** Beth.beech@nice.edu.au

**Doug Blomberg** is Professor of Philosophy of Education at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto. His current sabbatical project is a book evaluating influential theories of learning from Plato, Augustine, Dewey, Gardner and others, seeking to demonstrate that these comprise important insights even though also essentially reductionist (thus, idolatrous). A biblical understanding of integral human experience and the rich tradition of reformational philosophy enables these perspectives to be regarded as complementary rather than contradictory. Doug's life, teaching and research are rooted in the conviction that Christ is the Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer of all things (Colossians 1:15-20). **Email:** dblomberg@icscanada.edu

**Kaye Judge** is a lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education in Australia. The college is part of the Seventh-day Adventist worldwide network of Christian education institutions. Her current research interests revolve around my PhD study programme from Andrews University in the USA. The focus of her research interest is 'Leadership in Early Childhood Education' with a special focus on 'Love as Pedagogy', 'Love as Leadership' and 'Creativity and Social Justice in Leadership'. She often travels during the year and appreciates the online church community of the Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan and she also follows Ravi Zacharias's (RZIM) as a worldwide specialist in Christian apologetics. Foundational scriptures are the Shepherd's psalm, Psalm 23, Psalm 121 and Micah 6:8 "What

does the Lord require of us; to love mercy, to seek justice and to walk humbly with our God".
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**Lotte Latukefu, Maureen Miner Bridges, & Liam Webb:** Dr Lotte Latukefu is Head of Performing Arts at Excelsia College. Recent and current research includes socio-cultural approaches to teaching and learning singing at tertiary level and professional, personal and spiritual formation in students in higher education. Lotte is an active member of the Uniting Church on the Mall in Wollongong, NSW and enjoys attending church camps with her youngest son Lonnie. **Email:** Lotte.Latukefu@excelsia.edu.au

Dr Maureen Miner Bridges is Director of Research at Excelsia College and a Director of the Lumen Research Institute, a joint initiative of Excelsia College and Indiana Wesleyan University. Her current research interests include student formation through higher education, relationships between attachment to God and well-being, and spiritual processes involved in relational leadership, burnout and work engagement. In daily life Maureen draws on the all-sufficiency of God's grace, and the prayer for hope, joy and peace of Romans 15:13.
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Liam Webb lectures in Aural Perception at Excelsia College. Liam is a teacher and bassoonist, who studied music, education and theology at Excelsia College, Regent College and Sydney Conservatorium. He has a passion for Christian higher education. He wishes to integrate spiritual formation and community engagement into his courses, and see his students grow not only in their academic capabilities but also in their faith in Christ and sense of vocation. Liam is an active member of the Uniting Church in Australia and Leichhardt Uniting Church, where he preaches, leads worship, and is a member of church council.

**Maria Lam** is currently a senior consultant of AJ-Great Limited. Being a Chinese Christian scholar and a teacher in business administration, she has deep convictions living up to who she is as a Christian, and desires to serve her unchangeable Lord in an unshakable Kingdom (Mark 10:42; Hebrew 10:28; Hebrew 13:8). She has taught business subjects in two Christian Universities in the United States for fourteen years. She has been a visiting scholar at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Wuhan University, Chongqing University, and several universities in China. She holds a Ph.D. in marketing and organization behavior from George Washington

University, Her research interest is in management education and corporate social responsibility. She is open to collaborate with colleagues in other institutions.
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**Miriam Lilli** is a child of God who knows and relies upon her love through Jesus Christ. She works as an adjunct lecturer with NICE, and as Primary Coordinator at Casino Christian School, NSW. Miriam loves learning and is always studying. She is interested in rigorous, Biblically faithful academic writing, and finding ways to collaboratively engage primary and middle school students in Drama, Science and STEM/STEAM education. Miriam is married to Sekove and they have seven children. She enjoys family outings, crochet, music with meaningful lyrics, and clogging (Appalachian tap). **Email:** miriam.lili@cen.edu.au

**Craig Murison** is Dean of Education, Humanities and Business at Christian Heritage College (CHC), Brisbane. He was Founding Principal of Mackay Christian College, serving as Principal for 33 years. Current research projects focus on graduate attributes, quality teaching and learning, faith learning integration and, revelatory communities in schools. Craig is passionate about helping teachers to teach Christianly, to build their spiritual formation as an integral part of their work as teachers, and to grow in understanding of how God reveals Himself to students. Craig is an ordained minister and plays saxophone in the worship team at his church. **Email:** cbm@chc.edu.au

**Nola Norris** is Program Coordinator for the Master of Teaching (Secondary) in the Education Faculty at Morling College in Sydney, Australia. She completed a PhD in 2014, which was a phenomenological investigation of thinking and learning in gifted adults with Asperger syndrome. This study, lead on to the development of a model to enable teachers to identify the demands of learning tasks in relation to learners' cognitive characteristics. Currently, Nola's research interests are the development of identity and spirituality in people experiencing ASD. Nola attends Camden Uniting Church and is involved in prayer and healing ministry with Ellel Ministries Australia. **Email:** nolan@morling.edu.au

**Chris Parker** is a lecturer with the National Institute for Christian Education in Australia and the editor of the Christian Teachers Journal. Through the adventure of teaching mathematics, science, and technology in Christian schools for 13 years, Chris developed a passion for helping children to see all of life through the lens of the gospel. He has a particular research interest in the non-neutrality of technology and how the biblical worldview, centred in Christ, should shape how we approach technology (and all things) as Christian educators. Chris and his wife, Coco, live in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. They have two children and a growing collection of ukuleles. **Email:** chris.parker@cen.edu.au

**Shirley Roels** became executive director of the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education in 2017. Previously she led a network of U.S. colleges and universities that together engaged in the theological exploration of vocation. While working for Calvin College, she was a professor of business and an academic dean. She has published on the integration of Christian faith with business and women in leadership. Since 2006 her scholarship has focused on Christian education. She is a member of Shawnee Park Christian Reformed Church and its outreach committee. Psalm 121 and Hebrews 11 are favored scriptures. **Email:** director@iapche.org

**David Rylaarsdam** is Professor of the History of Christianity and Worship at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He earned his doctorate in early Christianity at the University of Notre Dame. His research interests include the faith formation practices of Christian communities in different times and places. David previously served as a congregational pastor. He now enjoys preaching, teaching, and learning in cross-cultural contexts around the world. Recently he helped Calvin College set up an accredited college program in the Michigan prison system, a program that focuses on leadership training and character formation. **Email:** drylaars@calvinseminary.edu

**Andrew Staggs** is the Dean of School of Ministries, Christian Heritage College (CHC), Brisbane. He is also Principal of Citipointe Ministry College. Andrew has research interests in church leadership, the Holy Spirit and Pauline studies. He is strongly committed to the local church and has been involved in senior church leadership, preaching and teaching, and church

planting. For over twenty-five years he has also had a coaching and consulting practice with leaders, churches and NPFs as clients. His favourite verse is Romans 8:31: "If God is for us, then who can be against us?" **Email:** andrew@andrewstaggs.com

**Taking Christian Higher Education to prison**

*By David Rylaarsdam*

**Abstract**

The U.S. has a massive problem of mass incarceration, replete with racial disparities which can leave one prostrated in despair. We are the most incarcerated nation in the world—by a landslide.  2.3 million people are in prison, and prison culture has soul sucking power.  Life behind bars is often plagued by anger, violence, racism, fear, gangs, intense loneliness, sexual aggression, and mental illness.  It's 'college for criminals,' and positive character formation isn't in the curriculum.  But things are changing:  25 years ago, one of the bloodiest maximum security prisons in the U.S. started offering college courses, focusing on Christian formation and leadership.  Violence in the prison has dropped by an astounding 80% and there are now 30 congregations within the prison, all led by inmates.

A few years ago, Calvin College set up an accredited bachelor's degree in Faith and Community Leadership in the Michigan Department of Corrections.  The goals of the programme are to form agents of renewal who will model virtue and mentor other inmates so that violence and recidivism are reduced.  My paper tells the story of how God dramatically opened doors so that Calvin could set up an extension campus in prison.  I also describe how prison students have zealously engaged their education, becoming leaders and a community of practices which has had formative impact on others—on faculty, other prisoners, and corrections officers.  My paper reflects on how the educational resources of Christian colleges can innovatively seek to address large social challenges.

**Introduction**

The U.S. has a massive problem of mass incarceration.  We are the most incarcerated nation in the world—by a landslide.  Although we have less than 5% of the world's population, we have almost 25% of the world's prisoners.  2.3 million people are in prison, compared to only 300,000 in 1972. The racial disparities of incarceration leave one prostrated in despair.  African

Americans are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of whites, maintaining a racial caste system in America that is the moral equivalent of Jim Crow (Alexander, 2012).  Prison budgets are breath-taking.  The state of Michigan's Department of Corrections has an annual budget of $2 billion a year, which is one-fifth of the total state budget.  The term 'corrections,' is often a misnomer.  Two out of three prisoners released in the U.S. will reoffend, because prison is 'college for criminals,' and positive character formation is not in the curriculum.  Prison culture has soul sucking power.  Life behind bars is often plagued by anger, violence, racism, fear, gangs, intense loneliness, sexual aggression, and mental illness.  Prisons seem like god-forsaken places.

Calvin College and Seminary are schools that teach at an intellectual level that there is not one square inch of creation that is beyond hope of redemption.  As John 1 says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5, NIV).  But teaching something intellectually and actually seeing the light shining in the darkness are two different things.  As John 1 warns, we humans often do not recognize the Light shining in apparently godforsaken places:  "The true Light . . . was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him" (John 1:9-10, NIV).  Our failure to see God at work in the world is perhaps, in part, because we do not expect to meet a holy God in the deepest darkness.  Greeks in the first century did not expect God to take on the darkness of human flesh.  Jews did not expect Jesus to eat and drink with sinners living in darkness.  The disciples did not expect Jesus to hang on a cross in mid-day darkness.  Who expects God to do such things?  Who expects God to roam around in bloody, maximum security prisons, dwelling in people with life sentences, taking on the form of a prisoner and inviting us to come and visit Him?  Who expects such things?  One of the tasks of Christian educators is to help students open their eyes to that kind of a God, and in order for us to do our task, God often needs to open *our* eyes to a world pregnant with His presence and activity.

**Opening our eyes**

Fifty years ago, long before Calvin would end up in prison, God began a patient process of opening our eyes.  In 1966, Calvin College decided to introduce an annual award for distinguished alumni. The first alumnus to receive the award was Garrett Heyns, a nationally-recognized leader in prison reform.  In particular, Garrett was known for providing education

programmes to prisoners.  A major prisoner education center in the state of Washington is named after Heyns.  So too is a Calvin College residence hall.  When Calvin presented Garrett Heyns with its first alumni award, it had no clue that God would use the award half a century later to provide Calvin with unprecedented access to Michigan's prisons.  But before Calvin was ready to walk through open prison doors, other events, in a variety of places, needed to be orchestrated first.

One such place was Angola Prison, the state penitentiary in Louisiana.  Angola is the largest maximum security prison in the United States.  5,000 prisoners are housed there, most of them with life sentences.  For much of the 20th century, Angola was an institution with a simple philosophy:  lock up the man and throw away the key.  Angola was a place full of despair, and where there is despair, there is violence.  Treated like animals, prisoners acted the part, attacking and killing each other.  In the early 1990s, Angola was one of the bloodiest prisons in the U.S.  Gangs were in control.  Prisoners feared for their lives.  They would stuff their shirts with newspaper before bed, hoping the padding might blunt a stabbing attack during the night.  Bunk mates would take turns staying awake during the night to warn each other of oncoming attacks.  The place was hell on earth.  The blood flowed, because there was no hope.

In 1995, Burl Cain was appointed as the new warden of Angola prison.  He was not a deeply religious man at the time, but when he became warden, his mother told him, "Burl, you are responsible for the souls of those prisoners.  You better see to it that you do something for them."And Burl said, "Yes, maam," because that's what you say to your mother in Louisiana.

Burl Cain realized that Angola prisoners were in desperate need of hope and moral rehabilitation.  He decided to start treating prisoners a bit more like human beings.  His justice was swift and firm.  But his love was also unmistakable.  He held the hands of death row inmates as they were executed.  He set up hospice care for prisoners and allowed inmates to serve as hospice workers.  He allowed inmates to bury fellow prisoners with dignity.  He told prisoners, "I will love you as much as you let me, and hurt you as much as I need to."

Warden Cain also invited a seminary to teach some classes in prison, hoping that it might help the prisoner's moral rehabilitation.  At first, some prisoners showed up to class simply because the room was air-conditioned.  But the wind of the Spirit was also blowing.  Within a few years, there were more than 100 seminary students crammed in a small prison classroom,

hungry for Good News, eager to be changed and thankful for a purpose in life—namely, to transform the culture of Angola Prison.

During the last 20 years, violence at Angola has dropped by an astounding 80%. Gangs have largely been replaced by 30 congregations, all led by inmates and offering 400 worship services and Bible studies every month. Angola has a fully accredited prison seminary which offers bachelor's degrees. Graduates not only lead congregations; they mentor short-term prisoners so that they will not return to a life of crime when they are released from prison (Shere, 2005). Within two decades, Angola was transformed from the bloodiest prison in the South to a place where you can walk around with prisoners all day, often with no guards in sight, and be completely safe.

Terry is a person whose eyes were opened to God's activity in Angola. Terry is a businessman from Chicago who visited Angola about a dozen years ago. While there, he attended a worship service led by inmates. During Angola services, visitors are asked to come forward so that the prisoners can pray for them. Terry was asked, "How can we pray for you?" Terry didn't know what to say. He said, "Well, you can pray for my daughter. She has trigeminal nerve disease."

Until recently, this disease was called the suicide disease, because the trigeminal nerve in one's face causes such excruciating pain that many people cannot deal with it. Other people, such as Terry's daughter, were so heavily medicated that the narcotics basically left them incapacitated. "You can pray for my daughter," said Terry. So these inmates with life sentences laid their hands on Terry and prayed for him and for his daughter. Terry was appreciative, but he left Angola and didn't think too much of it; until a few weeks later.

Terry was on an airplane, and a woman sat down next to him. She opened her things, including a big book that hit Terry's tray and was covering half of his tray. Irritated, Terry turned to say something and he noticed that the book was open to a medical drawing of the human face, showing the trigeminal nerve. The woman sitting next to him was a medical doctor traveling the country, teaching about a new drug to deal with trigeminal nerve disease.

Terry, of course, wants his daughter to try this experimental drug, but the doctor warned him that it was not always successful and that his daughter would suffer excruciating pain when she was withdrawn from her narcotics. Terry decides to go for it. His daughter went off her

narcotics.  But she suffered no pain.  In fact, she never went on the new drug, because she had been healed.  Terry has his daughter back. He is profoundly grateful.

Not long after his daughter is healed, Terry has a birthday, and his well-heeled friends are at his party.  They know that Terry has no need for gifts, so they ask him, "What can we do for you?  How can we celebrate your birthday?"

Terry replied, "Why don't you put some money in an envelope and send it to Calvin Seminary so they can take their students to Angola Prison."

So Calvin Seminary received a generous check in the mail.  And for approximately five years we did nothing with it.  Yes, that's embarrassing.  I mention it because Calvin's slow response illustrates at least two things.  First, we at Calvin do not deserve the credit for whatever justice and mercy and shalom that the Calvin Prison Initiative is bringing.  The initiative was never our bright idea.  God repeatedly placed the opportunity in our lap in order to open our eyes to how He could use Christian higher education behind bars.  Second, God used our hesitation for His uncanny timing.  As we will see, Calvin's slowness to take all-expenses paid trips to Angola allowed for a confluence of other events in the Michigan prison system.

When Calvin Seminary became concerned that we might be offending Terry the donor, we finally began taking students to Angola.  What was our reaction to Angola?  "Wow!  Look at the power of the gospel to transform a culture!  We teach about such things but to see it so vividly is a dramatic education."

But some of us at Calvin also had another reaction: "Too bad this could never happen in Michigan.  Yeah, we don't have a warden like Burl Cain.  We don't live in the Bible Belt.  And who in the world would ever convince the Michigan Department of Corrections to set up a prison seminary?"

It was Michigan prisoners who asked Calvin: "Why couldn't this happen?  Have you prayed about it?"

At approximately the same time that Calvin Seminary started taking students to Angola, I started mentoring a Michigan prisoner named Troy Rienstra.  While in prison, Troy began to take his faith seriously and for a decade before I met him, he had been zealously working to improve prison culture.  He mentored prisoners, started a book club, helped to develop a new prison congregation, and even found a way to bring Christian motivational speakers to prison,

including Kirk Cousins (current quarterback of the Washington Redskins) and billionaire Rich De Vos.

Troy asked me to mentor him, but he ended up mentoring me. He had a vision for how Christian higher education could develop prisoners into leaders who could help to change not only prison culture but society more broadly. The challenge was finding a way to deliver the education. Distance education would not work, because prisoners cannot have access to the internet. Another challenge was separation of church and state. Would the state allow a seminary to deliver courses taught from a Christian perspective? Troy was confident that all barriers could be overcome, and he kept pestering me to make Calvin's education available. I finally gave Troy a Calvin Seminary application form and told him to apply, in the hope of forcing Calvin to take his request more seriously.

Troy immediately made copies of the application form and started distributing them to other prisoners. Not long after, in a single day, Calvin Seminary received six applications from prisoners. "There are more where those came from," Troy said.

Troy's prison, Handlon Correctional Facility, is 40 minutes from Calvin. The seminary decided to request the Handlon warden to allow us to come and teach one class. The seminary dean wrote a letter and then, for several weeks, tried to call the warden repeatedly. His attempts were an epic failure. For example, one day the dean called the warden's office at 10:00 a.m. and the warden's assistant said, "The warden can't talk to you. He's at lunch." Four hours later, at 2:00 p.m. the same day, the dean called again and the assistant said, "The warden can't talk to you. He's at lunch." Either the warden eats a lot, or we were being avoided and rejected.

So imagine our surprise when the doors of the prison blew open. Suddenly, the warden was very interested in talking to us about teaching a class. Two of my colleagues from Calvin went to visit the warden. He gave them the red carpet treatment and a tour, and he said to them, "You guys obviously have connections in powerful places."

My colleagues looked at each as if to say, "We didn't know we had any connections!" The warden said, "Yeah, I didn't know what to do with your odd request. No seminary has offered programming at a Michigan prison before. So for several weeks I pushed your letter from one side of my desk to another. And then one day, the Director of the Department of Corrections was here and I happened to show him your letter. I told him, 'I don't know what to

do with this.' The Director looked at the letterhead a few seconds and said, 'Calvin. They do good work. You make this happen.'"

We didn't know much about the Director at the time. He was not a Calvin grad, and he was not a member of a Reformed church. He had been a sheriff in Michigan before the governor unexpectedly appointed him as Director of the Department of Corrections for a short time. We at Calvin did not know the Director, but he knew us, because his name was Dan Heyns. He was the grandson of Garrett Heyns, who had received Calvin's first Distinguished Alumni Award for being a leader in prison education programmes. Now, 50 years later, Dan was inviting us at Calvin to do the very thing we praised his grandfather for.

**A bigger invitation**

For a few years, Calvin Seminary taught one unaccredited course each semester at Handlon Prison. The faculty and prison students were so enthusiastic about the courses that people in the Calvin community and the Department of Corrections became open to a much larger project. The seminary board chair offered his jet so that Dan Heyns, the seminary president and a Michigan state representative could make a one-day visit to Angola Prison together. On the return flight to Grand Rapids, Dan Heyns studied the statistics of Angola and kept muttering things like, "How does violence drop by 80%?!" A few days later, he invited the seminary president to send him a proposal for developing an accredited seminary degree programme in the Michigan Department of Corrections.

So for several months, Calvin—with the invitation of a lifetime in hand—accomplished nothing. Being entrepreneurial is not our first gift. To be fair, this project would be large. Calvin Seminary would need to partner with several other organizations and people. Since the seminary is not accredited to offer undergraduate programmes, it would need to persuade Calvin College or another school to join the effort. That school's accrediting agency would need to approve an extension site and a new academic programme. The two educational institutions would need to work with donors, the Department of Corrections, and Handlon Prison on countless details that would assure educational standards, safety, financial sustainability, and so on. Thankfully, a seminary donor was persistent in spurring Calvin into action and provided generous seed money so that a faculty member could have a significant reduction in teaching load in order to develop the project. The seminary dean asked me to take the lead, not because I

had any sense of Reformed processing and good order, but because everyone else had declined his offer.

I realized if the Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI) was going to get off the ground well, I needed the help of those who had gone before us. I consulted with dozens of organizations and individuals. The donor's seed money enabled me to visit other educational programmes in U.S. prisons. From these prison programmes, I learned the countless questions that would need to be addressed in a proposal to Calvin College. For example, which Michigan prison has adequate space and a cooperative warden? What should be included in our Memo of Understanding with the Department of Corrections? Should the Calvin Prison Initiative admit sex offenders? How will faculty from a variety of West Michigan colleges be vetted and oriented to teach in CPI? Should CPI students live in the same prison dorm or be a leavening influence in several dorms? How do we respond to constituents who are offended that Calvin is providing college education to prisoners? What computers and lab equipment will the prison permit, and are these adequate for academic accreditors? Of course, within all of these questions, there are countless secondary questions. For example, if prisoners cannot have internet access, how do we put a library catalog on a hard drive, how frequently can we update the hard drive, who will the prison allow to do the updating, and how much do we need to budget for this process?

Studying other prison experiences was also helpful for articulating the goals of Calvin's prison initiative. Convicting goals were critical in persuading schools and donors to participate. One of the most persuasive arguments was that countless people in the prison system as well as society would benefit from bringing Christian higher education to prison.

**Everybody wins**

By providing face-to-face Christian higher education to prisoners, CPI hopes to accomplish several goals. First, CPI wants to form leaders. The culture of prisons is best reformed from the inside, by inmates who understand their unique world thoroughly. As outsiders, traditional Calvin graduates can provide leadership in the judicial system and in state and national legislatures, they can visit prisoners and worship with them, but they cannot change prison culture and mentor inmates as consistently and directly as those who are behind bars 24/7. The majority of CPI students have life sentences and are committed to being agents of renewal over the long haul. They mentor short-term prisoners, model a virtuous way of life, tutor

inmates pursuing a GED (General Equivalency Diploma), lead prison congregations, engage in service such as hospice care and suicide watches, help prisoners practice restorative justice rather than violent retributive justice, and so on.    When CPI students complete their college programme, they will be sent in pairs or groups to 30 prisons throughout the state of Michigan so that they can help to improve prison culture in many locations.  CPI students who are eventually released can be leaders on the outside—leaders of families, neighbourhoods, and churches which desperately need reformed leaders rather repeat offenders.

Second, when leaders on the inside are trained to change prison culture, a rippling effect of goodness starts to take place.  Rand Corporation has researched studies from the last two decades regarding prison education.  These studies clearly demonstrate that higher education in prisons reduces inmate violence and lowers recidivism, thereby decreasing crime and saving taxpayers money and bushels of grief.  For example, Rand's meta-analysis of 58 studies concluded that inmates who participate in any education programme (GED, vocational, or BA) have a 43% lower chance of recidivating than those who do not (Davis et al., 2014).  Moreover, the higher the degree earned, the lower the recidivism rate (Stern & Western, 2014).  Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prisons is a typical example of the success of college prison programmes.  As documented by HBO films, "Zero Percent" and "The University of Sing Sing," Hudson Link has a recidivism rate near zero, compared to the New York state average of 50%. Since it costs $40,000 per year to incarcerate one person, Hudson Link is saving taxpayers millions.

Prison seminaries have not only reduced recidivism by providing college-level education but also by addressing crime at its root—the human heart (Johnson, 2012).  These programmes have been so effective that Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion was awarded a $1.3 million grant to assess their impact.  Byron Johnson, the director of the Institute says that the data produced by this study "has the potential to fundamentally change the way we think about corrections" (Goodrich, 2012, p. 1).

A third goal of CPI is that it would change us at Calvin College and Seminary.  In my visits to other prison programmes in the U.S., professors consistently testified to ways in which prison teaching had changed them personally and professionally.  The prison classroom, they said, was the most vital teaching they had ever done. The experience re-kindled their passion for the importance of Christian higher education.  It exposed them to people of different races,

cultures, and religions.  It educated them about a host of complex social issues, such as the effects of crime on families and neighbourhoods, the ways in which sentencing polices and parole processes need reforming, the connections between crime and poverty and racism, the nature of retributive and restorative justice, and the savage inequalities of the American educational system.  As one administrator put it, "Do you want effective faculty development? Send professors to prison."

CPI goals quickly coalesced into a two-word mantra, "Everybody wins."  Bringing higher education to prison obviously benefits prisoners by building their knowledge, skills, and character.  But literally everyone else also benefits.  Calvin faculty and student volunteers learn as they serve Jesus in prison (Matt. 25:35-46).  The church behind bars benefits from trained leaders.  Corrections officers benefit from less prison violence.  Michigan citizens benefit from lower recidivism, less crime, and tax dollars being diverted from corrections to education and roads. Victims benefit from prisoners who re-enter their neighbourhoods as morally-rehabilitated citizens rather than as more gifted criminals.  The children of offenders benefit because they are more likely to aspire to education rather than crime, thus breaking a harrowing cycle of intergenerational incarceration (Stern & Western, 2014).

**Structure of the Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI)**

A 120-page CPI proposal was developed for Calvin College.  The proposal not only outlined the need for the programme and its goals but also the programme's structure and details which addressed a host of potential college and accreditor concerns related to assessment, library resources, sustainable staffing, budget and fundraising, governance, advising, orientation, academic rigor and integrity, and student services for prisoners.

In early 2015, Calvin approved the proposal to establish an extension college campus in Handlon Prison and to offer accredited diploma, AA (Associate of Arts), and BA (Bachelor of Arts) degrees in Faith and Community Leadership.  Twenty students are admitted each year from among the 42,000 prisoners in Michigan.  Students of any religious persuasion are welcome to apply.  The application process includes a number of proctored essays on topics related to the goals of the programme.  The prison warden has a voice in the final selection of students.  The Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC), transfers admitted students to Handlon and puts a

hold on them so that the students will not be moved to another prison until they have completed their degrees.

The BA degree takes five years to complete and is the only BA offered in the MDOC. All courses are delivered entirely in person. Since prison students do not go anywhere during the summer, courses are offered year-round. There are three semesters, and students take three courses per semester. In order to control costs, most courses are offered every other year, which means that year 2 and year 3 students take courses together and years 4 and 5 will take courses together. There are approximately 40 students in these courses. English, Speech, and other courses that need smaller class sizes are offered to year 1 students. The proposal to Calvin College included a 10-year budget. CPI costs approximately half a million dollars a year and all funds are privately raised. The range of donors is much broader than the typical supporters of Calvin College and Seminary. Secular organizations understand that investing in CPI means "everyone wins."

A full-time Director and an administrative assistant are also included in the budget. CPI teachers are paid at an adjunct rate, plus mileage expense. In order to ensure staffing sustainability, Calvin faculty were thoroughly polled regarding how frequently they would be interested in teaching. Faculty of other West Michigan schools (Western Seminary, Kuyper College, Cornerstone University, Hope College) were also approached. The polling indicated that faculty interest was more than adequate. CPI is currently in its third year and for a number of courses, we have faculty standing in line, patiently waiting for a turn to teach. Some have tried to move up in the queue by volunteering to teach without pay.

**Communities of formation**

The mission of Calvin College is "to equip students to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world." Thus far, Calvin has been repeatedly overwhelmed by the creative, unexpected ways that God is fulfilling that mission behind bars. CPI students are certainly zealous about thinking deeply. When a faculty member shows up in prison for the first day of class, a number of students will already have read many of the assigned texts for the course. They are so insatiably inquisitive—even about obscure footnotes—that faculty need to step up their game and come better prepared for teaching than they do on Calvin's main campus. No professor exits a prison course the same as when they

entered. Philosophy professor Lee Hardy says that teaching in prison has changed his view not only of the prison population, but also of humans and God's ability to work with them. "These people are trying to piece their lives back together in conditions that would defeat almost anyone," says Hardy. "I consider them my spiritual superiors" (Ruiter, 2014).

CPI students are also passionate about Calvin's mission to act justly. Some CPI students persuaded administrators of Handlon Prison to let them garden so that they can donate the produce to Calvin Dining Services. Calvin will use the money that they save on food to donate to non-profits, such as women's shelters in Grand Rapids. Another CPI student, Eric Boldiszar, organized a 2017 conference at Hope College called, "Hope for Restoration: Radical Hospitality and Prison Reform." Although Eric's incarceration prevented him from going to his own conference, hundreds of free people did attend. The conference was so successful that Eric won an award from the National Association of Community and Restorative Justice. In his acceptance speech, delivered by Calvin College administrator, Eric said, "I dream of a criminal justice system which balances the need for justice with mercy . . . [and] acknowledges the needs of crime victims, rehabilitating offenders, and restoring wholeness and harmony to communities. I urge you to pray daily to God . . . to make the restorative justice movement a reality within America's prisons" (Hubbard, 2017, Aug. 23).

The last phrase of Calvin's mission statement, "live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal," has become a battle cry for prison students who had been tempted to give up on ever having a meaningful life behind bars until CPI accepted them. Some CPI students serve as agents of renewal by leading a Handlon Prison congregation that began with 7 members a few years ago and today is dynamic group of 150. Other CPI students, who love to pass on what they learn, are offering classes to non-CPI prisoners – classes on grammar, writing, philosophy, and moral formation.

Of course, barbed wire does not inhibit the Spirit of God from using CPI students as agents of renewal. Free students on Calvin's main campus are all required to take a course called "Developing a Christian Mind." All sections of the course met together for an opening plenary, which is led via video by CPI students. Prison students tell Calvin College freshmen the purpose of Christian higher education, testifying to how it can transform their lives and the world. One CPI student wrote a letter to the college newspaper, describing with deep gratitude how a Calvin education was equipping him, in his unique sphere of influence in the Kingdom, to be an agent

of renewal. Philosophy professor Jamie Smith tweeted that the letter should be required reading for every student entering Calvin College. I wonder if Calvin parents ever dreamed that their children would be taught the value of Christian higher education by murderers with life sentences. God's ways are not our ways.

The testimony of CPI students has also influenced how free students use their gifts in the Kingdom. For example, a Political Science major on Calvin's free campus built a new website interface and mobile phone app called the "Re-Entry Map Initiative." This application connects recently released prisoners to 150 West Michigan agencies and resources that will help them to find jobs and clothes and food and relationships which will help them to stay out of prison (Noonan, 2017). Another Calvin student, a Film major, developed a documentary of a Detroit mother whose son had been murdered by an angry orphan. The mother not only forgave the young murderer, but took him in and now considers him her son (Hubbard, 2017, June 13).

Not every prison student is a story of transformation, but the percentage is much higher than on Calvin's main campus. The success rate of the CPI students, needs to be high. Being agents of renewal among hard-hearted prisoners and cynical corrections officers is incredibly challenging. But even this tough crowd is being influenced. For example, CPI students live in a prison dorm with 100 other prisoners. By the end of the first semester of the college programme, the misconduct tickets in the entire dorm had dropped to zero. Corrections officers do not witness such transformation very often, so their skepticism is slowly eroding into puzzlement and even wistful awe. One officer admitted to a faculty member, "Sometimes, I think these students are more genuinely free than we corrections officers are." (Reported by Danjuma Gibson, Professor of Pastoral Care, Calvin Seminary, October, 2015).

**Conclusion**

As the Kingdom comes, God goes before us like a renewing fire. I'm reminded of this every time I enter a Michigan prison. Before I am allowed to enter, a corrections officer searches me and tells me to take off my shoes and socks so that he can see if I have a weapon or drugs hidden under my feet. When I first starting going to prison, I found this ritual annoying. In airport security lines, I can at least keep my socks on. In prison, I am asked to put my bare feet on a sketchy floor where hundreds of dirty feet have been. This is asking a lot of a germophobe with arches too flat to hide anything.

Then, one hot summer day, the corrections officer said to me, "Remove your sandals." And suddenly, the words ringing in my head were those of God to Moses, "Remove your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Like Moses at the burning bush in the wilderness, here I was standing on the threshold of a modern wilderness where the presence of God was already burning and renewing. God is the real Agent of Renewal in prisons. I'm thankful to be invited into His show. Now, whenever I enter prison, I look forward to the little shoe-and-sock ritual. For me, it's a reminder of God's presence and an act of worship, though the corrections officer gazing at the bottom of my feet probably doesn't see it that way.

All around us, bushes are burning. Our world is pregnant with the presence and activity of God. In your city or country, where is the wilderness with a burning bush? Perhaps in your context, mass incarceration is not a large social ill that needs to be addressed, but there is another wilderness. Perhaps there is other darkness where the Light of the world is already shining, but we need to keep encouraging each other to see how God is inviting us to join Him. Where might God be inviting us to bring Christian higher education directly – not just indirectly through our graduates going out and reforming various square inches of creation someday, but directly through our programmes? How can our schools use their immense Kingdom resource to aid those in need, to support the oppressed, to include the excluded, and to love our neighbour?

Responding to God's invitation at the burning bush will have some challenges. But, in Calvin's most recent experience, the primary challenge was not closed doors and insurmountable hurdles. God flattened hurdles with flair and prepared to open doors decades ahead of time. Our greatest challenge in responding to God's invitation was trying to keep up with His Spirit. Taking Christian higher education and stepping forward into dark places means hanging on for the ride; because our God goes before us like a pillar of fire.

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# Photo elicitation metaphors for determining postgraduate course efficacy

*By Elizabeth G. Beech*

## Abstract

For nearly 40 years, Christian Education National (CEN) schools in Australia have been teaching online, postgraduate degree courses through the National Institute for Christian Education in order to equip their secularly trained school teachers to think Christianly about education in the context of all of life. The core of these courses is an attempt to deeply embed biblical theological and worldview foundational beliefs flowing out of a biblical theology and Kuyperian philosophy. However, until recently, no formal academic research had been undertaken on the transformative efficacy of the National Institute's programme with regard to the pre-suppositional worldview beliefs of its graduates.

The challenge was how to identify changed implicit beliefs that are harder to uncover than what is commonly found through explicit survey techniques. In response to this challenge, a methodology of the photo elicitation interview (PEI) has been used in hopes of priming subjects' memories and emotions in order to allow for greater insight into their underlying worldview assumptions and change. Hence, as the second part of a larger project, this particular research focused on metaphors presented by graduates through PEI in order to explore the question of whether the National Institute postgraduate courses have proven transformational in regards to their worldview presuppositions, and thence, their educational practices. The effectiveness of PEI as a methodology for achieving this insight has also been considered, since it may prove useful in similar studies across Christian schools and higher education institutions.

## Photo elicitation metaphors for determining postgraduate course efficacy

The National Institute for Christian Education was established nearly forty years ago for the purpose of equipping teachers in the Christian Education National (CEN) schools throughout Australia to think Christianly about education in the context of all of life. CEN, formerly known as the Christian Parent-Controlled Schools (CPCS) movement, and the National Institute emerged from a Dutch-reformed heritage with a strong emphasis on a Kuyperian, non-dualistic, understanding of knowledge and our role as Christians participating in God's plan of redemption

for the world. This includes a deep knowledge of the Bible (particularly through a biblical theology model), consideration of Christ as the Lord of all things (Col 1:15-20), and an understanding of the importance of underlying worldview assumptions which are never "neutral" but serve one God or another. It also acknowledges the Creation-Fall-Redemption ground motive of life and education, God as the author and owner of all true knowledge, the 'office' calling of educators, and the role of Christian educators and education in the society and community. These, and subordinate foundations, underlie all of the units that make up the National Institute postgraduate degree programmes as representing the intentional, philosophic core of the CEN schools' movement. As such, the National Institute is to be "the guardian of the intellectual capital of CEN, accumulated through scholarly endeavour over a period of fifty years . . . (and) is committed to helping people to think, act and teach in ways that take seriously the public truth of the Christian gospel and its implications for all of life" (Dickens, in Blomberg, 2015, p. 863).

Since the vast majority of educators within the CEN system have been trained by secularists in their initial teacher training, the purpose of the postgraduate courses has been one of transforming worldview assumptions. This is a much more complex, difficult and long-term task than simply 'teaching facts' or 'teaching skills'. This transformation should be evident in that a teacher views each class, or teaching point, not as something to which they must 'add' something Christian, but as teaching that flows out of a deep understanding of God, His beings, His understanding of truth, and so on. The stated goal of the National Institute is that this would become not something about which they think in each lesson but the norm by which they live, speak and act, evidence of changed pre-suppositional beliefs.

Until recently, however, no formal academic research has been carried out to determine the transformative efficacy of the National Institute's programmes with regard to the pre-suppositional worldview beliefs of its graduates. The challenge was how to identify changed implicit beliefs that are harder to uncover than what is commonly found through explicit survey techniques. In response to this challenge a methodology of the photo elicitation interview (PEI) has been used in the hope of priming subjects' memories and emotions in order to allow for greater insight into underlying worldview assumptions and change.

This paper will focus on the graduates' perceptions of themselves before and after their postgraduate study through the National Institute for Christian Education. The purpose of the research is to answer the following questions:

- What do the metaphors of the photo elicitation images reveal about whether National Institute for Christian Education courses have been transformational for graduates' pre-suppositional understandings and educational practices?

- In what ways can PEI be found to be of particular importance/usefulness in the elicitation of worldview assumptions when assessing higher education course efficacy?

In order to lay a foundation for this study, it will be helpful to first review the relevant literature regarding worldview transformation, the challenge of 'unhiding' implicit beliefs, the usefulness of metaphors in research, and the photo elicitation interview (PEI) methodology.

**Worldview transformation**

All education is transformational on some level in that the acquiring of different forms of knowledge will change an individual to some degree (Edlin, 2014; Rice, 2006). Any efficacious educational program should bring about at least some form of transformation whether at the level of knowledge acquisition, behavioural changes in classroom or leadership practice, new espoused beliefs and understandings, or at the deepest level of pre-theoretical worldview assumptions that form the foundation, pre-consciously, of our beliefs and practices (Goheen & Bartholomew, 2014; Naugle, 2005; Sire, 1998). The efficacy of the National Institute's postgraduate courses hinges on worldview transformation, on fundamental changes, or the crossing of thresholds (Meyer & Land, 2010) that strongly influence beliefs and practices through conceptual shifts regarding ontology, epistemology, and praxis.

The literature pertaining to transformational or transformative andragogy comes primarily from the work surrounding adult education and examines the changes to meaning structures, perspectives and schemas—the broad predispositions we hold that result from our assumptions and which determine the extent of our expectations (Mezirow, 1991, 1997; Cranton, 2002). "Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference . . . to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7–8). These "taken-for-granted frames of reference" are pre-suppositional worldview assumptions. "Worldview is an articulation of the basic beliefs embedded in a shared grand story which are rooted in a faith commitment

and which give shape and direction to the whole of our individual and corporate lives" (Bartholomew, 2015, p. 477).

While Mezirow's work on the transformative aspects of adult learning has been well recognised in the literature, it does not emerge from a biblical understanding of human beings and their purpose. This begs the question of how transformative learning may be considered from a biblical foundation. One attempt at redefinition is the claim by Beversluis (1986) that rather than transformational, education that is truly Christian is firstly affirmational: "It affirms the world as God's creation, and civilization and culture as gifts of God's general goodness to humankind, calling not only for the Christian celebration of those gifts but also for extending and developing them" (p. 19). Burggraaf (2014), however, instead of seeking a new terminology, provides a different definition for transformation:

> *Transformation involves shaping the desires of students and teachers towards the Kingdom for the purpose of 'shalom', the integrated wholeness, well-being and harmony in every dimension of life that God intends for his creation. Transformation of heart, mind, spirit and life is the work of the Holy Spirit and the school shapes its educational experiences and settings in openness to the direction and guidance of the Spirit.* (p. 19)

**Unhiding implicit beliefs**

Probably most education that claims to be Christian, or Bible based, would also claim to be transformational (Edlin, 2014). However, uncovering real change in worldview assumptions involves 'unhiding' one's implicit beliefs. Too often correct or anticipated responses can be given through surveys or traditional interviews, however, these may only present espoused, not implicit, beliefs. Notably, "a belief is, by its very nature, unquantifiable and 'does not lend itself easily to empirical investigation' (Patchen & Crawford, 2011, p. 286).

Yet these beliefs about knowledge construction, or epistemological orientation, are what form the basis of everything we do, including our teaching strategies. However, uncovering the underlying epistemological orientation that informs one's worldview is very difficult and has not often been considered in studies of teacher practice. Even more problematically, the limited amount of research that exists has been inconclusive. Some has shown that when teachers define their practice, they often espouse a particular epistemological orientation but enact roles that

support opposing epistemological constructs (Wilcox-Herzog, 2002), whereas other research has shown that teachers act in concordance with their stated beliefs (Patchen & Crawford, 2011).

The conceptual system that "defines our everyday realities… is largely metaphorical so that "the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor" (Lakoff & Johnson, in Van Brummelen & Badley, 2012, p. 6). For this reason, "research has shown that behavioural intentions measured indirectly, using physiological measures, occur well before individuals become consciously aware of their intentions and are able to self-report the desire to act" (Ajzen & Dasgupta, 2015, p. 116). Dirkx (2006) suggests that, "the expression of affective and emotionally laden issues reveals the ways and forms through which adult learners give voice to unconscious personal meaning of their learning experiences" (p. 16). This occurs through "emotion-laden images" and "a symbolic language" that helps with "developing a more conscious relationship with the unconscious dimensions of our being" (ibid., pp. 15, 19).

## Metaphors

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) argue in their classic *Metaphors We Live By* that "metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary, conceptual system in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (p. 3). Thus, by eliciting and examining metaphors it is possible to delve deeper into the implicit beliefs that govern one's life. "The potency of imagery, is that it has the capacity to transcend the boundary between the outside world and what is happening inside us" (Porr, et al, 2011, p. 31). It has been posited that since metaphors function at a much more fundamental level of cognition that flows from underlying worldview assumptions, analysis of metaphors can help reveal "unconscious metaphorical thinking patterns, which are simply taken as 'givens'" (Schmitt, 2005, p. 360).

The use of metaphor in unhiding profound truth has been common throughout history. "[The Bible] make[s] abundant use of metaphor and imagery to describe the most central concepts and themes, often with no attempt to communicate the concept in literal language" (Ott, 2014, p. 361). Jesus' tendency to teach through parables or metaphors was not a concern so much with spiritual knowledge but with the transformation of attitudes and behaviour at a deep, worldview assumption level (Parker, 2008). "Metaphoric language's vivid and concrete nature

conveys rich layers of meaning, relationships, and emotions inaccessible through naked abstract formulations, and is thus most appropriate to describe the profound mysteries of God and his dealings with humanity" (Ott, 2014, p. 362).

The act of expressing oneself through metaphor involves digging beneath the surface of verbally expressed views to reveal the emotion, thoughts and feelings behind the impression given in an image.  In this way, metaphor defines reality itself. Lakoff and Johnson argue boldly that any theory of meaning and truth ultimately rests on metaphorical understanding. In other words, we do not know directly but only through metaphor." (Van Brummelen & Badley, 2012, p. 7) As Braunstein (2011) has said, "Metaphor . . . is built into our conceptual framework as human thinkers and can be understood as the basis for human consciousness" (p. 17). Therefore, an expression of one's true thoughts and an indication of transformation at the pre-suppositional level could be discovered through the examination of explicated metaphors.

In order to explore transformation relating to course outcomes, the instruments used in this research are designed to assess how the course changed the way participants view themselves, challenged the firmly held ideas of participants, changed their practice, or discovered things they had believed previously to be right (or considered to be 'normal') and which the course taught were not so (Kember et al., 2000). This has been done through the use of Photo-Elicitation Interview (PEI) techniques in order to draw out metaphors describing graduates' perceptions of themselves before and after their postgraduate study experience.

The resulting vignettes show that adult learners often find that something they have experienced in their interactions with others in the learning setting or have read as part of their learning experience evokes within them powerful emotional reactions. Transformative learning is often characterized by such intense, emotionally laden experiences that are mediated by powerful but often dimly perceived images. Like dreams, the experience of these images cannot be fully articulated through words (Dirkx, 2006).

**Photo elicitation interviews**

The PEI process involves asking the research participants to bring several pictures showing their attitude and feeling towards the product at hand with them to the interview. They are then asked to explain each picture and its personal meaning, thus treating the picture as a metaphor. In talking about the pictures, new verbal metaphors come up which, are also mirrored

and explained in depth (Schmitt, 2005). Although the images, or photos, themselves are not usually used as part of the data set, it is this reflective mechanism that allows the researcher to get beyond "superficial interpretations of metaphors [that] are unlikely to reveal the complexity of epistemological orientation" (Patchen & Crawford, 2011, p. 296).

After a systematic literature review of studies using Photo-elicitation Interviews (PEI), Torre and Murphy (2015) determined that, as a research tool, PEI can increase validity of responses by empowering participants, building trust, and helping the "researchers better see through participants' eyes" (p. 12). Overall, PEI provides richer interview data with deeper insight into participants' experience than traditional interviews (Torre & Murphy, 2015). It not only provides the initial 'fodder' for the participant to relate their implicit thoughts regarding feelings about their experience, but it also provides a structure for the researcher to delve into deeper questioning about the beliefs behind the selection of their images. As participants return to their selected images they are invited into yet deeper reflection upon what prompted these selections. PEI is considered to be "ensconced in a post-positivist paradigm" that sees "photos as a method for uncovering how both the researcher and the participant understand the world" (p. 6). It is precisely in clarifying one's understanding of the world both before and after National Institute courses that could indicate if transformation has occurred by identifying "changes in worldview and habits of thinking" or "changes in being, such as in one's forms of relatedness to others and to the world" (Hoggan, 2014, p. 134).

**Research design**

All 260 graduates of the National Institute for Christian Education were invited to participate in the initial postgraduate survey for a larger research project. The 33 respondents were invited to indicate their willingness to participate in a further interview stage for this follow-up study. The twelve people who consented to be interviewed were then emailed instructions to search for two images to bring to a scheduled interview. These images could be photos of themselves, hand-drawn images, or images found on the internet. They were asked to schedule an interview either in person or by phone, depending on their physical location. Because of the extra burden of obtaining photos before an interview, it has often been difficult in PEI research to recruit participants (Torre & Murphy, 2015). However, of the initial volunteers, seven followed through with the interview and requested images.

Since the purpose of the study was to uncover implicit beliefs held prior to engaging in National Institute study as compared to those held upon completion of study, instructions were given to prepare for the interview by selecting an image that could represent them before their study and one representing them after their study, in particular, as relating to their personal and professional development as an educator. It was suggested that the interviewees consider any type of metaphor but that they try to find something that would depict the first thing that came to mind.

During the interview, participants were first asked to describe each image and their rationale for selecting it. Further photo-elicitation interview questions focused on clarification of the meanings the images represented, changes between one image and the other, and what they perceived to be the cause of any change. Clarification prompts emphasized the influence of particular people, units of study, 'ah-ha' moments, and personal or professional circumstances. Finally, they were asked to express any changes in their own professional practice they have experienced as a result of their study.

It must be stated that the researcher has a vested interest in the outcomes of this research because of her position at the National Institute for Christian Education. Therefore, extra care was taken throughout the interviews to not influence responses beyond the pre-determined prompts and in the analysis to use the respondents' actual words when discussing their images, stated changes and emotions.

**Analysis**

Although these photo-elicitation interviews drew their data largely from metaphors, it was decided not to use systematic metaphor analysis or grounded theory in the data analysis because of the structuralist restrictions that would need to be applied (Fabian, 2013; Schmitt, 2005; Yin, 2003). Instead of systematically breaking down the interviews into reductive themes in order to treat the words or phrases as cold, superficial pieces of data, the researcher has opted to analyse this study through a more post-qualitative analysis that "is richer in interpretation" as "deconstruction makes evident that language does not have intrinsic meaning. Language is used to construct ideas." (Douglas, 2017, pp. 2–4)

Although a qualitative software analysis tool (NVIVO) was used in a superficial analysis of the interview data, the task of coding, recoding, combining, regrouping and rearranging codes

in order to identify 'themes' was forgone in favour of deconstructive analysis in looking for representative words, feelings, connections and hidden meanings in order to develop a consistent narrative. This is more in keeping with the "post-positivist approach [of PEI which] acknowledges that while photographs are a physical representation of an observed reality, how a viewer interprets a photograph depends on what is within the photo's frame, as well as the personal experiences of the viewer and the context of the viewing" (Torre & Murphy, 2015, p. 11). Likewise, in an attempt to conduct biblically cognizant research, such a critical realist approach aligns more appropriately with the un-hiding of *Weltanschauung* (world and life view) presuppositions in the biblical sense of truth (*aletheia*) seeking for redemptive purposes. "Applied to research, a critical realist approach implies the need for research to not merely unhide knowledge but to use the knowledge gained to transform or empower others—often those who are participants in the research" (Beech & Beech, 2016, p. 10).

Thus, the focus has been to delve into the deeper meaning of the transcript of each respondent (designated R1 to R7) in order to determine in what ways PEI is an appropriate research tool for evaluating the presence and effect of transformed implicit worldview beliefs as revealed in the descriptions of before and after images of how graduates see themselves in relation to their postgraduate study.

**Findings- metaphors**

Participants were quite eager to share about the images they had found, describing the exercise as reflective and "bridging the gap in terms of emotion" (R2). There were no complaints about being difficult to find images rather they "like(d) making the metaphors." (R6). Throughout the course of the interviews some even added additional metaphors as representative of their view of themselves before and after their study. One respondent stated, "It's a metaphor but it's not complete, so you have to explain the thinking behind your choices . . . . I think that's a useful process to look at" (R6).

A description of the photos respondents chose for their before or after image of themselves regarding their postgraduate study are set out in Table 1 along with a brief capsule of the main point of the metaphor and a corresponding summary of their expressed main cause of the change. These summaries, however, do not do justice to the actual descriptions of the photo

images that were quite rich in depth and feeling. For instance, Respondent 1 (R1)'s *before* description included the following:

> *My first image was a ship sailing in stormy seas—sort of sailing on, more or less. It's quite unstable. It looks like it's going to tip over. Things around it are a bit chaotic. It's getting there, but not quite as effective as it could be, I guess . . . . So in the context of my teaching, things were going okay. There was lots of chaos all around me. That's what happens in the first couple of years of teaching, I guess. So it wasn't understanding, as such, but I guess I wanted to learn how to teach more effectively and to ride those chaotic waves of teaching a little bit better.*

Then the description of R1's *after* image was:

> *So, the stormy seas are still there—in some ways I'm in a more leadership position so the waves are actually higher than the first photograph but at the same time I've learnt how to ride and how to navigate those waves better. So it's the picture of a surfer riding a large wave as if it was perfected in the sense that the waves are still there, it's still stormy, but, much like learning, it's still chaotic in many ways, but it's really easier to navigate and to recognize those waves and those perils that come my way, you know, the things that are going to rock the boat—maybe gales that come against education—to navigate it more effectively*

In additional clarification, they added:

> *If I wanted the perfect image I would have seen in that second image, particularly, God pushing the waves. That would be the perfect metaphor. He is pushing you to greater heights. Yeah the difference between the two images is the sense that It feels like in the first image you are riding the waves and you feel alone. Whereas, actually, after studying the Masters there is a real sense that God is with you and that God is leading you through this journey. And the wave is very much a journey like life. So there is that sense of even though sometimes up and down things are chaotic, God is at the heart of everything both in driving my past and all around me. My eyes have been opened in many ways through the Masters. I've been really blessed. I'm ecstatic that I chose it.*

Reponses from all of the participants were equally detailed in their description of the rich imagery implicit in the metaphors and the emotions or thoughts involved in their selection.

**Table 1:** Before and After Metaphors for National Institute Study

| | BEFORE | | CAUSE OF CHANGE | AFTER | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Metaphor | Main point | | Metaphor | Main point |
| **R1** | Ship sailing in stormy seas | "It's a bit chaotic…. Still getting there but not quite as effective as it could be." | Took the time to "force myself to reflect upon those bigger issues, and bigger issues in education, which has been great." | Surfer riding a large wave | Stormy seas still there but "I've learnt how to ride and navigate them." |
| **R2** | Person rock-climbing held by ropes and helping others up | Taking other people along a standard two-directional path. Safe. | A "refocus of what I'm doing" and "trying to filter things through . . . the biblical perspective." | Stylized drawing of an amusement ride called the rotor where floor falls out but people are up against the carrying on with life—three dimensional | "A deeper understanding about things but also an understanding about just how complex everything is." |
| **R3** | A person sitting on a hill looking out over the mountains just pondering | Still didn't really get what I was doing in Christian education but content where I was | "To recognise what was not working well and then going from there." | Two girls on the beach jumping for joy | My 'knee-jerk' reaction that I was glad I did it but was glad it was over and I got my life back with my family. |
| **R4** | A photo of Nicolas Cage screaming "I **am** being loving!" | Representing a 'cage stage Calvinist' set in his views. | Undertaking more reading and study, interaction with others "who have wisdom but are generous in their thinking towards others." | Mahatma Ghandi, older and wiser. | "Quite measured in the way in which he deals with things." |
| **R5** | Car smoking from exhaust pipe | On a journey, things are working together to move, but "there's something maybe not quite right." | Exposed to the idea of multiple worldviews. | Garage with cars up on hoists being repaired. | Now knowing what was wrong and how to fix it. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **R6** | Sad, dreary barely blooming wattle (flower). | They were going okay but it just wasn't at its best. | "So the purpose of the study actually made you reflect on not just my practice in my classroom or from the committees that I was in but on my worldview." | That sprig of wattle that is just in full bloom. | Absolutely glorious, producing pollen and just doing what they need to do: "it makes me blossom." |
| **R7** | Man yelling with his hands up in triumph but a huge question mark overhead | Thought Christian education was just a Christian teacher standing in front of the classroom— "obviously knew very little." | "Understanding my place in the biblical story" and the significance of worldviews "applied to different aspects of my practice." | "A man doing a bunch of calculations in his head but he can see all the calculations in front of him." | Can see the problems and consider some solutions. |
| **Additional metaphors offered without prompting** | | | | | |
| | Like the difference between knowing you are going to be a dad but not understanding what that actually means and being a dad. | | | "You can't explain the transition but that moment when your eyes are open when you first hold your daughter or your child . . . when it all makes sense." | |
| | Dry season skies in the Northern Territory that are clear beautiful and crystal blue colour (but rather boring). | | | Would have liked a photo of this time of year with "amazing storm clouds of grey textured and full . . . sometimes with lightning." | |

## Aha moments!

Respondents indicated factors they felt were important in bringing about the change between the first and second images, as indicated in Table 1. However, their 'Aha!' moments were also indicative of elements that brought about "profound shifts in one's awareness or consciousness of being in the world—what we refer to as transformative learning" (Dirkx, 2006, p. 19). When asked, one responded, "Oh, there are far too many Aha moments to name!" (R1). Books, readings, conversations with lecturers as well as feedback on assignments all contributed to these moments of transformation.

Several respondents said the core units were "quite important", particularly the worldview unit, because of "all these ideas of worldview sloshing around in your head" that

finally "made sense" (R2). Despite the academic challenges, one respondent indicated a particular lecturer "was both the bane of my existence . . . and pushed me to much greater heights . . . [as it was] revealed to me how shallow my thinking was" (R7). Several also mentioned being changed because they understood "there's no single square inch of creation of which Christ does not cry 'mine' and . . . it's just this mantra that . . . sort of became the core of my whole study" (R3).

**Change in practice**

"In addition to Mezirow's description of changes in worldview and habits of thinking, transformative learning often results in changes in being, such as in one's forms of relatedness to others and to the world" (Hoggan, 2014, p. 134), therefore, respondents were broadly questioned about any particular changes in their professional practice or personal life. National Institute study flows out of a particularly reformed theological perspective however, most graduates felt it actually made them more tolerant of individuals with differing views, "less affronted by people's rebellion in the classroom, and actually willing to sort of think, 'well what's going on for them?'" (R2). One stated, "I'm probably as strong as ever in my thinking and yet I'm comfortable that other people think differently and am okay to let it happen that way" (R4). Another reflected, "So it's interesting because it hasn't just filled in a lot of the gaps but actually changed a lot of my mind set as well" (R2). Other comments on changed practices included:

*I'm really trying to filter things through going 'Is that what God would want? Is that what we're on about? Is that the focus of what we should be doing or is there something we're missing here? Or . . . what is actually the Biblical perspective on this? (R3)*

*My practice has changed quite dramatically. I have been growing as a teacher over the past few years but a fairly big part of it has been from being in the masters, being very deliberate with how I teach. Teaching from a Christian perspective and a Christian worldview and letting my perspective really infiltrate my teaching. Again, I'm not just tacking on Christianity and biblical narrative but actually teaching through the narrative. That's changed how I teach. (R1)*

**Emotions**

It has been suggested transformative learning may elicit "the expression of powerful affect or emotion, associated with particular instructional content or processes in adult learning, [that] usually suggests there is more to the experience than meets the eye" (Dirkx, 2006, p. 22). Therefore, particular attention has been paid to emotive words in respondents' discourse. Table 2 lists all of the emotive words associated with the graduates' descriptions of themselves either before or after their study. Instead of being attributed to each respondent, they are grouped by similarity and ordered against contrasting emotions in order to determine if there is an apparent change in their unconscious perception of themselves in their professional world.

**Table 2:** Emotions Associated with Graduates Before and After National Institute Study

| Emotions Before | Emotions After |
| --- | --- |
| Afraid | Relief |
| | Contentment |
| | |
| Feeling lost | Authority |
| Skewed | Led by God |
| Something not quite right | Repaired |
| | Recognize what was not right |
| | |
| Feeling my way | Longer term goals |
| Just okay | Deliberate |
| | Unconscious decisions |
| | |
| Not at one's best | Equipped |
| Not effective | Faithful person |
| | |
| Not fulfilled | Joy |
| | Praising God |
| | |
| Not getting it | Understanding |
| Thought I understood | Deeper level critique |
| Shallow thinking | High level conversations |
| | |
| On my own | In community |
| | Helping others |
| | |
| Pondering | Unhiding |
| | Wisdom |
| | |
| Stressful | Calmness |
| | Praise God |

| | |
|---|---|
| Strong Views | Non-confronting |
| Questionable triumph | Respecting others |
| | Measuredness |
| Hard Edge | Patience |
| Yelling | Gentleness |
| Content where I was | Challenges as beautiful |
| Safe | Three dimensional |
| Two dimensional | |
| Wrong worldviews | See things differently |
| Black and white | No solid solutions |

## Discussion and conclusion

In response to the first research question, several insights gained from the metaphors of the photo elicitation images indicate that National Institute for Christian Education courses have been transformational for graduates' worldview assumptions and educational practices. Across all the participants, the *before* and *after* metaphors themselves are quite distinct; every individual indicated that a significant change had taken place within them in more than just their external practice. These graduates of the National Institute actually *see themselves differently* as a result of having completed these studies.

The participants were able to articulate some of the factors that influenced the change. These were often considered, *aha moments* and often were associated with study units, readings, or lecturers who incited cognitive dissonance with previously unchallenged implicit beliefs. The changes were not temporary but rather were "deeply shaping" (R4).

Every respondent actually mentioned *worldview* in their interviews, either in reference to the actual core worldview unit of study, with regard to the changes in their understanding, or in reference to their new way of understanding themselves in the world. For instance, one stated, "I found that while I'm not thinking about particular NICE courses when I am planning things, I think it's infiltrated a lot of my thinking when it does come to actually teaching in ways that I probably don't even realise" (R7).

Each individual also felt their study had affected the way they deal with others and their sense of self-esteem. The unfiltered list of named emotions from before and after study seems to indicate a clear distinction between the emotive states of the respondents. All of the *before* emotions indicate insecurity, confusion, doubt, loneliness, intolerance and misunderstanding, whereas the emotions expressed *after* postgraduate study are of joy, strength, understanding, tolerance, and overall satisfaction.

> *Such outcomes are similar to the transformative learning outcomes described by different scholars. For instance, Lange's (2004) description of a change in people's ways of being in the world encompasses outcomes such as more genuine relationships and a greater appreciation for life. Similarly, both literatures refer to a deeper sense of spirituality and greater authenticity* (Hoggan, 2014, p. 135).

Was photo elicitation (PEI) found to be a useful method for uncovering implicit, pre-suppositional worldview beliefs? Given that the case has been made that this set of graduates of the National Institute postgraduate courses have experienced transformation, the photo elicitation interview (PEI) has been shown to be an effective tool in stimulating deeper and richer narratives than might have been possible through direct questioning alone. The photos, or images, represent metaphors that have not only required thought in their selection but that also prompted respondents to draw out deeper, possibly hidden, meaning behind them. Respondents themselves indicated that they enjoyed this process and appreciated the opportunity to think more deeply about what their study had actually done for them. As compared to traditional interview or survey methods, the photo elicitation interview (PEI) has been shown to give insight into elements of research that are often hard to extract, specifically, implicit worldview assumptions. Although further research should be conducted to amplify its application in similar studies, this study has found that significant transformation occurred in the graduates over the course of their postgraduate studies at the National Institute for Christian Education.

Many Christian higher education programs promote the *transformative* aspects of their courses without necessarily having actual research to back those claims. The postgraduate teacher education program offered by the National Institute for Christian education was founded by educators from a Kuyperian tradition who were particularly concerned that school teachers in their movement would be able to teach from a profound understanding of their place in God's

Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration story. For administrators of the program, it is of vital importance to know if worldview transformation has occurred as a result of the coursework in order to substantiate its value for the school association. This proved to have been the case with a sample of graduates and PEI was shown to be a very useful tool with which to explore the nature and depth of this transformation.

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**Training up a minister: Principles of discipleship and leadership training
from the example of Paul and Timothy**

*By Andrew J. Staggs*

**Abstract:**

This paper will explore the training and ministry development of Timothy by analysing the leadership dynamics of Paul and Timothy. In a manner not entirely clear to us Paul trained a large team of leaders and co-workers. These leaders were gifted in preaching and teaching and they were equipped to disciple new converts, launch churches and establish Christian communities. In their writings, neither Paul nor Luke, discuss the development of the New Testament leadership in a systematic way. Timothy himself has no recorded words. Information about Paul and Timothy has to be gleaned from passing comments on the activities of the missions or from passages dealing primarily with other matters.

This paper seeks to discuss and identify key concepts related to Timothy's leadership and ministerial formation by exploring the leadership dynamics of Paul and Timothy. When addressing the training of a young minister, scholars generally overlook the intangibles of the development relationship including the values and philosophy of the senior leader. The emergence of research in transformational leadership concepts enhances this exploration of the complex dynamics of leader and follower. This paper will lead to principles for the effective discipleship, leadership development and ministerial formation of leaders.

**Introduction**

This paper will explore the leadership dynamics of Paul and Timothy and how Timothy was trained to be a minister. It will start by outlining who Timothy was in relation to Paul and Paul's leadership network. This will help to identify a general chronology of their activities and leadership partnership. As neither Paul nor Luke discussed the development of the New Testament leadership in a systematic way in their writings, information about this has to be gleaned from passing comments on the activities of the missions or from passages dealing primarily with other matters. Timothy will be identified as an important co-worker in Paul's leadership network. This paper will then discover keys for how the Paul and Timothy leadership

partnership developed over time. Timothy spent a lot of time with Paul watching, modelling and being apprenticed in ministry and leadership.

The paper then focuses on Paul, and discusses his uniqueness as a leader. We will then be able to gain insights into how the distinctives of Paul's leadership shaped Timothy for future effective ministry. The paper will continue to explore Paul as a unique leader with a different leadership approach and mindset. We will undertake a discussion on Paul's different philosophy, focus, ethos and skills. The paper will move to identify how Paul was transformed and link this to the leadership partnership with Timothy. This will also sharpen our understanding of the leadership dynamics that are in operation.

We will then continue the exploration of the leadership dynamics of Paul and Timothy by undertaking a deeper review of the leadership development and education culture in Greco-Roman Times. This will help to deepen the appreciation of the uniqueness of Paul's leadership approach and skills, and especially how Paul redefines education, leadership and success in the context of his kingdom understanding. The paper will then identify more specific leadership dynamics of Paul and Timothy. The discussion will focus on the key dynamics of imitation, teamwork in community, leadership relationships, and modelling and mentoring.

**Apostle Paul and Timothy – A leadership partnership**

The Apostle Paul was a significant leader who "attracted friends around him like a magnet attracts iron filings" (Bruce, 2006, p. 8). He was very rarely seen working alone. Paul preferred to have others working with him and there are references to over a hundred different people in his letters that partnered with him in some way (Spell, 2006, p. 134). Of all members of Paul's circle, there was none with whom he formed a closer attachment than Timothy. In six of Paul's letters, Timothy's name is allied with his own in the opening address. In four of these Timothy's name is the only one to be related with Paul's in that way. This does not infer that Timothy always had any significant share in the composition of the letters. Paul had other companions when he sent the letters being referred to, but Timothy's name is associated with his own, most likely because Timothy shared his ministry on a more regular basis. His close leadership partnership with Paul has some referring to Timothy as a "change agent" (Malina, 2008, p. 77). This is a good endorsement for the junior partner of a long-term ministry relationship.

Timothy's history is indicated in Acts and the Pastoral Epistles. He was a native of Lystra in the Lycaonian region of the province of Galatia. He was the son of a mixed marriage; his mother was a Jewess and his father was Greek (The Jews of Anatolia were reputed to be laxer about mixed marriages than Jews in many other parts of the Dispersion). His Jewish mother, Eunice, brought him up in her faith, with the added encouragement of her own mother Lois (2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy was well versed from childhood in the Old Testament scriptures, presumably in their Greek form (2 Tim. 3:15). He first appears in Luke's narrative when Paul (accompanied by Silas) pays his second visit to Lystra, returning to his Gentile mission-field after the Council of Jerusalem. By this time Timothy could be called a "disciple…the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer" (Acts 16:1). It appears, then, that mother and son had come to faith in Christ during Paul's previous visit to Lystra (in company with Barnabas), two or three years previously (Acts 14:6-20; Bruce, 1999, p. 214; Marshall, 1986; Vaughan, 1974). That Timothy was a convert of Paul's is further implied by his description as Paul's "true-born child in faith" (Bruce, 2006, p. 29).

Timothy's spiritual development had been rapid since his conversion. He was commended (Acts 16:2), not only by responsible Christians in his own city but also by those in nearby Iconium. Paul quickly satisfied himself that their commendation was well founded, and decided that this youth had the qualities which would make him a very valuable assistant to him in his missionary and pastoral work (Acts 16:3). Timothy was very willing to accompany Paul.

As the son of a Jewish mother, Timothy would have ranked as a genuine Jew, but for the fact that he had never been circumcised (no doubt his Gentile father would protest). To all practical intents and purposes, he was a Jew in Gentile eyes, but in Jewish eyes he was worse than a Gentile – he was an apostate Jew (because he was uncircumcised). Therefore, to regularise his status, Paul circumcised him. Had he had not done so he "would have supported apostasy and would no longer have been allowed to appear in any synagogue" (Hengel, 1980, p. 64). To Paul, circumcision in itself was a matter of complete indifference (Gal. 5:6, 6:15), however he objected when circumcision was imposed or accepted as a religious obligation, or as a necessity for salvation. Paul was positioning Timothy for effective engagement in future ministry.

Timothy accompanied Paul (and Silas) through Asia Minor to Troas (Acts 16:8), where they were joined by Luke. From there they set sail for Macedonia, landing at Neapolis and going

inland to Philippi (Acts 16:12; Bruce, 1988, p. 305). There Timothy saw some of the hazards attendant on apostolic activity – he had probably seen them already, although without personal involvement, when Paul was nearly stoned to death at Lystra on his first visit there (Acts 14:19). From Philippi, the missionary party went on to Thessalonica, and after some weeks they had to leave the city in a hurry. Paul was escorted for his own safety, first to Berea, and then on to Athens. When Silas and Timothy were able to re-join him in Athens, Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica by Paul (1 Thess. 3:5) to see how the young church there was faring, and to give it the encouragement and reassurance it required in the midst of persecution. This was a responsible mission, and Timothy must have been judged capable of discharging it. He returned to join Paul in Corinth, bringing a good report of the Thessalonian Christians' stability and community witness, which prompted the sending of the letter 1 Thessalonians (Bruce, 2006, p. 31). We can start to see Timothy emerging as an envoy involved in maintaining contacts with congregations founded by Paul (Westerholm, 2011, p. 110).

Timothy appears to have been with Paul for the greater part of Paul's eighteen-month stay in Corinth (Acts 18:11), and later of his three-year ministry in Ephesus (Bruce, 2006; Hiebert, 1992). Paul's ministry in Ephesus was punctuated with disquieting reports from his converts in Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17), and in his dealings with them he found Timothy's aid of great value. He sent Timothy from Ephesus to Corinth about the same time as the letter which we know as 1 Corinthians, to convey by word of mouth some of the lessons emphasised in the letter (1 Cor. 4:17). Timothy evidently set out before the letter was sent, but might not have arrived in Corinth until after it had been received; presumably he was to visit other places as well as Corinth (Acts 19:22). Paul thought it necessary to urge the Corinthians not to despise Timothy but put him at his ease among them (1 Cor. 16:10-11).

Timothy was with Paul in Corinth a year or two later when the letter to the Romans was sent (Rom. 16:21), and he was one of the large party that escorted Paul on his last voyage to Judaea (Acts 20:4). After Paul's arrest in Jerusalem we lose sight of Timothy, but he reappears with Paul in Rome (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Philem. 1). When Paul had reason to believe that a judicial decision would soon be taken about him in the imperial court, he wrote to his Philippian friends telling them that, as soon as he knew the outcome, he would send Timothy to give them the news and for him to bring back an update from them. It is at this point that he gives Timothy a quite remarkable praise: "I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your

welfare. They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But Timothy's worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel." (Phil. 2:20-22). We see in these passages all the fondness which a father could feel for a likeminded son, and in return, the service and devotion which Paul received from Timothy (Bruce, 1999).

On one occasion Paul gave Timothy an important commission to be fulfilled in the Ephesian church (Hiebert, 1992). Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus to provide continuing leadership for the church in this great city. Because of Timothy's experience of working at Thessalonica and Corinth and serving as a traveling companion with Paul, the apostle trusted his ability to lead the church at Ephesus. Paul needed someone who knew both Judaism and the Greco-Roman religions to guide that church, which existed amid religious syncretism. Timothy met these requirements. Paul later he sent him a message from his condemned cell, begging him to come to him with all haste and to collect on the way the cloak, books and parchments which he had left at Troas some time before (2 Tim. 4:6-12; Hiebert, 1992). It is not known if Timothy reached Rome in time to see Paul before he died. It is also difficult to ascertain if it was before this, or at a rather later date, that Timothy himself was imprisoned for the gospel's sake. "Our brother Timothy," we read in the personal notes with which the letter to the Hebrews is concluded, "has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon." (Heb. 13:23). The circumstances of this imprisonment are also unknown (Bruce, 2006). Timothy continued to be involved in the activities and hazards of the leadership network and ministry.

It is interesting that Timothy was very willing to accompany Paul and be part of his leadership network. He no doubt found something exceptionally captivating about Paul's distinctive personality. For his sake, and for the sake of the gospel to which Paul was dedicated, he was prepared to forget the ambitions which a young man of his gifts and opportunities could reasonably have activated. His ready self-sacrifice and unfailing commitment was deeply treasured by Paul.

In this next section we began to explore the leadership dynamics of Paul and Timothy by outlining who Timothy was and the general way that he was engaged in Paul's leadership network. We saw how Timothy was given practical experience including short-term assignments and increasing responsibility. Having established a general chronology for their leadership partnership we will now look at Paul and his uniqueness as a leader. This will help us

start to gain some clarity about Paul's leadership, development, ministry philosophy and how he developed the leadership of Timothy.

**Apostle Paul – A unique leader**

In the previous section we identified Timothy as an important co-worker in Paul's leadership network. We identified themes relating to how the Paul and Timothy leadership partnership developed over time. Timothy spent a lot of time with Paul watching him, modelling his life and being apprenticed in ministry and leadership. He was also given hands-on experience and increasing responsibility over time. This section will focus on Paul and discuss the uniqueness of Paul as a leader. We will be able to gain insights into how the distinctives of Paul's leadership and his own development shaped Timothy for future effective ministry.

Paul stands out as the "charismatic leader *par excellence*" (Giles, 1989, p. 179). His psychological profile was far from normal. It was so unusual that some researchers have speculated that he was an epileptic (Cole, 1978), asserting this affliction to be the "thorn in the flesh" that troubled him so (2 Cor. 12:7). Paul had an unusual unique temperament. For instance, he was a man who frequently received visions (Acts 22:17-18), though his transforming experience near Damascus was not merely a vision but a real event, an actual meeting with the risen Christ (Acts 22:6). The unnamed individual (2 Cor. 12:2) who had mystic experiences of visits to heaven and of hearing unutterable words is almost certainly Paul himself. He thanks God that he enjoyed the ecstatic Holy Spirit experience of "speaking with tongues" far more than the most excitable Corinthian convert (1 Cor. 14:18). He could be completely prostrated by depression, so much so that he felt as if he was under the sentence of death (2 Cor. 1:8-9). On the other hand, the extravagance of his joy knew no bounds (Phil. 1:3-4), and the *Christ-mysticism* of Paul (Gal. 2:20), however understood, showed a tremendous depth of spiritual intensity. Further, Paul also enjoyed an understanding of and partnership with Holy Spirit in his ministry. On the whole, "unusual" would be a better word than "abnormal". This is because the characteristics outlined here are combined with sober judgment and with mental balance in leading and dealing with the practical problems of the churches (Cole, 1978, p. 123).

The relationship with and understanding of the Holy Spirit that Paul had, was a unique feature of his ministry and leadership, and is worthy of further discussion. The Holy Spirit had a very important place in Paul's theology (Paige, 1993), because it enabled the bonding of the

historical Jesus who was raised from the dead, with the Lord of heaven, who is simultaneously present with his people. The importance of the Spirit in Paul's ministry and writing may be on the basis of the early Christian communities' experience of the Holy Spirit in their midst, including Paul's own experience. This was evidenced in the working of miracles; in the experience of boldness and wisdom to proclaim the gospel even through difficult situations; in the perception of God's presence during worship; in the encouragement of prophecy; and in the emotions of joy. These experiences for the early Christians were signs of the Spirit present and acting. Paul, more than any other New Testament writer, linked the concept of the Spirit given to live inside believers with living the Christian life (Paige, 1993).

Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit indwells believers and empowers them to live a life pleasing to God (Rom. 8:1-4, 12:1; 1 Thess. 4:1), and pleasing to the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9; Eph. 5:10). This life is described as being "led by the Spirit" (Rom. 8:14), or "walking in the Spirit." (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25). Paul declared that the Spirit is not only the power of God convincing believers of the truth of the gospel, not only helping its preaching, but the Spirit is the power of new creation to those who have come to faith in Christ. Paul also observed that the Holy Spirit had an intimate connection with the gospel message and he empowered the Christian mission. This is vividly portrayed with the directing of Paul at key points in the expansion of the gospel (Acts 11:12, 13:2-5, 16:6-10). Paul himself wrote to the church at Rome that he had been enabled to lead Gentiles to God "by what I have said and done - by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit." (Rom. 15:18-19). He referred to his apostolic task as a "ministry of the Spirit," (2 Cor. 3:8), of which evangelism was a significant component. The Spirit accompanied his missionary preaching by confirming the truth of the message in his hearers' hearts; and by empowering Paul to effect "signs and wonders." (Rom. 15:18-19; 2 Cor. 12:12). In summary, Paul was transformed by and partnered with Holy Spirit to outwork God's agenda of redemption.

Paul was also very clear about the power and purpose of influence as a leader. He understood the principle of God's plan of discipleship and that leadership development is the influence of one life on another - the character, perspective and skill of one godly person influencing another enthusiastic person. Paul understood the role of *paideia* (education) in his culture as the process of developing citizens and leaders (White, 2015, p. 140). *Paideia* was a matter of imitation (White, 2015, p. 181). Teachers were not merely educators; they were also

role models. Paul positioned and identified himself as a worthy role model and would often draw a sharp distinction between himself and other leaders, characterising his life and ministry in the worst possible terms in order to demonstrate how closely his own life resembled what God was seeking and what it looked like to embody Christian *paideia* (White, 2015, p. 196).

The aim of the *paideia* was obedience, which should encourage those who believe that faith is action sustained by belief. Further, a disciple develops character in community with others through imitation. The method is tried and true: "Entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." (2 Tim. 2:2). This means that, as a leader, Paul chose to invest his best effort in developing faithful leaders who were able to reproduce. A leader's behaviour reveals what they really care about. This important theme will be explored more deeply in a later section.

Paul's special leadership and authority also came from the fact that he was the "spiritual father" (e.g., 1 Cor. 4:17), to the cluster of churches that looked to him for leadership. It was natural for them to look to Paul in this way as he had been instrumental in their conversion to Christ. He was also the one who discipled them and trained their leaders. In addition, Paul was still a pastor to them, even though he had delegated the leadership of the specific church to others (Spell, 2006). Paul presents himself as their father and offers himself up as a model of life in Christ. At the same time he defines his own authority not only as a leader and apostle, but as the founder of the church, and this is reason for the churches to imitate him. Witherington (1995) states, "Paul distinguishes himself both from the sort of father figure the emperor might be and from the sort other teachers…might be" (p. 145), and he is the one who they should look to as their example. If needed, Paul is also the one who can discipline them. The most important example of a role model and the person a child was expected to imitate was the father (White, 2015).

Paul was also an innovative communicator evidenced by his unique use of letters in his sphere of influence. His letters to the Christian communities "were highly innovative by the standards of the time. These letters drew on all of the available forms of media, as well as contemporary rhetorical techniques in order to fully relate to its audience"(White, 2016, p. 124). Paul's letters may also be characterised as long-distance preaching and leadership development. They were a form of preaching not only because they addressed explicit needs in early churches but also because they were primarily oral communications (Greidanus, 1993).

Except for brief conclusions (2 Thess. 3:17; Gal. 6:11; 1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18), Paul did not write these letters but dictated them to secretaries and associates like Timothy (Rom. 16:22), for the purpose of public reading in the churches. Like preaching, therefore, these letters were a form of oral communication. Moreover, in the Greek letter-writing tradition, a letter was a stand-in for the presence (*parousia*) of its author. Since Paul was "unable to be present in person, his letters were a direct substitute, and were to be accorded weight equal to Paul's physical presence." (1 Cor. 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 10:11). Listening to Paul's letter being read, therefore, was the same as hearing Paul himself speak - except that this speaking was long-distance and was committed to writing.

To further illustrate, Paul constructed some of his letters to give effect to "apostolic parousia" (Funk, 1967, p. 249), or leadership presence. Paul reminds readers in these passages of his apostolic authority by "making his presence powerfully felt through the letter itself, by reference to the visit of a representative like Timothy or to Paul's coming visit" (Trebilco, 1993, p. 449). The letter and the representative are proxies for Paul's own presence when he cannot travel, but both serve as a means of transmitting his apostolic authority. The presence of Paul in person was the primary way in which he made his apostolic authority effective (1 Cor. 4:19; Phil. 1:24-25), and he would rather have given his material in person than by letter or via a representative. These two alternatives were sometimes necessary as a visit to a young church during times of conflict could make things worse (Trebilco, 1993).

Clearly Paul attached great importance to his attendance with his congregations. In Galatians 4:20 he writes "How I wish I were present with you now and could exchange my voice [for this letter]." However, over time and with coaching, Timothy grew in strength and presence and was able to "presence" Paul more effectively. In this way Paul was able to multiply his leadership efforts.

In summary, we have identified that Paul was a distinctive leader. This is evidenced, for example by Paul's leadership strength, and his clarity about the importance of partnering with Holy Spirit, role modelling, spiritual fathering, and communication.

**Apostle Paul – A transformed leader**

Before we move on from the discussion of the distinctiveness of Paul as a leader we need to further explore the journey of transformation of Paul into a unique leader. We will identify

some aspects of Paul's formation and link them to the leadership partnership with Timothy. This will also sharpen our understanding of the leadership dynamics that were in operation and that are transferable.

The expansion of the gospel to the ends of the earth was a formidable project. A unique leader would be needed in order for the Christian faith to go out into all the world. Paul was uniquely the man of two worlds. He was "Jewish to the last fibre of his being, but also a man who knew the Romans and the Greeks as few Jews knew them…here indeed was the man prepared by God to be the bridge between two worlds and to be a bridge by which the Gentiles might come to God" (Barclay, 1958, p. 25). This leads us to an exploration of Paul's leadership and ministerial formation. It is a rich tapestry of unique shaping and experiences.

One representative development season was when Barnabas saw the need to bring Paul (still called Saul at that time) (Acts 11:25), to Antioch to help him (Spell, 2006). Luke does not indicate the justification for Barnabas' decision to bring Paul to Antioch (Ramsay, 1951). Perhaps he felt that Paul's background distinctively matched him for this type of ministry in a mostly Gentile setting. With both men in Antioch, the result was that, "for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people" (Acts 11:26).

It seems clear that during this time in Antioch, Paul initially occupied a subordinate role to Barnabas (Riesner, 1998, p. 271), although over time he is part of the local church leadership together with others of equal status (Riesner, 1998, p. 272). Paul witnessed large numbers of converts who were discipled and received systematic instruction (Keener, 2012, p. 1847), in the principles of their new faith (Bruce, 1988, p. 228). He is not said to "teach" believers before this point at Antioch, although it is implied in his disciples in Acts 9:25. Paul did not help found the church but was brought on to assist Barnabas in a pastoral role and in teaching the new congregation. Barnabas and Paul already had a relationship from the time of Paul's first post-conversion trip to Jerusalem. Barnabas knew Paul well enough that he felt comfortable in asking him to become a part of the leadership team in the Antioch church (Talbert, 1997). He is shown to be vouching for the authenticity of Paul's salvation, as well as the authenticity of his ministry.

The year that the two men spent working together in Antioch would have solidified and strengthened that relationship (Murray, 1998). As a subordinate of Barnabas, Paul would have also gained valuable training for future ministry (Hiebert, 1992, p. 44). It appears that the primary role of Barnabas and Paul was in teaching and instructing the church in Antioch after the

apostolic pattern. This time of ministry in Antioch would have allowed the two men to get comfortable in working together. It would have also have given them the opportunity to get acquainted with each other's theology and understanding of the gospel.

Paul learned to work in a team and to secure the support and endorsement of the church leaders in Jerusalem. It appears that Paul was engaged in missionary work before Barnabas recruited him. This was very likely the first local church that Paul had been a part of and it would prove to be a determining factor for the rest of his ministry (Spell, 2006). As we will see in a later section this development and strategic formation will be repeated in the leadership development of Timothy over time through mentoring, endorsement and imitation.

This discussion has started to give insight into the transformation of the person and works of Paul, the enigmatic first-century apostle to the Gentiles (Witherington, 1998). Although he was rabbinically schooled, Paul's reassessment of the whole spirit and content of his earlier training was so radical that many Jewish scholars have had difficulty in recognising him as the creation of a rabbinical education (Bruce, 1999).

## Apostle Paul - A transformational leader

The discussion so far has highlighted Paul's practice of modelling and his understanding of incarnational mentoring. Training by example and in the context of relationship is very powerful. It is transformed trainers who facilitate transformation in students. To be effective teachers must model what they want to produce; "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). Relationship and modelling facilitate transformational training (Ferris, 1995). This happens when trainers "facilitate true attitudinal and character change when they sensitively blend learning *about* God with genuine first-hand learning *from* God. This is done when trainers recognise the way in which truth must be felt and obeyed as well as understood" (Ferris, 1995, p. 97).

Numerous studies have revealed direct and indirect connections between student success, learning, and strong teacher-student relationships (McMaster, 2013). Further, effective leaders are often outstanding motivators and coaches (DuBrin, Dalglish, & Miller, 2006), and this assists to develop the complex level of skills and capacities in trainees. It is also transformational or charismatic leadership that is often related with remarkably high levels of follower motivation (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2002). Current leadership theories include the model of

transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bellé, 2014). The Apostle Paul is thought by some scholars as being a transformational leader (Cooper, 2005). This leadership model covers four behavioural dimensions: "inspirational motivation, idealised influence, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration" (Bellé, 2014, p. 110).

These are understood as follows: inspirational motivation involves articulating a vision of the future that is appealing and inspiring to followers. Idealised influence is associated with charismatic actions and modelling behaviour that causes followers to identify with their leader. Intellectual stimulation involves soliciting followers' ideas and challenging them to question old assumptions and analyse problems from new perspectives. Individual consideration entails attending to each follower's needs through mentoring, coaching and other similar activities (Bellé, 2014, p. 110). This has been recently updated by researchers Avolio and Bass (2004), to encourages others (formerly inspirational motivation), builds trust (formerly idealized influence - attributes), acts with integrity (formerly idealized influence - behaviours), encourages innovative thinking (formerly intellectual stimulation), coaches & develops people (formerly individual consideration).

Transformational leadership involves motivating followers through communication, care and culture "to transcend their immediate self-interest for the sake of the team" (Bellé, 2014, p. 109). The success of transformational leaders is "measured by the effect of leader behaviours on followers. Followers of transformational leaders often verbalise feelings of admiration, respect, trust, and appreciation toward these leaders and are motivated to provide extra effort" (Webb, 2007, p. 54). Gilley, Gilley and McMillan (2008), add that a "leaders' thoughts and skills are manifested in actions, structures, and processes that enhance or impede change, further strengthening the linkage between their behaviours and effectiveness" in leadership activity (p. 78). To explain, unless a leader is understood as trustworthy it is difficult to motivate or hold the devotion of followers or to acquire collegial support and cooperation.

This modern understanding of Paul's New Testament style of leading helps us to understand how the principles of discipleship and leadership training in this paper can be understood in our context. It also helps us to understand how Paul and Timothy had worked together for almost 20 years and co-authored six epistles (Cooper, 2005).

In summary we have explored Paul as a unique leader with a different leadership approach. We saw how Paul filtered his ministry approach through the lens of Christian *paideia*,

led as a spiritual father, understood his shaping role as a mentor, and built teams and a web of co-workers.  We can now see how transformed leaders are then likely to be transformational leaders.  These are key aspects in the shaping and leadership development of Timothy.  Paul's own transformation was linked to his education (*paideia)* and development.  This needs a deeper investigation because of its potency and relation to imitation.  It is also important because it is a backdrop to the strength of the Paul-Timothy leadership partnership. The following section will explore the various elements of ancient education and life development processes.  We will also find a link between Paul's unique leadership with the idea of "kingdom *paideia.*"  This is very important in our understanding of the leadership dynamics in the development of the early church and with Paul and Timothy.

**Leadership education in Greco-Roman times and transformation by kingdom** *paideia*

In this section we will continue the exploration of the leadership dynamics of Paul and Timothy by undertaking a deeper review of the leadership development and education culture of that time.  This will help to understand the uniqueness of Paul's leadership approach and skills, and especially how Paul refocuses and redefines *paideia* (education), leadership and success in the context of his understanding of the kingdom of God.  This had a significant impact on Timothy's spiritual and ministerial formation.

The leadership development of Paul's ministry team including Timothy can begin to be explained against a backdrop of ancient education or *paideia* (White, 2015)*.  Paideia* was the means by which a child was trained and developed to be a cultured citizen and leader.  Jaeger (1946) noted long ago that the Greeks were the first to spot that education means intentionally moulding human character to achieve an ideal (pp. xvi-xvii).  Education furnished students with an adult identity - a status of mature, active, decision-making subjects (White, 2015).

This status was also perceived as "success." It was training for life, a process of enculturation that moulded a young person into an elite citizen and leader, and a means by which he could distinguish himself from others (White, 2015). However, it was part of a humanistic worldview, characterised by a set of virtues and beliefs at odds with the humble message of the Cross. It was in many ways the antithesis of the Christian message; it was the "wisdom" that saw as "foolish" a crucified Messiah (White, 2015, p. 58).  Paul notes that the true embodiment of God's wisdom and the head of the Christian school is not a human teacher, but is in fact Christ.

At times he made a conscious choice to appear weak and fearful. This is what aligned him with the "curriculum" of Christian education and life development, that is, the foolish message of the Cross. He also outlined the nature of the wisdom that he preached and defined true maturity as something that is characterised by (among other things) Spirit-possession. These *pneumatikoi,* it was suggested, are the students of Christian education and in Paul's view the true mature followers of Christ (White, 2015).

Paul's efforts and leadership is assessed by Judge (2008) who suggests that the early church presented a new way of life and leadership *paideia* that supervened the existing educational systems (Greek and Jewish)(as cited in White, 2015, p. 3). He further argues, "What we are observing is a matter of adult education, or indeed, as the apostles might have put it, a kind of higher education 'in Christ,' which is the complete development of man" (White, 2015, p. 4). Judge (2008) suggests that the apostles were not concerned with an educational system as such; rather, they were dedicated to "the preparation of man for his proper end." (as cited in White, 2015, p. 4).

This *new man in Christ* was characterised by three consistent features: The notion of the spiritual man (one who had the Spirit of God); the notion of the complete or adult man (growth towards a full personal development "in Christ"); and the notion of the loving man (since man is to grow to wholeness in Christ, the display of love will be the essential sign of growth) (White, 2015). This is the essence of transformation and this is the approach that was the backdrop for the development of Timothy as a young leader. It is yet another example of what differentiated Paul from other leaders and teachers. This is how Timothy was formed spiritually and how he was profoundly impacted. Paul used imitation and modelling as a leadership and educational shaping tool.

This new way of life and leadership *paideia* is further expounded by Saunders (1998), who argues that the "ideals of *paideia* are not ignored by Paul: they are recognised and transformed into kingdom *paideia*" (White, 2015, p. 194), or "kingdom of God *paideia*." To demonstrate "kingdom *paideia*," Paul writes to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:11), and lists the virtues of which Timothy, as a servant of God and leader, should pursue, and also lists (2 Tim. 2:22-25), the vices which he is to avoid and other virtues which he is to pursue. Bishops, deacons, elders are also to be aware of what is required and what is to be avoided (1 Tim. 3:2-7, 8-13; Titus 1:6-8). A list of virtues is included to remind Timothy of the way in which his mentor, Paul,

conducted his life (2 Tim. 3:10). Paul powerfully uses mentoring and imitation as an incarnational teacher to bring transformational training. He also reminds his leadership network and Christian communities of what a Christian leader and teacher is supposed to look like. He uses examples that are "infused with new meaning and values that sharply contrast with the existing social order" (White, 2015, p. 24).

In summary we have conducted a review of the leadership development and education culture at the time of Paul and Timothy's ministry. We have also seen the effectiveness of hands-on experience and how Paul in his day uniquely reframed the principles of education and leadership development. He led apostolically with a kingdom mindset that resulted in new education understandings and "kingdom *paideia*". We have identified the powerful principle of incarnational teaching and Paul's transformational leadership style. This leads us to conclude that it is transformed, transformational leaders who can transform others. As we reflect on the discussion so far, we have a deeper appreciation of the uniqueness of Paul's leadership approach and coaching skills. Having established a series of foundational principles we now have a clearer understanding of how Paul trained Timothy and how they ministered together over a long period of time with great effectiveness. It is now time to detail some more discipleship and leadership dynamics of Paul and Timothy.

**Leadership dynamics**

The discussion in this section focuses on the key dynamics of imitation, teamwork in community, leadership relationships, and modelling and mentoring. Firstly, Paul uses the language of "imitation" (*mimētēs/ mimeomai*) in five key passages (1 Cor. 4:16, 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:6, 2:14; 2 Thess. 3:6, 9). This follows on from a discussion in the previous section about imitation. It is very significant for Timothy because of the transforming effect that it had on his life and leadership. Paul had reorientated his understanding of the power of the gospel by turning his eyes to the Cross. In particular he has pointed to his own life as a leader and founder as an embodiment of a cruciform existence in the world. To imitate the weakness and power of Christ is to become the recipient of God's power in one's own weakness. Paul points to his life of weakness as the way to embody the life of the Cross. By imitating Paul in this respect Timothy has adopted the manner of life needed to live faithfully on this side of Christ's return.

Paul seems to have grasped that it was only through imitating one who already had sought to embody - with some degree of success - the cruciform life of a disciple that new disciples could hope to embody the Cross in the various contexts in which they found themselves. The power of the cruciform life is what led Paul to urge several of his churches to imitate him as he imitated the life of the cross which he saw in Christ (Fowl, 1993, p. 431). Yet, curiously, when one reads the contemporary literature (Copan, 2010), on spiritual direction, "there are virtually no references to this notion of imitation or patterning oneself after another" (ibid., p. 6). Through revelation, Paul has identified the power of incarnational and influencing relationships. Timothy not only imitates the transformed life of Christ from Paul but also Paul's ministry mindset and leadership habits.

Secondly, Paul and Timothy embraced the principle of teamwork in community. Paul developed a conviction that it was a worthy investment to mentor Timothy. Perhaps Paul had seen the benefits of the Barnabas-Paul-Mark trio and wanted to complete another trio with himself and Silas. Paul developed a pattern where he used other people to reach his apostolic goals. This becomes more visible beginning with Paul's second missionary journey. He is seen as leading a team of "missionary-organisers" (Cook, 1981, p. 487).

The founding of the Thessalonian and the Berean churches provides a thought-provoking picture of the way that Paul relied on his associates. When the persecution became severe in Thessalonica, "the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea" (Acts 17:10). There is no indication of Timothy leaving with Paul and Silas, although he is with them later in Berea. It seems likely that Timothy stayed for a short while in Thessalonica, continuing what Paul had initiated. He would not have been as well-known as Paul and could have quietly taught and strengthened the believers. Pillette (1992) points out that Timothy had been working with Paul for less than a year and his own Christian experience was not that much longer than the Thessalonian's. Paul, nevertheless, felt confident that Timothy was up to the task (Spell, 2006).

The work in the Philippian church further illustrates the dynamic of teamwork in community (Acts 16). Luke's narrative changed back to a third person account when the apostles left Philippi (Spell, 2006). The "we" narrative does not start again until Chapter 20 of Acts. This shift seems to indicate that Luke stayed behind in Philippi. Bruce (1988) believes that Luke stayed and is later identified by Paul as the, "loyal yokefellow" of Philippians 4:3 (ibid., pp. 221-222).

The second missionary journey saw Paul begin to use his co-workers in an ever-increasing capacity. As discussed previously, both Timothy and Silas were used in Thessalonica and Berea, after harassment forced Paul to leave. Priscilla and Aquila helped Paul plant churches in Corinth and Ephesus. In this context, it appears that Luke was left behind in Philippi to help establish the church. While hostility forced Paul and Silas to leave, Luke was able to stay behind and carry on the work that they had started in Philippi. Paul again is shown relying on one of his leaders and co-workers to help him expand the Gospel (Spell, 2006). Hiebert (1992) goes on the say that Paul "worked most efficiently when he had some co-workers with him, and he was uneasy without any attendants." (p. 6). Paul's team played a large part in what he achieved.

As we continue the discussion about leadership relationships it is time build on a dynamic generally outlined in an earlier section. One of the major influences most often used by God to develop a leader a person or persons who have something to share that the minister needs (Stanley & Clinton). This is the essence of modelling and mentoring. As discussed, Paul experienced the benefits of discipling and mentoring from Barnabas. Undoubtedly during Paul's early days Barnabas patiently stayed with him, knowing that time and experience would soon temper and mature the gifted young minister. Modelling is certainly a biblical concept and Scriptures validate many leaders including Paul as models and encourage modelling as a means of empowering others (Stanley & Clinton, 1992, p. 133). Paul used modelling as a means of empowering Timothy. He took the initiative and invited Timothy into an opportunity to minister with him. This was demonstrated in Acts 16:1-3 when Paul asked him to join the second missionary journey. It was similar to Jesus choosing the twelve disciples to "be with Him" (Mk 3:14). Suitable transparency is a key to effective mentoring. We see the extent to which Paul was transparent in his modelling with Timothy as follows:

> *You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings -what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them* (2 Tim. 3:10-11).

To further illustrate, Paul also mentored Timothy in the importance of the ability to connect with people. An astute Paul recognised that to be effective as a leader Timothy needed

to be able to relate to his diverse and expanding ministerial audience (Hoehl, 2011). He addressed this need to connect, for example, to a particular audience of prospective converts by stating, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews." (1 Cor. 9:19).

Paul was conscious of positioning himself well for optimum kingdom influence.  Based on this understanding of the necessity of relating to one's audience, Paul wisely had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3), so that he could identify with a greater share of his Jewish audience. In getting Timothy ready for leadership and ministry, Paul made sure that he was prepared for the task.  He also gave Timothy a conceptual framework for making future leadership decisions. Timothy was also enculturated (Malina, 2008), by ongoing direction from Paul to seek to maintain the integrity of his faith community.

Over the years of their leadership collaboration, there were many strategic opportunities to activate and process.  As a result, Paul taught Timothy many principles. In the face of firm opposition, Paul advised Timothy to remain faithful to those principles. Since these teachings had come from such a dependable leader as Paul, Timothy had the utmost assurance in their reliability.  Timothy accompanied Paul and was on occasion sent to teach his churches in his absence. Timothy had been well instructed by the apostle and therefore could be dispatched to Thessalonica to "strengthen and exhort you regarding your faith" (1 Thess. 3:2, 6), and later to Corinth to "remind you of my ways in Christ just as I teach [them] everywhere in every church." (1 Cor. 4:17).

In this section we have seen a series of leadership dynamics operating in and around leadership partnership of Paul and Timothy.  The key dynamics of imitation, teamwork in community, leadership relationships, and modelling and mentoring were identified and discussed (see Staggs, 2018a for more information).  These leadership dynamics can be applied in any leadership or ministerial formation efforts for leaders today.  These dynamics come together in a key verse from Paul for Timothy after years of development and shaping by Paul:

> *Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.  Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers* (1 Tim. 4:14-16).

For years Timothy has been watching, modelling, growing in capacity, and imitating Paul (and other key role-models). He has walked in the same direction as they have been pursuing Christ. It is these dynamics that will be useful for the effective and intentional development of leaders and ministers.

## Conclusion

This paper started with an exploration of the leadership dynamics of Paul and Timothy by outlining who Timothy was and the general ways that he was engaged in Paul's leadership network. Having established a framework for their leadership partnership we looked at Paul and his uniqueness as a leader. We were able to gain some clarity about Paul's leadership, his ministry philosophy and how he developed the leadership of Timothy.

We identified that Paul was a unique leader and that this contributed to the leadership dynamics of Paul and Timothy. This is evidenced, for example by Paul's early leadership experiences and by the unique way that Timothy committed himself to Paul and their leadership partnership. Of special interest was the way that Paul was transformed by and then partnered by Holy Spirit to make significant kingdom impact. The Holy Spirit features heavily in Paul's theology and writings.

The paper then explored Paul as a unique leader with a different leadership approach. This was partly due to his own personal transformation with the help of Barnabas, which he then expressed as a transformational leader. We identified how Paul filtered his ministry approach through the lens of Christian *paideia,* adopted a different measure of success, led as a spiritual father, and built teams and a network of co-workers. These are key aspects in the shaping and leadership development of Timothy.

We then discussed Paul's approach to leadership education (*paideia)* and development at a deeper investigation because of its potency and relation to imitation. It was also important because it was a backdrop to the Paul-Timothy leadership partnership. We explored the various elements of Greco-Roman education and life development processes. We also found a link between Paul's unique leadership approach with the idea of "kingdom *paideia.*" This was very important in our understanding of the leadership dynamics in the development of the early church and with Paul and Timothy.

A key aim of the paper was a provide a deeper appreciation of the uniqueness of Paul's leadership approach and skills. Having established a series of foundational principles, we now much more clear in our understanding of how Paul and Timothy ministered together over a long period of time with great effectiveness. We have also identified some of the intangibles of the development of their relationship.

We identified a series of leadership dynamics operating in and around the leadership partnership of Paul and Timothy. The key dynamics of imitation, teamwork in community, leadership relationships, and modelling and mentoring were profiled. These leadership dynamics can also be applied in any leadership or ministerial formation efforts for leaders today.

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# A new perspective on neurodiversity: Characteristics of people with and without autism within a framework of thinking, memory and learning

*By Nola Norris*

## Abstract

Christian schools are focused on students as being created in the image of God while educational theory and practice places students at the centre of the teaching and learning process. However, thinking and learning in students with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is not well understood. Schools with programmes for gifted students may be experiencing an increase in the number of students with autistic traits, whether or not they have been diagnosed. The imperative to develop teachers' understanding of neurodiversity and the impact upon learning is a challenge for all schools and teachers, not just those with special needs programs.

A framework of thinking, memory and learning is needed for teacher professional development and to facilitate conversations between teachers, family members and students about the learning needs and characteristics of neurodiverse students, with and without autism, fostering acceptance and understanding of neurodiversity. This paper provides a review of the neuroscience and memory-in-autism literature and describes the development of such a framework from the literature. There are three components in the framework: Schacter and Tulving's (1994) model *Major systems of human learning and memory*; the unique cognitive profile and learner characteristics found in people experiencing autism; and, the *Learning Ladder*, a new evidence-based model that supports the existence of a hierarchy of thinking activities, facilitates explanation of the cognitive characteristics of neurodiverse learners, and serves as a guide for pedagogical decision-making. The framework is the output of a doctoral study and translates neuroscience research on the science of learning for teachers and school leaders.

**Introduction**

In recent decades teacher education has focused on the way individual children learn as being central to best practice in teaching and learning. Pre-service teachers are taught to consider the optimal means of facilitating the learning of their students (Anderson, Lubig, & Smith, 2012) and there is recognition that different students learn differently (Tomlinson, 2005). Teachers adapt the teaching methods they employ based on their understanding of the learning needs of individual students in their classes (Anderson et al., 2012). The development of teachers' understanding of their students' learning is therefore a key element of teacher education and professional practice.

One of the important outcomes to emerge from the recent field of the neuroscience of learning is that traditional ideas about learning have been challenged. For example, the idea of a single, scored intelligence has been disputed, leading to the development of other explanations of intelligence such as the *Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (Gardner, 2000, 2006, 2008). Facilitated by newer theoretical conversations about intelligence, the notion of *twice exceptionality* has highlighted that a student may be both gifted and learning disabled (Assouline, Foley-Nicpon, & Doobay, 2009; Willard-Holt, Weber, Morrison, & Horgan, 2013), as is the case with many high-functioning students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), sometimes diagnosed as Asperger syndrome (AS) (Assouline, Foley-Nicpon, & Dockery, 2012). Such students may attend mainstream schools and be recognised as gifted, while simultaneously requiring learning support in certain areas (Norris & Dixon, 2011), for example, in social and communication skills, emotion processing, and learning activities that employ executive functions (Brady et al., 2015; Gökçen, Frederickson, & Petrides, 2016; Williams & Minshew, 2010).

The cognitive profile of students in mainstream schools is now known to be more diverse than was previously imagined, which poses the educational problem of how teachers can assume that they understand the learning characteristics of their students. Historically, Lorna Wing is credited with the first English publication of Hans Asperger's work (Wing, 1981) but it was not until 1991 that Asperger's writing was translated into English by Frith (Baron-Cohen & Klin, 2006; Frith, 2004; Robison, 2016) so the impact of Asperger's work upon teaching and learning in educational contexts is relatively recent. The evolving knowledge of autism and Asperger syndrome in the research literature and the appearance of Asperger syndrome in the most recent three editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American

Psychiatric Association, 1994, 2000, 2013) presents a challenge for education: new evidence-based theoretical frameworks to support teachers' understanding of how students learn are required. This new understanding of *neurodiversity* (Bustion, 2017; Dant, 2014; Robison, 2016) increases the complexity of the learning and teaching environment for teachers and school leaders, providing a challenge that, in my view, is yet to be assimilated well into teacher education and professional development of teachers. This article offers a review of the literature and a theoretical framework to help meet that challenge.

Christian schools in particular have focused upon the central place of each learner as a person uniquely made in the image of God (Psalm 139:14)—*Imago Dei* (Coe & Hall, 2010; Hammond, 2017)—and so the field of Christian education imputes an additional layer of significance upon teachers' understanding of their students' learning as being central to the mission and purpose of Christian education (Kilgour & Christian, 2017). In addition, a number of Christian schools have intentionally focused on supporting students with high-functioning ASD and many provide programmes for gifted students that may attract students who express autistic traits, whether diagnosed formally or not. The development of teachers' understanding of neurodiversity and the incorporation of this knowledge into classroom practice therefore has particular relevance for Christian education.

**Purpose and significance**
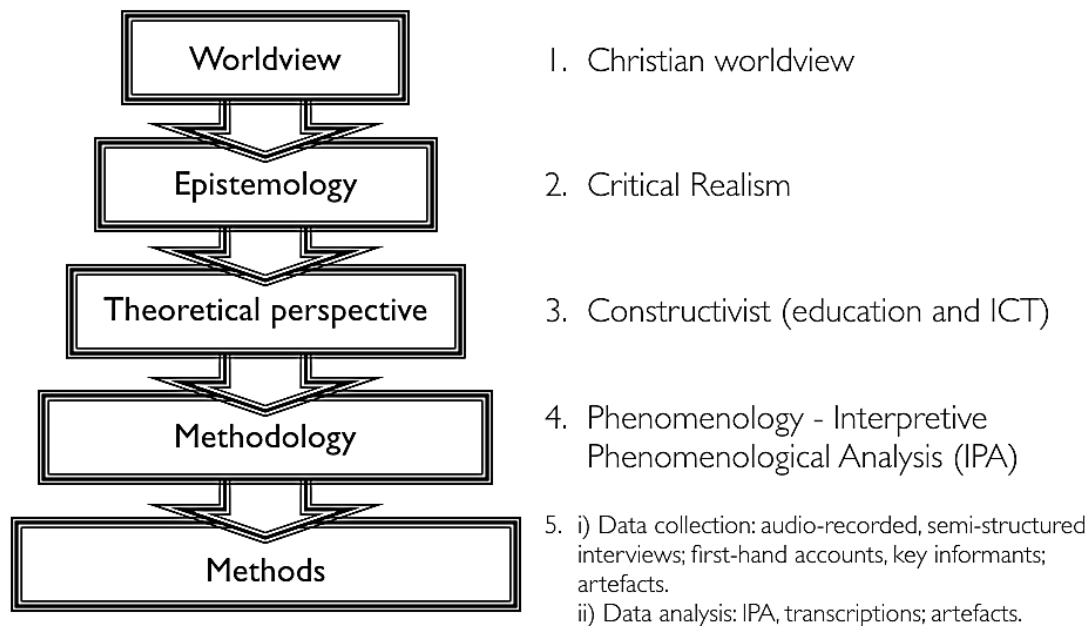
This article reviews the literature on theoretical concepts associated with thinking, memory and learning and then describes the development of the *Learning Ladder* out of that literature as part of an explanatory framework of thinking, memory, and learning. The Learning Ladder is a new model that provides a way to understand the likely learning characteristics of students, factoring in the neurodiverse needs of different students with and without ASD.

Although the original setting of the research study was a doctoral study in a coeducational Christian K-12 school where gifted students with autistic traits presented in mainstream classrooms, the framework that developed was based upon research and therefore has application across other educational settings. As a teacher at this school, I received strong support for the research from the school leadership, with an acknowledgement that the study had both a professional and personal faith base. Professionally, a purpose of the research was to disseminate evidence-based knowledge from recent neuroscience research to apply to teaching

practice in local Christian educational contexts to develop teachers' understanding, on the foundation that God is the author of all knowledge (Proverbs 2:6). The unfolding knowledge as the study progressed was disseminated through professional development presentations at this and other Christian schools. In those sessions, teachers were exhorted to adopt a strengths-based approach with their students who presented with autistic traits (often accompanied by giftedness in narrow special interests) and to value them as created by God in His image (Genesis 1:26-27).

The personal perspective was the sharing of my (our) faith journey with the school community and beyond when my husband was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome at that time, leading to a new role as teacher-researcher, a situated learner, and member of the autism community. The open-ended research question was "How do gifted people with Asperger syndrome think and learn?" Figure 1 illustrates the ontology and epistemology of the resulting study, based on an adaptation of "Basic beliefs associated with the major paradigms" (Mertens, 2005, p. 9) and the "four elements" of research (Crotty, 1998, pp. 2-4): epistemology; theoretical perspective; methodology; and, methods. *Worldview* was added and equates to Mertens' category of *Ontology*.

**Figure 1:** The design of the study: Adapted from Mertens (2005) and Crotty (1998).



1. Christian worldview

2. Critical Realism

3. Constructivist (education and ICT)

4. Phenomenology - Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

5. i) Data collection: audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews; first-hand accounts, key informants; artefacts.
   ii) Data analysis: IPA, transcriptions; artefacts.

**Method**

In order to address the need for an explanatory framework of the cognitive characteristics of learners for teachers and school leaders to utilise in their understanding of how students with both ASD and giftedness learn, a qualitative doctoral research study was undertaken to develop such a framework. This study was based upon in-depth, first-hand accounts of the lived experience of five high-functioning participants with Asperger syndrome whose narratives were interpreted in the light of a comprehensive search of the research literature across the disciplines of the neuroscience of learning, psychology and education. There was a two-fold outcome of the study: (a) the development of an explanatory framework, and, (b) a contribution to the missing voice in the area of thinking, memory and learning of people experiencing autism and giftedness, through the production of case studies. The focus of this article is on outcome (a).

Transcriptions of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants and key informants, along with artefacts such as publications, photographs, and diaries, were interpreted utilising *interpretive phenomenological analysis* (IPA) methodology. The study was modelled on a number of IPA studies that demonstrated the suitability of this method for participants with autism/Asperger syndrome (e.g., Carrington, Papinczak, & Templeton, 2003; Humphrey & Lewis, 2008; Huws & Jones, 2008, 2015). The data were collated and analysed using *NVivo* software. Codes and categories were developed organically from the literature and applied to the data in an iterative process that allowed themes to emerge. The data analysis and interpretation were member-checked by participants.

**Literature review**

This paper next describes the major explanatory theories of autism within the literature and the development of the explanatory framework from that literature. Four major areas of autism research were identified in the literature: *theory of mind*, *central coherence*, *executive function*, and *enhanced perceptual functioning*. Each of these is an area of knowledge that is critical for teachers' understanding of the thinking of students experiencing ASD.

**Theory of mind**

*Theory of mind* (ToM) is the capacity, which begins to develop in infancy, to mentally represent and accurately attribute mental states—beliefs, emotions, thoughts and bodily sensations—to oneself, and other people (Frith, 2001). Also described as *empathy*, *mentalising*

and *mindreading*, ToM is the basis of social cognition (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004). The ToM mechanism allows an individual to predict the likely meaning and purpose of others' behaviours and words (Frith & Happé, 1994). A person with well-developed ToM has the capacity to perceive social cues (e.g., tone of voice, body language) that will likely be overlooked by a person with poor ToM (Perner, Frith, Leslie, & Leekam, 1989). People with Asperger syndrome have impaired ToM (Boucher, 2012). The notion of ToM is closely associated with the educational literature on metacognition, which is the ability to reflect on one's own thinking: that is, to mentally represent one's *own* thoughts and feelings (Sodian & Frith, 2008).

## Central coherence

The term *central coherence* refers to an information-processing style. Proposed by Uta Frith, central coherence is described as "the tendency to draw together diverse information to construct higher-level meaning in context" (Frith & Happé, 1994, p. 121). Central coherence has been described as a "perceptual-cognitive style" (Burnette et al., 2005, p. 63) and is weak in autism (Booth, Charlton, Hughes, & Happé, 2004). *Weak central coherence* is sometimes referred to as *local* or *bottom-up processing* and is contrasted to central coherence, *global* or *top-down processing* (Hill & Frith, 2003). Individuals with weak central coherence tend to focus on one detail in an event, picture or experience, not seeing the bigger picture, context or *gestalt* (Blakemore et al., 2006). Central coherence is described in relation to learning as a hierarchy of mental task types (or thinking activities) from simple to complex and concrete to abstract, which employs increasingly sophisticated mental organising strategies, such as categorisation, prototype formation, and schema development (Markowitsch & Staniloiu, 2011; D. L. Williams, Minshew, & Goldstein, 2008).

## Executive function

*Executive function* (EF) is an umbrella term that encompasses mental operations that are reliant upon the prefrontal cortex (Hill & Frith, 2003). Examples of executive functions are inhibition, flexibility, planning, problem solving, control of one's own attention, and decision-making (Hill, 2004; Williams, Happé, & Jarrold, 2008). Impaired functional connectivity between the prefrontal cortex and other parts of the brain leads to decreased prefrontal cortex

activity in autism (Kleinhans et al., 2008). Autism is, therefore, sometimes described as a disorder of integration of brain functions or brain connectivity (Steyaert & De La Marche, 2008).
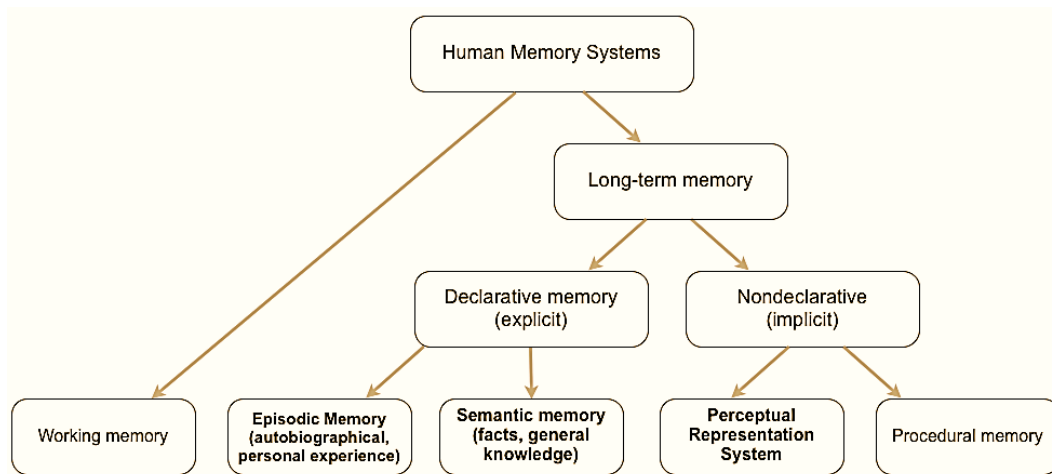
**Enhanced perceptual functioning**

*Enhanced perceptual functioning* was first proposed as an explanatory theory of autism by Mottron (Mottron, Dawson, Souliéres, Hubert, & Burack, 2006). The impact of sensory sensitivities on the thinking and learning of gifted students with Asperger syndrome has been documented (Betts, Betts, & Gerber-Eckard, 2007). Sensory issues in autism may take the form of *hyper*sensitivity or *hypo*sensitivity (Blakemore et al., 2006). Sensory integration issues experienced by individuals with high-functioning autism pertain to "both basic perceptual functions and … higher-order processes" (Brandwein et al., 2013, p. 1329), indicating the broad impact on thinking and learning. Sensory issues, while being a disadvantage in some environments, may result from functional neural connectivity that simultaneously contributes to the giftedness of the individual (Boso et al., 2010). Central to each of the four major explanatory theories of autism is the area of memory.

**Memory**

Many significant research reports draw upon a particular model of memory, Schacter and Tulving's (1994) *Major systems of human learning and memory* (e.g., Ben Shalom, 2003; Bowler, Gardiner, & Grice, 2000). The model was originally published as a table, however, the model is represented here as a figure (Figure 2). Of the five memory systems represented in the bottom row of Figure 2, the centre three (shown in bold)—*episodic*, *semantic* and *perceptual*—are of particular interest in the present context because of the evidence for selectively enhanced and impaired function in ASD, giving rise to an uneven cognitive profile that impacts upon learning (Cash, 1999).

**Figure 2:** Major systems of human learning and memory (Schacter & Tulving, 1994)**.**



## Episodic memory

Episodic memory is long-term memory for personally experienced events. It is the most complex and late-maturing form of human memory and entails a sense of personal involvement (Schacter & Tulving, 1994). Episodic memory is associated with a unique form of memory retrieval called *mental time travel*: one imagines oneself back in the remembered event and mentally re-experiences it (Lind & Bowler, 2010). Episodic memories are incomplete (that is, *not* a complete recording of an event) and subject to change as they are retrieved and re-experienced (Markowitsch & Staniloiu, 2011). There are consistent findings that episodic memory is impaired in autism (e.g., Ben Shalom, 2003; Boucher & Mayes, 2012; Bowler et al., 2000).

## Semantic memory

Semantic memory handles memory for facts and general knowledge about the world (Tulving & Markowitsch, 1998). Semantic processing involves symbolic representation of objects or ideas distinct from the physical perception or experience of those things and without the personal involvement of first-hand experience (Markowitsch & Staniloiu, 2011; Tulving, 1985). For example, knowledge about Paris gained from a book is represented in semantic memory: knowledge about Paris gained through first-hand experience is represented in episodic memory (Baddeley, 1994). Semantic memories are context-free or decontextualised: that is, the memory of a fact stands alone without reference to location, time or emotion (Lind, 2010; Markowitsch & Staniloiu, 2011). Semantic memory is: (a) unimpaired, or possibly superior, in

individuals with high functioning autism (Ben Shalom, 2003; Boucher, 2007); (b) associated with rote learning, which is intact, or superior, in individuals with autism (Crane & Goddard, 2008); and, (c) along with perceptual memory, functionally aligned with detail-focused, bottom-up information processing tasks that do not require complex mental organisation or use of abstraction strategies. Examples of mental functions that employ semantic memory are rule learning and rote memorisation (Minshew, Meyer, & Goldstein, 2002).

**Perceptual representation system**

The *perceptual representation system* is also known as *perceptual memory*. It is *non-declarative* or *implicit* (Baddeley, 1994): that is, it does not require effortful thought, and is operational at birth. Perceptual memory is the most primitive and early developing of the three long-term memory systems under consideration. It is associated with judgements of familiarity: that is, an item is recognised as either being familiar or not, without being named or recalled from previous experience (Markowitsch & Staniloiu, 2011). It has been reported that perception is intact or enhanced in autism (e.g., Boucher, 2007; Mottron, 2011; Mottron et al., 206).

**Development of the Learning Ladder**

The major autism theories were cross-referenced with Tulving's memory model in order to align and clarify characteristics of memory noted within the literature (see Table 1).
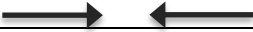
**Table 1:** Autism theories and memory characteristics mapped to Tulving's memory systems

| Episodic memory | Semantic memory | Perceptual memory |
|---|---|---|
| **Explanatory theories associated with this memory system** | | |
| Central coherence<br>Executive function<br>Theory of mind | Weak central coherence | Enhanced perceptual functioning |
| **Mental construct functions** | | |
| Prototype formation<br>Concept formation<br>Meaning-making | Naming, labelling, classifying<br>Simple category formation | Recognition<br>Familiarity |

**Critical features**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Source memory | Single-item/item-specific | Sensory processing |
| Temporal memory | Symbolic systems e.g., | Experiential |
| Prospective memory | language, mathematics, | |
| Relational memory | visual symbols | |
| Autobiographical memory | Serial processing | |
| | Rote memory | |
| | Associative or linear thinking | |

**Processes and descriptions associated with this memory system**

Top-down processing → ← Bottom-up processing

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Explicit | Explicit | Implicit |
| Mental representation | Mental representation | No mental representation |
| Memory for personal experience | Bottom-up, local, detail-focused or low-level processing | Direct perception |
| Global processing, *gestalt,* high-level or complex information processing | Not contextual | Low-level processing |
| Mental time travel | No memory binding | Raw experience |
| Subjective | Not interpretative | Being *in the moment* |
| Contextual (spatial, temporal, affective) | Literal | Registration of sensory input |
| Memory binding | Concrete | Sensory sensitivities in ASD |
| Abstract reasoning | Object-focused | |
| Organising strategies | | |
| Interpretative, constructive | | |
| Metacognitive | | |
| Higher-order thinking | | |

The terms in Table 1 were drawn from the literature. A simplified version of Table 1 was subsequently developed for instructional purposes (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Translation and interpretation of Table 1

| Episodic memory Weaker | Semantic memory Relied upon for explicit thinking | Perceptual memory Enhanced |
|---|---|---|
| Theory of mind | One thing at a time | Enhanced perception |
| Executive function | Single-item memory | Being *in the moment* |
| Central coherence the *big picture* ⟷ | Focus on detail at expense of bigger picture | Sensory sensitivities |
| Abstract reasoning ⟷ | Concrete, literal, *black-&-white thinking* | |
| Cognitive flexibility ⟷ | Train-tracks thinking: rigid, fixed thinking | |
| Relationships between thoughts, concept, ideas ⟷ | Rote memory: recall of discrete data and facts | |
| Subjective time judgements ⟷ | Time measurement: clocks, calendars | |
| Subjective sense of self | Formulaic thinking, i.e., $a + b = c$ | |

A key concept within the memory and autism literature is that memory is *selectively* impaired (Ben Shalom, 2003). Specifically, perceptual memory is enhanced (Mottron et al., 2006), semantic memory is preserved or superior (Ben Shalom, 2003) while episodic memory is weak or less developed (Boucher & Mayes, 2012), highlighting a distinct, uneven, cognitive profile (Cash, 1999). The lateral arrows in Table 2 indicate a contrast between the items in column 1 and column 2: for example, abstract reasoning, which is an episodic memory function, is contrasted with literal thinking, which is relied upon to a greater extent when the episodic mechanism is weak.

**Hierarchy of thinking and learning activities**

There is a developmental hierarchy between the long-term memory systems with perceptual memory present in newborn infants, semantic memory developing from the first year of life and episodic memory being later maturing (Markowitsch & Staniloiu, 2011). There is a corresponding hierarchy in thinking activities indicated by *top-down processing,* also referred to

as *global processing* or *central coherence.* To clarify the nature of this hierarchy, a matrix that summarised the conceptual understandings distilled from the literature was compiled (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Hierarchy of thinking and learning activities

| Type of thinking & learning activity | Description | Memory storage implications |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Meaning making* | World view: active, constructed knowledge of the world tested over time against experienced reality | Conceptual frameworks very efficient: incorporate experience, account for facts, strive for internal consistency, seat of learning, understanding |
| *Concept formation* *Generativity* *Creativity* | Relating ideas into a meaningful 'whole' or higher representation | Episodic memory encodes relationships & dynamic elements such as time & change, not possible in semantic memory. Ability to generalise adds layer of efficiency. |
| *Prototype formation* | Summary representations | Prototype formation memory-efficient as it avoids the need to memorise every instance or variation |
| *Categorisation* *Grouping* *Classifying* *Sorting* | Indexing with shared criteria | Indexing requires 'memory binding' or 'relational memory' and is more efficient than rote memory. |
| *Naming* *Labelling* | Language contains/ represents objects, ideas | AS's principal storage process may be visual ('eidetic') rather than language-based. Language processing affected in ASD. |
| *Rote learning* | Literal Concrete | Rote-learned facts stored in semantic memory |

Abbreviations: AS = Asperger syndrome, ASD = Autism spectrum disorder
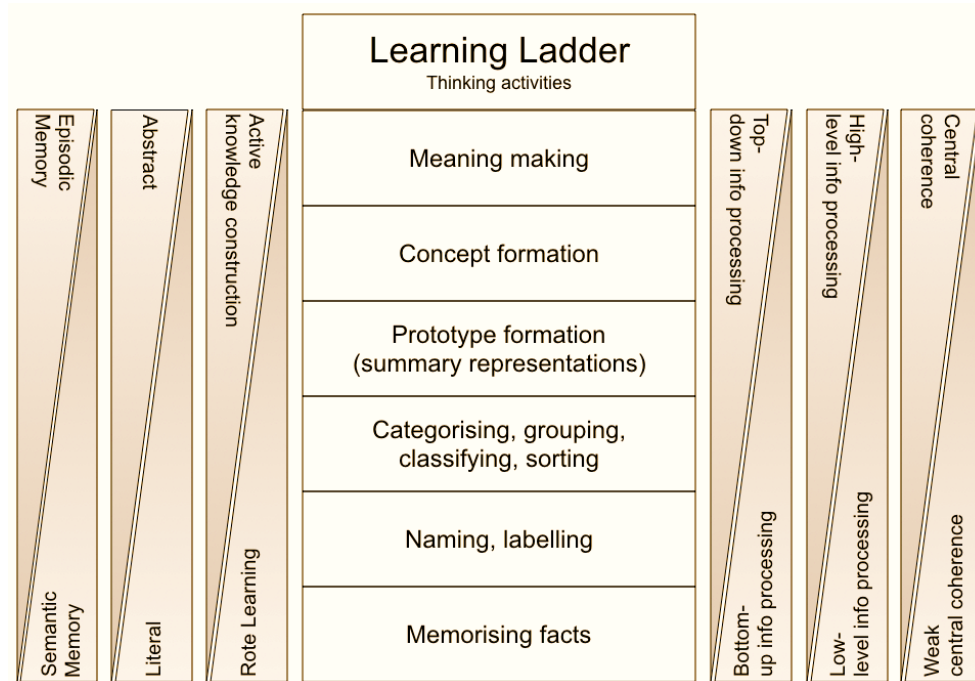
Table 3 summarises salient points from the literature related to thinking, memory and learning and elucidates the hierarchical characteristics of mental activity.

**Discussion: Implications for teaching and learning**

Conceptually aligning the autism theories with Tulving's model of memory and learning (Tables 1 & 2), then mapping knowledge related to the phenomena of interest from the literature into the framework shown in Table 3, suggested the next step: the development of the *Learning Ladder*, shown in Figure 3. The Learning Ladder represents complex insights relating to

cognitive characteristics associated with memory and learning. It is an evidence-based model of a hierarchy of thinking activities.

**Figure 3:** Learning Ladder: Types of thinking activity in learning, showing implied inverse relationships within memory characteristics



The process of reviewing the memory-in-autism literature for this study allowed a series of inverse relationships to become apparent, shown in Figure 3. Starting from the lower end of the central ladder, learning that involves the memorisation of isolated facts relies on the single-item, serial processing of semantic memory. From here, each ascendant rung of the ladder represents a shift from lower-level towards higher-level types of thinking. A top-down processing style is represented by the top of the ladder (meaning making): a bottom-up processing style is represented by the bottom of the ladder (memorising facts). Central coherence equates to a top-down processing style, whereas individuals with ASD most likely have a bottom-up, or detailed-focus, processing style (weak central coherence) (Booth et al., 2004).

Low-level information processing style refers to thinking that is literal, tied to the concrete, and that does not employ the use of organising strategies. An instance of thinking that employs low-level processing is the recognition of an object, such as an apple, as familiar: this

draws upon perceptual memory. Naming it as, *apple,* represents the application of language (a semantic system function) to the familiar item. Classifying an apple as *fruit* involves the development of categories and the correct designation to a single category or multiple categories: for example, round objects, food, plants. This is a lower-level use of an organising strategy or simple schema.

Moving up the ladder in Figure 3, prototype development is a more sophisticated organising strategy involving the memorisation of a summary representation of a category (a *prototype*), which is not an actual instance, and comparing newly encountered instances with the prototype (Klinger & Dawson, 2001). A prototype of an apple is a mental representation that allows speedy identification of an object as *apple* (or not *apple*) and accounts for all known features and varieties of apple, without necessarily representing a particular apple. This is an efficient deployment of memory compared to memorising *each* instance of *every* category, as reported by Temple Grandin, through reliance on prodigious rote memory capacity.

> *... it has been reported that in ASD the categorization of objects is in particular compromised when it has to be done on the basis of abstract object prototypes (Klinger and Dawson, 2001; Minshew et al., 2002). This is in line with an anecdotal account by Temple Grandin (who has ASD), who described her tendency to remember all specific exemplars of a category rather than rely on a more generalized concept of those exemplars (Grandin, 1995)* (Burnett & Jellema, 2013, p. 213).

Concept development is a more efficient means of knowledge construction and relies on abstract reasoning. As long as an individual's conceptual understanding is reliable (i.e., their conceptual understanding accurately represents reality), then abstraction higher up the ladder affords generalisability to new situations and circumstances that is not available to knowledge learning at the lower levels of the ladder, for example is, to knowledge that is rote-learned.

The highest rung of the Learning Ladder represents personal meaning-making incorporating the application of values, beliefs and worldview as part of personal knowledge construction. The designation of apples as "my favourite fruit" based on pleasurable first-hand experience of eating apples is an example of meaning making.

In Figure 4, the Learning Ladder is utilised to represent the likely cognitive characteristics of individuals with ASD, showing cognitive strengths and weaknesses that impact upon thinking and learning.

**Figure 4**: Learning Ladder: inverse relationships showing likely cognitive strengths and weaknesses for gifted individuals with ASD

Learners with ASD — Weakness / Strength

## Learning Ladder
### Thinking activities

Meaning making

Concept formation

Prototype formation (summary representations)

Categorising, grouping, classifying, sorting

Naming, labelling

Memorising facts

Learners with ASD — Impaired / Intact or superior
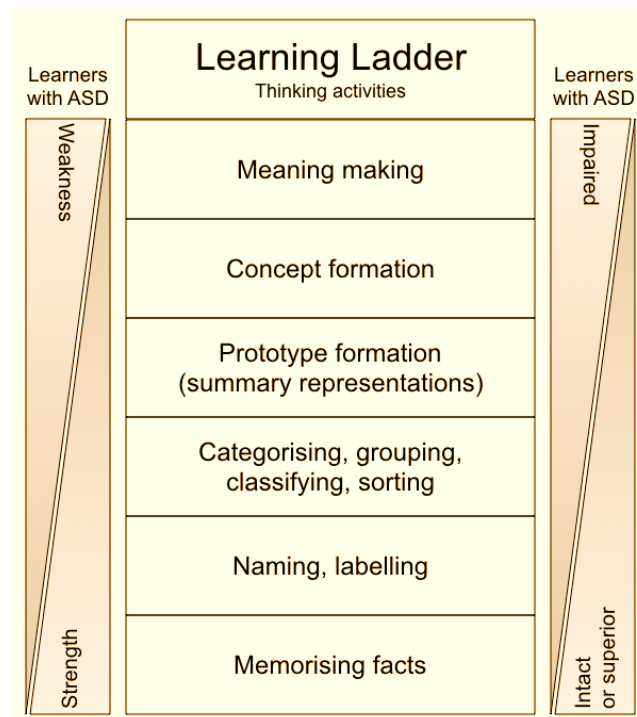
Figure 4 illustrates that a learner with ASD will, most likely, demonstrate a superior capacity in learning activities that employ memory for discrete factual knowledge but once organising strategies, such as prototype development or concept formation, are required in order to mentally represent knowledge, then even gifted learners with autism will be increasingly challenged.

**Limitations**

A major explanatory theory of autism that is beyond the scope of this paper is the amygdala theory (Baron-Cohen et al., 2000): the limbic system (Faran & Ben Shalom, 2008); the role of emotion in learning and the disruption to learning due to emotional dysregulation (Immordino-Yang, 2008; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Immordino-Yang & Fischer, 2011); and, an over-sensitive fight-or-flight mechanism with heightened anxiety (Hare, Wood,

Wastell, & Skirrow, 2014). In addition, important to the explanatory framework described in this paper are the types of consciousness or *knowing* associated with the long-term memory systems (*anoetic consciousness* in perceptual memory; *noetic consciousness* in semantic memory; *autonoetic consciousness* in episodic memory) (Gardiner, 2001; Lind & Bowler, 2008; Markowitsch & Staniloiu, 2011; Tanweer, Rathbone, & Souchay, 2010; Vandekerckhove, 2008). Further work is needed on the development of a theology of identity in autism in the light of diminished autonoetic consciousness and compensatory memory mechanisms (i.e., reliance upon semantic memory for memory of one's own experience and noetic consciousness for identity formation, where these are typically functions of episodic memory and autonoetic consciousness).

**Conclusion**

The approach documented in this paper of aligning the major theories of autism to Schacter and Tulving's 1994 model of human learning and memory and then mapping conceptual knowledge from the memory literature to enable elaboration and explanation, led to the creation of the Learning Ladder (Figures 3 and 4), which represents key concepts from the literature regarding the cognitive characteristics of students with ASD. Pedagogically, the Learning Ladder points to likely support needs of students in particular learning tasks, based on an understanding of the types of mental activity involved. Tasks involving greater demands on conceptual understanding and personal meaning will present challenges for students with ASD, requiring more scaffolding (e.g., an essay that requires students to draw upon their personal experience in response to a novel). Tasks involving greater reliance upon rote memory and item-specific knowledge will align with students' cognitive strengths (e.g., memorising and recalling the periodic table). The figures, tables and explanations presented in this paper form a new explanatory framework of thinking, memory and learning that supports the existence of a hierarchy of thinking activities and facilitates explanation of the cognitive characteristics of neurodiverse learners, including gifted learners with and without autism.

It is anticipated that through professional learning teachers will be able to critically apply this framework to their own cognitive profile in order to understand the potential differences between their thinking and the thinking of their students, facilitating increased understanding of

the phenomenon of neurodiversity among learners and heightening appreciation of the reflection of the image of God in individual students. A focus on the strengths of students with ASD in rote learning and prodigious recall of factual knowledge provides a counter-balance to the likely challenges in learning tasks requiring abstract thinking and the articulation of meaning, where teachers may utilise the Learning Ladder model in lesson planning to discern their students' need for increased scaffolding.

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**Revelatory classrooms: A new discourse for the journey.**

*By Craig Murison*

**Abstract**

The work of Christian educators to integrate a Biblical worldview into schools has been undertaken as a largely intellectual and theoretical task, often leaving little consideration for the work of the Holy Spirit in and through staff members. This paper argues the Faith Learning Integration (FLI) approach reinforces dualism within which faith and learning are mutually exclusive. The discourse of revelatory communities is proposed as an alternative language for Christian schools - knowing (cognition and theory), becoming (spiritual formation) and being Christ like (pneumatological and incarnational pedagogy) in community.

**Introduction**

Efforts to achieve effective Faith Learning Integration (FLI) have been one of the ways Australian Christian schools have sought to differentiate themselves from other schools. FLI in Australian Christian schools is a substantive part of the defence these schools present for their preferential employment of Christian teachers as, it is argued, the effective bringing together (integration) of faith and learning can only be achieved by teachers who are teaching from a faith basis. The FLI approach assumes faith and learning belong in separate kingdoms of our lives in our predominantly secular society.

Philosophically, most Christian schools do not agree with dualistic thinking, within which faith and reason are mutually exclusive. However, some of their practices may well reinforce it. The discourse of revelatory communities is proposed as an alternative to the language of FLI for Christian schools. Revelatory school communities develop a core of biblical understandings for use in curriculum development, take corporate responsibility for the spiritual formation of staff members and rely on the Holy Spirit to empower the incarnational nature of Christ within each staff member. In other words, they intentionally work on knowing (cognition and theory), becoming (spiritual formation) and being Christ like (pneumatological and incarnational pedagogy). While these terms (knowing, becoming and being) may be value laden and, at times, theologically controversial, in the context of this paper they collectively describe a

holistic approach to moving between orthodoxy (knowing) and orthopraxis (doing) in a process which is fluid and holistic. Revelatory school communities seek to develop the learning environment in ways which maximise the opportunities for students, parents, staff and the broader community to become more aware of the ways the Lord is revealing Himself to them as they learn and participate in the school community.

**Faith learning integration**

In the Australian context, the term Christian schools refers to relatively recently established low-fee, faith based, non-government schools which have a shared conviction of the authority of the Bible (Millis, 2004). In 1984 Ringenberg claimed more emphasis had been given to the integration of faith and learning in research into Christian schools than any other topic (Ringenberg,1984, p. 199). By 2013 debate on the topic had spanned over fifty years (Balance, Hollabaugh, & Truong, 2013). The main discussions in the literature have been about faith development (Astley & Francis, 1992; Fowler, 1981; Groome, 1980), moral education (Holmes, 1991), spiritual growth (Birkholz, 1997; Dudley, 1999); spiritual formation (Palmer, 1993); and faith transmission (McClintock, 1997).

The first use of the words 'integration of faith and learning', regarding school education, is thought to have been by Frank Gaebelein in 1954 (Badley, 2009). There is no agreement about the meaning of the phrase, leading some to suggest FLI has an identity crisis (Hall, Gorsuch, Malony Jr., Narramore, & Leeuwen, 2006). Yet, FLI is the common terminology used in Christian schools to describe their educational distinctive (Badley, 2009). Holmes (1987) and Rasi (2006) saw FLI as a whole of institution process of expressing Christian education. Recognising that without a clear definition it is impossible to apply FLI Thomas (2012, p. 18) provides the following:

> ...the integration of faith and learning is about maintaining the wholeness or connection between learning new information and seeing a corresponding change in behavior because of this new information... The IFL is the intentional action of an individual to bring his or her personal beliefs and faith into his or her classroom in a way that affects the behaviors and attitudes of the students. The behavior of the teacher influences the worldview of the students in such a way that the student experiences a paradigm shift in their thinking.

Glanzer (2008) argues, using FLI to describe the work of Christian educators does not go deep enough, echoing Smith's (2012) concerns FLI has become primarily cognitive and therefore not holistic. He proposes the language of the 'creation and redemption of scholarship' and claims, "When scholars "integrate faith and learning," they have already admitted that the original learning created failed to demonstrate 'faith' and therefore faith must now be integrated" (2008, pp. 44-45). An alternative conceptualisation is needed to represent a holistic approach to enacting a Christian worldview in Christian Schools.

### Worldview

Kant is the first person recorded to have used the term worldview in 1790 (Goheen & Bartholomew, 2008). Huffman (2012) refers to it as the comprehensive framework of one's beliefs about things. Sire provides the following definition:

> *A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being* (Sire, 2015, p. 122)

As we theorise about our lives, our worldview infiltrates our thinking and provides an undergirding, unconscious meaning to our lives (Edlin & Thompson, 2006; Roy, 2008). An individual's worldview can be observed in the ways in which they answer the most basic questions of life including those about purpose, humanity, knowledge, how we should live, hope and future (Roy, 2008; Van Brummelen, 1990).

The levels of priority we place on things, "are shaped by what we believe is real and true, right and wrong, good and beautiful. Our choices are shaped by our worldview (Colson & Pearcey, 1999). None of our decisions are made from value neutral positions. Instead, people have inbuilt biases and make decisions which are heavily influenced and shaped by their worldviews (Bertrand, 2007; Schaeffer, 1976). Our "moment-to-moment decisions are shaped by the worldview we have adopted and adapted over the course of time, often without realizing that we are dependent upon such a framework for decision making" (Barna, 2003, p. 5).

**Curriculum, FLI and worldview**

Most Australian Christian schools do not subscribe to the notion that simply employing Christian teachers is sufficient to be a truly Christian school. However, Hull (2003) claims that Christian educators, still typically settle for a vision for Christian education which is less than what they aspire to. He maintains what we settle for as Christian education, "can be more accurately named *Christians educating*" (p. 204). Christians educating changes the personality of the school; Christian education reshapes the school entirely (Hull, 2003).

The Christian school differentiating factor is not in the offering of a curriculum with significantly different content (Scouller, 2010). Through work around FLI they seek to offer a different hermeneutic, a different approach to the interpretation of what is being studied and learnt in the school. Without this distinctive hermeneutic a Christian school will be little more than a public school with some 'add-ons' and there will be a tacit validation of the societal norms presented in the government curriculum.   The distinctive hermeneutic of Christian schools' worldviews is the "shaper and driver" of curriculum (Dickens, et al., 2015, p. 3). In practical terms, the Christian worldview forms the organising core of biblical understandings scaffolding the approach to curriculum design. The questions informing such a core might include a) what was God's original intent for the slice of reality being studied? b) how has sin affected this part of reality?  c) what actions should or could be taken to bring reconciliation or restoration to this part of reality? (Fennema, 2006).

Operating from a common core of a biblical worldview, impacts far more than just curriculum (Brickhill, 2010). Presentation of the Christian worldview to students involves a transformational approach to every aspect of the Christian school (Hull, 2003). Hull (2003, p. 204) describes Christian education as "a biblically grounded, alternative kind of education that rejects the whole matrix of scientific and humanistic ideals that currently vie to define the purpose of the public school." The establishment of a well thought through, distinctive Christian philosophy of education, one grounded in research and literature, is foundational to the work of being Christian.

**The problem of dualism in FLI**

Integration has been the dominant approach of Australian Christian Schools since the emergence of the Christian school movement in Australia in the 1970's. As schools have explored what it means to be Christian, FLI has formed the substantive response to questions of how these schools have sought to address questions about how Christian they really are. The word 'integration' comes from the same Latin root as integrity (Bufford, Sorenson , Derflinger, & McMinn, 2004), one of the meanings of which is "the state of being whole". When something is integral to something else it means it cannot exist without it. The steel reinforcing in a high-rise building is integral to the very building. Remove the reinforcing and the building will collapse. In fact, the building would not exist at all without it. When used in conjunction with faith and learning the implication is that learning is not in a state of being whole if it does not incorporate faith. When applied to Christian integration into knowledge it means Christian perspectives are integral to knowledge. In other words, all truth is God's truth (Augustine); noting Miller's admonition, this includes relational truth as well as propositional truth (2014). God, or some conceptualisation of Christian living or thinking, does not have to be put back into the content of the curriculum. He is already there. When we begin to think about curriculum in any other way we simply reflect and reinforce the dualism of our society.

> *It is one thing to take for ourselves the premise that all truth is God's truth. It is another thing to build upon this premise an effective educational practice that shows a student the unity of truth and that brings alive in his heart and mind the grand concept of a Christ who 'is the image of the invisible God,' by whom 'all things were created,' who 'is before all things,' and by whom 'all things consist, or hold together'* (Gaebelein, 1968, p. 23).

Worldview involves "thought, cognition and intellection" (Wolterstorff, 2002, p. 107) and is seen by many to be about content choice (Smith, 2012, p. 16). However, as mentioned earlier, Smith (2012) expresses concern that FLI has been taken over by educators who view it in cognitive and theoretical ways. Smith believes a deeper approach to FLI involves changes in practice and involves a narrative of Christian identity. His concern is FLI is approached as a superficial addition of faith to a discipline.

Dualistic thinking divides and separates things into 'either or' instead of 'both and'. When we consider things dualistically we make decisions about how they are separate (either

or). When we consider things non-dualistically we consider how they are the same (both and). Applied to matters of faith, dualistic thinking separates knowledge and experiences as either sacred or humanistic, Christian or secular. This is a false dichotomy. When we use these expressions as ways of navigating our world and dealing with the paradoxes it presents to us, we unconsciously strengthen the dualistic paradigm within which we see the world.

A dualistic approach to education is one which separates and alienates the dimensions of the created order (Gill, 1979). Gill makes very deliberate use of the word 'dimensions' in his thinking about FLI.  The most common language used to distinguish between the physical and spiritual is *kingdoms* (Gill, 1979). Kingdoms cannot co-exist in time and space. Gill proposed, 'dimensions,' as an alternative because dimensions can co-exist in time and space. He, like Hall et al. (2006) believes the use of the term integration has, in and of itself, created a problem for Christian educators. The continual use of the word integration reinforces the notion that faith and learning are separate and must be put back together. This is an approach which stands in contradiction to the idea all truth is God's truth. The faith learning integration approach to Christian education creates a potential self-fulfilling dualistic prophecy which makes the task of Christian teachers much more challenging.

While a lot of things may look the same when they are undertaken from either a secular perspective or a Christian one, they may actually be very different. Cooling (2010) juxtaposes the endeavours of Richard Dawkins, a well-known atheist, with the work of Francis Collins, the former Director of the Human Genome Project, a converted atheist. Dawkins believes evolution explains life on earth while Collins sees life on earth as designed by a loving creator. While these two scientists, no doubt, respect each other's scientific work, they differ on what they believe. As Cooling (2010, p. 13) explains, "they differ fundamentally when it comes to meaning and significance." There are many things in both Christian and secular schools which look the same. Just because they look the same does not mean they are the same. Teachers in both types of schools may well say they chose to be teachers because they believe they can make a positive difference to the life opportunities of children. The Christian teacher's motivation should be firmly based on the belief every child is a unique creation of a loving God who has a plan and a purpose for their lives.

The Christian differentiation should be evident in the impact on the operations of a school of the central belief that all truth and revelation are understood and interpreted through a

distinctive Christian perspective which gives meaning and significance to the work of Christian educators. However, as stated by Eckel (2003, p. 53);

> *Christian education has failed to make a convincing case that it is different from secular education, that we see all of education influenced by our understanding of revelation and truth from a Christian perspective, where every discipline is undergirded by a basically distinctive or Christian view of reality.*

Every aspect of the life of the school should reflect this Christian view of reality. If a biblical worldview is not what gives meaning and significance to the day to day operations of a school it is providing a Christian adaptation of a secular school.

**Challenges for the teacher**

The way the word integration is used in Christian schools reinforces the idea the material required to be taught is devoid of God. As such it is secular. To become Christian it must go through a process to put God into it in some way. Thus, integration has shifted from meaning something is essential to the very existence of something else to meaning putting something into something else. The logic of the view something must be put into curriculum to make it Christian, at best, implies God was never in it in the first place. At worst, it implies God can be removed from something completely and for that thing to be considered Christian God must be re-integrated into it. Both present a picture of God which does not line up with many beliefs fundamental to the Christian faith.

Some schools have developed frameworks to help their teachers see where the Christian worldview might fit in the curriculum. Some have very loose expectations; others have quite clearly prescribed expectations as to how this integration should be undertaken and how it will be evidenced in planning documentation. Overall, however, the integrative approach to developing Christian curriculum in Christian schools makes the job of planning and teaching more difficult for teachers. It adds a layer of thinking and planning which is not natural and intuitive for the teacher.

Good, committed teachers will spend hours finding the most seamless ways to bring Christian perspectives into what they are going to teach. Less committed teachers and those who have become frustrated by the workload and the expectations of the school, will find creative

ways to tick the compliance box without changing anything in their practice. I am not proposing Christian Schools should throw away the guidelines and resources they have worked hard to develop to help teachers plan and deliver quality Christian materials. I am suggesting we can make the task easier for teachers than it currently is. It is easier to illuminate God in the curriculum, as He is already there, than it is to try to put Him back in.

One of the obstacles to the development of a pedagogically and educatively sound Christian worldview in schools lies in the pre-service training of the teachers. Often, they completed their initial qualifications at secular universities and completed their early years of teaching in a government school. This results in the adoption of phenomenological pedagogy which outworks as they teach within Christian schools from secular perspectives (Lawrence, Burton, & Nwosu, 2005). When this remains unaddressed by Christian schools it acts as a permission giving mechanism for teachers to continue to be dualistic in their thinking (Collier, 2013).

For some time in Australia many churches have not had a scholarly approach to the delivery of their message (O'Harae, 2007). Preaching in churches can be inspirational or motivational and most personal Bible reading is devotional and inspirational. Consequently, even teachers who have been Christians most of their lives do not have a full understanding of the Bible, nor a fully developed Christian worldview (O'Harae, 2007). While teachers should take responsibility for their own spiritual growth the school can make a valuable contribution by partnering with staff members in a collective sense of responsibility for ongoing spiritual growth.

Christian teachers may seek to teach students a biblical worldview; they also teach from a worldview which may not be consistent with a Biblical worldview. A young person's teachers are, claims Schultz (2002), one of the most influential factors in the development of their worldview. Gaebelein (1968) believes it is an undeniable fact that the teacher's worldview slowly changes the worldview of the student. To create a deeper result, Christian educators, according to Smith (2012), must work to identify their own biases and assumptions. Smith argues we are human beings, occupying a time and culture which influences the ways we see the world around. We are fallen, sinful and imperfect.

The discussions about the critical role of teachers in FLI, with an understanding the teacher does not have a complete Christian worldview and is subject to the prevalent dualistic thinking of our society, present a conundrum for Christian schools. If the successful inculcation

of a biblical worldview into every aspect of a Christian school is to be decided by the teachers who are, themselves, imperfect for the task – we have a problem.

**Revelatory communities**

A key way to begin to address this problem is to make some small changes to the way we talk about FLI. The process should not be one of integration, of taking out what is believed to be non-Christian and/or putting in that which is believed to be Christian. It needs to be reconceptualised as one of revelation. We cannot reveal God to anyone else. God reveals Himself to us. In the school context, He does so through revealing truth, goodness and beauty in the subject matter and in the way the teacher teaches. In planning to teach in revelatory classrooms the teacher looks for the connections between the subject matter and other aspects of God's purposes to see how God might be revealing Himself through the material to be taught, rather than trying to identify explicit connections between Christian truth and the subject content. In simple terms, seeing God in the content, rather than trying to put Him back into it.

God reveals Himself to us through special revelation (through His word) and through general revelation (through the world around us). While acknowledging both special and general revelation as key ways God reveals himself to us, it is in the living of life Christians can interpret and understand Scripture and tradition (Schillebeeckx, 1968). In this way life itself is an hermeneutic exercise, an exercise of God revealing Himself to us. Our individual and shared experiences, the actions which result from our choices as we live life, shine light on the interpretation of Scripture and contribute to the ways in which God reveals Himself to us. "It is only in the sphere of action – of doing in the faith – that orthodox interpretation can be inwardly fulfilled… Interpretation becomes hermeneutics of praxis" (Schillebeeckx, 1968, p. 36). The lived experiences of students contribute to the ways God can reveal Himself to them. The relationship between students and teachers and the pedagogy of the teacher becomes of central interest here.

The revelatory classroom model, which has the three pillars of knowing, becoming and being, is echoed by other frameworks developed by Christian and other educators. The Delors UNESCO report, *Learning: The treasure within*, has greatly influenced education policy in recent years (De Leo, 2012). The report proposes four pillars as the foundations of education (p. 20). The most emphasis is placed on 'learning to live together' (conceptualised in the Revelatory

Classrooms model in the overarching role of community). The other three pillars, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to be, are seen as providing the basis for learning to live together. Pestalozzi established the 'Head, Hearts and Hands' framework of education in the late 1890's (Soëtard, 1994) which resonates with three of the pillars of the Delors framework. Schultz and Swezey (2013) identified a three-dimensional conception of worldview incorporating propositional, behavioural and heart-orientation dimensions. The connections to these other frameworks of education may help teachers understand and unpack what it means to be a teacher of a revelatory classroom

## Knowing (cognitive and theoretical)

The task of Christian educators is to facilitate the delivery of the curriculum in ways which maximise the possibilities students will connect with how God is seeking to reveal Himself to them. This is primarily a cognitive process, one of thinking through how God might reveal Himself in the lessons ahead. This is where learning about a Christian worldview and developing a common core to help teachers in the thinking and planning process, is very helpful. By using the language of revelation, in place of the language of integration, we change our approach from a deficit model – the Christian perspective is not in the curriculum and thus we have to identify how to put it there, to one of a surplus model, God is already there and wants to reveal Himself to us. If we truly believe all truth is God's truth then He is already in the material to be taught.

In this approach, the focus shifts from one of teaching a Christian worldview to one of teaching from a Christian worldview. If the development of a common core and building Christian worldview understandings is undertaken as a corporate responsibility within the school community, the focus also shifts from success resting solely on the shoulders of the teacher. The school begins to continually ask the question of how they could do things differently, in ways which better reflect their core Christian beliefs and values. This primarily cognitive and theoretical work remains important in the development of revelatory classrooms.

## Becoming Christlike (spiritual formation)

Maximising the conditions within which God will reveal himself to students involves an approach which includes strategic, deliberate strategies for spiritual formation of staff. This is

best achieved when it is embedded in the culture of the school. The starting point, as with many things in life, is to bring to awareness the dualistic thinking and ways of working which have not yet been transformed making the language of discussing these a common language of educative discourse in the professional community of the school. While the vision and purpose (telos) of Christian schools may be expressed in different words, there is a very strong unified ambition to see graduates discipled into Christ and actively involved in discipling others.

School communities must also take the time to help staff become aware of the elements of their worldview and to bring them into alignment with biblical Christian worldview through a process of spiritual formation. This process should be deeply embedded in the praxis of the school. In this way, it has less chance of becoming a regulatory check box with which staff can comply without substantive personal transformative change. One approach, one which aligns with best practice in teaching and learning, is for teaching teams to regularly meet to explore ways the Lord might reveal Himself through what and how they are teaching.

## Being (pneumatological and incarnational pedagogy)

A pneumatological incarnational pedagogy is one in which the teacher seeks to be the embodiment of Christ, imitating and modelling Him (Iselin & Meteyard, 2010, p. 35), and, in daily interactions with students, recognises 'the mystery of the Spirit's work' and allows 'room or space for that covert ministry in each phase of teaching itself as part of the implicit curriculum' (Pazmiño, 2010, p. 358). The cognitive and theoretical work involved in preparing content and strategies through which God can reveal himself to students is essential. It is also evident Christianity is intended to be a developmental faith journey through which we are becoming like Jesus. If teachers are strategically and intentionally engaged in these two elements they will begin to create the environment in which students might better connect to the ways God is seeking to reveal Himself to them. Revelatory teaching, however, goes beyond the formative to the transformative (Pazmiño, 2010), a process in which the Holy Spirit's presence is essential.

## Avoiding a new dualism

The possibility of creating a new dualism in the language of revelatory classrooms must be acknowledged. The three dimensions of the framework are not intended to be seen, or implemented, as separate components. The binding agent for them is the broader Christian

community. They are not components, rather dimensions which coexist in time and space (Gill, 1979).

**Conclusion**

The revelatory approach does not reject the efforts of FLI. It argues use of the term integration as the key language of the efforts of Christian schools to be Christian is problematic in that it contributes to the adoption of dualistic methodologies. The revelatory model adds to existing integrative processes. Firstly, it adds a recognition of the need for the transformational outcomes of a relationship with the Lord to be evident in all the ways in which a school behaves in its day to day operations and interactions with people. Behaviours are evidenced in actions, not in aspirational statements of intent. Christian schools need to respond to the challenge given by Hull (2003) for every aspect of the school to be clearly differentiated from the equivalent aspects of other schools. Secondly, revelatory schools recognise the importance of the ongoing spiritual formation of staff members and do not outsource this responsibility. The revelatory school community is one in which there is a strong shared corporate sense of responsibility which supports and encourages the ongoing spiritual growth of individual members of staff. As O'Harae (2007) discovered, teachers, as with all Christians, have a wide range of levels of spiritual formation. While it is imperative for Christian schools to employ committed Christian teachers if they want to have any chance of being Christian, this is really, at best, just a good start. Thirdly, it responds to Smith's (2012) concern the work of FLI in Christian schools is cognitive and theoretical rather than holistic, by bringing into focus the role of the Holy Spirit in the revelation process. Christian teachers never walk into their classrooms alone. They walk in in the company of the Holy Spirit.

The culture of Christian schools informs the practice of the teachers. If the culture communicates the responsibility for successful FLI lies with the teacher it may only partially succeed. The goal of revelatory schools is to create the best possible learning environment within which God can reveal Himself to the members of the school community, especially the students. The whole Christian school community needs to take up the collective responsibility of creating such a culture. Revelatory schools make this their prime objective.

 Thankfully Christians do not approach this task alone. We have been gifted the Holy Spirit as a guide and teacher (John 3:5-6, John 14:26). He lives within each person who chooses the

Christian faith journey (1 Corinthians 6:19). A prayerful, committed, sincere Christian teacher can be reassured in the knowledge the Holy Spirit is with them in every interaction with students. As Christian teachers prayerfully plan and teach, the Lord can perfect that which is imperfect. As teachers increase their knowledge of a Christian worldview (cognitive and theoretical), grow and mature as Christians (spiritual formation) and seek to be like Christ in dependence on the Holy Spirit in the classroom (incarnational pedagogy) a revelatory community is outworked.

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# Empathy as intellectual virtues in Christian Higher Education

*By Maria Lai-Ling Lam*

## Abstract

This paper is based on the reflection from my 21 years of professional experience in higher education in Hong Kong and the United States, including 14 years in Christian colleges in the United States, and my research concerning character development and leadership development (Lam, 2016, 2017). When I presented the idea of empathy international management conferences during the past fifteen years, the audiences always questioned me about the practicality of empathy in a highly competitive market. Their doubt motivated me to devote considerably more thought about the significance of *redeemed* empathy in Christian business education and how the reformed theology of creation, fall, redemption, and fulfillment deepen our gratitude to serve the Lord through the development of students' empathy. In this paper, I will use the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Fulfillment paradigm to elaborate the significance of the development of empathy as intellectual virtues, the practices, and then the principals behind experiential learning assignments and journal writings in my marketing and management courses in two Christian colleges.

## Creation-fall-redemption-fulfillment paradigm

We are created as God's image (Gen 1:26-27) and still need to be co-independent to enjoy each other in a flourishing community. Before fall, we don't need compassion but we still need empathy as we need to understand our subject and cooperate with the subject. Jesus expresses empathy in His words, "Do unto others as you would have then do onto you." Empathy is an innate human capacity. We have given the capacity to understand other people's thinking and capacity. It is part of our creation and our good character. Empathy allows us to be precious children and enjoy each other. It is defined as "the ability to comprehend another's feelings and to re-experience them oneself" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, pp. 194-195). It includes affective and cognitive empathy.

Affective empathy is to share similar feelings and emotions of the others. Cognitive empathy is the ability to understand others' thought and feelings from the perspective of others. Affective empathy can be emotional and spontaneous while cognitive empathy is more intentional and voluntary. Cognitive empathy is found to be significantly mediated the relationships between gratitude and compassion (Kim, Wang, Hill, 2018). It is essential to cultivate cognitive empathy that generates compassion and gratitude (Worthen and Isakson, 2007). Empathy is teachable and is essential for humans to have flourished in the past, in the present, and in the future (Goleman, 2006; Rifkin, 2010). It is also essential for critical thinking, positive appreciative inquiry, and creative thinking in organizational studies (Ashkanasy, Harte, & Daus, 2002; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Cooperider and Whitney, 2001; Finn, 2009; Vaill, 2007). It leads to altruistic motivation and helping behavior (Batson, Fuitz, Schoenrade, 1987). Each person has potential to us empathy to help himself or herself to thrive through helping others to thrive.

After the fall, every part of human existence, including empathy, has been corrupted by sin. Empathy can be manipulated to exploit our fellow human beings. These are major unfavorable outcomes: favoritism, selfish behavior, injustice to those who do not have much negative emotional expression, and misallocation of organization resources for reducing personal distress (Hoffman, 2000; Kleinlogel & Dietz, 2017; Koestler, 1964: Lamm, Batson, and Decety, 2007; Ohreen, 2013; Waytz, 2016). Empathy needs to be practiced in a culture of care and justice (Batson, 2011; Held, 2006; Hoffman, 2000).

Our students' empathy level has plummeted because of on-line education and the increasing usage of social media technologies (Konrath, O'Brian, and Hsing, 2016). The ability to develop a culture of empathy erodes even further when pervasive on-line education is moving away from broad education in the humanities and social science (Dolby, 2013; Natale and Libertella, 2016). Empathy is often coupled with low esteem in our current business education (Holt, 2012; Holt and Marques, 2012). Ironically, human beings can use technology to opt-out of our empathy toward others when we are living in a fast-paced digitized environment which desperately needs more empathetic concerns and more informed empathy. Konrath et al. (2016) found that the empathy level among college students in the United States dropped 40% during the period between 1972 to 2009after they did meta-analysis of seventy-two studies on empathy

conducted on college-age students during 1972-2009. They attributed the drop of empathy to the rise of social media and the rise of violence in social media technologies.

The universal existence of prosocial motives, generated by empathy, can easily be diminished when most business schools do not prepare students to reflect and challenge their beliefs when they worship money and power over other people's needs (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005; Giacalone and Promislo, 2013; McHann, 2012). Regretfully, many business students are found to be more inclined to be self-centered in behavior and have more positive attitudes toward greed in the existing business curriculum which is dominated by quantitative analysis (Sims, 1993; Wang, Malhorta, & Murnighanm, 2011).

Many students in business schools in the U.S. are infiltrated with perilous values opposing professional virtues before they receive higher education (Giacalone and Romislo, 2013). These students adopt materialistic attitudes and "winning at any cost" values. They have already accepted that the practices of empathy may hinder their abilities to make tough decisions and apply organizational standards in highly competitive industries before they receive any business ethics education. Paradoxically, business students, realizing the competitive characteristics of the field, need to have empathic education to be embedded in their objective education. They need more help in the development of becoming caring business professionals given their relatively low level of empathy or perceived low need of empathy in their technology-saturated lives. Holt (2012, p. 97) reminded us the urgency and importance of empathy,

> *Business school faculty, especially those teaching management and leadership courses, should make a concerted effort in infusing greater awareness into their students on the urgency and importance of empathy. The business community is a powerful one in that business enters where no government or nongovernmental entity does. As one of the most influential global constituents, it is eminent that businesses display the right attitude for the sake of future generations and for a restored equilibrium in the quality of life among members of the human race.*

Christian educators can be redeemed agents and use abundant Christian resources to develop empathy as intellectual virtues. With God's love and grace, we can go through the process of shared experience to have perceptual discovery. The exemplary practice of empathy

toward human beings is Christ's incarnation on the earth and his death on the cross. Jesus emptied himself and lived as a human being to understand our human lives on the earth. He died for us and led us to have new lives through his death and resurrection. Jesus empathized us and gave us the gift of salvation. All are made to be new in Christ. Another example of compassionate action is the Parable of the Good Samaritan (KJV Luke 10:25-37). The Good Samaritan was not overwhelmed by his emotional distress when he saw a dying person and took actions for his needs. The Pharisees just passed by and moved away from the scene that caused them emotional discomfort. The Good Samaritan and Pharisees both may have negative affective empathy whey they really look at the broken body. However, the Good Samaritan intentionally chooses to work for the stranger and show us how to empathize with our neighbors and love our neighbors as ourselves with God's common grace.

Redeemed empathy is like "perceptual discovery" described by Dr. Szalitz (2001, p. 99). With God's grace, we can understand the experience of others through our experience, our learning from the others, literature, and our personal analysis. Redeemed empathy is regarded as empathic introspection of our personal experience affecting our understanding of others' experience (Carr, 2015). Empathy is similar to a shared experience and shared discovery through many non-verbal communications. Empathy expands our own self-awareness and also facilitates the growth of our own beings and other fellow human beings in the intersubjective realities. The leap from shared experiences to insightful discoveries can be explained as a kind of God's revelation or love. Thus, the virtue of empathy will never totally loose its resonance in any image bearer of God. Redeemed empathy is described as an important virtue by Plantinga (2002, p 234), the previous president of Calvin College:

> *A deep and creative grasp of a subject requires empathy, an imaginative transposition of the whole self into the matters to be understood, a readiness to experience the world as others have experienced it.*

Empathy allows students to make inquiries about the objects with understanding before they take action. It also enriches students' lives through understanding many culturally distant neighbors in our historical texts and contemporary society. Empathy and critique are the two most important intellectual virtues needed to be cultivated in higher education (Lakeland, 2002). However, the first virtue is often missing in the pursuit of academic excellence. Students need to

be open to the experience and raise their consciousness for the greater common good through the practice of empathy in virtuous business education (Cameron et al., 2003; Caza & Cameron, 2008; Cook & Lam, 2017; Covey, 2002; Dutton, Worline, Lilius., 2006; Eshelman, Lam, & Cook, 2012; Vaill, 2007). Lakeland (2002) claimed that empathy is a distinctive niche for higher education:

> *Empathy is then the necessary condition for such a suspension of judgment; the virtue, or perhaps better, the habit of empathy precludes premature analysis or critique and does battle against the strong urge of the academician to place the object of inquiry in some preapproved taxonomy, system, or meta-narrative. While eschewing sentimentality, the inquirer must in a real way love the object of inquiry; what is to be studied must be respected, allowed, as it were, to be itself. Only when this happens is there at least a fighting chance that critique of analysis will in fact reach the object of inquiry and not remain within the labyrinth of the inquirer's mental pathways. Empathy, in other words, is profoundly practical* (ibid., p.14).

Students are guided to be open to the object of inquiry without being threatened or having the urge to control the object to confirm students' prejudices when students are willing to put themselves into other people's positions. The empathetic skill also prepares business students to know how to practice inquiry in the process of leading their own learning and to think more in an others-centered atmosphere. They also can practice positive appreciative enquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001), creative thinking (Cameron et al., 2003; Finn, 2009; Vaill, 2009), and active listening when they have developed empathetic skills (Cook, Lam, & Klemann, 2013; Vella, 2002). Redeemed empathy has been found positively related to effective leadership (Day et al., 2014; Terrasi, 2015; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Vaill, 1996, 1989, 2007; Weinberger, 2009), ethical decision-making (Batson, 2011; Batson et al., 1987; Dutton et al., 2006; Kleinlogel and Dietz, 2017; Pavlovich & Krahnke, 2012), and social capital that increase the values of firm relationships (Dutton, 2003; Dutton, et al., 2006; Goleman, 2006; Mahsud, Yukl, & Prussia , 2010; Pruzan, 2008; Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Vaill, 2007, 1996, 1989; Young, 2004).

**Practices**

The process of shared experience leading to perceptual discovery is still a mystery to many professionals. Empathy is advocated to be practiced in a culture of care and justice for better human development (Hoffman, 2000). Empathy has developmental characteristics. It involves the sanctification process with God's grace. Christian educators need to be informed and be mindful whether the practice of empathy is fair and caring in a particular context. When empathy is regarded as a perceptual discovery, Christian educators working as redeemed agents need to scrutinize their emotional responses with insights and information, and discern how their choices affect others.

Thus, with God's grace, Christian educators can treat empathy as informed choice with being mindful of yourself and others in the process of discovery. We need to be open to new discovery and practice humility in front of others. The process of perceptual discovery has to be sanctified with the Holy Spirit. When we are open to the interventions of God and suspend our immature judgement in the process of intellectual inquiry, we would not be dwelled in the negative emotional arousal and focus more on the needs of others and ourselves at that moment. We admit that God is in charge of the interpersonal relationships and will serve the Lord when we practice empathy. In the process of practicing empathy, the givers not only respond to the needs of their neighbors but also hold themselves to be accountable for their choices. The givers will follow Jesus Christ to discern their limits of empathy and have self-control. The givers are oriented to strengthen the receivers for the interest of Christ. The intrinsic knowledge of Christ also leads to higher level of empathy. The redemption and fulfillment process helps us to participate in Divine power and increase our gratitude to God's grace:

> *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make*

*you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ* (KJV 2 Peter 1: 3-8).

Thus, the practice of empathy as an intellectual virtue in a fallen world also includes compassion. The development of perspective-taking in the cognitive empathy can lead to compassion (Kim et al., 2018). I define empathy as a process to consider a particular perspective of another person, to feel as another person feels, and to take action for the needs of that other person (Lam, 2014). It is closely related to concern, perspective taking, and action. It needs to practice humility in the process of the development of perceptual discovery.

I have guided students to practice empathy with numerous experiential learning and reflection assignments. I have to model the virtues of empathy, courage, and humility in the process of intellectual inquiry embedded in a culture of justice and care inside and outside the classrooms. I must respect the hidden wholeness of my students and develop students' empathetic skills through connecting their own life stories with the subject (Eriksen, 2012; Palmer, 1983; 1989; McHann & Forst, 2010; Witherell, Tran, and Othus, 1995). I need to give enough space for students to disclose themselves and think about an issue from different frames of references. I must take the risk of challenging students' prejudices and lack of knowledge. Students have to practice intellectual critical inquiry in an open and respectful atmosphere and develop the skills of empathy that are embedded in the principles of Christ-centered care and justice.

There are six basic principles of practicing informed, mature, and mindful-empathy I have found in my 21 years' teaching business students in Hong Kong and U.S.:

1. model to students;
2. practice empathy in our observations, interpersonal relationships, and communications;
3. respect the shared space and a person's autonomy in a community ("I and us");
4. provide secure space for students to discover and deal with uncertainties;
5. guide students through self-reflection assignments and collaborative assignments;
6. develop the capacity of cognitive empathy and also critical thinking skills.

**Conclusion**

Empathy as an intellectual virtue in higher education and is essential for students to be open to others' perspectives before they judge and decide appropriate response. In Christian higher education, *redeemed* empathy is cultivated through the development of cognitive empathy and compassion through many traditional Christian resources. The *redeemed* empathy includes perspectives, concerns, and compassionate actions. Christian educators can be redeemed agents in the process of nurturing our students' innate capacity of empathy to be informed, mature, and mindful empathy. Empathy as a perceptual discovery process will be cultivated as an intellectual virtue with God's Grace. Using the creation-fall-redemption-fulfillment to interpret many research findings about the role of empathy in business education will lead Christian educators to be alert to our on sin and be grateful to the sanctification process of Holy Spirit in the process of our intellectual inquiry and the formation of perceptual discovery. Consequently, the practice of nurturing students' empathy, in particular cognitive empathy, will lead students to have more compassionate actions for the people and more gratitude to the Lord through their service.

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**Christian engagement with people of other faiths: Undergraduate preparation and experience**

By Shirley J. Roels

**Abstract**

Historically, a Christian majority has shaped the United States of America. Now its religious and cultural future is becoming a multi-religious context like many others in the world. In this process, U.S. Christian higher education leaders should learn from Christian educators with significant experience in multi-faith cultures. Together we should consider Biblical and theological approaches to the religious faith of others as we develop effective teaching and learning practices to cultivate the Christian identity of our graduates as well as their preparation to engage people of other faiths.

This paper explores inter-religious challenges in the United States context for Christian higher education. The author describes the changing nature of U.S. religious commitment and elaborates on the range and fluidity of beliefs in undergraduate student populations. American Christian higher education institutions now include more students of diverse religious backgrounds and some who declare no known religious faith. Can one educational context both deepen Christian roots and support interfaith branches?

To address this situation American Christians in higher education are benefiting currently from a positive confluence of scholarship, leadership, and funding to address the changing context for undergraduate education. Yet Christian educators must grapple with interfaith dynamics related to educational mission, effective paradigms for interfaith engagement, evangelism strategies appropriate to the higher education context, and religious illiteracy among some students. In these matters, American educational leaders should garner wisdom from other Christian educators throughout the world.

**Introduction**

The airline passenger in the next seat was a young woman wearing a hijab. I asked, "What brought you to Washington, D.C.?" That day she had attended meetings as the director of communications for the Islamic Society of North America based in Indiana, the American heartland. As a daughter of U.S. immigrants, she had grown up in a devout Muslim Midwestern family, graduated from a public university, and then used her media skills to move into a position of national influence. During the flight, we talked about her family's religious tradition as well as her work. As we left the plane, she thanked me for our exchange. Then she noted that several times Americans on airplanes had refused to sit by her. Her observation prompts pondering about my responsibilities as a Christian educator in a changing culture. As Christians, how should we educate our students for a multi-faith future, both locally and globally? In what ways can we shape citizens for fruitful engagement instead of fear? Can Christians provide undergraduate education that deepens Christian roots and nurtures multi-religious branches within the same higher education context?

Historically, a Christian majority has shaped the United States of America. Now the USA future is shifting, gradually, to become a multi-religious context like many others in the world. In this process, U.S. Christian higher education leaders should learn from Christian educators with significant experience in other multi-faith cultures. We need each other to consider Biblical approaches to the religious faith of others as well as effective teaching and learning practices about Christian engagement with people of other faiths. In this paper, I explore the inter-religious challenges specific to the United States context for Christian higher education, questions that arise in this process, current pilot initiatives in undergraduate education, and challenges that must be addressed by Christian educators.

**The Changing Religious Context in the United States of America**

The cultural and religious orientation of United States of America is changing. Before the arrival of Europeans on this continent more than 500 years ago, indigenous people groups had spiritual traditions. Yet the religious history of the United States as a nation began with Pilgrim Protestants from Europe who sought religious freedom and settled on the east coast. Early on, there were only a few Catholics and Jews in port cities; but they did not constitute a significant voice. In subsequent eras, two major Christian religious revivals strengthened Protestant

Christianity within the early states. Only later did California with its long-standing Catholic mission communities join the union.

As a result, the dominant religious influence in the U.S. until the mid-1900s was that of Protestant Christianity embodied in denominations such as the Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Presbyterians. According to Finke and Stark's (1988) analysis of U.S. census data, the levels of formal religious affiliation in the United States continued to rise from the early U.S. years until the 1950s. From a small set of denominations, these populations constituted a strong Protestant majority that shaped the course of a nation. While such denominations supported religious pluralism and freedom in concept, American traditions and norms in practice were aligned with Protestant Christian habits and ideas arising from such denominations.

Most of these Protestant denominations established colleges to train new generations of leaders. They sought to provide an educated Christian clergy as well as those fit for national leadership posts. Roman Catholics developed their own higher education system as a capstone for the U.S. Catholic educational system and an attempt to avoid Protestant dominance. Over time and through these Protestant and Catholic channels, the United States and its educational institutions were influenced significantly by majority Christian understandings for learning and social institutions. Colleges and universities such as Harvard and Princeton were founded to educate Protestant Christians leaders for congregations and the nation; and Catholic higher education counterparts such as Georgetown University and the University of Notre Dame were similarly focused.

Since the 1800s the U.S. public university sector has grown substantially. Yet in 2017 it is still the case that more than 400 four-year independent colleges and universities in the United States retain active ties to a founding Christian denomination or religious order. Their mission statements, curricula, and institutional cultures reflect roots in Christian traditions and aspirations. More recently, the U.S. population is changing in the scope of its religious orientations. Annual Gallup Poll surveys of American religious affiliation document the nation's shifting religious identity as noted in Table One.

**Table One: Percentage of Americans by Religious Affiliation**

|  | 1970 | 2015 |
|---|---|---|
| Protestant | 65% | 47% |
| Catholic | 26% | 23% |
| Other Religions | 5% | 10% |
| None | 2% | 17% |
| Undesignated | 0% | 4% |

By 2015, and for the first time, U.S. Protestant identity has slipped below 50% of the total population's identity. Those devoted to other religious traditions such as Islam, Sikhism and Buddhism continue to rise in numbers. Yet because these are newer religious traditions in the American context, there are almost no U.S. higher educational institutions associated with such traditions. For example, the U.S. choice for a young devout Muslim is either: one fledgling Islamic college of a couple hundred students, a Christian-based college or university, or public higher education.

Further, since 1970, the percentage of those claiming no specific religious identity has risen substantially. Additional studies in this regard note distinct religious trend lines among emerging adults enrolling in U.S. colleges and universities. A significant proportion of those designating themselves as "nones" in relation to religious identity are young adults in the U.S. For example, a 2013 online survey of 1800 U.S. undergraduate by the Trinity College Centre for Inquiry noted that U.S. college students are divided almost evenly into three camps regarding religious faith.  About a third considered themselves as "true believers." Another third identifies as spiritual but not religious; and just under a third of students define themselves as secular. The researchers noted this widening spread of self-definitions despite that fact that many of these students came from Christian households. In the survey, most of the secular students as well as roughly a third of those who believe themselves to be spiritual suggested that they were actually "nones". Many of these surveyed undergraduates seem to prefer a lack of identity with any established U.S. religious tradition.

Few younger Americans openly identify themselves as atheist or agnostic. To self-identify as a "none" may mean that some of America's emerging adults seek to distinguish themselves from any known historic Christian group. In 1985 American sociologist Bellah in

*Habits of the Heart,* described Sheila, one of his interviewees who mixed beliefs across religious traditions in a blend she titled Sheilaism. He worried about her co-optation from multiple strands of religious commitment that occurred without grounded theological knowledge or deep reflection. More than thirty years later, in a forthcoming publication, Trina Jones, professor of religious studies at Wofford College, suggests that Sheila is no longer exotic among current American undergraduates. Students are creating their own blends of Christian and non-Christian religious traditions.

Today's young U.S. adults may not discard all religious formation provided by their families; but a significant share of them prefer to identify outside traditional Christian categories of belief and label themselves as "none", "spiritual", or "secular" in their mixing of many religious flavors. The result as noted in recent studies by Herzog (2014) is that, "Emerging adult spirituality and religiosity is exactly that—a complex phenomenon…fraught with multiple transitions and contradictions" (p. 65).

There are many reasons for such complexity of religious expression and understanding among U.S. emerging adults. Almost a decade ago, Smith (2009) noted the loosened religious foundations among soul-searching young adults who are detached from stable families and congregations in multiple religious traditions. Many find their way through what he titles "moral therapeutic deism", a vague commitment to the expectation that God expects good behavior and will help in times of need. The lack of specific theological content leaves the beliefs of the young quite malleable. Clark (2006) attributes the loosening of traditional religious foundations to inattentive parents, shallow congregational youth ministries, and a lack of focus on the hurts that youth experience. He asserts that a lack of depth and intensity, particularly in the Christian formation of youth by families and churches, feeds the fluid nature of faith identity.

Other scholars have noted multiple and complex ways in which immigration to the United States affects religious identity. While Warner (2018) observes that often families migrate to the United States as Christians, many Hispanic Catholic immigrants construct their religious identities in ways that deviate from those held by their parents, leading to fluidity. According to the Pew Research Center (2014), while some of these Hispanic survey respondents became Protestants, many of them gradually drifted away from Christian participation. Often they sought to disassociate themselves from cultural traditions and perspectives wedded to Catholicism in their countries of origin. This leads to religious fluidity among the Hispanic

Catholic young. The young may also be attracted by the growing U.S. opportunity to explore alternative religious traditions. In Yang and Erbaugh's (2001) case studies of U.S. Buddhism (2001), they describe attempts by immigrant Chinese Buddhists to attract nonimmigrant Americans to their tradition. They described younger people who seek to leave their parents' mainline Christianity and explore other possibilities.

Research by other scholars may also lead to questions about whether substantial use of social media by the young is now adding fractures to the traditional typologies for belief in any religious tradition. As Moulin (2013) notes, religious identity construction for the young is a social process in a plural context. Now that the social context for emerging adults includes their online exploration of the self, personal religious identity can be shaped by this source; and if religious identity becomes a project of independent and virtual self-construction, then those influenced by such media may perceive various religious traditions as ingredients to be mixed and matched among individual preferences and with resulting practices.

When one considers these two dynamics since 1970, namely the doubling of adherents to non-Christian religions in the US and the significant increase in young people identifying with more fluid categories for religious identity, it is clear that U.S. religious culture continues to shift radically. Noting such changes, Putnam and Campbell (2010, p. 493) wonder whether the U.S. will become "a tinderbox for a religious conflagration."

**Student Faith Identity within American Colleges and Universities**

While research studies document changing religious beliefs of American emerging adults, stories also abound among independent U.S. colleges and universities regarding changes in faith identities within their student bodies. The fluidity of religious identity as well as the results of immigration and migration have complicated the mix of student religious beliefs on any given campus. Among higher education institutions founded by mainline Protestants and Catholics, such changes in student religious composition are occurring on the heels of a 20th century movement in which these institutions sought greater independence from their founding religious circles. As Marsden (1994) and Burtchaell (1998) document, many leaders in American independent higher education perceived that greater flexibility related to religious identify could

attract a larger pool of prospective students and faculty members with needed expertise. This became particularly attractive as population demographics changed after the 1960s.

In subsequent decades, founding denominations also were less willing and able to be principal sources of financial support for students. Instead, several mainline Protestant denominations opted to develop the faith identity of youth *within* congregations instead of *beyond* them in their related colleges. Those directing college and university networks associated with mainline Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian U.S. denominations noted this change to this paper's author.

For example, several regional Wesley Foundations that had historically supported college scholarships and campus ministries shifted financial support to congregational youth ministries. The questions of campus religious composition became even more complex after the 1990s. The emergence of online education further loosened geographic identity associated with regional congregations; in particular Christian circles. The result is that in the last half of the twentieth century, greater distance developed between institutions of Christian higher education and their religious founders; and by the 21st century student religious diversity in these colleges and universities had increased substantially. Because of these changes, educational leaders in mainline Protestant and Catholic traditions now ask how colleges and universities sustain Christian roots along with the multi-religious branches that have grown into major limbs. For example:

- After a significant Jewish population moved to Florida, college students of such origins began to enroll at near-by Eckerd College, part of the Presbyterian higher education network. These students now comprise more than a third of the undergraduates. (D. McMahon, personal conversation, July, 2015).
- At Augsburg College, a Midwestern Lutheran college, the total enrollment goal is sustained because of a significant number of Somali Muslim undergraduates. These students originate in families that Lutheran Social Services supported as new U.S. immigrants more than twenty years ago. (M. Stortz, personal conversation, October, 2010).
- At Wesleyan College in the American south, about 25% of students are from international origins across a broad arrange of religious traditions from Asia and the

Middle East. This is an outgrowth of the college's strong emphasis on globalization. (D. Humphreys, personal conversation, summer, 2014).

- California Lutheran University notes on its website that students originate in 45 different countries even though most of their families are permanent U.S. residents. The university composition reflects their west coast multicultural location. University leaders regularly ponder the integration of students with Lutheran roots with those from many religious and cultural traditions, particularly from multiple Asian, Middle Eastern, and Hispanic backgrounds.

- Benedictine University in Illinois, a community committed to the rule of St. Benedictine, has a student population that is more than 25% Muslim. These students are principally the children of Pakistani and India Muslim immigrants who found work in the meat-processing plants outside Chicago. When parents sought higher education for their sons and daughters, they wanted proximity, excellence, and moral values. Benedictine University became the institution of choice for many such families (C. Fletcher, personal conversation, summer, 2014).

For institutions such as these that still affirm their Christian religious traditions, the daily undergraduate experience is a multi-religious one, where student peers learn about multiple expressions of faith. Even among evangelical Protestant colleges and universities, the question of student religious identities arises. Since 1975 a network of about 120 evangelical Protestant institutions has chosen to remain more closely identified with specific Christian traditions. These institutions hire only Christian faculty members and position themselves under the umbrella of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) within the United States. Yet they too have experience Christian engagement with people of other faiths. Minimally, these institutions must consider whether the creation of campus cultures as "Christian bubbles" - isolated spheres of Christian experience - is educationally effective in a changing society. Additionally, they must grapple with the question of how much access to Christian learning should be provided for students in other faith traditions who seek to enroll in Christian higher education. Responses to these challenges have been varied. For example,

- Bethel University in Minnesota has adopted the stance of preparing their students for effective Christian living in the United States. As quoted by Larson and Shady (2017,

p. 53), one student wrote, "So now I am interested in interfaith simply because I want to know people. I strongly believe that a person's faith or non-faith is a huge component of her or his identity. How can I follow Christ's command to love my neighbor as myself if I fail to know my neighbor's identity as a person of faith? I just want to know my neighbors who I believe are all created in the image of God, and I want to build relationships based on our common humanity rather than walls and divisions due to stereotypes."

- Baylor University, a Texas university with staunch Baptist roots has documented its increase of Muslim students. Many are the offspring of global oil industry executives and have experience in American secondary education. They are not eager to return to the Middle East for undergraduate education; and there are no Islamic institutions of stature in the United States. So, some of these Middle Eastern Islamic parents are choosing Baylor University for their youth because the university takes religion seriously, even with a faith different from their own. They perceive Baylor University as a place that will honor the sacred nature of religious texts and shape moral values in their children. (D. Davis, personal conversation, October, 2011)

- Calvin College in Michigan admitted a Muslim undergraduate from Southeast Asia whose sister was a doctor in the local community. This student accepted the explicit college statement that she would receive an education based on Christian beliefs and frameworks. She sought a high-quality degree at a proximate independent college in which religious beliefs and values mattered; and then she wanted a holistic undergraduate experience that included residence hall life with a Christian roommate.

This is a time of dynamic change in religious exploration and the paths through which U.S. colleges and universities influence students who will shape futures for faith and culture. As higher education researcher Alyssa Rockenbach noted (March 2017), interfaith curiosity, friendship, and exchange are now part of the undergraduate experience. The remaining questions are:

- Will students shape faith and interfaith journeys by themselves or should their educators guide them?

- Will faculty members and professional staff, who are committed Christians become formative mentors in guiding undergraduate religious exploration and understanding?

- How will U.S. Christian higher education leaders consider an effective balance concerning institutional mission, the cultivation of clear Christian identity, the development of inter-religious competence by their graduates, and the requests of non-Christians for educational access to Christian higher education?

Given this context, many U.S. non-governmental colleges and universities seek effective pathways to educate current undergraduates about Christian traditions of religious identity as well as a multi-faith cultural future. Their goals are two-fold: to cultivate rooted Christian faith and support effective approaches to interfaith engagement.

**Recent Incentives for Interfaith Education in American Higher Education**

The research statistics and stories above provide documentation regarding the need for interfaith engagement in the United States, particularly within its independent colleges and universities. Fortunately, or providentially, in the past twenty years a combination of individuals and institutions have converged that encourage U.S. higher education institutions to consider the role of faith in the educational process. They include American scholars, presidents of private colleges and universities, the Lilly Endowment partnership with Council of Independent Colleges leaders, select Christian church leaders, and Eboo Patel's Interfaith Youth Core.

Since the year 2000, American-based scholars, both Christian and those of other faiths, have published original scholarship about student spiritual formation, the religious understanding of faculty members, faith-based identity among Americans, and the changing dynamics of campus life. Parks (2000) in her book *Big Questions and Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Emerging Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*, was at the forefront of these scholarly efforts. She advanced development theory related to the search for meaning among undergraduates and explored best practices among those who mentor them in the educational process. As someone who began her professional life as a Presbyterian college chaplain prior to her years as a Harvard-based researcher, Parks has a passion for supporting student spiritual life. This book, updated in 2011 with a tenth anniversary edition, is a seminal scholarly foundation for knowledge about explorations of faith and purpose among American undergraduates.

The Astins (2011), nationally known higher education researchers at the University of California-Los Angeles, then added to the credibility of such scholarship. Operating from secularized Jewish origins (and late in their professional careers), they noted the strong undergraduate attraction to spiritual practices. Through subsequent national student surveys and deep statistical analyses, they provided substantial evidence that the health of student spiritual life in many deep religious traditions correlates strongly with higher levels of undergraduate academic achievement, degree completion, and satisfaction with their educational experience. Because of their well-established research credentials, the Astins' message in *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives* has been influential in American higher education. Subsequently, the Astins' research and writing colleague, Lindholm, added a major analyses about faculty spirituality. In her book (2014) *The Quest for Meaning and Wholeness: The Spiritual and Religious Connections in the Lives of College Faculty*, she describes how faculty members across different disciplines intersect personal faith commitments with their teaching. Such publications by well-known American higher education researchers encourage U.S. college and university leaders to attend to campus religious culture.

During this same period, American scholars from the fields of religion, theology, history, psychology, literature, and sociology also wrote about the intersection of American religion with education for civic life. Eck (2003), Peace (2012), and Volf (2015) published new works on Christian theology related to interfaith engagement. Palmer (2000), Schwehn and Bass (2006), the Jacobsens (2012), and Clydesdale (2015) added additional perspectives on the role of higher education in supporting the religious identity of students. Wuthnow (2007), Smith (2009), as well as Campbell and Putnam (2010) added sociological studies concerning changing American religious identity. Smith's (2009) longitudinal research is particularly noteworthy. Through both surveys and in-person interviews, he followed a large American cohort from their mid-teen years to their later twenties to research their beliefs about God, perspectives on living, and related behaviors.

The work of these higher education scholars and sociologists is complemented as well by ongoing national surveys associated with the Barna Group, Gallup Poll, and the Pew Research Center in its 'Religious Landscape Studies'. A recent Pew study compares American religious affiliation between the years 2007 and 2014; and this latest study adds analyses about the phenomenon of religious switching among American adults, the effect of marriages between

people of different religious affiliations, and the rising lack of affiliation among millennial students. All these voices in research and scholarship have created robust well-documented evidence about changes in American religious life and the search for purpose and meaning by emerging adult students.

These abundant scholarly resources could be attached readily to the educational and civic concerns of presidents leading independent colleges and universities. The September 11, 2001 terrorism attack along the U.S. east coast pierced the perceived invulnerability of the U.S. to religiously inspired violence, and it prompted deep reflection from U.S. college and university presidents. For example, Bobby Fong, then president of Butler University, observed to the author of this paper that his Indiana-based institution was: a.) without any close ties to religious bodies that could address student stress and perplexity in a time of extreme national crisis; and b.) lacked religious literacy to differentiate the motivations of Al Qaeda members from those of their moderate Islamic neighbors in Indiana. His reflection exemplifies similar reactions among other U.S. higher education leaders. Many of them concluded that once again grounded religious identity and literacy matter for effective education.

As both scholarly and administrative leaders in American higher education renewed the emphasis on religion exploration and pluralistic civic engagement, their priorities found a ready home through a partnership between the Lilly Endowment and the U.S.-based Council of Independent Colleges (CIC). The Lilly Endowment is a U.S. not-for-profit foundation focused on cultivating Christianity in the United States that was originally associated with mainline Protestant denominations and their related seminaries. Gradually the Endowment broadened its circle of engagement to include evangelical and mainline Protestantism as well as Orthodox and Roman Catholic circles.

Then in 2009 with significant support from the Lilly Endowment to the Council of Independent Colleges, a new national affiliation was launched, the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE). CIC designed this network to be an ongoing support for the integration of both intellectual and theological explorations of vocation in undergraduate education. NetVUE members include independent colleges and universities that are Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and multi-faith. The goal is to sustain theological expressions of vocation as a central feature of American undergraduate education. As NetVUE grew, its leaders recognized that education for interfaith engagement is a necessity in a changing culture. Thus,

while the Lilly Endowment is a Christian foundation, a portion of the Endowment's support for NetVUE, explicitly explores scholarship and best practices in undergraduate interfaith education. The partnership between the Lilly Endowment and the Council of Independent Colleges has created a special U.S. opportunity to address the concerns of higher education leaders about both personal beliefs and effective interfaith education.

In parallel, the Christian church, both Protestant and Catholic, is contributing to a new emphasis on interfaith understanding. Many mainline Protestant congregations have sponsored interfaith dialogue groups in local settings; and some churches classified as evangelical and Protestant have refined their theological understanding of interfaith engagement. In Catholic circles, discussion about interfaith education builds on the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on the Relations of the Church with Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, as a foundation for dialogue and collaboration with those of other religious traditions.

Colleges and universities associated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America have been leading denominational explorations of interfaith engagement. Reflecting on Lutheran theological foundations in a summer 2015 issue of *Intersections* magazine, these leaders emphasize that love and gratitude to God for salvation are demonstrated through an immediate calling to engage one's neighbor. Christian faith does not allow its followers selectively to love some neighbors and disregard others. Instead, love of neighbor requires engagement of all types of people in ordinary encounters. These Lutherans assert that their model for interfaith engagement is not one that occurs *despite* being Lutheran Christians but *because* they are Lutheran Christians.

Among those who identify with Reformed Christian higher education, some campus leaders have refreshed exchanges between their denominations and colleges about interfaith engagement. Educators have probed John Calvin's theology, including his writing about the census divinitatus that God places in every person, and Calvin's theology of regeneration as a daily turning toward the true God through growth in Biblical understanding and the ongoing sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Such theological frameworks allow Reformed Christians to value the religious and cultural experience of those in non-Christian religious traditions while inviting people to become attuned more fully to grace that saves through Christ and his rule as Lord. This theological understanding of hearts and minds shaped over time encourages Christian engagement as an act of human neighborliness that may lead to deeper engagement about life in

Christ. While the loosened 20th-century ties between American higher education and related religious circles often have limited denomination-related intersections, the exploration of theological foundations for interfaith engagement is a platform for renewed exchanges between Christian church circles and related higher education institutions.

Finally, Eboo Patel, the founder of Chicago-based Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) has emerged as a source of influence in the United States. Eboo, a U.S. born citizen, follower of moderate Islam, student of American religions, and Rhodes Scholar, has become a national leader in interfaith cooperation. Eboo knew former President Barack Obama from his pre-presidential years in Chicago and was able to build a web of connections to influential national funders. Now IFYC has its own momentum that is not dependent on particular U.S. presidential administrations; and IFYC has chosen young adults in colleges and universities as its primary strategic focus. Their goal is to support the young in exploring and articulating religious identity that leads to effective interfaith service. This organization offers ongoing student leadership development conferences, builds online educational resources, supports scholarly research, and provides colleges and universities with small grants to foster curricular change. Eboo Patel also works collaboratively with the U.S.-based Council of Independent Colleges to offer faculty development seminars about the teaching of interfaith understanding. He and his network are creating significant prompts and opportunities in American higher education to elevate questions of religious faith and meaning among emerging adult populations.

In summary, since the beginning of the 21st century, a special confluence in the United States has developed regarding interfaith education and engagement. The opportunities have risen as substantial scholarship, higher education leaders, Christian church articulations, and American interfaith leaders all consider the religious knowledge and practices of undergraduate students. The confluence of these factors in the U.S. is bringing religious questions to the forefront in the undergraduate search for life commitments and purpose. An emphasis on interfaith education is refreshing the explorations of Christian faith while also enabling the next generation of national leaders to shape a pluralistic religious context.

**Finding New Models for Interfaith Education**

Despite these promising developments, prior U.S. models for interfaith education are insufficient to deepen Christian roots while extending multi-religious branches in the American

context. Larson and Shady's recent book (2017), *From Bubble to Bridge: Educating Christians for a Multifaith World,* contrasts two alternatives that previously have framed different U.S. strategies for interfaith engagement, namely, the tolerance model and the affirmation model. The authors find both to be insufficient as models for the future.

The tolerance model has presumed that national religious pluralism can thrive if adherents to different religious faiths simply avoid each other or limit their interactions together. Larson and Shady assert that this often has been the default position of American evangelical Protestants. As a result, colleges and universities associated with such traditions have tried to avoid the topic of interfaith education for their students. Because Christians in these circles seek a closely bounded faith identity, such campuses have preferred in the past that student education occur in a "Christian bubble". Yet a tolerance approach can result in fear of those unknown and erupt in unhealthy ways during ordinary settings such as airline flights. Leaders in such colleges are recognizing that such an approach leaves their students underprepared for life in the workplace, neighborhoods, and nation.

Yet Larson and Shady (2017) are troubled as well by the affirmation model that has dominated American interfaith dialogues and the work of many mainline Christian Protestant higher education communities to date. This strategy does allow practitioners of different faith traditions to greet each other and compare notes. However, the relationships formed through such exchanges tend to be thin ones. Further, the affirmation model tends to seek the lowest common denominator as a bridge for engagement. For example, with this model its leaders may assert that Christians, Jews, and Muslims in American culture are more alike than different. The result can provide a veneer of connection but little space for the articulation of deeply held beliefs. Actual religious beliefs can be pushed to the margins of understanding in such interfaith settings. The affirmation approach can devolve into a space with limited room for the central truths of Christianity.

Instead of these two insufficient models, Larson and Shady recommend an approach that deepens theologically based models for interfaith engagement through an approach they name "inclusion." In this strategy, committed Christians become open to a more accurate understanding of other religious traditions through actual direct experience but without requiring Christians to bracket or deny their own faith as ultimate truth. Larson and Shady describe the inclusion frame as promoting "a shared reality where all partners in the dialogue come to

understand each other's position, even if they do not agree with it, and build a meaningful relationship despite their differences." (p. 75). The goal is to form a model that allows for thick and continuing human relationships across differences in religious faith.

Larson and Shady's inclusion model is informed by the theological writing of Miroslav Volf. He describes the self as formed by a balance between a person's own faith commitments and the openness/challenge of other perspectives. Volf uses physical embrace as an analogy. Arms open to signal an invitation to which another can respond. Then arms then close around another person to express mutuality without crushing life. Finally, arms reopen to release the person who has been invited into this engagement. Using Volf's analogy, Larson and Shady further develop New Testament ideas about Christian receptivity, hospitality, love and humility.

These two authors use Jesus' teachings in the parables of the prodigal son and the Good Samaritan. These parables describe the scope of grace and then the nature of neighborliness by someone from a non-Jewish tradition. On such bases, Larson and Shady stress that Christian love should fight religious prejudice, refuse to bear false witness, and work for the common good. They also suggest that Christians should have doctrinal humility, a value that acknowledges the continued human limitations and sinfulness of those who are saved through Christ. This approach stresses honesty about the challenges that afflict all humans because of the human fall.

Yet Larson and Shady's framework of inclusion remains fiercely loyal to the Biblical message of salvation through Christ's death and resurrection while inviting Christians to direct and continuing relationships with those of other faith traditions. The Larson and Shady model of inclusion is just beginning to gain traction among American colleges and universities. Most recently, Eboo Patel endorsed their approach in a February 2, 2018 professional development session hosted by the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU).

**Pilot Initiatives in North American Christian Higher Education**

In addition to the examination of models for interfaith engagement in American higher education, there also must be a translation of intentions into instructional and student life practices. Creative approaches to classroom instruction need to complement established pedagogical strategies in teaching comparative religion courses, the approach historically supported by the American Academy of Religion (AAR). Such teaching can value abstracted knowledge that stands apart from an exploration of personal identity and worldview. Further,

instructors are not encouraged by the AAR approach intentionally to engage the faith commitments of students. Instead, the exploration of personal faith is relegated to the university's student life and campus ministry divisions.

In contrast, Elizabethtown College, a U.S. college founded by the Church of the Brethren, is piloting a different pedagogical approach. This college requires that all students complete a foundational Christian theology course. However, one professor observed the changing composition of course students. The course enrolled a growing number of students from other belief traditions, some students not knowledgeable about their Christian faith, and a few who were overtly hostile to Christianity. Because of the college mission, she remodeled pedagogical practices to create a more engaging classroom community for both Christian and non-Christian students. This instructor reframed the required theology course around "big questions", asking each student to articulate their personal questions about human existence. Then as she taught orthodox Christian frameworks about the nature of God, faith, purpose, and salvation, she asked students to write reflections and share them in pairs or small groups during class sessions. In her comparison of student course evaluations, through statistical results and written comments, this instructor noted that Christian students learned their faith as they explained it in close conversations with non-Christian peers.

Similarly, non-Christian students said that they felt included more fully in the classroom because their big questions could be shared in a carefully framed educational context. Several of the latter described greater appreciation for the Christian faith of fellow classmates. While there were no noted conversions among students, many of them reported increased levels of trust and understanding among their peers despite a ready acknowledgement of core differences in belief. This example illustrates what might be done pedagogically to teach Christian theology while creating a culture of personal learning, trust, and reflection for students of mixed religious backgrounds.

Catholics in U.S. higher education have been particularly active in thinking about their approach to campus worship during both Sunday services and educational convocations. Because the Eucharist is central to the Catholic mass, it should not be shared with non-Christians. Still Catholics in independent higher education seek to invite those of other faiths into Catholic occasions for worship at academic institutions. Instead of abandoning the centrality of the Eucharist, the practice in some Catholic colleges and universities is to encourage non-Christian

students to come forward during the mass, not to participate in the Eucharist, but for a blessing by the priest. This approach continues to convey the centrality of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection but also is a way to affirm that God's love of humanity is not limited to Christians.

Additionally, some college and university leaders have learned to ask big questions of students during their advising and mentoring sessions instead of providing packaged answers. They have learned to listen more fully to students and consciously ask pointed questions such as these:

- What is the purpose of your human story? How does it connect with God's story?
- What are your personal gifts and what is their origin?
- How will you deal with human suffering that you see and experience?
- When you begin your future work, what is its purpose?
- In light of human mortality, what do you wish to be said when you die?

The goal is to enable such questions about purpose and meaning to prompt additional student explorations of their identity, commitments, values, and life stance. A pedagogy of questions needs to be complemented by active instruction about possible answers. Yet as a starting point, such an approach is appropriate for both Christian students and those of other faith traditions. Their goal is to engage faith traditions directly and honestly but in a manner that expects students to grapple with deep theological questions no matter what their faith tradition or lack thereof.

Engagement through interfaith service learning is becoming common in America's faith-related colleges and universities. Interfaith Youth Core continues to develop campus leaders from multiple faith traditions through its training weekends for student leaders, support for academic course revisions, and original research. Eboo Patel and his professional colleagues teach student leaders to explain how their religious faith motivates civic service. IFYC's expectation that one should be publicly articulate about religious faith is encouraging students to consider their own religious commitments more deeply. This effort is complemented by IFYC support for new and revised academic courses that combine inter-religious knowledge with the teaching of interfaith engagement. Instructors explore social science research about cultural and religious diversity, distinguish between theological and civic pluralism, and teach students about healthy human practices that create "bridging capital" in a diversifying society.

IFYC is also supporting original research about effective practices in interfaith higher education. Under their auspices, Matthew Mayhew, senior professor of educational administration at the Ohio State University, and Alyssa Rockenbach, professor of higher education at North Carolina State University, have launched a study about religious identities and attitudes across a large cross-section of American undergraduates. The goal is to enhance effective interfaith knowledge, appreciation, and practices within a wide variety of American colleges and universities including those in evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Catholic traditions. In these IFYC projects, its leaders are teaching emerging adults to value their own religious roots, present them with honest self-disclosure and engage others in a rich, diverse public square.

At the same time, the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) is working to deepen understandings of vocation across religious divides. NetVUE leaders support networks of administrators, faculty, and scholars that explore student questions of identity, purpose, and meaning as theological questions. Network directors encourage campus-based leaders to build an institution-specific theological vocabulary. Such a step encourages colleges and universities in varied traditions to reclaim their Christian roots and use them while framing the educational mission with interfaith engagement.

NetVUE-based scholars are also writing about the theological nature of calling and purpose. Their first two volumes have focused the Christian underpinnings for vocation and its implications across all fields of academic study. Now a pending third book specifically explores theologies of purpose and meaning that intersect across multiple traditions of religious belief. Authors for this third volume, to be published in 2019, have contributed chapters that reflect their own traditions in relationship to a Christian theology of vocation. Along with Christian writers, those involved are from Buddhist, Jewish, Humanist, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh religious traditions. Each of these chapter authors draws on the resources of their belief tradition to open a discussion for all to "hear vocation differently".

For example, this book's inclusion of newly-translated writings by the founder of Sikhism opens questions about life that are similarly asked by the author of Ecclesiastes; and explorations of the Qur'anic story about Joseph's faith in God's providence can be used to explore student doubts and misunderstandings about the will of God. While the creation of this book has been a

risk for all involved, NetVUE scholars wrote it to build bridges of interfaith understanding and vocabulary within undergraduate settings.

**Continuing Challenges in Interfaith Education**

In this period of rapid development related to interfaith education, higher education leaders must address important challenges. The first challenge is in clarity and consistency regarding the educational goals for interfaith education, particularly for Christian institutions of higher education. In a time of fast-paced development, it can be difficult to sustain coherent strategies that balance religious boundary keeping and the development of interfaith experience.

Second, educators must counter more paltry models for interfaith engagement that rely on thin dialogue or abstract cognitive pedagogies. Moving to a more robust framework that integrates dialogue, understanding, practice, and service with a Christian model of "inclusion" is challenging work for at least the next decade, if not beyond it. Ongoing faculty and staff development is crucial to ensure that a Christian theology of interfaith engagement and the institution's model for interfaith campus practices has Biblical foundations and matches the institution's intentions.

Third, educational leaders should consider the focus and goal of evangelizing within a college or university campus with a Christian mission. How does one evangelize appropriately on a college or university campus among students of other religious traditions? Academic institutions are not church settings in which those seeking to understand Christian faith voluntarily involve themselves. Often students may not expect to encounter active evangelization in a college or university setting to which they first have been attracted because of academic programs. Many faith-related colleges do not have guidance on when and how it is appropriate to present the Christian gospel to students of other faith traditions. Some campus leaders are choosing to ignore the challenge of appropriate evangelism while others remain perplexed about how those in positions of authority and influence should approach non-Christian students.

The fourth challenge is with the growing number of emerging adults who identify with no religious belief system. Within the American context, the rising number of undergraduates without a defined religious affiliation should concern Christian educators. Some of these students are already on our campuses; and more of them are arriving. The challenge is to tune the ears of such undergraduates for the very first time to theological questions. A student will find it

difficult to know a Trinitarian God or even compare this God with Jewish or Islamic monotheism if a tradition of Christian religious knowledge and practice was not formed during their younger years. The Qur'anic story of Joseph cannot be compared with the Old Testament story of this Israelite when the Biblical story is unknown. Christian educators must explore new ways to engage students whose faith narrative principally may be one of competition, success, cultural fashion, or virtual life and one in which the Bible is a mystery. The very nature of interfaith engagement may elude those for whom there is no known faith home; and there must be efforts to ask students big questions about their lives while inaugurating their knowledge of historic Christian faith. The future of interfaith education in the Christian higher education context will require that such challenges be engaged through further research and creative educational initiatives. Only then will we deepen Christian rootedness with interfaith branches.

**Conclusion**

Eboo Patel, an American Muslim writes in his introduction for Larson and Shady's (2017) book, "Religion in the 21st century can be a bubble of isolation; a barrier of division; a bomb of destruction; or a bridge of cooperation" (p. 4) and that American interfaith cooperation is essential because "religions command resources that can be deployed more effectively for common purposes" (p. 25). Yet beyond the command of resources for either destruction or cooperation in the current century, consider the Christian call to love those who do not share our Christian faith. I recall the gratitude of a young Muslim woman on a flight to Indiana that I never imagined as the national headquarters for a U.S. Muslim organization in the American heartland.

Then I reflect on Apostle Paul's letter from prison to the church in Colossae. In closing his letter to this Christian church, he asks that church to"… Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should." (Col. 4: 3-4) But then Paul adds two more thoughts, "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders, make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone" (Col. 4: 5-6). In spite to our hesitancy to be open to those of other faith commitments, will we heed this apostle's message?  Our task as Christian leaders is to open a door to the gospel but to do so wisely for the sake of all our students and the cause of Christian higher education.

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**Breaking the Silence: Connecting and Strengthening the Voices of Christian Early Childhood Professionals in Australia through developing Communities of Practice aligned with the aims of the Australian Early Childhood Christian Educators Association (ACECEA) 2017.**

*By Kaye Judge*

**Abstract**

There are many Christian, Early Childhood services in Australia, but minimal professional development support networks. There is a shortage of appropriately trained Christian Early Childhood educators and academics to sustain current employment levels. There is also a gap in research in relation to Christian Early Childhood leadership and practice. A strong compliance and standards based approach to leadership is presenting a critical challenge to the Early Childhood profession within Australia and globally. Prominent Australian Early Childhood leaders have raised the alarm and given the call for Early Childhood educators to pushback against the destructive forces of neoliberalism.

I propose that through a Communities of Practice (CoP) model ACECEA can present a united, dynamic approach towards providing authentic solutions to micro and macro, political and social, early childhood concerns. This paper describes the recent initiatives and research directions of Christian Early Childhood leaders who presented a united voice at the inaugural conference of the Australian Christian Early Childhood Educators Association in September 2017. Through 'Modelling Christ's Love', Christian Early Childhood educators and leaders, across Australia and New Zealand are invited to unite their voices through research informed dynamic Communities of Practice in the best interests of young children.

**Introduction**

ACECEA is an acronym for the Association of Christian Early Childhood Educators of Australia. This group is in the formation stage and the purpose of this reflection paper is to critically analyse the purpose, participants, perspectives and the processes involved in formalising this group into a legal not-for-profit entity. This association will be developed and

promoted through online communication and ongoing resourcing linked to a website, blog and Facebook page. Community will be established through annual conferences and quarterly professional development opportunities through online forums, mini-conferences, thematic CoP's and publishing in industry and academic journals. This process is facilitated initially by a small group of leaders from education faculty at Avondale College of Higher Education in Australia. The CoP's process aims to generate ongoing learning as a way to reach, unite, strengthen and promote three sectors within the Early Childhood (EC) profession, early childhood academics who promote a Christian worldview, Christian EC educators and pre-service teachers. Individuals with associated interests in the sector will also be welcome to join as members.

The first inaugural conference was designed to address four key EC research themes: wellbeing and flourishing; creativity; exploration, and leadership. The participants were invited to reflect on the principles of success and influence and the dynamics of creativity and inquiry as we considered ideas and strategies promoted by global thought leaders in education and leadership mentoring. In the next section of this paper I discuss current issues facing the EC profession in Australia and across the world. It is important for Christian EC leaders to understand the culture and contexts and concerns that influence our work and lives of children and families in our communities.

**Current Concerns for ECE - Neoliberalism**

To arrive at a transformed vision and mission for EC leadership it is important to understand the current influences that are negatively impacting the EC profession in Australia and internationally. The effects of Neoliberalism within the EC sector are viewed as detrimental to the quality provision of EC by many researchers and practitioners. Two leading EC lecturers, Sims and Waniganayake (2017) wrote a very confronting article about the pervasiveness of the Neoliberal agenda in leading educational policy and practice in New Zealand and Australia. They agree with Davies and Bansel (2007) and McCarthy and Prudham, (2004), who wrote that "Neoliberalism has become so entrenched in our thinking that for many, there is no alternative: it is simply the way the world operates" (p. 2).

Raising concerns about the alarming flow on effects that neoliberalism will have on EC educators and the lives of young children, Sims and Waniganayake, (2017, p. 2) anticipate that

compliant teachers who focus on how to meet quality standards will produce "compliant children who receive proscribed learning experiences" where learning will focus on achieving test results rather than seeking solutions to the more important questions in life. The decisions EC leaders make every day in their work roles and on behalf of EC communities have the power to create a culture of care and empowerment or one of detachment through adhering quality discourses that require extensive monitoring of standards.

Neoliberalism has recently been exposed by the renowned thought leader—Noam Chomsky. In his recently released book (2016) he expresses deep concern about the influences of Neoliberalism on the global control of finance and the distribution of wealth. He reveals that since the Second World War there has been a creeping concentration of wealth and power into the top 1% of the elite who use that power to create an economic system that maintains their power (Chomsky, 2016). A definition of neoliberalism from Abendroth and Portfilio (In Sims 2015. p. xii) identifies the "anti-democratic force that gives the corporate elite of global capitalism power of nation states". Sims (2017) claims that "Neoliberalism has a devastating impact on the EC sector with its focus on standardization, push-down curricular, and the positioning of children as investments for future economic productivity" (p. 9).

Dahlberg (2016) also expresses concern about the increasing pressures on EC professionals to work within quality assurance frameworks. While Dahlberg criticizes the focus on statistical gathering of data as evidence for meeting quality agendas she acknowledges the importance of numbers for governing. "It is quite clear that quantitative measurements have been an important cornerstone for democratic development over the last century" but the criticism is more concerned with when, and in what context, numbers are used (p. 2). It is important to recognise that "theories that are underpinned by numerical data become materialised in our practices with children and inform not only how we think and act, but also what we hope for" (p. 2). Giroux (2015) laments the status of Education as becoming a place where "an audit culture triumphs over critical thinking" (p. 123). This is a concern for the EC sector as a push for a growing professionalism, views teachers as critical and creative thinkers capable of discretionary decision-making.

Many EC professionals are voicing concerns and expressing the need for resistance or at least for consideration of alternative pedagogies and new ways of thinking for as Giroux (2015) reminds us "genuine democracy does not exist without space for opposition: resistance is not a

luxury but a necessity" (p. 200).

> *Ideas not only challenge the normalizing discourses and representations of common sense and the power inequities they legitimate, but also open up the possibilities inherent in a discourse that moves beyond the given and points to new ways of thinking and acting about freedom, civic courage, social responsibility, and justice from the standpoint of radical democratic ideals. (p. 189)*

Sims (2015) also challenges EC professionals with the responsibility "to resist these pressures, and fight for our sector to develop in a different way, a way that ensures each child experiences learning opportunities that enable them to flourish". This is a challenge for those who prepare, mentor and train the next generation of EC teachers to become courageous activists who demonstrate social responsibility and creative justice through radical democratic EC practice.

Tertiary EC leaders and academics must also consider what can be changed in teacher education as we negotiate our work within an environment conformed by standards. Another concern expressed by Chomsky (2016) relates to freedom of speech, and this is a concern that Sims & Waniganayake (2017) share as they notice the increasing compliance enforcement throughout the education sector. Quoting Furedi they state that "the cultural climate that prevails in higher education is far less hospitable to the ideals of freedom, tolerance and debate than the world outside the university gate" (p. iv) and they agree with Giroux (2015) who suggests that the aim of school is ... "to create employable graduates through a pedagogy of ignorance whose hidden curriculum is the teaching of political and intellectual conformity" (Sims & Waniganayake, 2017, p. 15).

In a related research study (Sims et al. 2017) surveyed and interviewed over 160 Early Childhood Educational Leaders (ECEL's) about the nature of their tasks and responsibilities in EC settings. They found that ECELs were "operating in a context of uncertainty and questionable lines of authority", and that the focus of their effort was concentrated on compliance with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the National Quality Standards (p. 10). These findings resonated with an earlier statement made in 2015 by these renowned EC scholars who wrote:

> *The reality of neoliberalism is played out in the establishment and maintenance of the*

*Australian early childhood quality assurance processes ... and the definition of approved qualifications for those working in early childhood. In both cases a tightly defined, top-down approach is used to assure quality. This has the effect of limiting flexibility and de-professionalising the work of early childhood professionals. It is our contention that in this neoliberal climate, early childhood practitioners have failed to construct their arguments in ways that could be better understood by outsiders to the profession; instead they are focusing on how best to be compliant* (Sims & Waniganayake, 2015 p. 333).

This is where the dangers of neoliberalism are realized as EC leaders consider the purpose of education and how these forces can affect the lives of families and educators as they prepare children of all ages to  "enter a neoliberal world of hyper-functionality that ultimately privileges work and economy over the more mundane wonders of human life" (p. 4).  The 'more mundane wonders of human life'— is a statement that should challenge Christian EC leaders towards contesting standardized compliance processes that threaten to diminish the way we understand our purpose and identity as human beings made in the image of God. "Higher than the highest human thought is God's ideal for His children" (White, 2007). Christian EC leaders must think beyond qualities that can be measured by embracing the realm of imagination, creativity, transcendence and future thinking. Christian EC leaders are to create new more just realities informed by God and His love. The kaleidoscopic enabling of God through His love, and spiritual gifts— freely given and without measure—work together to empower each teacher and child individually, for the betterment and blessing of our communities.

ECELs have opportunities to engage and excel in courageous leadership on behalf of young children, families and colleagues where they act to address inequity and injustice (Waniganayake &Sims, in press). This is important for their own sense of purpose, place and value as ECEC professionals.  For as Chomsky reminds us, "we enjoy an unusual legacy of freedom, privilege, and opportunity thanks to the struggles of those who came before [us], and ... now face [the] fateful choices as to how to respond to challenges of great human import" (Chomsky, 2016, p. 258). As Christian EC teachers and leaders we have a responsibility to make that difference in the lives of the children and families with whom we work and we can do this through resistance by thoughtfully considering new and alternative ways of practice and leadership.

**Forming a Christian ECE Association**

From a Christian leadership perspective, the task of forming the Association for Christian Early Childhood Educators of Australia (ACECEA) along with the organisation of the inaugural conference was a way of responding to the cultural mandate for mankind as expressed and recorded in the Bible;

> *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth." And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over everything that moves on the earth" Genesis 1:26-28.*

ACECEA is a way of initiating and nurturing a culture that values creativity and innovation as well as making a critical contribution to the organisational goals of Christian EC services. The aims of ACECEA have been reviewed and linked to Australia's national EC framework documents, the CECEAA (NZ) constitution document, and CoP goals. The aims are in draft form as discussion and consultation with new members is important step to take before adopting and formalising the constitution document.

**ACECEA Vision and Mission**

ACECEA's Vision Statement is: *To bring honor to God through excellence in Christian Early Childhood Education in Australia.* Its mission statement is: *We are a Christian Association that Facilitates, Advocates, Communicates and Educates in the best interests of children through serving and supporting early education and care services, their management and staff in fulfilling their roles as Christian educators and caregivers* (revised from CECEAA Constitution of May 2009).

The aims of ACECEA Association are:

1. To raise the visibility and urgency of developing high quality Christian Early Childhood education & care services.
2. To acknowledge and reflect the cultural heritage of Australia.

3. To promote and strengthen families from a biblical perspective of love and justice.

4. To promote the ongoing development of early education and care services within nurturing, safe and sustainable environments.

5. To facilitate the provision of resources, advice, networking and fellowship.

6. To assist organizations (persons) in establishing Christian early childhood services.

7. To research relevant governmental policy statements or other societal issues and where appropriate represent the collective voice of members from a Christian worldview in matters that concern families and educators from the sector.

8. To co-ordinate approaches to government, media and any other appropriate commission, committee or authority on matters pertaining to ACECEA.

9. To encourage Christian early education and care services to develop holistic, play-based approaches to learning and teaching where Christian values are intentionally woven into relationship and learning environments.

10. To actively promote Christian perspectives in alignment with the principles of the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), the Australian National Quality Framework (AQF), and the Australian Early Childhood Code of Ethics:

    - Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships

    - Partnerships

    - High expectations and equity

    - Respect for diversity

    - Ongoing learning and reflective practice.

11. To support and encourage early childhood researchers, practitioners and policy makers to become active in ACECEA through membership and CoPs participating at conferences, online platforms, and publications.

12. To do all such things as may be considered necessary for the attainment of the aims of the Association. (ACECEA Vision and Mission Statement, 2017)

ACECEA aims to promote EC services as blessed places where Christian EC educators come to view their work as a gift from God that feeds our souls and the souls of those we minister to. Tim Keller (2012) wrote in the book 'Every Good Endeavor':

*We do not see work brought into our human story after the fall of Adam, as part of the*

*resulting brokenness and curse; it is part of the blessedness of the garden of God. Work is as much a basic human need as food, beauty, rest, friendship, prayer, sexuality; it is not simply medicine but food for our soul* (p. 50).


ACECEA aims to develop excellence in work-place practices where EC educators are inspired to create places of nurture for body, mind and soul for children, families and educators. ACECEA provides a platform for professional development for EC educators within Australia through online forums, conferences, CoPs, and research publications. Professional development programs are important for life-long learning for educators in EC children's services, higher education organisations, and provide excellent opportunities for pre-service EC educators to interact with people in their profession.  Jones (2016), claims that 'every day, it is important to grow both professionally and humanely', and that 'these two dimensions are not disconnected'. (ref?)

While investigating the factors that influence teacher job satisfaction Jones (2016) found that three themes emerged: 1) A culture of continual learning, 2) A living philosophy and 3) A meaningful experience at work. The implications from this study apply to groups like ACECEA who share a 'particular focus on leadership and organizational strategies to enhance EC teacher job satisfaction' in their work of '*Facilitating, Advocating, Communicating and Educating in the best interests of children'* (ACECEA - Draft Mission Statement 2017). This is the reason the establishment committee chose to include an approach that promotes CoPs. Through action research projects embedded in EC practice in their communities ACECEA members will have opportunities to collaborate and investigate with like-minded peers on contemporary EC concerns and pedagogical practices that are important to Christian communities.

Communities of Practice (CoPs) are defined as groups of individuals that share an interest, a bundle of problems or a passion for a certain topic and who expand their knowledge and expertise in that subject by interacting on a continuous basis (Wenger 1998). The group of educators that will constitute a CoP can form the basis and gradually the culture that is cultivated can be bequeathed to the rest of the school community. At the epicenter of the function of a CoP … lies the exploration and improvement of daily school practice in a social environment of collaboration, interaction, solidarity and mutual trust (Wenger, 2006).  Some outcomes of a CoP include; building relationships; learning and developing the practice; taking action as a

community; creating knowledge; and contributing to publications. A CoP approach to learning and development and the creation of knowledge, supports a culture of inquiry approach to community building. It also aligns with the way EC services in Australia are encouraged to participate in ongoing quality improvement practices guided by the processes and standards outlined in the Quality Accreditation Framework (QAF). EC service leaders are encouraged to participate in ongoing reflection through questioning their philosophy and practices in line with new learning in the field of EC education. Being able to ask the right questions leads to improved practices.

Members of ACECEA are supported as leaders to develop intentional Christian cultures established upon love and justice in order to support young children and their families in their daily living and learning experiences. In this way we are responding to Isaiah's lament, repeated by Paul in Acts 7:49. This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? (Isaiah 66:1). Christian EC services are blessed places where the Spirit of God dwells and Heaven's Kingdom purposes are lived in daily life.

In 2017 ACECEA identified four focus strands for ongoing study and reflection:

- Flourishing: Well-being for EC leaders and EC communities (Jeremiah 29:4-7 and Galatians 3);
- Exploring: Education for Sustainability - Nature speaks of God's plans for his children (Genesis 1 & 2 and Psalms, Rev 4);
- Creating: An Arts approach for learning, faith, worship and play (Zephaniah 3:17 & Genesis 1 & 2 and Isaiah 54: 15-17);
- Leading: EC communities living in justice and love (Micah 6:8 & Matt. 5: 3-10).

These four themes are interrelated and connect our human identity as co-creators to our sense of wellbeing and our ability to flourish. As explorers in the world of nature we identify with the creative activity of God our Creator who is always creating through nature. Biblical perspectives of spiritual leadership as it relates to the context of mainstream EC leadership will be the focus for the leadership CoP.

**Processes: Cialdini's (2016) Influencing Factors**

On the first day of ACECEA's inaugural conference four leaders from EC Christian EC services were invited to showcase their centre practices through onsite tours. 'Portraits of Practice' is a term used to present the unique cultures of each service thus demonstrating the diverse ways that Christian practice is shared and nurtured within daily EC practice through intentionally designed learning environments and meaningful rituals that reveal, honour, and celebrate 'Kingdom of God' living in each context. The strategy of ACECEA is not so much about the information that will be shared but about our Why? Why do we as Christian leaders do what we do? How are we making the world a better place? Why is it important for Christian EC professionals to come together in an Association?

Simon Sinek's book (2009) "Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action" was an excellent introduction to the ideals of leadership for our conference participants. Sinek proposes we may be asking all the wrong questions if we don't know our – Why? AECEA's aims and beliefs need to become shared purpose statements for every EC service so that everyone is united in our response to the 'Why'? ACECEA's mission statement along with the aims, define the 'how' and the 'what' for ongoing planning.

Influencing new members to join ACECEA is an ongoing task if this organisation is to succeed. In his book 'Pre-suasion' (2016) Cialdini identifies influencing principles that organisations and businesses use to extend the influence of their products and services. Some of these proved helpful in designing the inaugural conference. Unity was a principle only recently added to Cialdini's list but I believe it is powerful and resonates well with what Jesus desires for Christian communities. He revealed this clearly in John 17 when He spoke about He and His Father being one and that He desires us to be one with each other in our communities. "Put simply, *we* is the shared *me*. The experience of unity is not about simple similarities. … It's about shared identities. It's about the categories that individuals use to define themselves and their groups, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, and family as well as political and religious affiliations" and "They are the categories in which the conduct of one member influences the self-esteem of other members" (p. 175).

Kinship ties can apply to Christian groups in the way that Christ unites us as brothers and sisters. Because of Christ's death and resurrection we are literally blood brothers with Him and therefore connected to the goals of His family. Through experiences such as morning worships,

an 'Agape feast' and a 'High Tea' farewell, kinship ties with new members were developed and strengthened.

'Place' is another influencing factor that invites unity. As members of Christ's Kingdom in Australia we share His Kingdom purposes as a united body through ACECEA. Our strength and potential to influence the EC sector nationally and in local communities, is increased through our combined professional witness. 'Acting together' in a shared purpose is known to build unity amongst group members. Cialdini (2016) identifies music as an effective 'influencing factor applicable to social entities to bring about synchrony as a means of influencing members towards group goals' (p. 197). … 'It can be co-opted to move others toward the goals of a single agent of influence'. There is an emotional and social connection 'that naturally accompanies shared musical engagement' (p. 198). The ACECEA planning committee featured music as a core strand in the inaugural conference. Musical experiences connected well to the 'creativity' strand of the CoP. Two musically gifted conference presenters facilitated workshops for EC educators unifying worship and celebration experiences for the participant's spiritual growth, bonding and enjoyment. Daily worship times helped define our purpose and passion as Christian EC educators. Cialdini (2016), believes that procedures that establish a pre-suasive feeling of unity will promote a context for desirable change (p. 208).

While we have been guided to a large extent by the formats and conference structure modelled and shared by CECEAA (NZ) we have also been careful to focus on the unique context and current issues facing the EC profession in local communities throughout Australia. We realise the challenges to be faced in developing networks and contacts within the wide diversity of EC communities. It is critically important that we join with leaders such as Manjula Waniganayake and Margaret Sim, who pursue worthy goals aligned to the vision and mission of Christian leadership on behalf of the EC profession.

**Creativity and Leadership**

Ken Wystma's (2016) 'theology of creativity' provides the biblical context that ACECEA reflects when promoting the visual arts, music, drama, creative play and creative leadership. In 'Create versus Copy' (2016) Ken states that 'To Create is Divine'. Quoting Genesis 1:27 "So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them". God's identity is that of Creator and the first part of the

theology of creativity is simply 'God Creates … and is immensely creative'. Being that we are created in the image of God we as His human children are 'created to create'. … "When we study creativity or act creatively, we learn about God... Creativity is one way we manifest and exercise the image of God… More than just having the capacity to be creative, we also have a responsibility to be creative… Creative capacity is something all of us are born with." (ibid., p. 26)  Creativity opens up new horizons in our relationship with God, with our families and communities, and even with the world (p. 31)'. Because we are made in the image of God, as our creator, we too can and should be creators.

In 'Create versus Copy,' Wytsma, states that "people are hungry for justice. They want to practice justice, experience justice, and know God through the universal quality of justice".  We know what is required of us. "To act justly: To love mercy, and to walk humbly" (Micah 6:8). God asks us to know Him in a dynamic sense. He is in effect saying, "Know Me by knowing how I bring justice and shalom together in a beautiful, just society. Understand your unique, individual, and active part in restoring what I intended" (p. 23). The grand plan, the great orchestration God wants to achieve through his dynamic art, is peace, unity, goodness, and relationships – all to His glory. The Hebrew Scriptures call this shalom.

> *God's dynamic plan is predicated on shalom – the intended state of peace and wholeness that all of God's creation is meant to experience.  … Shalom is the all-encompassing desire of God for peace and goodness throughout His creation. ... The astonishing reality is that we are also part of God's plan for mending the fabric of shalom* (p. 25).

A statement made by Lindsley (2015) resonates with Ken Wystma's association of creativity with God's mandate of biblical justice promoting the potential of the work of Christian EC educators: "If Christians would grasp what they were created to be as God's image-bearers, the results would be transformational. This realization, would unleash a burst of creativity among Christians, that would enhance their lives, their daily work, and the creation around them" (p. 9).

As a means to inspire, capture and promote creative engagement, ACECEA committee members provided a reflective journal as a gift for each 2017 conference participant as a place to express ideas, capture memories and make commitments through note taking, poetry, sketching and drawings. On the cover of each journal were the words "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you – plans to give you a future and a

hope" Jeremiah 29:11.

## Wellbeing and Flourishing

The inaugural ACECEA conference is a way to provide an intentional Christian platform for capturing our imagination about who we are as reflectors of the 'Divine Image'. Providing opportunities and inspirational contexts for renewal of our Christian mission and practices will be a way of reimagining and revisiting a culture that promotes the biblical vision of Shalom. Two presentations were focused on wellbeing and flourishing. A Christian psychologist and a wellbeing coach from Avondale College are specialists in the area of wellbeing. Their presentations provided opportunities to promote the nurturing of our internal lives through 'our two selves', our 'remembering' selves and our 'experiencing' selves in light of Scazzero's (2015) 'inner' and 'outer' lives. Scazzero claims that 'Experienced Well-being' has obvious links to emotional health in leaders' lives. Taking time to reflect, as Scazzero suggests, will enable ACECEA members and participants to develop realistic, spiritually in-tune and insightful lives. Nature walks around the campus, Pedagogical Café's, gift bags, an Agape feast on Friday evening and a spiritually themed 'high tea' celebration to close the conference created beautiful moments that nurtured participants internal lives in shared community with one another.

## Leadership: Diverse perspectives

Defining the ways leadership is enacted in EC contexts is difficult due to the variety of EC services. Waniganayake et al (2017) acknowledges the complexity of the task of bringing together "the differing beliefs, values and attitudes of everyone involved in an EC setting with the aim of creating a harmonious organizational culture built on respect for diversity" (p. 6). Intentional leaders are educators who engage in ethical practice by implementing leadership responsibilities in positive, purposeful ways with respect, care and compassion. In the rapidly changing policy environment that is descriptive of current EC profession, the frequency of making decisions impacting on the lives of young children and their families requires leaders to appreciate the complexities of their working environments and demonstrate a willingness to learn and inform others within their organization so that everyone is abreast of evolving developments.

Semann (2011, n.p.) calls on educators to re-imagine, dream and visualize a future landscape of hope and success (p.7). Through intentional leadership it is hoped that reforms can

align EC leaders with approaches to leadership that are more relationship focused as opposed to standards and compliance checking systems management. Waniganayake et al (2017) identify three relational constructs that underpin intentional leadership in practice: Leadership and vision as displayed in strategic thinking, optimism and hope for the imagined future; leadership and the love of ongoing professional learning; and leadership and connectedness, developed by working consistently to implement organizational culture through all areas of practice (p. 7). The dynamic practices involved with establishing and supporting excellent practices can be best supported by approaches that recognize each community as a learning community. Learning communities are supported well when EC educators view their work as communities of practice.

Liz Wiseman, in her book 'Multipliers' (2010), provides us with a framework for developing leadership strengths and strategies. The framework identifies five leadership disciplines from a 'Multipliers' perspective that have attached to them certain behaviours or skills. These are: 'Talent Magnet'; Liberator; Challenger; Debate Maker and Investor. As leaders we may produce 'Multiplier' effects or a 'diminisher' effect on those we lead. These skills provide important ideals and processes for the ongoing work of ACECEA when encouraging our members to adopt a multiplier's mindset in their work and in their network of relationships in order to create change throughout our world through 'harvesting the abundance of intelligence available to us and operating on correct assumptions' (p. 221), correct aims and beliefs in order to become sustainable. ACECEA members may also consider themselves to be 'a genius' or 'a genius maker' (Wiseman p. 220) who could have a profound and far-reaching impact in a world where challenges are so great and our full intelligence underutilized. Wiseman's multipliers perspective is an excellent framework for future reference in leadership training.

One of Sinek's quotes has influenced the importance of community in relation to the work of ACECEA; 'a community is a group of people who make a commitment to grow together'. It reminds me of the 'body of Christ' and the interdependent nature of the how the work of Christ is represented through His people. It is important that we reflect on Sinek's (2017) principles for intentionally inspiring action. For EC leaders and EC centre directors, Sinek reinforces that the number one priority is to take care of the people who care for the children. It is important that EC teachers 'feel that someone has their back'. He reiterates a shared belief in EC teaching practice; 'you don't teach curriculum, you teach children'.

I was inspired to 'take a risk' and ask Simon's leadership organisation if they could provide some support or materials for our presenters. I received a wonderful response from Simon's marketing manager who asked for our address. We received 25 copies of his book as a gift for each helper and presenter. His note read, "Thank-you for what you do in striving to make a positive difference in the world". Ben Carson inspires leaders to step out and take the bold risks. In his book 'Take the Risk' (2008) we read:

> *Only when someone takes 'the risk of faith' can he or she truly begin to experience the best consequence and the best rationale I know for belief in God. That's the privilege of a personal relationship with the Creator of the Universe, who wants to offer His wisdom and guidance to help us deal with all of the other risks we face in our dangerous world* (p. 148).

Establishing ACECEA was a way to become an active risk-taker in building the 'Kingdom of God' through service to children and families. While EC leaders need to know how to negotiate the risks both to ourselves, as well as to children and families, we are aware that in any work where God's children are engaged in His Kingdom purposes there will be challenges and obstacles that require our courage and God's wisdom to navigate.

**Conclusion:**

A 'Multipliers' perspective supports the promotion of using our talents as Christ intended when He taught the parable of 'The Ten Talents'. His disciples and followers understood that they should be active in building the 'Kingdom of God' while waiting for His return. ACECEA members will know our '*Why*': our purpose. Since we still live in that time between the first coming of Christ and His soon return, the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) speaks directly to our lives. Jesus came to usher in the Kingdom of God. We have a role to play multiplying Christ's Kingdom on earth through our EC services and our EC leadership responsibilities. As Paul said in Ephesians, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." As members of ACECEA we have the opportunity and privilege to view our work as one of the 'good things' we are created to do while we wait for Christ's return. Through 'Modelling Christ's Love', Christian EC educators and leaders, across Australia and New Zealand are invited join with us in uniting our voices, through forming research informed dynamic Communities of Practice in the best interests of young children.

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# Digital Discernment: Moving from technological instrumentalism to discerning determinism as we disciple teenagers in Christian schools

*By Chris Parker*

**Abstract**

Digital technologies, and their associated devices, have become a ubiquitous symbol of global culture. These technologies are now woven into the fabric of everyday functioning, communicating, thinking, feeling, and relating—especially for teenagers. This all-of-life technological integration has a pre-theoretical (worldview) forming influence. Digital technologies have not only changed the functioning of teenage life but have changed the way that relationships are understood and processed, the self is viewed, truth is understood, the 'good-life' is achieved, and what defines virtuous character. The breadth of this influence is highlighted by Turkle (2011) with her research suggesting that many teenagers discover and engage their feelings by texting them. Another example is found in the commentary from the field of neuroscience that the smart phone is becoming, measurably, an extension of our brains (Carr, 2010).

This paper is informed by a range of literature and discusses three effects that digital use is having on society generally, and the implications of these effects for teachers and students in Christian schools. The shaping effects discussed are our tendency to make information an idol, the increasing tendency to use digital technology (particularly social media) to mediate between ourselves and embodied aspects of God's world, and the redefining of character to include a significant acceptable narcissism. The paper concludes with a call to Christian schools and colleges to continue to avoid teaching a simplistic—yet well meaning—technological instrumentalism, and to continue to proactively develop language, liturgies, curriculum, and modelling that disciple toward a discerning technological determinism. Such a determinism recognises the good creational essence of technology while recognising the capacity it has to direct students and (teachers) away from a Christ-centred embodied shalom.

**Introduction**

The ubiquitous weaving of digital technologies into the very fabric of everyday functioning, communicating, thinking, relating, and feeling in societies around the world is increasingly evident. This is especially the case for teenagers; though certainly not exclusively so. This includes digital technologies being embraced in the structures and pedagogy of education and/or schooling. This requires an increasing commitment by schools and colleges to critical discernment of the educational merits of such technologies. However, it also presents a vital opportunity for schools and colleges to be educating for critical discernment around the potential distractions and dangers embedded in these technologies.

Christian schools and colleges seeking to unfold a transformational, shalom-nurturing, and Christ-embodied education that develops a view of the world and life, as described within the biblical narrative, must see such digital discernment as an imperative. This imperative will be driven by the acceptance that digital technologies, and our use of them, are not only changing the look and feel—the vista—of modern life, but they are shaping how we now think about the world, the way we understand and process relationships, our view of ourselves, notions of truth, visions of the 'good life', and what is virtuous character. Many of these influences happen at a subconscious—they are shaping our worldview.

Examples of the length and breadth of this shaping could include; the highlighting by Turkle (2011) that many teenagers discover their feelings by texting them; or research reported by Carr (2010) from the field of neuroscience suggesting that neurologically, the smart phone is becoming, measurably, an extension and adjunct to our brain; or Stone's (2014) recent inquiry into the effects of digital technology usage on people's breathing and heart rates, which she termed email apnoea or screen apnoea (p. 1).

In the author's professional experience as a secondary educator and teacher trainer, a trend is noticed for the professional vocational reading, to largely take a utopian approach to the potential benefits of digital technologies to improve, and indeed even 'revolutionize', education. However, there is a growing collection of publications from sociologists and cultural commentators suggesting a more dystopian perspective on our technological immersion with many raising questions about the efficacy, and possible detrimental effects, on education (Bauerlein, 2008; Birkerts, 2015; Carr, 2010; Detweiler, 2013; Powers, 2010; Turkle, 2011). It may be more helpful to consider Boyd's (2015) suggestion, from her research into the effects of

digital technologies on teenagers across America, that it is neither a dystopian or utopian posture that is most helpful—assessment must be nuanced by social and cultural contexts.

This paper posits that wisdom in assessing the extent and nature of engagement with digital technologies, to produce a shalom-nurturing life, can be found in the biblical narrative. It will do this by exploring three areas of worldview shaping influence; informationism, mediationism, and narcissism followed by a call for dedicated responses by Christian schools and colleges.

## Informationism

There was a time when the fastest way that information could be transmitted from one place to another was the fastest it could be transported by a person—horseback, steam train, etc. This changed with the invention and implementation of the telegraph system. Suddenly, not only could information be transmitted as fast as it could be tapped out, but it could also go to multiple places at once. Technological change influenced cultural change and initiated the cultural script that highlights the importance of information flow and being 'informed'.

Postman (1992), in *Technopoly*, explains that prior to the telegraph, people in one city in America didn't know what crimes, for example, happened overnight in another city—but now they could. This may well have been the beginning of a reduction in the depth of dialogue associated with communication of information in Western culture and as Postman suggests, the beginning of a shallowing of information and knowing. "The telegraph may have made the country into one neighbourhood", says Postman (1985), "but it's a peculiar one populated by strangers who knew nothing but the most superficial facts about each other." (p. 67). Even though Postman was writing prior to the Internet—which could be easy to argue is the telegraph on steroids—he helpfully suggests that this might have been the beginning of an idolizing of the flow of information. Perhaps our compulsion to continually check our Facebook feed to keep up with the latest snippet of news from our 'friends', or the transmission of TV news that not only has a bent towards the sensational but now must also have scrolling banners of news data snippets wrapped around the newsreader, be end point of the effects of the telegraph?

The role of the telegraph in this cultural trend may well be disputed, but the current situation is clear, there is a strong cultural script that says, 'If I can be informed, then I should be' and, 'If I am not being informed, then I am missing out'. This is being colloquially—and

increasingly, clinically—recognised as 'fear of missing out' (FoMO). Although the average teenager might speak about FoMO as specifically the fear of missing out on an event that has been advertised exclusively online (Boyd, 2015), FoMO could helpfully describe the stance of anyone compulsively engaged in following news feeds—whether current affairs, or just news of 'friends' and what they are doing and with whom. If the telegraph birthed early forms of FoMO, how much more has our pocket sized digital devices connected to a plethora of information flows that are so simple and stimulating to follow—particularly through social media—created a conscious, and subconscious, fear of being under-informed?  When reflecting on the commentary around a new iPhone release, Powers (2010) noted, "In other words, by the currently prevailing philosophy of digital life—the more connected you are to people and information at all times the better—it was a dream machine" (p. 121).

Schultze (2004) in his book *Habits of the High Tech Heart*, coined the term "informationism" (p. 21). He argues that, "we are succumbing to informationism, a non-discerning, vacuous faith in the collection and dissemination of information as a route to social progress and personal happiness" (p. 26). Schultze (2004) suggests that being informed brings a sense of security, safety, and satisfaction, and we begin to worship it. There is, of course, nothing wrong with information; it's good to be informed. However, with informationism we see a tendency towards settling for context-free knowing and the shallowing of understanding. Schultze (2004) acknowledges that, "As the pool of information grows our actual knowing declines" (p. 32). He continues, "Reading online about the needs of the world, for instance, is never the same as personally knowing people in need" (p. 34).

As context is reduced, culturally we begin to lose our ability to discern between what is valuable information and value-less information. The efficiency and effectiveness of information and communication technologies have resulted in an increase in being informed, but, ironically, a potential decrease, or shallowing, of knowing (Carr, 2010). The technologies that we have woven into the fabric of our lives and education are masterful at collecting data and communicating information: so much so that there is less time and 'space' for deeper knowing. A culture that settles for satisfaction in shallow knowing is permeated—not denying human agency in making individual decisions towards technological engagement but recognising a cultural narrative, or posture that leans this way. Challies (2011) acknowledges this subconscious de-valuing of deeper knowing:

*In this digital age, wisdom and even knowledge are often downplayed in favour of information. Information, available in unprecedented quantities, is no longer seen as a means to a higher and nobler end, a tool by which we increase our knowledge so that we might live with wisdom. Instead information has become an end in itself. We have begun to believe that the accumulation of information somehow leads to wisdom, that more information will solve society's ills and improve our lives. We place our faith in information* (p. 141).

If the sentiments in the poem, *The Rock*, by T.S. Elliot were insightful in 1934, how much more are they worth considering now in the light and shadow of the Internet: Where is the wisdom that we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information? We must also explore how the abundance of information, and our informationism, are also effecting our reading. Carr (2010) in his book *The Shallows* cites research indicating that our reading speeds have not decreased with the abundance of information, but the nature of our reading has changed. He concludes:

*We read if anything, faster than ever. Our reading rates have not slowed down. But we are no longer guided toward a deep, personally constructed understanding of the text's connotations. Instead we are hurried off toward another bit of related information, and then another, and then another* (p. 166).

Potted punchy grabs of information littered with hyperlinks ready to bounce us across the surface to some other context-less morsel, and all this wrapped up in a medium bordered by ads, 'click-bait', and other temptations for informational-transportation. Hence, says Carr (2010), "The strip-mining of relevant content replaces the slow excavation of meaning" (p. 166).

The screen, as opposed to other forms of communicating information, is deeply attractive within a culture of informationism for its efficiency and capacity to stimulate. The text, graphic, and video capabilities—and infinite creative options for layout—combine powerfully with the technology of the hyperlink. The hyperlink is perhaps one of the most under-recognised technologies shaping Western culture (Carr, 2010). The result is that when we move our interacting with information over to screen technologies we enter into what Doctorow (2009)

refers to as an "ecosystem of interruption technologies" (para. 10). Another shaping effect is that a desire to be distracted has been created—or at least fuelled. Challies (2011) postulates that:

> *...as we begin to understand our dedication to information, we see how information and distraction are closely linked. The fact is that we may want to be interrupted, because each interruption brings a new bit of information...We find joy and life in that information—not in using that information or turning that information into useful action, but simply in its constant flow* (p. 141).

Our idols become the objects of our affection, focus, and security. They can at times be subtle and abstract like our drive to 'be informed' resulting in avoiding FoMO, or succumbing to titillating informational distractions, or settling for shallow information over deep knowing. However, these subtle idols are just as effective at distracting us from the truth that God alone is worthy of our ultimate worship; He provides the rest He promises when these false idols ultimately provide anxiety, insecurity, and tendency to drag and distract us away from the shalom offered in the biblical narrative. What will a non-discerning engagement with digital technologies within our educational communities ultimately do for our students' view of the purpose of life? This is not simply a call to be teaching self-discipline around the use and exposure to digital technology, so much as a call to teach a discernment of how even the existence of these technologies in society has a cultural—and hence personal worldview— shaping impact.

## Mediationism

Technologies are increasingly being adopted in ways that have them mediating between the user and more embodied, authentic aspects of life. However, this is not new. By way of illustration, consider the innovation of cartography. Indigenous peoples, and Western people prior to the innovation of mapping, had a more intimate, direct relationship with, and knowledge of, the land where they lived. The development of mapping and maps brought a technology that began to mediate between us and an intimate knowledge of the land. This is not to suggest that maps, mapping, and cartography are necessarily wrong. Our agency and ability to invent and innovate as humans is a blessing from God—as are maps and mapping.

However, if we acknowledge the mediating nature of the map, we must acknowledge, and teach our students to acknowledge, the potential mediating nature of social media, text messaging, and photo-blogging. The opportunity exists for Christian educators to teach and disciple their students to be discerning about the technologies they embrace—not just in a way that seeks to explore the good blessings evident, but to also discern the potential to between humanity and other good creational blessings. As a result of digital technology's efficacy at collating and communicating relational data, it is increasingly mediating between human to human communion.

How often is a text message sent instead of a phone call when a phone call could have perhaps provided a more direct communion more appropriate to the transaction? Or an email sent that should have been a conversation? Texting for example, can seem easier than a phone call as the technology plays a mediating role. One of the many attractions is that it seems to come at less relational cost, and if it draws less from my emotional account, I can perhaps have many more of these types of relationships—despite them being perhaps more shallow. Powers (2010) reflecting on how his family now disperses to their rooms in the evenings, cynically asks:

> *Why not flee the few of the living room for the many of the screen, where all relationships are flattened into one user-friendly mosaic. A human collage that's endlessly clickable and never demands our full attention…As I watched the vanishing family trick unfold and played my own part in it, I sometimes felt as if love itself, or the acts of the heart and mind that constitute love, were being leeched out of the house by our screens* (p. 53).

Even though digital technologies are a blessing for closing the distance for communicating across space, the more we tend as a culture to allow technologies to play a mediating role in our relationships, the greater the potential for a diminishing of authentic, relational engagement. As Turkle (2015) explains:

> *This new mediated life has gotten us into trouble. Face-to-face conversation is the most human—and humanizing—thing we do. Fully present to one another, we learn to listen, It's where we develop the capacity for empathy. It's where we experience the joy of being heard, of being understood* (p. 3).

Perhaps—as the increasingly popular meme suggests—we may at times need to *disconnect to connect*. The more we weave these technologies into the unquestioned day-to-day of our lives and relationships, the greater potential to move away from authentic, embodied relationships. Groothuis (2005) suggests that with digital technology, "The voice extends but the person recedes" (p. 38). Or as one discerning teenager puts it,

> *Facebook and MySpace sell themselves as social networking sites, but I think they actually do more to keep people apart than unite them. Why bother calling a friend when you can post on their wall? There's no need to visit a friend to catch up when you can just check their profile to see what's new* (Twenge & Campbell, 2009, p. 111).

This mediation results in a growing dependency on these technologies—specifically in the context of relationships; a dependency on being *connected,* but not necessarily on *connection*. Explain to a Year 10 class that they cannot bring any devices on their week-long school camp, and you will see the fear—a now clinically recognized anxiety—in many of their faces. Along with the fear of boredom, the anxiety of not having their brain-extension with them, and the disconnection from the flow of bite-sized updates of information, there will be the fear that they won't have their relational mediator. Unmediated connection can be confronting; the more we use our technologies to mediate in relationships and in communication, the less adept at, and willing, we become to authentically interact with strangers—and with our friends.

We can also use our digital technology to construct alternative mediated self-identities. Many students are spending a significant amount of time and emotional energy massaging and nurturing their online personas. While including himself, Challies (2011) suggests, that "many of us are more concerned with who we are in a mediated context than who we are before those who live in the same neighbourhood or who attend the same church" (p. 105). Teachers need to wonder about each of the teenagers (and increasingly tweens) in their classes, and how much they are relating to the whole unmediated child. Or are their students subconsciously holding something of themselves back that is saved for their mediated digital projection?

God is relational and communal by His nature of being three in one. Therefore, relationship and conversation—in the biggest sense of the term—are fundamental to human nature as a result of being created "in His likeness" (Gen 1:27). The more we uncritically use technology to meditate between our individual humanity, the more we are potentially drawn

away from the full, rich, and flourishing life that God has designed for humans. In *Reclaiming Conversation*, Turkle (2015) recognises this biblical truth—indirectly—by suggesting:

> *This new mediated life has gotten us into trouble. Face-to-face conversation is the most human—and humanising—thing we do. Fully present to one another, we learn to listen. It's where we develop the capacity for empathy. It's where we experience the joy of being heard, of being understood. ...But these days we find ways around conversation. We hide from each other even as we're constantly connected to each other* (p. 3).

Conversation is not the only vehicle for empathy and love of neighbour, but it is the gym where we train to be more loving and empathetic. Turkle continues,:

> *We are being silenced by our technologies—in a way, "cured of talking." These silences—often in the presence of children—have led to a crises of empathy that has diminished us at home, at work, and in public life. I've said that the remedy, most simply, is a talking cure* (p. 9).

Critical in Christian education is the intention to inform and invite students to live under the Lordship of Jesus and to seek His kingdom (Mat 6:33). This intention must include a commitment to teaching discernment towards the conversation-culling, relationship-reducing effects of a life uncritically mediated by digital technologies.

**Narcissism**

Many sociologists, psychologists, and cultural commentators are acknowledging that we are seeing an increase in narcissistic philosophy and behaviour. Kelly (2017) acknowledges this cultural trend and its import:

> *The decline in our civic virtue is undisguised, respect for institutional authority has eroded, the idea of a common community purpose is undermined, trust is in retreat but the most important singular development is the transformed notion of the individual — the obsession about individual autonomy in every aspect of life: love, work, race, sex, culture and death. Put harshly but not inaccurately, it is narcissism presented as self-realisation and human rights* (para. 6).

Digital culture didn't give birth to narcissism, the first lie, whispered to Adam and Eve, contained a narcissistic temptation and it's been an expression of our fallenness ever since. We must acknowledge, with Kelly, the plethora of cultural trends that coalesce to bring the primacy of self-realisation and individual rights. However, the temptation is now irresistibly for our students—and for any one 'connected'. The digital technologies that we have so successfully woven into the very fabric of our lives are significantly self-focused by design and promote an ethic of personal brand-management and self-promotion. They have an architecture that normalizes narcissism.

A longitudinal study of over 16, 000 students at San Diego University from 1982–2006 measured the level of narcissism of undergraduates using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). During this time period a 30% increase in the NPI was measured, and the study's report states, "Gadgets and online social networking sites have stoked the self-loving tendencies of modern students" (Hoover, 2007, p. 1). Postman (1992), writing pre-Internet, postulated, "Will the computer raise egocentrism to the status of a virtue?" (p. 17). If this was realised, how much more so with the invention and integration of the Internet, social networking, and pocket-dwelling devices that are connected to both?

In *The Narcissism Epidemic*, Twenge (2009) suggests four main contributing factors contributing to the increase in narcissism; permissive parenting, celebrity obsession, access to easy credit, and not in the least, digital technologies (particularly social networking). She states that not only is social networking designed for egocentrism, but it can drag the worldview norm to the narcissistic centre:

> *Social networking sites reinforce narcissism in an endless loop. Narcissists have more 'friends' and connections on these sites, and narcissistic behaviour and images are rewarded with more comments and more 'adds'. Thus users are more likely to be connected to people who are more narcissistic than the average person. So in addition to the site structure facilitating narcissistic self-promotion, the way users are connected may pull the norm of behaviour and self-presentation toward narcissism* (p. 111).

This tendency towards a narcissistic framing of social interaction also impacts relational empathy and authentic in-His-likeness human communion. As a result of these digital technologies promoting a narcissistic engagement, participants will tend toward a bias of

presenting a perfection that focuses updates on the good, happy, idealised aspects of life, and minimises—or even proactively hides—'bad', unhappy, raw aspects of life. Or as one astute teenager suggested about Facebook,

> *I think everything about you seems, like, glammed up. It is kind of, like, the rose-coloured glasses, because people aren't going to share about how they got kicked off the soccer team because they were late to every school practice. They are going to share about how their team won* (Gardner and Davis, 2014, p. 63).

It may be that we all tend to this presentation bias even with non-technological contexts. However, the design, worldview assumptions, and the cultural scripts that have developed around digital technology and digital culture now provide a tendency to engage in this more frequently and less critically. *The Frog and the Fish,* a publication by the author of this paper, seeks to unfold a view of the 'good life' to young adults and refers to the above tendency as "happy bias" (p. 69). It is suggested that:

> *It probably shouldn't come as too much surprise then, that not only are psychologists increasingly speaking about the effects on people of having fewer close, rubber-hits-the-road relationships than they used to, but they are also reporting seeing increased general levels of anxiety. I suggest that the constant immersion in a social networking mosaic of other people's fun, sexy, wealthy, happy, successful, beautiful, fit, 'blessed' lives is not insignificant. When you are about to post or share something online, do you ask the question, "How will this make my friends feel?" I don't mean feel about you: I mean feel about themselves!* (Parker, 2017, p. 69)

Technologies contribute to the development of cultural storylines, and then, in the case of communication technologies, become the amplifier of the storytelling. Could it be that our immersion in narcissistic-nurturing digital technologies unconsciously hinders a pursuit of Christ-likeness that typified by humility, self-sacrifice, and service? Again, the imperative here for Christian educational communities, and Christian educators, is to not only to teach, and model, more virtuous character, but to invite their students to be disciples of the Lord Jesus *and* equipped with a deep digital discernment, so they can know when and how they, and their friends, are being shaped at a worldview level.

**Instrumentalism or Determinism**

Although a Christian educator might not normally tend towards a deterministic view of the world—or indeed the teaching of such a view in a Christian education community—the categories of instrumentalism and determinism are helpful when critically considering technology and its potential benefits and impacts. A deterministic view of technology, at its simplest, suggests that it has a shaping role on society and culture. Technologies by their design, potential, functioning, and existence, have an influence consciously and, unconsciously, on the way we think, feel, and hope. A technological determinism of this nature does not necessarily extend to a holistic determinism where humans have no agency. It does, however, recognise the powerful place that our technologies can have in framing and shaping. As an example, while reflecting on the impact that the printing press and television had on the societies they were introduced to, Postman (1993) suggests:

> *A new technology does not add or subtract something. It changes everything. In the year 1500, fifty years after the printing press was invented, we did not have old Europe plus the printing press. We had a different Europe. After television, the United States was not America plus television; television gave a new coloration to every political campaign, to every home, to every school, to every church, to every industry* (p. 18).

By contrast, Carr (2010, p. 46) says, "Instrumentalism is the most widely held view of technology, not the least because it is the view we would all prefer to be true. The idea that we are somehow controlled by our tools is anathema to most people." It is common for government curriculums and school curriculums, to commonly espouse an instrumentalist paradigm. Digital citizenship resources and cyber safety material, often take the position that digital technologies are neutral and that training must be given on how to use them for good purposes and not bad; as a good citizen, not a bad citizen. Could this technological neutrality be evident in the approach taken by some Christian school and college curriculum? McLuhan (1964) made the bold assertion that:

> *Our conventional response to all media, namely that it is how they are used that counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot. For the 'content' of a medium is just the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind* (p. 18).

**Christian education**

Christian education is a wonderful opportunity to teach for transformation (Dickens Hanscamp, Mustin, Parker, Stok, and White, 2015). Additional to the state curriculum—or should we say through the school curriculum—Christian education seeks to teach students to:

- Understand and celebrate the intricacy, beauty, and grandeur of all strands of the creation—including human capacity to invent and the subsequent products of innovation,

- Recognise the places and ways that the goodness of God's world now tends away from Him—the "pattern of this world" (Romans 12:2)

- Participate in transformation that begins with "the renewal of their minds" (Romans 12:2) and proactively extends into all the dark cracks in the good creation that desperately need the light of the gospel.


The "patterns of this world" are often obvious to both teacher and student: pornography, identity theft, cyber bullying, online dog piling. However, in a culture tending towards an uncritical instrumentalist view, they can sometimes be somewhat subtle. Technologies often 'determine' subtle patterns of thinking, worship, and worldview that draw us away from God and towards a shallow, mediated, narcissistic idolatry. As Culkin (1967) suggests, "We become what we behold. We shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us."

Never before, perhaps, has a new generation embraced a suite of technologies with such passion, dependency, and entitlement. In many ways, Christians are living in watershed times. The author suggests that the impact that digital technologies are having on our worldviews currently, must be given a similar circumspection to cultural story-lines as gender politics or epistemology and the changing place of authority for truth. However, an anti-technology approach is not supported by a worldview shaped by the Bible—and is not what is being suggested. Technological tools, and the human ability to invent and to innovate, are a 'common grace' blessing; gratitude and thankfulness must be the foundation upon which we launch our critique.

Resting on a moralistic instrumentalism will not be adequate in equipping our students to navigate faithfully in a digital technology-rich culture and society. Christian schools and colleges must teach a discerning digital determinism if they are to adequately equip the next generation of faithful Christian kingdom-ambassadors. Obviously, technological skills must be taught and,

where appropriate, forms of technology integrated into teaching and learning strategies—while continually weighing pedagogical merit. However, Christian schools must *not* stop there. Dedicated space must be given in the school curriculum to the deliberate teaching towards a discerning digital determinism.

There are many questions that this call for teaching digital discernment raises, such as: "What about when parental modelling and family cultures are completely at odds with this message, making teachers seem like Luddites and the school 'behind-the-times'?", "The government curriculum barely has space for us to teach *with* a technological integration let alone teach *for* a discerning philosophy of technology.", "At what age do we start teaching technological discernment as it seems irrelevant when they are really young but too late when they are older?", "Aren't we as teachers just as—personally and professionally—uncritically immersed?".

These are important questions that Christian schools and colleges should be discussing in collegial teams. Perhaps these questions, combined with the following three concluding discussion topics arising from the above exploration of informationism, mediationism, and narcissism, could be profitably discussed in staff teams with schools—focus should be given in the discussions to where, and how, specific attention could be given in the school curriculum:

1. How well are we inviting and inspiring our students toward Godly wisdom through their learning, and not just toward contentment with a collection of disjointed, context-reduced information—even though their technologies shape them to think and process the world this way?

2. As we, and our students, increasingly embrace mediated living through our digital devices, how can we best model and disciple an authentic relational intimacy and a reducing of the distancing effects digital technologies?

3. What can we do as a school community (what story identity do we need to tell?) to winsomely, yet powerfully, unfold for our students that they are not the centre of the universe—even though the technologies in which they live and breathe are screaming at them that they are?

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# Spiritual formation and community engagement
# in a Bachelor of Music Program

*By Lotte Latukefu, Maureen Miner Bridges, and Liam Webb*

## Abstract

Excellent aural perception skills are necessary for trained musicians and yet traditionally students often detest these classes. In the past, aural training has consisted of exercises in melody, rhythm and harmony dictation with some sight-singing. These exercises often seem pointless and boring to students who can't see what relevance they have to the real world.  As part of our problem based learning (PBL) approach in a Bachelor of Music at a Christian Higher Education Provider in Australia we are trying to integrate aural training with community engagement and spiritual formation. To make this training more relevant to our students the lecturer organised for students to go to a nursing home and perform pieces they had been sight reading in class.

The success of this engagement prompted discussions with the nursing home about developing a Threshold choir to sing around the bedsides of seriously ill or dying patients.  This paper considers the way in which prompted ethical behaviour (singing to dying people) transformed a teacher's attempts to integrate Christian practice and broaden students' professional formation from an educational intervention into something that more resembled ministry. The paper concludes with an outline of the authors' intentions to develop a subsequent study to inquire into the effects of the PBL strategy on the volunteer student participants.

## Introduction

Music higher education in Australia faces a political context of student satisfaction and free market policies that steer higher education institutions to score highly on student satisfaction surveys, gain gold status in government assessments of teaching excellence, and to gain high places in league tables that will ultimately have a positive impact upon their marketing. In many Christian higher education settings certain subjects are singled out as integrative or 'Christian' units, whereas others are seen to be discipline specific skills based or theoretically framed. There can be a perception amongst staff teaching into the discipline specific units that the

'Christian' stuff is being taken care of in integrative studies and therefore there is no need to try and integrate it into the other units. In the case of the Bachelor of Music this is particularly significant because there is always so much music content to cover and with some units it is particularly challenging to work out how to authentically integrate Christian studies into the unit. This approach fails to tackle how skills and theory and Christian studies are brought together in the education of the whole person, or whole Christian/spiritual person, and not just a skilled professional.

Student feedback has taught us that where skills are taught as skills, without reference to more holistic development, students will see them as irrelevant or boring. This is particularly true of aural or ear training and Harmonic analysis classes in degrees where students are passionate and focussed on performing. In order to change this we introduced a Problem Based Learning (PBL) approach. Giving students particularly tricky real world problems to solve in class with the assistance of the tutor meant they started to enjoy these classes.

There was still a problem of proper integration of a Christian holistic framework into these aspects of the curriculum without it seeming artificial. In this paper we will explore how one of the researchers found a way to integrate PBL with community engagement and spiritual development.  In the process a transformation occurred from trying to integrate Christian practice into an aural class to ministry. In  that ministry not only were the students gaining aural skills they were also forming more mature spiritual attachments.

**Methodology**

The narrative approach to data and method conceives the person "as a social construction perpetually formed and reformed in and of socially mediated discourse, talk, text and image" (McIlveen, 2008 p.2). The current research uses a combination of auto-ethnography (Anderson, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2000;McIlveen, 2008) and narrative analysis (Daykin, 2005) to understand the physical feelings, thoughts, emotions and transformations that occurred when trying to implement social and community engagement with Problem Based Learning in a Christian context to a music aural class (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). One of the researchers is also a practitioner. His story has been taken as data and analysed as such with co-researchers. It is relatively common for researchers to analyse their own experience of participating in the research (McIlveen, 2008).

This paper will use a reflexive auto-ethnographic emphasis in order to look at how the researcher changes as a result of the interventions he introduces to his class (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The story produced by the auto-ethnographic narrative analysis will weave theory into the autobiography in order to maintain the usual rigors of qualitative research. We acknowledge that a single auto-ethnographic narrative analysis cannot be used to generalise principles. However, McIlveen (2008) argues there is potential that the empathy created in the reader through a profound understanding of a single case can act as a stimulus to "open new intellectual vistas" (p.5).

**Narrative 1 - Liam's story:**

Liam's story begins with his desire to broaden aural perception skills. These skills make up part of professional formation of students. Lotte, the Head of School, was keen to improve teaching and learning in this area by introducing a Problem Based Learning approach. Liam's approach to PBL was to combine the aural skills with community engagement. This helped with the personal development of students' ethical expression and broadening aural skills from being a musical exercise into doing good. The broader activity (singing to the dying) was framed as a communal act of altruism. Liam reflected:

> *I was thrilled to start teaching Aural Perception at Excelsia, when I was offered the opportunity. I had attended the college a number of years ago, been on student council, and in the end received two degrees in both music and education. As a Christian who believes that God call us to have a personal devotional faith and a public social action faith, I felt that this wasn't always done in the degree while I was there. Yet, I had found in many ways being in a Christian institution was perhaps the most enjoyable experience of education I had.*

> *The Head of School met with all the theory teachers and talked about the idea of moving towards a Problem Based Learning approach. At first I felt the best way of teaching aural perception was to teach students breathing techniques and introduce them to a number of prayers to calm anxiety, or exercises that helped with that. The reason for this was to create a safe classroom, as often students enter this subject terrified of having to sing in front of each other. I also wanted students to have ways of dealing with*

*subconscious and conscious anxiety in their study of aural perception, and in many senses a lot of the material I chose was what I have found most useful in my own journey with anxiety and spiritual formation. All the pieces I picked to match sight singing exercises were also useful for non-violent action and protest, which is a part of my church's practice and tradition. For the most part as we did this in our first semester, students loved it and responded well.*

Aural perception is often a very stressful subject for students. Traditionally there is a lot of testing and usually in front of the class. Exercises such as transcribing which, most students can do if given enough time, are often given time limits. This causes stress to students. Liam's introduction of breathing techniques and prayers to calm them was a pedagogical intervention highly influenced by the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola in the 16th century. His intention was not spiritual formation in students at this stage however historically, in philosophy, according to Cottingham (2005) the term 'spiritual' is more often coupled with exercises than beliefs. He wrote:

*When it came to the second semester I reflected on this more. I watched a video of Lotte talking as the head of music and how she mentioned social justice and community engagement was built into the course. And I thought for a moment – perhaps I should actually do this in my program.*

*Getting students to participate in sit-ins and other organised activities like that is difficult, as the time requirement is outside their lecture time, and also there is the dilemma of police, and certainly it not looking favourable or good for international students to be sent to jail, although for a good cause – such as freeing children from detention. Immediately to my mind came two ideas – teaching drumming and getting students to voluntarily participate in my church drumming at the climate march, and then singing at the local nursing home. So I built these into the curriculum, made the projects line up with objectives and we*
 *did it.*

*Drumming with my church community was again hard because it was outside school*

*time, however getting students' sight singing repertoire to match up with songs to sing for the old folk's home was very easy, and very easy to go there during regular class time. These situations can be confronting, so I wanted students to have prayers, but also breathing techniques to help assist them. I found the best thing was simple short meditations on different values such as compassion, guidance, anxiety, loss, new beginnings, and also a lot of prayers of fortitude that I got from communities of nuns who worked with the elderly and dying.*

*I also really emphasized that wherever joy, peace, patience, kindness, self-control and goodness are found God is present in spirit and at work. Some weeks I'd lead a prayer and meditation with open-ended self-reflection questions. Some weeks we would just pick prayer cards I'd created from old magazines and students chose whatever resonated with their heart and where their life was at. Most importantly I wanted to allow them to explore what God is doing in their life. I very much believe in the story of the salt doll which is often used in Ignatian spirituality for the purpose of discovering who we are in God, and our vocation in life:*

*"A salt doll journeyed for thousands of miles over land, until it finally came to the sea. It was fascinated by this strange moving mass, quite unlike anything it had seen before.*
*"Who are you?" said the salt doll to the sea.*
*The sea smilingly replied, "Come in and see."*
*So the doll waded in. The farther it walked into the sea the more it dissolved, until there was only very little of it left. Before that last bit dissolved, the doll exclaimed in wonder "Now I know who I am".*

As the semester progressed Liam felt a transformation from practical application of skills to ministry. He observed a special feeling in class when the students sang the choral arrangements to be used in the threshold choir:

*Nowhere in my mind had I thought that perhaps this whole subject itself had begun to become ministry. It was when my students began to sing "nearer my God to thee" with*

*four-part harmony, that I felt such a presence of love in the room. And many of them were blown away by the experience, most of them not church people.*

*I saw us as forming people in their spiritual journey, toward doing ministry whether known or unbeknownst to them in their participation in community. Houselander (2013) a Catholic mystic talks of God within each of us, that as "God is love", then so Christ is given to each person in an act of sacrificial love or deep love otherwise. "A young man setting his pace to an old man's footsteps is love; a swift thinker curbing his/her thoughts for a slow mind is love (p.12)". There are so many examples. And indeed I began to see what looked like Christ in my students, in the way that a deep love was being built in service.*

*Later on I went to a final US work trip rounding up my management job. During this time I ran into a number of people from Threshold Choir. I had bought some of their music for use in the classroom. One particular chapter leader encouraged me to start a threshold choir from the students and to open it to people outside the college and to begin this conversation. A threshold choir is a choir formed to sing for people at bedside, where they sing rounds and 2-4 part repertoire, but also take song requests of clients. I saw this as both an opportunity for students to improve their aural skills with sight singing but also to participate in ministry to those who are dying.*

*We began singing the songs and using them for sight singing in class. I began to dress up as an old lady and an old man and come into class in costume at the end. At first the students really believed I was bringing in a visitor, till I turned up with an old man wig and a walking stick. And then I had a student wheel me in on a friend's wheelchair the next week. As humorous as it was, my students treated me with gentleness and care as they performed their set for me.*

This playful approach was a powerful medium for effective learning but in generic spirituality terms there was also transcendence there, something beyond performance. Liam described a subtle change that happened as the students moved from singing to dying people to

singing over dying people. This was a pivotal point for moving from doing "good" to doing ministry. He reflected:

> *The time came for us to perform at the nursing home. My students are not singers normally so they were a bit nervous. I figured we should sit down for a cup of coffee and a piece of cake before we do it, and we just had some time going over what we would do and how. I felt a peace about it all, and I can't explain why. Before we went into the situation I wanted to encourage them more than anything, to remember one simple thing, that they are not singing to people today, but rather they are to "sing over" people today. I had learned this from charismatic circles I mixed in and the Pentecostal worship retreat I'd been to on the weekend before.*
>
> *We performed in their 4 individual houses going from the lowest form of care to the highest form of care. Initially the students were quite timid, but as they got into it they warmed up. The thing that hit me the most from that day was how proud I was of my students at every moment. The love and tenderness they had toward people as they sang, and as the odd person hopped up to give them a hug, was unbelievable. In many ways I felt they had been somehow weirdly formed for this in a process. The presence of God's love and peace I believe was deeply in that space. Afterwards the Head of School happened to meet a couple of students back at the college. She asked them how it went and one of the students who is not a Christian answered that he felt blessed. Another student said she was so moved that she cried and couldn't sing properly.*

Liam went through his own formation as a Christian teacher and he became aware of this after the students had performed in the nursing home. He wrote:

> *What I also think was that we encountered a great mystery – that of the passion of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane and the power of his death and resurrection. Rolheiser (2016), talks about misunderstanding "passion" as a word for Jesus enduring the cross. Passion in this case comes from the word meaning passive, as this part of Jesus' life from Gethsemane to the Cross was a time where Jesus no longer did ministry but instead had numerous things done to him. In the garden of Gethsemane he pleaded to God the Father*

*"if this cup can be taken from me please". Yet in Jesus' death and resurrection, he did far more for us than during his life of teaching.*

*In many ways this gives meaning to those who are elderly or moving into what is a passive part of their life, unable to do all the things they used to for others. Many of them are having things done to them that they would say "can this cup be taken from me?" Whether it may be doctors, bad news, the ravages of illness or loneliness. Many would see them as perhaps non-functioning, without a role in the world, yet perhaps as Christ did, in their passiveness there is a greater gift for them to give in love, than at any other time. In many ways I believe that not only did the students give love, but those they ministered to give a greater love than others they had performed to, and that added to the feeling of the space being one that was liminal. Not only were they ministering to these residents, but they were ministering to Christ, who was in turn ministering to them.*

*Jesus said in a famous parable "do you know me?", and he is known in the least of these, there is a way we can learn about Christ, but there is also a way to can experience Christ. And I believe this is what we experienced that day, us all giving Christ to each other in sharing love. I walked out from this surprised, immensely blessed myself, by the people and by my students. The students loved it and were very excited for this to become a regular part of their unit. All of a sudden what was a practical application of material had turned into ministry done by students, and into students being ministered to by Christ within those residents.*

Liam came closer in his knowledge of God and ministry "via the path of spiritual praxis- praxis that brings about an interior change, a receptivity, which is the essential precondition for the operation of grace" (Cottingham, 2005, p.12). He began to have a clearer identity of himself as not just teaching aural but also ministering to and with his class. His ethical reflection gave rise to ethical and spiritual praxis and in turn allowed for grace to transform him as a teacher.

**The next research phase: background and rationale**

Religion and spirituality can motivate students and others towards ethical behaviour – singing to the dying. In the case of Liam as lecturer, his personal faith motivated him to explore ethical praxis in his teaching. Initially that meant modes of teaching for the good of students in their professional formation but the ethical praxis itself led to spiritual experiences of God's love and peace. The ethical behaviour also led to spiritual development, where his experience of God fostered a new awareness of 'doing ministry' in his teaching. However, in the next phase of our research we are interested in whether as Cottingham (2005) suggests, the praxis of ethical activity -singing to the dying - could promote personal, spiritual development and maturity in students.

In this framework we propose that ethical practice would impact the person's spirituality. There is work on religion/spirituality affecting ethical attitudes and behaviour (as discussed below), but little work on how ethical practice affects spirituality. The prompted ethical behaviour in this case is contextualized communal behaviour. We argue that prompted ethical behaviour in a community context affects the three core dimensions of spirituality (core dimensions as proposed by Miner and Dowson, 2012): relationship, meaning and transformation. The particular ethical behaviour is couched as significant to the residents of the nursing home, hence motivating to the students, but voluntary and hence giving some autonomy to students. Setran and Kiesling (2013) note that young adults show a "pervasive pattern of individualism" (p.5) and so autonomy is important. It is performed in a setting of palliative care that raises existential issues. Many students will not experience death and dying in their own contexts, especially where youth and health are emphasized. Finally, it is performed as a choir, a community of singers, to a community of dying people.

The well-known religion to ethics argument is that religion teaches adherents to behave ethically via information and role models (e.g. Perrin, 2000). This behaviour includes acts of generosity, compassion, honesty and justice. A review of research into volunteering and helping among adolescents suggests those with high interest or involvement in religion are more likely to be altruistic, but some forms of religion (e.g. more fundamentalist and less questioning forms) are associated with violence and prejudice rather than compassion (Levenson, Aldwin & D'Mello, 2005). Religion may also predispose people to self-control, arguably a 'master virtue' that enables people to behave ethically and avoid sin or vice (Geyer & Baumeister, 2005):

religion fosters self-control by providing clear moral standards, motivation to do good, dissuading vice through guilt, social and spiritual support for self-control, promoting character strength and teaching about divine scrutiny of good and bad deeds.

Although it may be the case that some forms of religion foster ethical behaviour, it is much less clear if, and how, ethical behaviour might affect religious/ spiritual development.  An initial problem is the lack of agreed definitions of spiritual development and maturity, especially when young adults are considered. Levenson, et al. (2005) discuss religious and spiritual development as two aspects of religious experience suggesting that religious development is development of one's relationship with the sacred, and spiritual development is related to one's sense of self-transcendence (p.158). Setran and Kiesling (2013) hold the view that the developmental tasks of early adulthood include developing a worldview, owning one's faith, and choosing communities that will nurture the faith commitment over the lifespan.  They describe the outcome of spiritual development as the "with God" life and hence the core of spiritual development is seeking "inner transformation, costly discipleship, and embodied disciplines that facilitate communion with God" (p.8). Some researchers propose specific indicators of spiritual maturity, such 'self-differentiation' or 'differentiation of self (DoS)' (Majerus & Sandage, 2010). They define DoS as "the mature capacity to balance (a) thoughts and feelings, and (b) connection and independence in relationships" (p.42). As well as being associated with spiritual development, DoS has been positively associated with social connectedness and self-control (p.44), the latter related to ethical behavior as previously argued. In general, then, understandings of spiritual/religious development and maturity include reference to relationships with God and people by individuals who are balanced and transformed.

Core components of spirituality are usually held to be relationships and transformation, as mentioned above, with the addition of a sense of meaning (Miner & Dowson, 2012).  Each component is likely to be affected by the specific ethical behavior under consideration in this paper. The prompted ethical behaviour of singing to dying people is likely to affect experiences of, and relationship with God because existential issues around dying raise questions about God, meanings, purpose in life, suffering and related spiritual matters (Park, 2005). Suffering and existential issues are likely to trigger the student's attachment relationship with God if the student is a believer, or a seeker. This is because the attachment system is triggered by threat or danger (Bowlby, 1973) and depending on the student's relationship with God (more or less

secure attachment) the student is likely to cope in ways that intensify positive experiences of God, or confirm perceived negative experiences of God (Cooper, Bruce, Harman, & Boccaccini, 2009).

The prompted ethical behaviour is likely to affect spiritual meanings because the finality or otherwise of death clearly differentiates exclusively humanistic and theistic meaning systems. The reality of people dying may elicit taken-for-granted meaning systems that are inadequate for the student's experience, prompting questioning and possibly development of more thought through meanings. In highly stressful situations people need to reduce discrepancies between their beliefs and goals, and current understandings in a process of meaning making. The struggle is to understand the situation, regain a sense of control, and restore a sense of the world as good and of themselves as safe and protected (Park, Edmondson, & Hale-Smith, 2013, p.160). A change in their global meaning system is a possible outcome of the meaning making process. The change is likely to be towards spiritual meanings if the context is spiritual. If mature identity is formed within 'communities of truth' (Setran & Kiesling, 2013, p.8) then the community of singers who hold to a 'true' account of their altruism can direct the individual questioning to a transcendent truth.

The prompted ethical behaviour in the specific context of dying is likely to impact a sense of being transformed through the focus on dying, the social context, and the impact of training in virtue on a sense of moral self. First, dealing with suffering, death and similar existential issues is recognized as formative (Miner & Dowson, 2012): it raises questions about the nature of oneself as a finite or infinite being, and challenges unconsidered views of oneself in the world. Social behaviour in itself can influence self-concept (Merrell, Cedeno & Johnson, 1993) and so the communal expression of ethical behaviour can change self-concept by suggesting a sense of oneself as generous, caring, and so on if previously such behaviour was uncommon. Finally, the expression of virtue can reinforce further expressions of virtue and thus contribute to a transformed sense of self as virtuous. This is the stance of the Greek philosophers who advocated training in virtue in order to be virtuous, "as individuals actualized their virtuous potential in the service of society" (Miner & Dowson, 2012, p.9).

**Implications for researching student formation**

So far, we have considered how the experience of a lecturer in music changed his understanding of his work from training in musical skills to specific Christian integration to ministry. We have examined the literature to suggest ways in which the communal ethical behaviour of singing over dying people might be expected to impact spiritual development and maturity. Now we consider implications of our initial auto-ethnographic research and the literature review for research into student formation by means of communal singing to the dying and comment on promising research strategies.

The overall design of such research would comprise pre-during-post inquiries. The pre-stage would involve exploring students' initial levels or experiences of spirituality and their ethical thinking before classes began. Then, when they sing to dying people, researchers would explore their experience of singing as an ethical and spiritual experience. Finally, in the post-stage, levels of spirituality and indicators of maturity would be explored. Given the mix of qualitative and quantitative studies in the literature relating to spiritual experiences and spiritual maturity, the design would optimally include both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Mixed methods studies are held to give greater depth and breadth than single methods studies and to have greater perceived value by graduate students (McKim, 2017). In the proposed design quantitative data would be used to deepen understandings of spiritual change in a form of triangulation of data. The focus would be on individual-level quantitative data being related to personal reflections. Over time, if successive cohorts of students undertake the formative experience, the total number of responses could warrant separate statistical analysis.

More specifically, research strategies (after relevant ethical approval for the study, providing information to students about the study and informed consent by the students) would include interviews, questionnaires and observations (self-reflection) at each of the three stages of research. At the pre - stage we would use interviews or prompted self-reflection to understand the participants' motivation and how they frame the act of volunteering prior to the experience of singing at the nursing home. These means would provide rich descriptive and triangulated data to help understand any reciprocal effects or influence of volunteering on ethical and/or spiritual thinking and behaviour. In addition, we would use demographic questions and developed scales for sample description and to explore the students' spirituality across the dimensions of meaning, transformation and relatedness. Examples of scales measuring aspects of religion and spirituality

are discussed by Hill (2005). They include established scales of purpose in life to tap into meanings, faith maturity to tap into transformation and attachment to God to tap into spiritual relatedness. The scales would be supplemented, by self-reflection around sense of self as spiritual in order to include spiritual experience prior to the intervention.

At the stage around the time of singing to dying people, we would use interviews and self-reflection to explore student experiences, interpretations and attributions related to the intervention. At the post-stage towards the end of semester we would again use a mix of interviews, self-reflection and questionnaires to assess students' understanding of their experiences in hindsight (i.e., how they identify, express, and explain their acts of singing to dying people), current levels and experiences of spirituality (including re-application of scales of purpose in life, faith maturity and attachment to God) and considered interpretations, attributions, and outcomes related to the intervention.

In reflecting upon the reported experiences and observations of the students we will be considering Christian theology as a key discussion partner. As one of the authors has written previously:

> *According to traditional Christian theology (e.g., McGrath, 1997), God creates the universe and maintains a deep connectedness to His creation. Moreover, (a) God is a community of three persons (called the Trinity) having three distinct functions but existing in perfect unity; and (b) God embeds His perfectly unified communal nature and character in creation itself. In short, theologically, the universe is connected to God and by God. As the pinnacle of God's universal creation, people are also connected to God and connected by God, and thus are whole persons ... The connectedness of the universe and integration of persons are two key theological principles with direct implications for understanding spiritual experience* (Miner & Dowson, 2012, p.25).

By including theological reflection with the research design we will also acknowledge a transcendent purpose for human life and development. Since relationship with God is dynamic, producing the transformation of humans into the likeness of Christ, the ultimate goal of any Christian formation is ongoing spiritual transformation that glorifies God.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to describe and attempt to justify an innovative approach to learning in an Aural Perception class. Initially the approach was problem based, then it also became one of community engagement as a 'good work', and finally the approach added spiritual formation as an intentional outcome of the community engagement. Overall, there is warrant for suggesting that ethical behaviour might impact spirituality, and hence affect the spiritual development of students.

However, as Cottingham suggests, not all ethical behaviour and forms of spirituality are helpful for formation: only that praxis (including the practice of ethical behaviour) that allows space to receive grace is helpful and "any old system of spiritual praxis will not do, only one whose insights are in harmony with our considered moral reflection" (2005, p.16). Hence there is need for ethical reflection that gives rise to helpful ethical and spiritual praxis and in turn allows for grace to transform the individual.

By comparing post-stage information, from students involved in the threshold choir, with material obtained at prior stages it will be possible to comment on changes in spiritual/religious thinking, experiencing and behaving over the course of a semester that included singing to the dying as a prompted ethical activity. Such a comparison would not establish a causal relationship between the activity and spiritual outcomes, but it would give provisional support to causal inferences. The challenge for Christian educators, then, is twofold. First is the challenge to consider all of our teaching as having potential for spiritual praxis and spiritual formation. Second is the challenge to conduct research to discern and support the most helpful praxis. The ultimate goal of human transformation into the likeness of Christ for the glory of God is surely worth the effort.

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# Dramatizing an apocalypse

By Miriam Lili

## Abstract

This paper recounts the experience of working with Stage 3 primary students in a Christian school on a play-building task on Apocalypse while simultaneously writing a play, for a postgraduate unit, designed to embody the challenging and controversial metaphorical imagery of Ezekiel chapter 16, and its Biblical context. In both there is a search for God's story and the contribution of a metanarrative of salvation and redemption. The play-building task aimed to help Stage 3 students creatively explore a theme of their choosing and to allow the word of God to shape the play by creating commentary and transition between vignettes. The practice-led research aimed to assist a potential community of actors and an audience in reconciling the horrors of Ezekiel 16 with the Christian testimony of a loving God who brings healing, salvation and restoration to his creation. The playwright's method of exploring reality through dialogue proved useful in conceptualising the connections dialogically with a light touch. By finding a place between Brechtian and Artaudian ideas of experimental theatre that aligned with a Biblical worldview a playful didactic theatre can be used creatively for educational purposes.

## Setting the scene

*Friday 1st September. From my daily program notes: Period 3. Choosing a topic for play-building, improvisation on the topic and listing ideas for vignettes. Reflections on practice: The class of Stage 3 (Year 5 and 6) students was abuzz with excitement. I had just explained to them that they were going to build their own play. After two terms of teaching and learning mime, improvisation and storytelling, my colleague and I were now at the beginning of a unit on play-building. We knew our students were expected to perform at the school's Drama Night and we hoped that the process would lead to a performance that the students would think of as their own and would really enjoy performing. Using Dorothy Heathcote's famous open-ended introduction ("Dorothy Heathcote: Three Looms Waiting," 1971), I had asked the students "So,*

*what would you like to do a play about?" I was excited too.*

**The Practice and Pedagogies of Play-building**

As a primary school teacher in a Christian school, I aim to develop Christ-centred environments and experiences for my students as I plan for their learning, and monitor and assess their progress. Ideally these are created in collaboration with other Christian teachers as we work together as citizens of God's kingdom, and "infuse" (Goheen & Bartholomew, 2008, p. 62) the outcomes from the state education syllabus with a biblical worldview. In this way,

> *the Christian school* [can become] *a place specially designed to equip children and young people to represent Christ in the world over which he is Lord over all things...true to Jesus, true to the Bible and true to the world created and held together by Christ's powerful presence. Christian schools [can] equip for a life of honouring God, serving others and enjoying God's good creation—life as God intended it to be.* (Fennema, 2006, p. 45)

Play-building was a highly anticipated part of my planning for the year. I had spent a year reviewing literature on Drama education, play-building, and collaboration, and this was a valuable opportunity to give my ideas and initial hunches some informal testing in practice. My main interest centred on how students could experience play-building as a genuinely collaborative activity.

Drama teaching can be extremely rewarding because it is active and relational, but the performance event and environment contain elements of risk. Like sport there is teamwork and a need to trust others but, as with all creative arts, Drama in practice tends to be bounded by guidelines rather than rules. "Play-building" is a particularly unpredictable and contingent drama form. It is closely associated with "group devising" and "collective creation", and for many years it has been an important part of upper primary and secondary Drama education in the NSW syllabus. Play-building "involves sustained [dramatic] exploration over a number of weeks to create and devise a coherent drama about a topic or issue" (Board of Studies, 2006, p. 92). The ideal is for this to be achieved through an active process of collaboration, where Drama learning goals and outcomes are achieved through interactions and collegial relationships with other ensemble members and the audience. While play-building has been the focus of some studies

(e.g. Lovesy, 2003; Milne, 1998), play-building's inherent collaborative nature seems to be assumed with little known of the experiences of students in mandatory Drama classes where the syllabus determines that they are required to build plays collaboratively.

My approach to teaching play-building applies ideas from a study by secondary Drama teacher Christina Milne (1998), who implied that group script writing should be intentionally delayed when making devised theatre because, "improvisation stimulates ideas, research expands and solidifies those ideas, [and] then a script is developed that becomes the foundation for performance" (p. 171). Further, I am intrigued by Sawyer and DeZutter's (2009) description of original devised theatre making as a gentle and gradual construction of a stabilised form, somewhat like the solidification of molten lava. Importantly these ideas suggest that two products emerge from collaborative creative theatre: (i) the group or ensemble, and (ii) the play, and both need to be built. The group is built as individuals come together and find their place in a common creative purpose, and the play is built as ideas are suggested, selected and stabilised.

**We are People of Creation**

Goheen and Bartholomew (2008) make reference to Abraham Kuyper in explaining that "part of being made in the image of God is that he has graced us with something of his own capacity for creativity", which as their quote includes the, "possibility both to create something beautiful, and to delight in it" (p. 157). Harris (2007) suggests that for Christians, "creative efforts must be guided by the fact that biblically and historically, the use of drama in Christian worship has been highly participatory and closely centered around the story of God's saving acts in the history of his people" (p. 21). Many Drama forms require long periods of preparation and rehearsal, and culminate in brief performance events that bring people together temporarily for shared artistic experience. They are often remembered for their visual and emotional impact, and can be relived mentally through photographic and video records. The importance of Drama is that personal or collective cultural stories are actively communicated through techniques that allow actors to experience something of the characters with their associated conflicts and emotions and "show" these stories to live audiences.

**Generating ideas**

*Reflections on practice: Given the diverse personalities in the class, I opted for a vignette approach; in which several groups of students would devise short plays on a common theme.*

*These plays would eventually be connected into one class play by adding connecting transitional scenes. So, in preparation for this, we had asked the students to suggest ideas of what they would like to do a play about. A student raised their hand and suggested "Apocalypse." I wrote it on the whiteboard and glanced across at my colleague. The word joined a list including ghouls, enchanted forests, gang rivalry, an aeroplane crash, and zombies; ideas that all were admirable in their potential for conflict, a necessary backbone of Drama, but challenging in view of the expected performance at a Christian school's Drama Night. For this purpose and audience, some of the ideas were really not ideal. I told the class that there would be no plays on zombies. Then I suggested that "apocalypse" could be a suitable overarching theme as most of the other ideas could readily connect to that concept. The students responded enthusiastically and I suspected that they did not fully understand the meaning of the term, which gave my colleague and I something to build on with them. Additionally, I recognised it as a term associated with Biblical literature.*

*At the time of this class play-building project, I was working on my own creative practice-led research project with the University of New England School of Arts: a theatrical re-imagination of the book of Ezekiel. I was writing a play script that aimed to portray the book of Ezekiel as a whole, from a Christian worldview. The idea of representing Ezekiel theatrically was supported in the literature by others who had recognised its dramatic nature. But I had my own decisions to make about what I was going to do with Chapter 16. A friend had advised me to leave it out but it didn't seem to be that simple.*

## Playwriting the prophetic and play-building the apocalyptic

My play script was eventually titled, "Refleshing the bones," alluding to the need to move beyond merely a fragmentary knowledge of the well-known event in Ezekiel 37. In the associated creative practice-led research I explored textual adaptation as a transitioning of story between modes—in my case from ancient biblical prophetic text to a scripted play. The findings were submitted as a dissertation titled: *Ezekiel*: *Reconnected and revived theatrically.*

In my review of literature I found that potential performance material had been recognised within *Ezekiel* by American theologian William Shiell (2014), Jewish theatre

academic Shimon Levy (2000), and American associate professor of theatre Todd Farley (2008). Shiell (2014) states: "for actors and audience, the book begs to be performed" (p. 3). Levy (2000) suggests that Ezekiel's prophecies are "peculiarly theatrical… exploiting a number of non-verbal, performative techniques, under the specific socio-religious circumstances of exile" (p. 178). Farley (2008) concurs, explaining that "Ezekiel enacts a prophecy that no one will hear [having long rejected the message]; hence, the prophecy must be embodied to be seen [and in essence] the word becomes enfleshed in Ezekiel." (p. 35). As such, Ezekiel's use of drama is God's initiative to appeal to the people's sight to further highlight their refusal to respond to the aurally communicated messages of previous prophets.

The book of *Ezekiel* starts with a series of visions that commission the prophet into his role. This is followed by a series of prophetic acts and oracles where the prophetic commentary refers to concepts and actions, many from daily life and nature. Then Chapter 16 explodes with shockingly explicit imagery, which condemns shockingly promiscuous betrayal; all written with heavier language than I would choose to use in my own writing. It is helpful to note Wood's (1996) explanation that the inclusion of *Ezekiel* in the Jewish Scriptures was challenged before the time of Christ, in part because material in Chapter 16 was felt to be "too repugnant for public reading" (p. 354). Byrne (2016), however, emphasises the notion of finding connections through a "revisioning of the Scripture or text under consideration" (p. 200) through reflexive studio practice, which "welcomes seemingly disparate ideas into the practice until the ways in which they are connected become evident" (p. 198), and this is the approach I used with my project.

First, I acknowledged that the stylistic features of *Ezekiel* together with insights from various Christian Bible commentaries (Allen, 1994; Shiell, 2014; Taylor, 1969; Wright, 2001), clearly indicate that the controversial text in *Ezekiel* 16 is descriptive imagery to portray a metaphorical woman (representing Israel) who despises the kindness, covenant, protection, and generosity of a husband, and betrays him through soliciting and paying for opportunities for prostitution with foreigners. It is clear from the prophetic record that these actions will ultimately lead the "woman" to her own experience of extremely cruel and violent betrayal, ending with her destruction. Second, the metaphor illustrates the unfaithfulness of Israel in seeking provision and protection through idolatry. At the time of writing, Israel's leaders were foolishly seeking the support of the foreign nations who had historically oppressed them, and were doing this despite their past experiences of God's glorious interventions on their behalf. In many ways it is similar

in its intent and purpose to the metaphorical account of the "prodigal son" in the New Testament (Luke 15: 11-32) as in both accounts groups of people are represented as single individuals. The story of the son's disrespectful behaviour to his father is told concisely and conservatively, and ends positively with the son's restored dignity and reconciliation. However, it is as destruction looms and becomes immanent in Ezekiel's prophecies that we finally reach Chapter 16 where the metaphorical husband (representing God) acts with violent fury towards the unfaithful wife, and declares that he will take an active role in handing her over to her lovers for her destruction.

This metaphor grates with norms and values in contemporary Western society. Claassens (2014) and Llewelyn and Payne (2011) raise concerns about the potential dangers to women if men are exposed to its contents and led to believe that this chapter is authoritative. Interestingly, Claassens (2014) acknowledges her "own position…would be that the [biblical] canon as we have it, even though flawed and limited in places, is sufficient…and difficult texts such as Ezekiel 16 should be kept" (p. 9). However, she "question[s] whether one can transform the God-language in *Ezekiel* 16…[and emphasies that] the violent metaphor of God as an Abusive Spouse has to be deconstructed so that it may no longer be used to justify the violence and abuse toward any group in society" (Claassens, 2015, p. 9). My commitment to the theatrical adaptation of *Ezekiel* as a whole book meant that it was important for me to attempt to include *Ezekiel* 16.

In a helpful analysis of the theatrics of *Ezekiel*, Levy (2000) describes Chapter 16 as "a major (not unexpected) shift [that] occurs in the plot, ensuing from the girl's hubris" (p. 183). He accounts for it theatrically in explaining that "good plays deliver the expected in an unexpected way, and indeed, despite being rich, beloved and beautiful, instead of everlasting fidelity, she betrays her God-husband and engages in a series of atrocious sexual-religious betrayals" (Levy, 2000, p. 183). The bible does not shy away from the atrocities committed by people in its stories and it seems that "telling painful stories is precisely the hallmark of a biblical worldview" (du Toit, 2001, p. 2). All great bible characters have flaws, but the greatest characters show knowledge of how to respond to God with repentance, thus restoring relationship.


**We are people of the fall**

Drama often portrays the worst of human inventiveness and imagination as it explores the dark spaces of human hearts and lives. Goheen and Bartholomew (2008) suggest that:

"artists…help us to experience and see the world in fresh ways" (p. 157). However, as Wolters (2005) explains, it is important to be aware that:

> *the Bible speaks very straightforwardly of the domination of the devil over God's creatures and of the demonic forces that God's people must contend with. Satan stands at the head of a whole hierarchy of evil spirits who seek to twist and spoil the good gifts of the Creator. To the degree that these spirits are successful, creation loses its lustre, becoming ugly rather than beautiful* (p. 66).

There are approaches within Drama that depart from a Biblical view of truth and reality and can lead to idolatry and darkness. Simon du Toit (2001), then Professor of Theatre Arts at Dordt College, cautions that when actors work within Stanislavsky's Method they

> *are taught to discuss their roles in the first person, as if they truly have become the character…they are taught that they are somehow in touch with a mysterious higher truth that lies within themselves. Understood from a biblical stance, they are taught to make an idol of character in performance* (p. 5).

He prefers Brecht's socially aware but alienating or distancing approach that "forces the audience to confront the oppression of the suffering other [as closer to] satisfying a [reformed] biblical calling" (du Toit, 2001, p. 6). However, his recommendation is that "performance must remind us truthfully of who we have been, who we are, and who we hope to become as God's people; and it must acknowledge the contingency of our relations with God and each other" (du Toit, 2001, p. 6). As such, Drama at its best allows for social connectedness through respectful vulnerability that honours the other while not holding back from speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15 NIV).

Drama in contemporary society is often found at the extremes of escapist entertainment and disruptive, embodied cries of pain. It can be used to hide and deny or to show and reveal where creation hurts, and expose the nature of the injury. Embodied representations of injustices and abuse experienced by people in sectors of society other than our own can be deeply confronting. The danger is that repeated representation and uncritical acceptance of what is shown can bring the injustice towards a place of normality. What should occur is that which is demonstrated in the Bible, such as when the Levite dismembers his concubine in Judges 19.

Those who become involved in the act through being at the delivery addresses of those gruesome packages are roused to indignation and act in great determination to address the wrongs of which they have become aware. We are people of the fall, but we must not simply expect that our stories must remain lost in hopelessness or brokenness.

## Beginning to Build

*Friday 15th September. From my daily program notes: Period 3 Play-building: Apocalypse. Possible statements and dialogue that could be heard (to share). Each group to show tableau of endpoint first, then build forward.*

*Reflections on practice: Rehearsals began with great enthusiasm. We told the students to use improvisation to play with their ideas and that at the end of the lesson they would perform their improvisations informally. Groups formed and the students began talking together. In line with my beliefs about play-building, I encouraged them to limit their discussions and begin improvising as quickly as possible. The performances at the end of this first rehearsal had the common elements of surprise attacks, pursuit across the performance space, and dramatic, violent deaths. But a few students had distanced themselves from their groups for a variety of reasons and, despite teacher intervention, were refusing to join in again.*

## The conflicts and contingencies of play-building

My colleague and I faced two difficulties: assisting students to collaboratively build a creative project and assisting students to engage Christianly with the conflict that makes Drama so appealing. Crawford, Hurst, Lugering, and Wimmer (2003) note that "whereas a playwright writes a play in isolation, or perhaps in consultation with a director or company, play-building is collaborative…and it conveys, eventually, a collective message that is [the group's] own" (p. 66). They further outline the demandingness of the play-building task in its requirements for sensitive communication; extensive research; analysis, selection and synthesis; open and creative collaboration; constructive evaluation; responsive listening that acts on advice; and commitment to the play-building process (based on pp. 67-68).

Our lessons were avoiding the use of written text to preserve ideas between rehearsals and avoiding premature scripting because I was prioritising collaboration and wanted our students'

ideas to be able to crystalise through improvisation rather than through a written record (Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009). I reassured myself that at the very least, the students who had opted out of their groups were not permanently written out. My colleague and I wanted them to find belonging in the group work and enjoy a rewarding experience of co-creation, so during group rehearsals we spent our time moving from group to group, trying to assist students with negotiations, and with working through conflict with forgiveness and reconciliation. We also encouraged them to maintain their focus and be inclusive, and commented positively on their quality ideas.

## We are people of the cross

Group work is hard work, especially when the project is worthwhile. Clashes between group members' with preferences, strong opinions, and self-interests can distract us from the truth that in Christ it is not our life but his life that will be truly effective in all that we do (Galatians 2:20). Goheen and Bartholomew (2008) state, with the church in mind:

*we can make something of God's kingdom visible in our lives, action, and words…As God's people, we are a 'good news' community that erects signs of God's present-and-yet-coming kingdom in our communal life, in our callings in the public life of culture, across the whole spectrum of our family and individual lives.* (pp. 60-61)

This is also true for Christians in schools. We can easily forget that God is with us as we build but he continues to play his role as "main actor in the biblical drama" (Goheen & Bartholomew, 2008, p. 33) in our world today. Our collaborative endeavours can readily include his input as we collectively make room for him, wait on him, and discern his purpose and direction for our plays in our place and our time. As such he continues his necessary work of reconciling us to God and each other because we are people who need to live out in our experience what he achieved once and for all on the cross.

### Ezekiel 16: God's scream.

*Reflections on practice: My own project had gradually changed its focus: from theatrically representing the actual biblical text of Ezekiel to giving imaginative voice to the silent characters of Ezekiel's wife and the metaphorical Chapter 16 woman. The plot was*

*bringing them into conflict and contrasting their possible motives. It had become a creative adaptation of a part of Ezekiel that was not fully told in Scripture by exploring this gap and inventing a new dramatic story that was consistent with what I knew of the whole biblical metanarrative.*

Sanders (2006) notes that a strength of adaptation is that it can construct "a revised point of view from the 'original', [by] adding hypothetical motivation, or voicing the silenced and marginalised…[in an] attempt to make texts 'relevant' or easily comprehensible to new audiences" (pp. 18-19). He suggests that these opportunities can enrich the original text and ensure that its story is understood afresh and communicated appropriately to a new generation.

Although the book of *Ezekiel* contains much text that is recorded as the words of God to Ezekiel, I had initially made a conscious decision not to let an actor directly represent God in words or actions, but to instead show God's impact on people. However, while giving voice to the metaphorical *Ezekiel* 16 woman, I had to include the voice and character of God as the metaphorical husband that she rejected. I did this through creating two characters: a teenager and a man. The teenager plays out the tender care given to the abandoned baby girl, and then the man plays out the transition from grief to rage in his interactions with the *Ezekiel* 16 woman. I invented a Brechtian character with a stage manager's role, which consoles the man with minimal effectiveness. Eventually the man is seen cradling the rescued illegitimate child of his devastated and deceased wife, picturing the remnant, and the teenager returns to introduce a messenger in rags who has come to tell Ezekiel about the fall of Jerusalem.

A Brechtian approach is highly intellectual and textual and while I embraced its possibilities for symbolic portrayal and "historification" (Crawford et al., 2003, p. 212), I wanted an audience to empathise and respond. Ideas from Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty pulled the play away from being a "slave to words and text" (Crawford et al., 2003, p. 25). I aimed to continually assault the audiences' senses with new experiences; but compassionately and tenderly, without Artaud's frenzied movements. I used symbolic gesture, movement, sound and rhythm, but not so far that "language became incantation…[and without] using any of Artaud's violent and often pornographic techniques" (Crawford et al., 2003, p. 25). I wanted a sense of beauty and poignancy to carry the horrors. Through working theatrically with this controversial text I began to recognise the text of *Ezekiel* 16 as God's own artistically portrayed scream of rage

and pain as he saw his beautiful many-times redeemed Israel fall as a result of cruel, deliberate and active choice to reject the covenantal position of honour and dignity he had given her.

**Bringing Hope in Community**

*Tuesday 19ᵗʰ September. Notes to visiting YWAM team; Year 5/6 Drama. The children are making plays on the overall theme of Apocalypse. It would be great to have your support in some drama skills/ideas and Biblical perspectives during the process.*

*Reflections on practice: In order to broaden my students' thinking in developing their ideas, I helped them to develop a working definition of apocalypse. After referring to some online dictionaries students could describe apocalypse as unexpected cataclysmic change, and an uncovering or revelation of something that had been hidden. But the plays were not developing…it seemed we had reached a standstill. And then, collaboration with a visiting Youth with a Mission (YWAM) team led to an unexpected change in the direction of the students' vignettes. The class performed all of their vignettes to the team members who then joined with different groups to share feedback and ideas while actively workshopping the vignettes with the students.*

Davis (2010) raises the importance of teacher-student collaboration in Drama education:

> *Co-artistry signals different ways of working with students than in many traditional contexts, especially when working with artistic product…[it] opens up a territory where teachers explore emotional landscapes with their students and work collaboratively on shaping and sharing that work through micro-level interactions* (p. 223).

I had intended that the play-building task would lead to students' autonomous artistic creations, but their capabilities were not sufficient for the task. Du Toit (2001) views "performance [as] inescapably contingent and relational" (p. 7) such that it can be a visionary and transformational experience for all involved as it "draws imaginative attention to aspects of our experience that normally go unexamined" (p. 9). The input of the interested other, in this case someone other than their class teachers, breathed new life into the plays for our students and helped them to tighten up the mis-en-scene. The YWAM volunteers also helped them to consider the content of their vignettes from the perspectives of eternity, good and evil, and what they

would hope could happen in such experiences.

**Collaboration and collective ownership in play-building**

*Friday 13th October. From my daily program notes: Period 3. Using Chromes for write up and to research quotes and Bible verses. Reflections on practice: Stage 3 were given access to Chromebooks for two tasks: first, to write up the scripts for their vignettes. Second, to locate and suggest several quotes and Bible verses that they felt were relevant to their vignettes. The transitions were then teacher-written using these student contributions, only because by this point there was limited time before the performance date. The transitions were built from student suggested text without the use of improvisation, and involved pairs of students standing at the front of the stage and talking to the audience.*

*Wednesday 18th October –Thursday 19th October, in shifts over the "night watch," my colleague used a Google doc to arrange the vignettes into a possible order for one big play. This was then shared with me so I could write transitions from the suggested quotes and Bible verses, and do a final edit of the scripts as a plausible, coherent, single performance piece. The next morning, the scripts were copied as booklets and brought to class. There was great enthusiasm as our students saw the pile of scripts. They eagerly received and perused their copies.*

*We received some positive feedback from a parent volunteer in the classroom, who was also flipping through a copy. Then the students' complaints began. Apparently there were problems with all of the vignettes. Each play-building group was united in an opinion that we had got it all wrong, and unanimous in recognising a difference in the record of performance they had just read in the scripts and the performance they had created.*

*Throughout the rest of the day, including during a bus ride with the class to attend gymnastics lessons, I met with the groups, one by one, to discuss the changes that needed to be made to reconcile the scripts with their embodied conceptions of their vignettes.*
*At about this time I completed my own play script and dissertation. My supervisor and two external examiners gave critical feedback, and for me the most interesting comment was that it would have been more interesting theatrically if Ezekiel had expressed doubt.*

**We are people of the resurrection**

Christians are people of the resurrection. We are called to live in hope and to declare hope. As the Apostle Paul explains, "if only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19) but pity is also due to us if we live and act as if we have hope only for the next life. Ezekiel was an example of one who held on to hope. Unlike Isaiah and Jeremiah whose self-doubts are expressed early in their experience of the prophetic call, Ezekiel arrives at his potential place of doubt when, after experiencing the death of his beloved wife and hearing of the destruction of his beloved temple, he finds himself in the valley of dry bones. The man stands alone in a field of death. He has heard God's scream in response to gross unfaithfulness that led to the tragic death. He has heard God's command and muffled his own scream when his unfaithful wife suddenly died.  He has buried his wife's corpse in silence and her body was in the process of decay. No scream. Death was Ezekiel's very present, painful, experiential reality when God asked him for his opinion as to whether the dry bones before him could live again. Bordering at the point of doubt he turns his face to God: "Oh God, only you know." There is no scream for Ezekiel but instead he receives a voice of power at God's command. He commands bones to be re-fleshed and life to return. This is a small glimpse of the "mighty strength" that God exerted in the fullness of time when he raised Christ fully resurrected from the dead (Ephesians 1: 19-20) as his "incomparably great power for us who believe" (Ephesians 1:19). We are people of the resurrection. We are people of sure and enduring hope.

**Recognising that which is ours**

The Stage 3 students had become aware of what their play contained through embodied improvisation prior to script writing. The frictions, when they came, did not threaten group cohesion but sought to re-establish the story they knew because it was the story that belonged to them. Wolters' (2005) recognition that "art ought not to be pronounced worldly, but claimed for Christ" (p. 71) suggests a return to God's story. Goheen and Bartholomew (2008) offer a vision of such a restoration in claiming:

> *Historically, the church has a great tradition of art and creativity. The Bible itself contains much extraordinarily beautiful literature in poetry, parables, tragic and comic narratives, biographies, and dream visions. The church was once the centre of artistic*

*creativity, where decorated and illuminated manuscripts, paintings and sculpture, stained glass, poetry and drama, literature, music, and architecture joined to proclaim the glory of God. It is a rich legacy that we need to recover* (p. 157).

Drama teachers in Christian schools have opportunity and responsibility to do more than simply reproduce the dramatic works of our culture. We can use a theatrical lens and embodied exploration to enjoy beauty, understand pain, and challenge idolatries, but our audiences may be poorly served if we only ever lead them to a vision of the fall through our art. We are called to create embodied artworks, individually or collaboratively, which declare the greatness of our God and share his story of redemption, resurrection, and restoration of hope.

## Performing apocalypse

*Tuesday 7th November. From my daily program notes: Periods 3-6. Hall sound set up. Drama rehearsal, matinee dress rehearsal, performance. Reflections on practice: Secondary exams were finally finished and the hall was booked for exclusive use by Stage 3. The students arrived at school with their costumes. All groups performed with all but one of the group members intact in their role and happy. The matinee performance was mostly for the other primary classes. Parents, other family members, and school staff attended the evening performance. After both performances the audiences were invited to ask the students some questions about their performances. A question raised was why there was so much violence and killing in the plays. One student's reply was along the lines that it was because it was fun and Stage 3 students enjoy these kinds of topics.*

This student's reply was likely true for most of the students in the class, if not all of them. Perhaps dramatic violence and killing was part of exploring aspects of their imaginations. Perhaps it was something that, with their burgeoning affinities for fairness and justice, they would not condone in real life but could play with in Drama. Despite these morbid interests, through co-artistry nearly all of the plays contained an element of intervention through human or divine activity that turned and brought hope out of a destructive situation. The transitional comment for the one that didn't, noted that humans do not cope well with apocalyptic crises with their own resources. The Christian teacher can model Christ's love and hope within professional

Drama teaching practice by helping students learn, through collaboration, how to recognise the "other" and to be open to reconciliation during inevitable contingencies and conflicts. Through prioritising Biblical truth Drama teachers can confidently show how God's love and hope permeates our culture, even in our pain, and how he can bring hope to the darkest places of human experience.

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# A Problem-posing pedagogy: Nurturing wisdom in Higher Education

*By Doug Blomberg*

## Abstract

The wisdom we seek to nurture is grounded not in theorising but in concrete experience, which is always embodied. However, the body and bodily experience have often been denigrated, notwithstanding Christ's incarnation and resurrection and the biblical view of humanness. We are to walk with Jesus humbly, in heart, body and mind, engaging holistically with what is truly of value, whereas Plato champions the rational mind, fostering the intellectualisation of education characteristic of Western schooling.

God upholds and orders the world by the power of His Word, entrusting us with caring for all He created, guided by His purposes in unfolding society and culture. But creation is radically marred by our fallenness, so we live in the antithesis between sin and God's ubiquitous grace. Thus, both the Creation Mandate and the antithesis present problematic situations, leading me to advocate a "problem-posing pedagogy". Serving God in love, justice and mercy requires questioning the world to discern and actualise what should be. For this, we need wisdom, which Maxwell (1984) defines as "the realisation of value". How best might we nurture wisdom?

In historical, experiential mode, I begin by reviewing my vocation as an educator, always in a particular context. I then consider paired parables, introduce a contemporary instance of service learning, and survey briefly a number of "experiments in problem-posing" I have valued in my journey. I close with a note on how this plays out currently for me and my institution. The pursuit of wisdom is deeply personal.

## Who then is this Christ?

If we wish to know how we should teach, we need to determine the goal of education. This requires knowing what it means to become a mature person. Scripture states our goal is to "attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). Who then is this Christ? Within the Christian community alone, there are myriad conceptions. Which are we to pursue?

Unless we comprehend "the fullness of Christ", we may very successfully attain something that is not at all what our Lord models. So I need to outline my understanding of what Scripture teaches.

When I first began thinking about the present paper, a memory came strongly to mind. The context was a meeting of Christian educators; the recollection is of the opening devotions; he passage was the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). As we know, Jesus resisted Satan's wiles, countering his allusion to biblical texts with texts of his own. How could Jesus stand firm in the face of all the blessings the Adversary would bestow? In glossing the passage, our devotions leader asserted that the answer was quite simple: Jesus was God, so he was incapable of giving in to temptation. This is not at all an uncommon stance, throughout the history of Christianity.

Whether in the form of Arianism, Docetism or other dualisms, the full humanness of Jesus was denied; he was viewed as God hiding for a time in a human body. These beliefs have been condemned by the Church since nearly the beginning. What sense would it make to comfort ourselves with Paul's assertion that, though Jesus was tempted in every way we are, he did not succumb so neither should we (Hebrews 4:15)? No comfort at all, if Jesus always had a way out, a way that relied upon the fact that he was a "supernatural" being in "natural" clothing.

**Gnosticism**

Gnosticism rears its head not just after the early days of the Church: the Apostle John (1 John 4:1-3) warns of false prophets who will not acknowledge that Jesus has come in the flesh. This is the litmus test. Because matter was evil and the spirit was good, nothing good can come from the body: esoteric knowledge, available only to an intellectual elite, was essential to salvation. We are not to take this as our model: as John goes on to emphasise, love is the hallmark of those who serve the Spirit of God. How are we to emulate the love and hope of Christ? How are we to understand that we, made in the image of God, are to follow in the footsteps of He who is the true image – the "spitting image", as my pastor once put it? His feet may not have walked on England's pastures green, but walk in the dust of Galilee he did. If Christ is not risen bodily, then our hope is in vain. Paul makes the startling claim that if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either (1 Corinthians 15:12-28). We confess not

only the resurrection of Jesus, but our own resurrection. The body is not secondary, but integral to humanness.

**Integral humanness**

In other words, the picture which persistent heresies present takes for granted the bifurcation of nature and super-nature. Bluntly, this is not biblical: it is not rooted in the Hebraic Scriptures and the newer Testament that, though written primarily in Greek, nonetheless retains the Hebraic perspective on humanness. The Word is not *logos* in the Greek sense of rational, particularly theoretical, understanding, but *dabar*: deed. When God speaks the world into life, His word effectively creates. In similar vein, the Hebrew understanding of *nephesh*, unsurprisingly translated as *psyche*, brought with it the Classical notion of a substantial soul. Not so for the Old Testament, as its anthropological terms were *relational* in their conception (Wolff, 1974).

*Nephesh* connotes vulnerability, the utter dependence of people on their creator. It is a term closely related to the neck and throat, the softest tissue, where life can be strangled, stabbed or slashed, where hunger and thirst might be signalled. Humans are indeed in the image of God, who upholds us by every breath, every word proceeding from his mouth. In the same way, *basar* connotes our relation to the earth, the very dust from which we were formed, humans from humus, *adam* from *adamah*. We are integral creatures, always in relationship as a whole person. *Lebab* is the most common anthropological term in the Hebrew Scriptures; our lives are rooted in our hearts, close in significance to what Augustine recognised as the *will* (as did Wolff).

We have our treasure in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7), which is not to say our bodies are a receptacle for the soul, perishing over time while only what it contains remains imperishable. So often – I did so myself – we interpret this to mean the soul is inside, thus we have two not merely distinct but separate natures. I am reminded of the examination of a ministerial candidate, asked to explain what is meant by Christ being fully divine and fully human. "That's simple," he said, "in the body, Christ is human, in the soul, he is divine." Perhaps it is not only the minds of unbelievers that had been blinded by the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4). This seems harsh, but it is a further reminder that the antithesis between sin and grace cuts deep into the hearts of believers too.

We are accustomed to speak of "human beings". This seems to consolidate the idea that being is indeed something "solid" – a substance. I am reminded of the thematic phrase in the first pages of Herman Dooyeweerd's *New Critique of Theoretical Thought*: "*meaning* is the *being* of all that is created" (Dooyeweerd, 1958, Vol. 1, p. 4). While *being* stands alone, self-sufficient, *meaning* is a consequence of everything standing in relation to everything else: All things are connected, as Lenin asserted, unconsciously echoing Paul in Colossians (1:15-20). Meaning is the continuous referring character of all things, the web of connections we pursue in the process of learning.

**The impact of Plato**

As Plato saw it, souls are eternal, existing long before they descended to inhabit a body. Memories of pre-existence were erased as they passed through the River Lethe. If they could but shake off their mortal coil, and regain the insight they previously had into the eternal Ideas or Forms, they could return to their celestial abode. This is a doctrine taught by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; but it is also a doctrine implicitly assumed by too many who count themselves part of mainstream Christianity. Plato characterised this earthly sojourn as a place where *metanoia* (repentance/conversion) was a precondition for heavenly bliss: grasping the Forms required eschewing mundane, practical realities and turning one's sights in theoretical contemplation to what lay beyond. Practice was inconvenient, even though necessary. The soil had to be tilled, the grain harvested, but the farmer was lower on Plato's scale of human achievement. Note, however, that Isaiah's farmer (28:23-29) is instructed by God, who "teaches him the right way". Different crops require different treatment: "All this also comes from the LORD almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom" (v. 29). The farmer hears the voice of wisdom in the nitty-gritty toil and sweat of serving the earth; it poses problems to address.

Plato assumed no *bodily* resurrection, but absolute departure from the grubby earth. And we do think of the earth as "grubby". As a Native American speaker underscored at the 1994 ACSD conference, the idiom of Caucasian Americans (and not only they) connects the dirt with "dirty", the very soil with being "soiled", the dust from which we are made something to be cleaned away. Of course, this disdain for bodily matters, our intrinsic relationship with the earth and bodily functions, extends to a puritanical, ascetic conception of sexuality, to be avoided as

often as one can, just as common parlance jokes snidely that sexual congress was the mark of the fall. What Plato conceived for the highest class of people, and for the human soul, was an existence of pure intellect. The intellectualisation of Western education is rooted in this, ignoring the multiple facets of humanness and our many ways of knowing.

Yet Jesus ascended bodily, with the promise he would build many mansions for his faithful people. Where on earth would these mansions, be built? Not on earth at all, too many believe. But He promised to return, having prepared a place for us. The culmination of God's Kingdom would come on earth, as Jesus modelled us praying – and for our daily bread, nonetheless. The New Jerusalem would descend to a renewed earth, Jesus once more living fully incarnate among us, Emmanuel. God created us bodily and pronounced this not just good, but very good. Does not our Lord revel in his earthly image-bearers as servants doing His will? Will He not continue to do so in the age to come? Should we not be preparing for this future rather than one designed for ethereal spirits?

## Consequences

A worldview repudiating the basic goodness of God's creation is not without consequences. Why worry about climate change if the earth will ultimately be consumed by fire? Why should politicians, governments, citizens worry when the earth is but a fleeting pastime in the eyes of the Lord? However, the earth is no more destroyed (as most translations have it) than it was in the time of Noah. Rather, it was cleansed by water to give the earth and its inhabitants a renewed beginning (2 Peter 3:5-7). A conviction that there will be apocalyptic dissolution of the elements, a dystopic conclusion to earth's history, does have a direct impact on the way in which we choose to school our children.

I have another relevant recollection, this time when I was leading a workshop for educators (Blomberg, 1986). A principal asserted there was no need to worry about whether our students learn to live justly and promote mercy, as we were all going to heaven anyway. Just concentrate on what needs to be done to succeed in school for the present age, ensuring there is a routine of devotions, chapel services, Bible study, praise singing, and so on, preparing for a celestial age to come. But what do students need to learn if they are to "succeed" on the New Earth? Certainly, much more than *spiritual practices*, narrowly construed, however, though all of life is *spiritual*.

**My pilgrimage**

I have been deeply engaged in Christian schooling since my conversion at a Billy Graham Crusade, at the time of the present conference just a few days less than fifty years ago. My sense of this was quite constrained then, oriented to what we might instead term Church education. My vision was broadened at one point, though not because of the theological college where I was studying. It was a providential conversation with a student at morning tea that did much to put me in touch with an integral, comprehensive vision of Christ's sovereign rule over all things. This echoes Abraham Kuyper, of course, and more deeply, Paul writing to the Colossians:

> *He is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all thing were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.* (Colossians 1:15-20)

I have long advocated a "problem-posing pedagogy", inspired by Paulo Freire but soon grounded in the biblical teaching of creation and antithesis. The Creation mandate affirms the responsibility of God's image-bearers to tend and care for all that God created in law-ordered splendour, not merely the "natural world" but the social and relational developments since the beginning. I think of marriage and family, the church, state and other institutions, including schools. We are called to unfold creation culturally, in ways glorifying the Lord. Human creativity involves imagining what *could* be, posing problems to discern and actualise what *should* be, serving God's purposes. What humans are *able* to do is often contrary to God's purposes, due to the radical corruption wrought by the Fall and our sinful dedication to idols.

The gospel is rooted in the historical experience of the People of Israel (and ultimately, Jesus' historicity), called by God to be a blessing to the world. This experience plays out in time and space, unfolding organically, growth and death entwined. Everything has a context, is situated here or there. This is what I intend by "concrete experience", not restricted to the

physical and sensory but embracing experience in its complex richness. Though mathematics may seem separated from the "messiness" of everyday experience, it too has a history: Hindus invented zero, Arabs devised algebra. Formulae and algorithms have been revered as eternal since the time of Plato, existing in a realm beyond time and space: the "truth" is the same everywhere – which in fact means nowhere. Theoretical generalisations ignore specific instances and are powerless to predict let alone determine concrete actions. No wonder students complain about the irrelevance of much to which they are subjected by school "subjects" – in higher education also.

Our conference theme is oriented to professional *practice*; the strand in which we meet points to the need for *innovations*. Thus, my question is, "What criteria should we employ to judge which teaching and learning strategies best aid students not only to know what *is* but what *ought* to be, so they may *act* in faithfulness to God's purposes?" Abstract intellection is insufficient: there must be active engagement with what is truly of value. This is captured in Nicholas Maxwell's (1984) phrase describing wisdom: the *realisation of value*. Realisation has two meanings, implying both discerning and actualising. Biblically speaking, this is hearing and doing the word of God. What is properly of value will bring *shalom*, the dynamic interconnectedness of all things, when "Mercy and truth have met each other: justice and peace have kissed" (Psalm 85:10). This is the Kingdom of God come.

Wisdom, the maturing of understanding in Christ, is our goal. It is always historically situated, requiring more than knowing *that* or knowing *how*. "Knowing *when*" is a "third way" (Blomberg, 1998), for practice depends on judgments concerning what is right to do here and now. It is acting concretely, resolving a complex, problematic situation just enough to move forward – without perfect knowledge, but in faith – "no longer halting between two opinions", as the prophet Elijah warned Israel (1 Kings 18:21). Psychologists talk of "situated cognition", but we need a conception of "thinking" that includes whole-body, sensory, emotional, lingual, aesthetic, ethical and confessional modes of humanness, among others.

**Mount Evelyn Christian School**

I started my research into Christian schooling in earnest with my undergraduate honours thesis. This outlined a "Reformed Christian Philosophy of Education", offering criteria to evaluate the initiating topic, Francis Schaeffer's educational program at *L'Abri*. The following

year, I commenced doctoral studies in the same vein. Providentially, once more, I met a teacher from Mount Evelyn Christian School (MECS), who invited me to visit, which I did regularly. This immersion in the life of a new Christian school enabled me to observe and engage with the concrete practice of education. MECS had shaped its curriculum around "chunks" of creation: at the core of the curriculum was Creational Studies. This approach was influenced by the work of the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) in Toronto, particularly *Joy in Learning* (De Graaff & Olthuis, 1973). It was an "integrated" curriculum. The difficulty I saw with a thematic, integrated curriculum was that school subjects remained the building blocks. It was taken for granted that real knowledge was what was practised in universities, school subjects being diluted forms of largely theoretical academic disciplines. There was a deep-seated understanding at CDC and MECS that the fragmented curriculum needed to be repaired – renovated would be closer to the mark. New wineskins were necessary.

When the teacher I mentioned who was influential in shaping Creational Studies moved to Donvale Christian School, he coined the term "Integral Studies". This is one influence on my choice of "integral curriculum" to denote how schools should be organised. "The selection and organisation of experience for educational purposes" is a common definition of curriculum, very much about how time and space are organised: our concrete experience. Was schooling to be segmented into periods, blocks, integrated days, terms, semesters and timetabled classrooms – not to forget out-of-classroom experiences? Was learning to be divided between subjects, integrated in themes, or framed around expansive projects. How may we conceive of schools not as "teaching fortresses" but "learning headquarters"? Will schools be hosts to rich and complex contexts for learning, or pre-packaged courses that some teachers will repeat over a span of twenty years?

The curriculum can seem eternal, immutable, delivered from the mountaintops, not dredged exploratively from the messy but fertile swamps in which we daily live. It is in this messiness that we encounter not just academic puzzles to test understanding of what we have and have not learnt, but real-world problems that impact the way we act and live.

## Institute for Christian Education

My move to MECS as a high school teacher overlapped with developing for a teacher education program at the Institute for Christian Education, where we proposed a Graduate

Diploma of Curriculum Studies. We did not regard curriculum as merely subject-*matter*, but necessarily integrated with subject-*manner*. Transforming knowledge pedagogically means merging what is more conventionally known as curriculum with an emphasis on instruction that is frequently separate from it. A "problem-posing pedagogy" is thus not limited to instructional concerns, but pervades curriculum. We may distinguish between the two, but should not separate them.

In a program of two years part-time accommodating professional teachers, we decided to make two innovative curricula the focus. The first and most controversial by far, was *Man: A Course of Studies* (MACOS). It was banned in many southern US states, and also in the Australian state of Queensland, because of its humanistic and specifically evolutionistic stance. We were added to a list of unacceptable school programs by a Christian watchdog group, as they assumed we were teaching MACOS as is, rather than engaging with it critically, though also hospitably. It required testing all things, holding fast to what is good and rejecting what is not (1Thessalonians 5:21). Our firm conviction was that God's grace is at work for all. Our focus was on "religio-criticism", helping students (and ourselves as instructors) dig down to the spiritual roots of educational practices. Absent this conviction, we would ban Darwin and D. H. Lawrence, as many Christian schools have certainly done. MACOS was an experiential, holistic curriculum, relying on concrete experience through sophisticated films and age-appropriate research projects. It commenced with the life cycle of salmon, followed by a study of herring gulls, then the behaviour of baboon troops. The largest segment focused on the Netsilik Inuit. It was an interdisciplinary approach, framed around three questions: "What does it mean to be human? How did we get this way? How can we, become more so?" MACOS focused on process rather than product, inviting children to ask questions, engage in discussion and argumentation, and seek to form conclusions based on evidence (Bruner, 1966).

In the second year, we focused on a Christian curriculum developed in the 70s in Canada: *Man: A Study in Hope* took a multi-dimensional perspective, influenced by Dooyeweerd's framework of modal aspects. One outcome towards the conclusion of the program was an Aboriginal Studies curriculum, exploring the lives of the Pintupi, one of the last Australian tribes to come into contact with Europeans.

**Two parables to orient Christian schooling**

Of all the parables, that of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) is the one to which Christian educators most frequently appeal, to justify the laudable aim of helping students develop their gifts. But the *talents* are coins the master gives servants to work with, not innate giftedness as we now understand the term. This parable is followed immediately by another, the last before Jesus was crucified, and key to what he commands his disciples to promulgate. We know it as "the Sheep and the Goats" (Matthew 25:31-46). A prime example of wisdom teaching, it says we hear the voice of Jesus in the voices of God's image-bearers, and most pointedly in the voices of the underprivileged and oppressed. We serve Jesus in serving them – the widows, orphans, poor, and aliens, the ubiquitous focus of Israel's calling to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

But there are two ways in which this parable is misunderstood; parables often pose problems, after all. First, the unwise servant is rebuked not because he has little ability, but because he does not use the ability he has to seize the opportunity offered by the one talent he is given. The second point of educational import, shocking as it may be, is that those suffering are the "talents" presented to us. Instead of placing the nurture of individual abilities at the centre, it leads us to ask what our curriculum and pedagogy would look like if the task of bringing healing to a broken world were at the centre and made the restoration of justice, the in-breaking of dynamic shalom, its impetus. Should not our goal be people who live in service of others' flourishing as they serve their Creator-Redeemer? Who can say they love God, whom they cannot see, if they do not love their neighbour, often right in front of them? Is not the whole law summed up in the commandment to do just this? Is not the pursuit of justice – relationships reconciled so all is right among people – a paramount goal of wise living, "doing what is right and just and fair" (Proverbs 1:2b)? Does not this pose existential problems we should be willing and able to address in schools, at all levels?

This is a call to *act*. Christian personalist John Macmurray (1957) argues in his Gifford Lectures that the "I do" precedes the "I think", countering Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. Phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and (specifically with respect to education) Max Van Manen emphasise the importance of uncovering the texture of lived experience. My brief review of biblical anthropology underscores the significance of this orientation to action.

**Talented environments**

In our calling to educate, how do we create talented environments affording students opportunities to develop their abilities? (Well, we might provide a piano and preferably a piano teacher, for example.) How do we construct spaces in which "the community of truth may be practiced" (Palmer, 1998, p. 90)? In what practices do we invite students to engage, in what narratives do we encourage them to live? How do we evoke in them a hunger and thirst for justice, mercy and humble dependence on the Lord to address a suffering world – and also help them be satisfied? This exemplifies a problem-posing pedagogy – and wisdom also, for what could be wiser than discerning suffering and acting to heal those who suffer?

Life is lived in complex, concrete contexts, not disciplinary compartments at one remove from the fullness of everyday life. Learning generally, and scholarship in particular, should be accountable to life lived. The challenge is to be in touch with life, including its suffering. As the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats indicates, suffering is at the heart of the gospel – ultimately, Jesus' suffering for us, that we might be redeemed from suffering. This means being in the world, in its agonies. It means "completing what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ" (Colossians 1:24), by doing "even greater things" than Jesus has done, if we ask God in faithfulness to his purposes "so that the Father, may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:12-13). Thus will the glory of the Lord be over all the earth.


**A providential meeting**

In the midst of writing this paper, I had an intriguing conversation with a teacher who oversees a high school Christian Studies program. He explained his and his students' involvement in providing meals for homeless people. This had built to four nights a week. Recently, one of his former students offered to organise a Friday night gathering, not yet covered. (As an aside: one cannot long for a cup of water, nor feel the hunger, cold and rain of a naked or homeless person, if not a body.) He shared the story of a man transforming to a woman who regularly shared in the meals. Large and burly, he has huge hands with long, manicured fingernails; he also has breasts, hormonally cultivated. There was some shock on my friend's part, interacting with and then learning to accept a transgendered person. One evening, he asked my friend to pray with him. The guest also prayed, evincing a deep love of Jesus.

My point is not to enter into the rights and wrongs of this person's life, but to offer an example of how one can be a friend of Jesus and of outcasts such as him – to reflect and demonstrate the love and hope we have in Christ, particularly for those who suffer. The practice on these evenings was to close with prayer. As someone rises and starts to pray, there will be loud urging from the floor to be quiet and respectful. At the conclusion, there are shouts of "Amen, Amen!" That this man could find a space in which to pray, modelled during these evenings, opened him and no doubt others to the possibility of talking, and walking, with God.

I have suggested that problem-posing pedagogies have an ontological foundation (Blomberg, 1980b, 1993, 1999). Discerning and actualising these possibilities is the primary sense in which creation poses problems to us, and we pose problems to creation. That we live in a fallen world adds another dimension. Ours is a suffering world; our task is to bring healing where there is brokenness, not merely to observe, describe and to analyse, but to demonstrate mercy. As with the anecdote I reported, many Christian institutions incorporate "service learning". The strategies I describe below can each be adapted to this end, though hopefully with such projects playing a more central role than currently. At the IAPCHE conference in Nicaragua in 2006, I described a number of pedagogies for higher education that break from the conventional mould (Blomberg, 2008); I briefly review these, as my primary goal herein is to propose a perspective, not to present detailed blueprints.

**Problem-based learning**

In "Problem-based Learning" (PBL), the problem is the initiator of learning, not its application. Problems are by no means foreign in schools or university teaching, but they are used to assess or practice what students have studied, typifying the theory into practice paradigm. Such problems are often more like puzzles, not problems in an existential sense. Messy, ill-structured problems, however – the kind we meet daily – generate learning objectives and processes and provide the criteria by which the quality of learning is assessed.

PBL is a ready site for cooperative learning, with students bringing their varied expertise to bear and researching different aspects of the problem, a team approach mirroring the situation in many work environments. Higher education could engender a more collaborative culture, and encourage teachers to employ cooperative learning strategies. They afford a welcome respite from the individualistic, competitive regimes that are common, so antithetical to the centrality of

community expected in the body of Christ. Project based learning is a contemporary iteration of PBL, and has quickly gained prominence in several Christian schools in Ontario and elsewhere; the Buck Institute for Education is an excellent resource.

**Case studies**

Harvard Business School was an innovator in case studies that portray people engaging with real-life problems presenting a dilemma. Faculty and Research Assistants study a company intensively for weeks, and prepare a case that "presents the story exactly as the protagonist saw it, including ambiguous evidence, shifting variables, imperfect knowledge, no obvious right answers, and a ticking clock that impatiently demands action". Classes rarely end with a tidy solution, but foster a deeper appreciation of the complex factors involved, a clearer understanding of how to employ relevant techniques to analyse and evaluate the problem, and further insights into dealing with the uncertainties.

**Immersion programs**

The University of Melbourne's innovative "Course B" Diploma of Education involved substantial experience in and close working relationships with schools. Becoming a teacher is intensely personal: their beliefs about the meaning of their experience are crucial. Good teaching requires not only subject-matter expertise, but pedagogical content-knowledge ("subject-manner"). Faculty needed to see "what happened when these students were teaching" (Dow, 1979, p. 11); students needed to reflect on the nature and teachability of their subjects and learn to ask their own questions (thus, pose their own problems). They spent two days a week in the same school, meeting on Fridays for Curriculum Studies, a problem-centred course, tied closely to Methods courses and students' teaching, "to what different students are looking for because of the particular problems they are experiencing" (Dow, 1979, p. 13). Course B was a variant of what we know as "cooperative education". Personal engagement in the working environment is essential for developing many kinds of understanding. Sadly, this innovation did not long survive and is worth remembering; it helped shape my view of schooling and teacher education in significant ways.

**Collaborative action research: the "Project to Enhance Effective Learning".**

The "Project to Enhance Effective Learning" (Baird & Mitchell, 1993) focused on *learning* rather than teaching. The project is still going strong, with uptake not only in Australia but elsewhere, particularly in Scandinavia. This was a *collaborative* action research project, incorporating cooperation between teachers and academics *as equal partners*; significantly, teachers initiated this.

**Bennington College, Vermont**

Liberal arts curricula are sometimes criticised for being "merely academic" (cf., Meriwether, 2007). President Elizabeth Coleman of Bennington College says, "The trajectories of specialization, an emphasis on technical mastery, neutrality as a condition of intellectual integrity, leave us unable and disinclined to take on the real-world obligations of citizenship." Facing these requires accepting that real-world problems "are much too open-ended, contentious, messy, value-laden, and dependent on capacities radically different from those of a narrowly conceived and technical expertise" (Coleman, 2007, p. 3). Academics are largely averse to tackling such problems. Bennington radically reoriented its curriculum around the Center for the Advancement of Public Action. What stands – literally or metaphorically – at the centres of our campuses? If the choice is between the *disciplines* and *discipleship*, the latter requires a conception more comprehensive than a focus on piety, morality or intellect.

**Institute for Christian Studies (ICS)**

To return briefly to my own practice (now predominantly in distance mode), I remain committed to graduate students engaging with issues arising in professional practice, and this from an explicitly biblical perspective. This is the case for ongoing reflection in regular blog posts, as it is in major assignment(s), exemplifying authentic assessment. My *Ways of Learning* course incorporates an action research project in which *my* students work with one or more of *their* students to improve their learning strategies. My curriculum course encourages students to develop or revise their curricula; in *Leadership: Vision and Mission*, they research their own educational values in relation to those of their colleagues; in *Wisdom and Schooling*, they explore how their practice may be permeated by a Christian worldview, in this context a challenge to the theory dominating practice paradigm.

ICS's Centre for Philosophy, Religion and Social Ethics is committed to community-based, collaborative action research, a significant innovation for a graduate school dedicated for most of its 50 years to interdisciplinary philosophy and theology. The Centre has investigated the understanding of justice in Christian Reformed Churches, the settling of recent immigrants to Canada, and plans to research mental health provisions. Each of these projects is in partnership with non-academic institutions.

**Conclusion**

As I began to write this paper, I realised it was perhaps most important to explore what it means to model Christ in his humanness and thus to understand what it means to be fully human. Affirming the integrality of human experience, as Scripture does, funds a holistic perspective on problem-posing and its role in nurturing wisdom, quite contrary to the Platonic heritage that values theoretical understanding above all. As just one, very particular kind of thinking, theorising is focused on aspects abstracted from the fullness of experience; this is important indeed, but leads readily to reductionism and its distortions.

Problem-posing, addressing real-life concerns requires immersion in complex everyday contexts. It is not theoretical formulations, but discerning the most significant problems we face and how properly to address and actively resolve these that constitutes wisdom. Tertiary educators would do well to evaluate their practices with respect to the primacy of experiential knowing and a biblical wisdom perspective, if they are not already doing so. In turn, this will impact the practices of schools at other levels also, given the influence of universities.

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