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Exploring effective pedagogy

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Why not add Christian Education?

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EDITOR
Graeme Perry
email: TEACH.editor@avondale.edu.au

Mountain View Adventist College (MVAC) early learners on the mat. Photo: MVAC image files.

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Ministry Of Teaching

EDITORIAL

Graeme Perry

Looking into their eyes as you grasp your student's attention have your thoughts drifted to imagine what threatens that attention span? Understanding what is trending in your students' minds (2023 cf. 2022) is an essential component of preparation for effective teaching. In the Australian context, the ranking of the most important issues for students is shifting. The importance of the environment is decreasing (44% cf. 51% in 2022), financial and economic issues increasing (31%, cf. 22%), while equity and discrimination (31%, cf. 36%) and mental health (30% cf. 34%) are of slightly less concern (Mission Australia, 2023, p. 5), responses to the inflationary monetary period and lower covid anxieties. At a personal level, the biggest challenges related to school (49% - workload, academic pressure, poor teacher relationships and difficulty learning), mental health (24% - stress, anxiety, depression, diagnosed disorders or self-harm), and relationships (21% - with family, friends and significant others over lack of support, abuse or due to death) (p. 6). Particularly disturbing however is that "1 in 3 young people said nothing more could help, or they were unsure what could help with their challenges, indicating there is an opportunity to improve awareness of supports available to them" (p. 6). Fortunately, this report includes informed, commended, suggestions to support educators in addressing some of these issues impacting wellbeing and consequently learning.

In seeking student attention and creating the learning context and content for class did you involve AI processes? The last editorial noted differences in the approach of systems to AI involvement in schooling. The recent release of the Australian Framework for Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Schools by the National AI in Schools Taskforce (NAIIST, 2023) addresses three support goals: Education outcomes, ethical practices and both equity and inclusion. It enunciates 6 interconnected principles within: Learning and Teaching, Human and Social Wellbeing, Transparency, Fairness, Accountability and Privacy Security and Safety and develops 25 guiding statements across them (p. 4). Demands for use (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2023), permission to use (Cassidy, 2023), policies to guide use (NAIIST, 2023), do not readily help a teacher envision the application of AI within their own classroom. Time author Olivia Waxman (2024) provides an eight-minute read of applications by 'early adopters' in the US but also measured perspectives from 'doubters'. Educational Services Australia (2023) provides an exhaustive global context within which local developments are emerging and some local resourcing, but little practical pedagogical help. This pedagogical gap is also missing from online sources but provides a creative opportunity for educators. Henebery (2024) offers recent observations of teachers, including that "85% said it [AI] will never replace educators themselves" (para. 5). This technological innovation will be best addressed by distributed leadership characterised by "the 6Es: Engage, Enable, Enact, Encourage, Evaluate and Emergent" (Harvey & Jones, 2023) supporting teachers in their roles.

Do you (still) aspire to being a phenomenal teacher? In a research presentation for optimising the educational outcomes for students from Pacific Islander, Maori heritages and potentially First Nations students, researchers identified ten habits of phenomenal educators (Chu-Fuluifaga & Ikiua-Pasi, 2021). Of these ten, culturally sensitive relationships that support student wellbeing was supported as the take-out message, one I judge applies to teachers at earlier levels of education even more importantly. This issue of TEACH invites you to prioritise appropriate relationship-building with individuals to support each student's wellbeing, enhancing learning capability. Be phenomenal. TEACH

> *the ranking of the most important issues for students is shifting*

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[Photography: Glenys Perry]

TEACH[R]

Talk less and Yarn more: Seeking student voice to explore effective pedagogy in a Christian environment.

Daniela Rodica Ana-Maria Brown
Bethlehem Tertiary Institute, Tauranga, North New Zealand
d.brown@bti.ac.nz

Keywords: Empowerment, Christian teaching, disempowerment, Photoyarn, relationships, visual research methods (VRM), yarning.

Abstract

This research explores how students within a Christian school experience pedagogy and how they perceive this experience to influence them, in terms of empowerment or dis-empowerment. Photoyarn (Rogers, 2017) was the chosen methodology of this research, the motivation for the choice being drawn from the researchers own experience of marginalising research methods. This Arts based Indigenous method demonstrated the power meandering conversations (yarning) and visual listening can bring to students whose voices are not typically heard. Using a photo as a metaphor, the students were invited to respond to two prompts: 1) What is happening when you were empowered by your teachers to flourish? and 2) What is happening when you feel disempowered by your teachers? The findings from the yarns discovered an interesting relationship between disempowerment and empowerment. Flourishment was dependent on the degree to which the teacher embodied their faith through connection, relational pedagogies, and awareness of the environment. This article invites Indigenous Tertiary Education (ITE) students and the wider Christian education community to reconcile the relationship between their espoused and embodied faith. The determining factor to the success of such, is the voice of students. Through interrogating the connection between their inner worlds and outer performance, self-aware teachers are able use pedagogy as an expression of their faithful call to administer Gods kingdom here on earth.

> *how engaged are teachers in exploring the links between their teachers' purpose and pedagogy as experienced by their students*

Introduction

On the analysis of more than 9000 peer-reviewed journal articles, Smith (2018) concludes that very little research exists which explores the impact of a Christian teacher's faith on their chosen pedagogies. His research showed that teachers were more likely to "tell" components of the biblical story for example: love your neighbour, be hospitable, act justly, love mercy, walk humbly; but seldom consider how their pedagogy might serve their educational vision. Alongside this, less than 4.8% of the 9000 peer reviewed journal articles from 1970-2017 identified "the pedagogical process or the way students experience and interpret learning" (Smith, 2018, p. 3). Smith (2018) laments that the "declarations of faith strike up a stirring tune, but it is the wild dogs of the day to day that determine our dance steps" (p. 1). More often than not, teachers are "building a wall between inner truth and outer performance" (Palmer, 1998, p. 17).

This article considers the purpose of Christian education and the effectiveness of prevailing pedagogies (Cox, 1980; Freire, 1992; Watkins, 2008) and suggests that the quality of teaching and learning within Christian education is determined by how engaged teachers are in exploring the links between their teachers' purpose and pedagogy as experienced by their students (Belcher, 2006; Duncan & Te One, 2014; Grove, 1990; Norsworthy, 2007; Postman, 1997).

Research project purpose and design

Research purpose:

This research project explores how students within a Christian school experience pedagogy and how they perceive this experience to influence them, in terms of empowerment or dis-empowerment.

The two prompts to which participants responded were:

1. What is happening when you were empowered by your teachers to flourish?
2. What is happening when you feel disempowered by your teachers?

Research design

The chosen research design drew in part from my story as an adoptee from a Romanian orphanage

and the resulting suppression of my voice in published media through assuming my voice and experience of international adoption. Wolterstorff (2002) describes how the marginalized rarely have their voices heard and the injustice they experience is often enforced on them by those in authority. In choosing my methodology, I considered an approach that would position my participants not as objects of knowledge but rather as "provocateurs, as lines of flight that take us elsewhere" (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 620). This drew me to consider such qualitative methodologies that communicated the everyday lived experiences and voice of those previously silenced (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006; St. Pierre, 2014; Walford, 2001; Wang, 1999).

Comprehension of social and psychological phenomena can be accessed through Visual Research Methodologies (VRM) as the richness of the reflection and evaluation processes seek to make implicit knowledge accessible (Clark, 2010; Reavey, 2011). Visual Research Methodology includes the use of visual artefacts combined with communication where participants share insights from their experiences and context with the researcher in an interview or dialogue (Emmison et al., 2012; Harper, 2002; Rose, 2016). Social research values Visual Research Methodologies as they elicit deep and interesting talk about subjects otherwise too complex to explore (Birkeland, 2013; Guillemin & Drew, 2010; Harper, 2002; Pink, 2012; Rose, 2007; 2016). Clark (2010) describes this dialogue as "visual listening" (p. 165) where participants are invited to share their experiences with reference to metaphors within images (Oliver et al., 2007; Patton et al., 2011; Rose, 2016).

Research method

A recent method of incorporating visual listening into the research design is Photoyarn. Rogers (2017) developed Photoyarn—an arts-based Indigenous method—as a modification of Photo Voice or Photo Elicitation (Wang, 1999). Instead of the terminology of dialogues or discussions to describe the process of interpreting the photos, it honours indigenous values and principles by using yarning circles as part of the data collection process. Described as a "fluid ongoing process, a moving dialogue interspersed with interjections, interpretations, and additions" (Geia et al., 2013, p. 6) yarning circles are an important part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Finding a research paradigm that invited the participants to weave their stories and experiences within their responses led me to choose the methodology, Photoyarn.

Research process

This Photoyarn research project had three phases. The planned data collection process took place over five weeks with data gathered from individuals and groups.

Phase one

After the participants accepted the invitation to join the research, a Participant Information Sheet and a written Consent Form were emailed to them. After the participants signed and returned the written consent via email; they met together at a nominated space and time selected for the initial kōrero (discussion). During this kōrero, the two prompts were shared: "What is happening when you were empowered by your teachers to flourish?" and "What is happening when you feel disempowered by your teachers?". A two-week time frame was given to participants to create their visual artifacts as a response to the prompts. An explanation of the ethical considerations took place, noting that any photos taken were not to include students and teachers and wouldn't be published by participants to any social media platform. The Consent Form indicated the yarns would be audio recorded and subsequentially transcribed with opportunity for the transcripts to be sighted and signed by participants during phase three of the project. The option was given for participants to have another person present during their yarn. During this initial kōrero, time was given for those who had questions to ask them. The school counsellor was present during Phase One to ensure that there were no concerns about influence/direction or coercion.

> *VRM includes the use of visual artefacts combined with … participants share[d] insights … in an interview or dialogue*

Phase two

The second phase consisted of one-on-one yarns where each participant responded to the two prompt questions: "What is happening when you were empowered by your teachers to flourish?" and "What is happening when you feel disempowered by your teachers?" using their visual artefacts. Some participants chose to take photos themselves, while others curated photos from the internet- specifically typing into a search engine the metaphor they wanted to encapsulate. Some participants chose to use one photo to represent their experience while others chose multiple images. Each participant was invited to choose a safe environment in which these yarns would occur. Attention to small details enabled an inclusive, relaxed, and comfortable environment such as: entering the room after the participant so they could sit in a place of their choice and, when the audio had begun recording, the phone was placed face down with no other distractions present. This phase did not have a time limit, allowing time for each

participant to yarn in a relaxed and comfortable environment. This enacted Rogers' (2017) intention for the yarns in this methodology to meander as the participants tell their stories (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). It is important to note that the images as metaphor are not the data, but rather what it elicited through yarning is the gold from which findings were drawn (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

Phase three

The final phase was a group yarn with all participants over kai (food). This was a space in which all participants were able to contribute and reflect on their experiences together. Initial themes from analysis of yarns were revealed as participants shared commonalities and made connections. As noted in the Participant Information Sheet, the transcripts from the individual yarns were provided to the participants to read and sign after verifying that they were a true and accurate representation of the Phase Two yarns. The participants yarned about the experience of participating in this research, leading to further thematic connections and mutual insights. A karakia (prayer) concluded this hui (group yarn).

> *how they 'diagnose their students' condition determines the nature of their remedy'*

Findings and implications for teachers

This data analysis of the responses gained from the two prompts in the study's three phases was completed through open coding—a process that organised the data. Thematic analysis communicated patterns that revealed when factors contributing to empowerment were missing; they experienced disempowerment (Table 1).

The final part of this article will explore how disempowerment (Figure 1), or empowerment (Figure 2) is directly dependent on the degree to which the teacher embodied their faith through firstly recognizing students' need for relationship, secondly choosing relational pedagogies and finally sensitively implementing strategies within an awareness of the whole classroom environment.

Embodying faith through: Recognizing students' need for relationship

Teachers should shape their teaching and learning decisions around the perception they hold of their students for how they "diagnose their students' condition determines the nature of their remedy" (Palmer, 1998, p. 47; see also: Badley & Van Brummelen, 2012). Embodying a biblical worldview,

Table 1: Themes drawn from yarns

	The participants experienced DISEMPOWERMENT when:	**The participants experienced EMPOWERMENT when:**
A. Perceptions of teachers embodying their faith	*Teachers didn't ignite passion for learning:* • Teachers pulled on the "authority of the role" rather than offering what the 21st Century teenager needs • Teachers didn't ignite a passion for learning when stating "Here's the work, go do it" • Not matching how teachers taught with what students needed, including - Not considering student learning styles - Not revisiting material so students understand it	*Teachers modelled passion and enthusiasm for learning:* • The way the teacher positioned themselves in relation to the subject influenced the student's experience.
B. Knowing the students as real people	*Teachers viewed them all as the same rather than as individual people:* • Teachers did not know what was going on in the life of students, • Students viewed as all the same, rather than individuals	*Teachers recognised them as real people:* • Teachers knew the students, • Talked to students about life outside of school
C. Awareness of the environment.	*Teachers had no connection with the environment:* • Teachers didn't understand the pressure on students if the space was uncomfortable	*Teachers had a connection with the environment:* • Connected with students not just as school students but rather within their wholistic context • Ensured students felt comfortable in the classroom

teachers can acknowledge that each student is "a receptacle of the divine, a place where the life of God flows" (Willard, 1998, p. 14). This diagnosis recognises each student's capacity for relationship and promotes empowerment within the classroom environment. One participant shared:

> *I work better if teachers are friendlier and have a connection with the students and you can talk about other stuff, not just work. For example - things that go on at home and that engages me a bit better in class.* Respondent 2

Another participant noted:

> *I definitely think that a good teacher that has a good relationship with students [can] have a bit of banter and a yarn about other things [it] help[s] us do well in that kind of environment.* Respondent 5

Being in relationship with the students can also interrupt the escalation of relational breakdowns within the classroom. A participant described the vulnerability of remaining in the classroom with a teacher with whom they had a negative altercation:

> *It's hard to ask for help when you are not exactly*

Figure 1: The disempowering experience

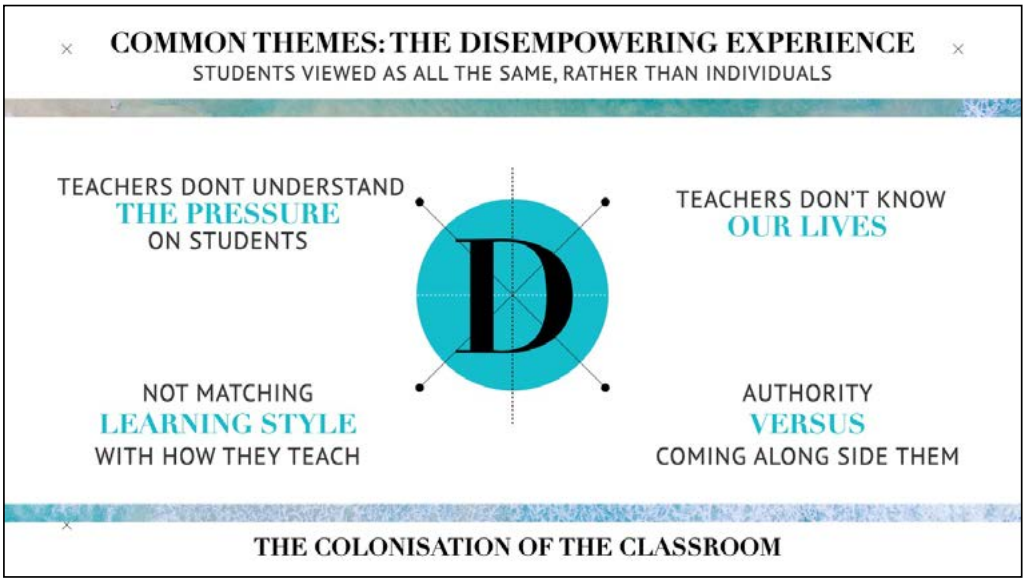
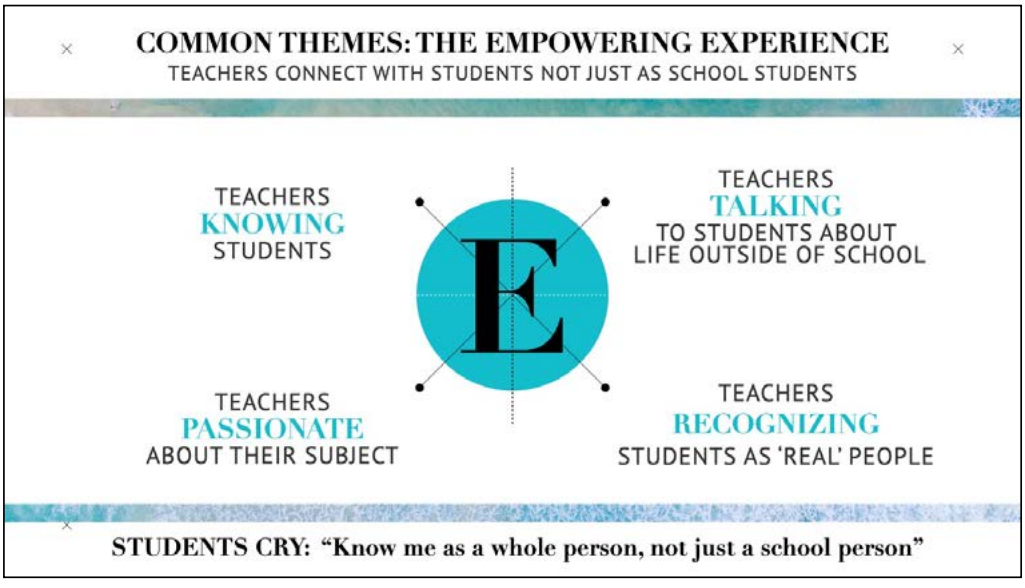


Figure 2: The empowering experience



> *teachers can acknowledge … each student is 'a receptacle of the divine, a place where the life of God flows'*

> *on the right terms with somebody. Like you don't want to ask for help after you have just been a di*k to the teacher. I guess so I don't want to go ask for help because I don't really like them cause of past experiences. I don't do much work because we don't work well together. We haven't gelled so it's awkward.* Respondent 6

When the student's relationship with the teacher was interrupted, the participant believed that no reconciliation or restoration of the relationship could occur, thus effecting his sense of achievement within that subject.

Literature suggests that teachers' interactions should be infused with promotion of social wellbeing and mutually respectful interpersonal interactions (Norsworthy, 2006; Paris, 2016; Smith, 2018).

Embodying faith through: Seeing students as real people

Recognizing students' need for a relationship informs teachers who choose relational pedagogies and so meet the inner yearning of students to approach meaning-making with awe and wonder (Gibbs, 2006; Gilbert, 2005; Kessler, 2000). Such an approach bridges the gap between the students' lives outside school and the classroom. It has the capacity to equip students "to come at life venturesome, imaginative and questioning" (Bolstad & Gilbert, 2008, p. 106). Positioning the curriculum as credit accumulation rather than enthusiasm and passion for learning resulted in the participants feeling like they were not individuals with their own needs. By the participant's testimony when they are treated with a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, they acknowledge that sometimes their behaviour isn't positive—"*I feel very suppressed, and then I just get angry*". Respondent 3

> *It's hard to ask for help … Like you don't want to ask for help after you have just been a di*k to the teacher.*

Engaging with pedagogies that overlook the diverse gifting's of students suppresses the learning environment leading to disempowerment (Bamber & Moore, 2017; Palmer, 1998). Teachers can alleviate this tension through building communities within their classrooms that reject hostility and instead operate from shalom (Benson, 2018; Spears & Loomis, 2009; Wolterstorff, 2002). Shalom is experienced as universal flourishing and a sense of peace in all relationships between 'God, self, fellows and nature' (Plantinga, 2002; Wolterstorff, 2002). When pedagogies are based on human flourishing, God's Kingdom intention of a peaceful and just society is honoured (Smith & Smith 2011). Furthermore, Benson (2018) extends 'flourishment' beyond peace and justice, to "incorporate delight into one's relationships" (p. 23). One participant's perception, if a teacher is relational, was they felt safe in that environment without fear of conflict:

> *I definitely think that a good teacher that has a good relationship with students has a bit of banter and a yarn about other things help(s) us do well in that kind of environment…if you get off on the right foot and have the right environment, you're not going to be conflicting with the teacher around stuff like that…In those classes, those teachers are not off-putting or putting you down constantly, they are saying things like "I know you can do it" - even though you don't want too. Just believing in me, even when I don't believe in myself.* Respondent 1

Rapport has a huge bearing on participants' sense of empowerment and flourishing. Participants referred to the "old school" pedagogy which did not meet their needs for relationships, however shared that empowerment occurs when:

> *Teachers actually connect or know us on a level as a person rather than just a group of students they have to teach … It's coming back to the personal connection.* Respondent 3

Embodying faith through: Sensitivity to the classroom environment

There is strategic intent to a teacher's practice when they prophetically imagine a space where they welcome the students as guests and consider themselves as hosts (Friere, 1970; Smith & Smith, 2011). Considering this role as host, teachers shape their pedagogy to extend beyond words and become intentional in creating a welcoming 'home' with their actions and dispositions (McLaren, 1995; Smith, 2018). This hospitality addresses the paradox between the teacher and student's experiences within the classroom through creating an intentional space that promotes equality and mutuality (Chinn, 2014; Smith & Smith, 2011; Palmer, 1998). Some authors suggest that viewing education as a space for flourishing invites teachers to consider how their classrooms can be crafted into an environment that is safe for students and teachers to enter each other's life worlds (Norsworthy, 2006; Palmer, 1998; Plantinga, 2002; Smith, 2018). One participant described one environment where they felt safe:

> *We can all just be ourselves. It's a safe place where I don't have to put up a wall. I feel calm and It's beautiful.* Respondent 3

Another participant described their ideal physical environment to enable best learning:

> *It is light and airy, not stale or dark. Having music playing is cool—lightens the mood and isn't so serious. If we are doing work, you want to be relaxed not uptight or not feeling comfortable where you are.* Respondent 6

When the participants felt safe, they felt humanized with potential to contribute and be vulnerable enough to ask questions (Cameron & Swezy, 2015; Cooling et al., 2016).

Participants identified that their flourishing was disrupted by the teacher's lack of awareness of the classroom dynamics which resulted in feelings of suppression.

> *Some teachers are set in their ways and don't move, they want us to be the same…this is all that is acceptable… as soon as I give my little bit of a flower, its unacceptable and it doesn't fit in. They say, "be a flower" but "be THIS flower!".*

This participant described their potential as:

> *A little baby flower not even open yet… that is what we are capable of, but they (teachers) are not giving us the time to open up… they are stealing it off the tree already… they just leaving us as branches because they want branches they don't want flowers … all of us has potential, we want to blossom, but any time we blossom somewhere else, that doesn't fit in—the teacher wants to rip it off.* Respondent 4

The participants described their experience of how teachers expected them to fit into a pre-crafted classroom and didn't expect the participants to flourish in their own unique way. This notion speaks to Friere's (1970) critique of the banking approach to education. He describes 'banking' as a form of oppression where teachers view students as containers simply to receive and retain information, valuing memorization rather than "knowledge emerged through invention and reinvention" (Freire, 1970, p. 72).

Discussion

Returning to Smith's (2018) findings, teachers were more likely to "tell" the biblical story, but seldom consider how their pedagogy might serve their educational vision. When this link is not explicit, "it would be hard to claim how much of teaching is Christian" (Smith, 2018, p. 7). This tension disrupts and inhibits a teacher's ability to infuse their teaching and learning with Christian principles (Smith, 2018). The key here is to consider how the inner beliefs and the agency of a teacher's purpose is communicated to students in the classroom because, according to participants in this research; the levels of disempowerment they feel tell a different story.

Teachers with a humble, reflective, self-aware stance can consider their practice and the impact their faith has on their pedagogies (Gibbs, 2006; Palmer, 1998; Smith, 2018; Smith & Smith, 2011). One effective way to survey self is to invite student experience, using their voice to consider if professional practice has been conscripted into something not tangibly biblical. In doing this, teachers are more able to resist the institutional habitus that has informed current practice and shaped education today (Bourdieu, 1990; Tarabini et al., 2017). Discussing the conceptions and misconceptions felt between inner truth and outer performance "intentionally and contextually, puts this knowledge to work" (Beane, 1995, p. 617; See also: Moss 2013; Smith, 2018; Smith & Smith, 2011). Smith (2018) suggests one reason that such professional dialogues have been neglected is because "there is no simple formula for teaching Christianly" (p. 10). However, without considering the impact that pedagogy has on students, Christian education would be as Postman (1997) describes a "mirror of social belief, collecting, amputating and distributing its narratives" (p. 59).

Recommendation: Teachers need to talk less and yarn more

To illustrate the impact of drawing meaning from students' experience, one participant in this study described the process of this project:

> *It has changed my perspective- thinking that we go into this much detail and seeing how other students think- maybe how we could all work together with other students and teachers and have more conversations?* Respondent 1

This student sat with their school dean and had an open dialogue about their different perceptions of what occurs in the classroom:

> *I actually had a big heart to heart with a dean on this very conversation. Just about student's vs teacher's perspectives, it was on my mind from doing this. It was so good because I understood where they were coming from, it gave me much more understanding.* Respondent 1

By engaging with moving ongoing dialogues "interspersed with interjections, interpretations, and additions" (Geia et al., 2013, p. 6), teachers can shape their practice by the beliefs they profess. Having these yarns opens the lens through which they perceive embodiment of their faith in the classroom (Blecher, 2006; Postman, 1997). Further, through teaching from the most truthful part of themselves, these teachers can bravely embody to their students the capacity to "discover and explore and inhabit those places in the living of their own lives" (Palmer, 1998, p. 183).

Having these yarns opens the lens through which they [teachers] perceive embodiment of their faith in the classroom

this article reveals the deep impact pedagogical decisions have on students and their desire to be seen and treated as relational people.

Conclusion

Smith (2018) notes with concern that scholarship focused on Christian education typically does not invite student voice into the research design. Shaped by Roger's (2017) methodology Photoyarn, this article reveals the deep impact pedagogical decisions have on students and their desire to be seen and treated as relational people. The revelations from analysis regarding disempowerment and empowerment as experienced by students can be understood as unearthing the 'diamonds' within the soil of the participants' experience. The findings inform powerful conclusions for teachers seeking to embody their faith in their practice. Considering the gap between the espoused and the experienced, teachers need to be committed to finding pedagogies that enable the Christian story to be embodied. The crippling inactivity that can sometimes shape a teacher's practice can be alleviated when they consider that they are not alone in what might seem a lofty pursuit. God's "divine spirit is always blowing, it is the sails of human listening that may or may not be raised" (Moran, 1997, p. 13). TEACH

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Author information

Daniela Rodica Ana-Maria Brown is a programme lead and educator in the Bethlehem Tertiary Institute Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Secondary) Programme. Her research interests include: Non-Indigenous positioning in relation to de-colonising/re-indigenising research, visual methodologies and creating safe spaces for storytelling.

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TEACH[R]

Is Positive Education an appropriate framework for student wellbeing in Anglican and other Christian schools: A review of the literature

Nigel Grant
St Paul's School, Bald Hills, Queensland
grantn58@gmail.com

Keywords: Holistic; flourishing; wellbeing; positive education

Abstract

This literature review investigated potential problems associated with the uncritical implementation of a Positive Education approach to student wellbeing in the context of Anglican (or other Christian) schools. Six themes were considered in turn, drawing on a wide range of literature from the fields of education, philosophy, psychology, sociology and theology. These themes are as follows – 1. Distinctives of Anglican education in Australia; 2. Holistic education and the good life; 3. Understanding student wellbeing and flourishing; 4. The need for student wellbeing programs in schools; 5. Student wellbeing, Positive Psychology and Positive Education; 6. Is Positive Education compatible with a Christian worldview.

The paper concludes that Positive Education programs, including PERMA and the VIA Character Strengths, ought to be critically considered and carefully adapted before implementation in Anglican or other Christian schools.

There is a great need for Anglican schools to be committed to transformational, counter-cultural mission, with the biblical meta-narrative deeply embedded

Introduction and overview

The scope of this literature review encompasses issues of ultimate importance for Anglican (as well as other, faith-based) schools: What is the purpose of education? What do young people most need from schools, to be as thoroughly prepared as possible for an uncertain future? Why should churches involve themselves in schooling? Six themes were developed from the topic and, in this review, the literature relating to each of these themes is considered in turn.

1. Distinctives of Anglican Education in Australia

First and foremost, an Anglican education is founded on a biblical worldview, a belief that the Bible, as the inspired word of God, is the ultimate source of wisdom for living (Cairney et al., 2011). This worldview offers both a rationale for and an explanation of the approach taken by Anglican schools. Anglican schools are seen by the church as a means of presenting the gospel to their students, many of whom come from unchurched families (Cairney, et al., 2011). Australian society in the twenty-first century could be described as more pagan than Christian, despite our Judeo-Christian heritage, and as Newbigin (1993) said in describing England in the 1970s, "the development of a truly missionary encounter with this very tough form of paganism is the greatest intellectual and practical task facing the church" (p. 236). Consequently, there is a great need for Anglican schools to be committed to transformational, counter-cultural mission, with the biblical meta-narrative deeply embedded in the curriculum (Cowling, 2009).

Regrettably, Anglican schools, in practice, fall short of consistently fulfilling their own gospel-centric mottos and mission statements (Cowling, 2009). Perhaps the greatest challenge for leaders of Anglican schools is to avoid fostering a form of dualism, in which "the *sacred* and the *secular*" run on parallel but separate lines through the life of the school (Cowling, 2009, p. 5). It has been noted that many Anglican schools feature religious education, chapel, and service-learning (each of which may very well contribute to faith formation), but these elements remain "tangential" (Smith, et al., 2021) or "peripheral" (Cowling, 2009) to the main business of schooling.

This tendency to dualism and the failure to consistently fulfill the missional objectives of Anglican schooling can, in part, be understood

theologically. As sinners, we do not love God with our whole hearts. Consequently, we do not enjoy the "wholeness, flourishing and abundant life" that God intended for us to enjoy in fellowship with him (Plantinga, 1995, p. 10). In the context of our vocations, Garber (2020) suggested that we are "disposed to dualism", and that "we choose incoherence rather than coherence, a fragmented worldview over a seamless way of life" (p. 64).

Despite this predisposition to incoherence, teachers and other staff in Anglican schools are committed to the development of the whole child. Thus, Anglican schools typically emphasise not only academic achievement, but also sporting and cultural activities, pastoral care, service and leadership opportunities, Religion and Values Education, and regular Chapel services (Cairney, et al., 2011). Of course, the same could be said of all Christian schools, not just Anglican schools. Further, this is as it should be: Smith (2016) claims, "We need to shift the emphasis of education from dissemination of information to holistic formation" (p. 164). Or, more broadly, "Religious communities naturally talk about the whole person, the heart and soul, as much as the body and mind" (Brooks, 2019, p, 259).

The need for wellbeing programs in schools has been clearly demonstrated within the literature. This need represents an opportunity for Christian schools (in a similar way to the opportunities facing the church) in a world that is dealing with change at an unprecedented rate and scale (Bolsinger, 2015). Such "uncharted territory", Bolsinger suggested, offers opportunities to "become even more of a witness for the future of the world" (p. 202). Similarly, Chalke (2006) proposed that "Intelligent Church" (and, I would suggest, intelligent Christian schools) should be offering wider society an "intelligent response (that is) … wise, relevant and authentic", and this response should "promote holistic, physical, social and spiritual wellbeing" (pp. 16, 27). Anglican schools are well-placed to apply their missional purpose to the needs of this current generation of students.

2. Holistic education and the "good life"

In its simplest form, holistic education is defined as "concerned with educating the whole person – body, mind and soul – to develop his or her fullest potential" (Lee, 2015, p. 18). With a concern for not only intellectual, but also emotional, physical and spiritual development, holistic education is a lot like the *paideia* of first-century Greece, a term used to describe the process of becoming fully human (Cairney, et al., 2011). Thus, in some ways, holistic education may be seen as a "return to basics" (Miller, 1999).

McGrath (2017, p. 62) suggested that the ultimate questions for human beings to answer are "What is the point of life?" and "What is the good life and how do I lead it?". Garber (2020) suggested that the key question is "What does it mean to be a human being?" (p. 90). These are questions that philosophers and theologians have wrestled with, from the time of Aristotle to the present-day. Modern psychology reinforces the notion that these questions of purpose and significance are still fundamental to human wellbeing (Rogers, 1961; Seligman, 2002).

The "good life" as described here is an ethical life or, as Mackay (2013) described it, "a morally praiseworthy life … a life devoted to the common good" (p. 1). Aristotle used the word *eudaimonia* to describe the good life. Not easy to translate into English, *eudaimonia* has been variously translated as "gratification" (Seligman, 2002), "a complete human life lived at its best" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 149) or, perhaps best of all, "human flourishing" (Pennington, 2015). More that the pursuit of pleasure (hedonia), a truly good life (*eudaimonia*) is one in which people who are wise pursue fulfillment, purpose, and completeness (Hackney, 2021).

Increasingly, holistic education is expressed through an emphasis on character development, in schools that have a vision to teach "children to become good people and good students at the same time" (Garber, 2014, p. 162). Garber cautioned us to "beware the temptation to believe that competence can be separated from character, that excellence can be defined in merely academic terms, without a corresponding concern for the kind of people we are" (p. 48). Or, as Angela Duckworth (cited by Seligman, 2011) put it – "Character is at least as important as intellect" (p. 103). According to Aristotle, character may be best understood in terms of the presence of virtues such as temperance, prudence, fortitude and justice, while within a biblical worldview, character is expressed in the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, humility, self-control - Gal. 5: 22-23). These lists of virtues need not be mutually exclusive. At St Paul's School (2017), for example, the school's Character Framework comprises ten virtues, as follows – compassion & kindness; generosity; honesty & integrity; patience, perseverance & resilience; diligence; loyalty & faithfulness; humility & servant-heartedness; courage; respect; self-control.

3. Understanding student wellbeing and flourishing

Although it has been the subject of study for hundreds of years, wellbeing has proven to be difficult to define (Dodge, et al., 2012). Like the good life, *wellbeing* has been described in terms of "flourishing", with a range of positive factors needing

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to be present to meet this description. Huppert & So (2013) equated flourishing with "life going well" (p. 838). Their definition of flourishing was limited, however, to a state of mental good health or psychological wellbeing. Taking a more holistic view, VanderWeele (2017) suggested that flourishing requires that the person be doing well in the following domains: "1. Happiness and life satisfaction; 2. Mental and physical health; 3. Meaning and purpose; 4. Character and virtue; 5. Close social relationships" (p. 8149).

Wellbeing is seen to exist as a continuum and may even be expressed in negative terms - for example, "languishing", as described by Huppert (2009). Dodge et al. (2012) posited that individual wellbeing is dynamic, and that each person experiences a state of subjective wellbeing that may move around a "normal equilibrium level" (p. 227). They likened this to biological homeostasis, with life challenges usually being responded to by the individual's psychological, social, and physical resources. I did wonder, on reading this, why they did not also consider spiritual resources: I will explore this theme further on in the review.

Wellbeing is widely considered to be a construct with measurable elements (Keyes, 2002; Huppert, 2009; Seligman, 2011; Soutter, 2011; Huppert & So, 2013; Phan & Ngu, 2015; Runions, et al, 2021), including physical, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual dimensions. Within the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) statement of curriculum, wellbeing is defined as "a sense of satisfaction, happiness, effective social functioning and spiritual health, and dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity and resilience" (ACARA, n.d.a.).

A well-known multidimensional approach to wellbeing is the PERMA framework (Seligman, 2011), consisting of Positive emotions, Engagement, positive Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment. The PERMA framework also established a connection between wellbeing and character strengths, with 24 key strengths grouped under six virtues (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). Seligman (2011) described wellbeing as the topic of positive psychology, and the aim (or "gold standard", p. 13) of positive psychology as *flourishing*.

From a Christian worldview, I found myself asking: physical and mental health may be necessary conditions for flourishing, but are they sufficient? Flourishing has been equated with 'happiness', but surely this falls short of what it could and ought to mean. Mackay (2013) warned that conflating happiness with 'the good life' runs the risk of "emotional, cultural and even moral hazards" (p. 45). Even Martin Seligman, the champion of positive psychology, replaced his own Authentic Happiness theory (2002) with a more sophisticated Wellbeing theory (2011), the goal of which is Seligman's version of human flourishing. An alternative definition of flourishing, which recognised the importance of giving as well as receiving, was offered by Miner and Dowson (2012) – "we define flourishing as the holistic realisation and altruistic expression of human potential" (p. 15). According to Volf (2015), *flourishing* describes a life that is lived well (defined by loving both God and neighbour), a life that goes well (seen in good health and necessary material provisions) and a life that feels good (including the experience of joy and peace). Swaner & Wolfe (2021) described flourishing students as "exuberant in their learning and … growing socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually" (p1).

Those who establish, lead and work in Anglican (and other Christian) schools understand that spiritual formation plays a vital role in overall wellbeing (Cairney et al., 2011). Jesus described his reason for coming into the world as that we might *have life to the full* (NIV, John 10:10). I suggest that there has never been a better definition of flourishing than this, "life to the full". My Christian worldview causes me to suggest that genuine flourishing is dependent on the quality of our relationship with God and the development of a godly character. Or, as Tom Wright (2011) put it, it is as we "pursue virtue in its specifically Christian form" that our character is shaped so we become "the human beings God meant us to be" (p. xi).

It would be neither accurate nor fair to suggest that only Christian schools are concerned about the flourishing of students. Secular schools and positive psychology practitioners also emphasise character development and wellbeing. Indeed, the Jubilee Centre for Character & Virtues (2017) stated that "flourishing is the ultimate aim of character education" (p. 1). However (and unsurprisingly), secular educators tend to view the development of character and virtues from a humanistic rather than a Christian worldview. For example, Seligman was quite non-specific when he defined (in the context of PERMA) the term *Meaning* as "belonging to and serving something you believe is bigger than the self" (2011, p. 17). The vagueness of this definition will be examined more fully later in this review.

4. The need or student wellbeing programs in Schools

Quite simply, the evidence suggests that many young people in Australian schools are not well beings. Rather, our young people are facing extraordinarily high levels of mental health concerns. The World Health Organisation (2021) reported that "mental

health conditions account for 16% of the global burden of disease and injury in people aged 10-19 years". Further, Mission Australia (Carlisle, et al., 2018) reported that this is a growing problem, with the number of young people who identify mental health as an important issue in Australia increasing from 20.6% in 2016 to 43% in 2018. This was also supported by the Headspace Youth Mental Survey (2020), which found that 34% of Australian young people self-describe their levels of psychological distress as "high" or "very high". Why is this so?

We live, and teach, in times of unprecedented change – an "age of disruption", according to Hannon & Peterson (2021, p. 24). The acronym VUCA, originally applied in military contexts but now widely employed in the world of business, refers to the *volatility, uncertainty, complexity* and *ambiguity* that have become characteristic of life in the 21st century (Lawrence, 2013). Friedman (2016) described this present era as an "Age of accelerations" and identified three realms in which change is occurring at an exponential rate - *Information Communications Technology* (ICT); Globalisation; and *Climate Change*. Friedman used "Moore's Law" (which originally proposed, with uncanny accuracy, that the processing power of integrated circuits would double approximately every two years, while the cost remained the same) as a tangible example of the rate at which technology is changing. As a consequence of the rapid advances in ICT, the current generation of school students has access to tools and toys (including Virtual Reality headsets, online games and social media apps) which would have been unimaginable to their grandparents at the same age.

A second stressor for young people is *Climate Change*. In Australia, the mean temperature has increased by 1.470 C since 1910, and the rate of temperature increase is increasing (BOM, 2023). This temperature increase is associated with heat waves, extreme fire weather and more frequent heavy rainfall events (with associated flooding). A longitudinal study of Australian children and adolescents found that 62.2% had high, moderate or increasing levels of worry related to climate change, and that those with high levels of such anxiety also had elevated depression symptoms by late adolescence (Sciberras & Fernando, 2022).

The third realm described by Friedman, *Globalisation*, has been a feature of the human world since the late-sixteenth century, when exploration of the Americas led to the beginning of world markets (Volf, 2015). Volf defined *globalisation* as the "state of interconnectivity and interdependence in the world, the whole process that led to it, and the capitalist market working in tandem with the 'spirit of insatiability' that today mainly drives it" (2015, p. 11). While globalisation offers benefits to many, Volf cautioned that globalisation also presents many challenges, including a growing disparity in wealth, global crime, cultural homogenisation and loss of privacy (2015, pp. 35-36). Our students may find these challenges to be "overwhelming", and as "threatening to the things that anchor them: their jobs, local culture, and sense of home, neighbourhood and nationhood" (Friedman, 2016, p. 169).

To the changes described by Friedman (2016) we could now add the COVID-19 global pandemic which, Fullan (2021) suggested, may also be responsible for accelerating changes in education. Fullan (2020) described the then current situation in the education sector as "so chaotic that it is beyond complexity theory, and even out of reach of chaos thinking." (p. 26)

Another, more gradual change, was described by Smart (2016) when he suggested that biblical Christianity has been replaced as the dominant worldview in Western societies over the past two or three centuries. Now other worldviews, all of which have excluded transcendence, eternal hope and everlasting virtues, dominate. This situation was described by Brooks (2019) as a "telos-crisis" (p. 30), where telos refers to having a moral purpose or ultimate aim.

Junger (2016) described another stressor (or, perhaps, inadvertently made a connection between the decline in church-attendance and the almost-universal uptake of ICT and social media), when he proposed that "we have lost our sense of community" (p. 108). Junger went on to suggest that the chronic loneliness experienced by many moderns in Western societies may be contributing to "some of the highest rates of depression, schizophrenia, poor health and anxiety in history" (p. 18). This loneliness epidemic (likely exacerbated in many instances by the COVID-19 pandemic), poses a real threat to wellbeing if, as Brown (2018) suggested, "Connection, along with love and belonging, is why we are here, and it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives" (p. 126).

Critically, Friedman (2016) pointed out the opening of a gap between the rate of change and "the ability of people and governing systems to adapt to and manage them" (p. 212). Friedman used the terms "dislocation" (p. 29) and "cultural angst" (p. 33) to describe the consequences of this ever-widening gap, and suggested that the only solution is to "enhance humanity's adaptability" (p. 35). The extent to which we can enhance our adaptability is, at this point, unknown. What is known, as Friedman (2016) pointed out, is that "unfortunately, there is no Moore's Law for human progress and moral development" (p. 376).

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> *education has to be about learning to thrive in a transforming world*

In response to all the challenges facing young people, their parents and schools, Hannon & Peterson (2021) proposed that "education has to be about learning to thrive in a transforming world" (p. xiv) and Fullan (2021) stated that "we can no longer afford to separate wellbeing and learning" (p. 14). This is where a holistic education, especially in terms of student wellbeing programs, comes in. The Anglican Schools Commission in Queensland (2020) put it this way –

> We are learning communities whose end is moral, spiritual and character formation with the capacity to transform and turn the whole community towards a greater and common good. This is a way of being in the world that seeks to participate in and transform society for the good of all. (para. 7)

5. Student wellbeing, positive psychology and positive education

Positive Psychology, as it is understood today, was championed by Martin Seligman when he became President of the American Psychological Association in 1998 (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Essentially, Positive Psychology was seen as a "build-what's-strong" approach to therapy, as opposed to the "fix-what's-wrong" approach of traditional psychology (Duckworth, et al, 2005, p. 631). Or, put another way, Positive Psychology suggested that there is more to mental health than the absence of mental illness (Keyes, 2007). Positive Psychology, with its emphasis on positive emotions, wellbeing and character was seen to be of benefit to all, rather than only for those suffering distress (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

The potential for schools to become the providers of some of the elements of positive psychology was quickly realised. In the past twenty years, positive psychology has undoubtedly made some significant contributions to the education sector. For example, the concepts of *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh & Nakamura, 2014), *gratitude* (Van Cuylenburg, 2019) and *grit* (Duckworth, et al 2007), have also found widespread acceptance in many school wellbeing programs.

The application of Positive Psychology in schools has been labelled as *Positive Education*, and was defined by Norrish, et al (2013), as "bringing together the science of Positive Psychology with best-practice teaching to encourage and support schools and individuals within their communities to flourish" (p. 148). If it is accepted that all schools have a role to play in student wellbeing and flourishing, then in Christian schools this is especially the case, given their focus on the spiritual aspect of human nature (Ambler, et al., 2017). Interestingly, in relation to this review, the two schools which were most involved in the early research into student wellbeing and *Positive Education* in Australia are both Anglican schools: namely, Geelong Grammar (Seligman, 2011) and St Peter's, Adelaide (White & Kern, 2017). It was at Geelong Grammar, from 2008, that many of the principles of Positive Education were developed and established.

A focus on student wellbeing is important in contemporary schools – even those that would not claim to offer a holistic education - not least because of the link that has been established between wellbeing and academic achievement (Dix, et al., 2020; Cardenas, et al., 2022). More than that, a recent report by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership identified the importance of "choosing the right wellbeing program (as well as) measuring its impact and effectiveness" (AITSL, 2022, p. 4).

It seems likely that schools are going to be increasingly held accountable for the extent to which they foster wellbeing (including physical and mental health) as well as character development amongst their students (Ofsted, 2022), which demonstrates the need for further research in this area. As Seligman stated (2011), "As our ability to measure positive emotion, engagement, meaning, accomplishment and positive relations improves … we can ask with rigour if our school systems are helping our children flourish" (p. 28).

Various scales have been developed to measure wellbeing in adolescents around the world. One of the early scales was the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMBS), which was validated in the United Kingdom (Clarke, et al, 2011). In an Australian context, the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Wellbeing (Kern, et al., 2016) was developed in the context of the PERMA framework (Seligman, 2011) to monitor student wellbeing at St Peter's College (Kern, et al., 2016; White & Kern, 2017). Like the PERMA framework, the EPOCH model recognised wellbeing as multidimensional, and was designed to assess Engagement, Perseverance, Optimism, Connectedness and Happiness.

Flow, mindfulness and gratitude are all understood to have a positive effect on psychological wellbeing (Hackney, 2021). However, based as it is on a secular worldview, the question must be asked: does Positive Psychology (and Positive Education) have a fundamental flaw in relation to its application in faith-based schools?

6. Is positive education compatible with a Christian worldview

Pennington (2015) cited Augustine when he claimed that "human beings can flourish and be truly happy only when they centre their lives on God, the source of everything good, true and beautiful" (p. 3). This

claim is supported by passages such as:

> The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, "The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.
>
> (Psalm 92: 12-15)

According to Pennington (2015), "human flourishing is a key biblical theme" (p. 5). This theme was developed throughout the Old Testament by use of the Hebrew words, *parach* (as in Ps. 92, above) and *shalom* (which Pennington translated to mean not simply "peace", but "flourishing when all the parts of one's life – health, economics, relations – are functioning together in harmony and completeness" (p. 6)). Plantinga (1996) translated *shalom* as "universal flourishing, wholeness and delight – a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Saviour opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights" (p. 10).

Another expression of flourishing found in the Old Testament is the use of the Hebrew word *ashre*, commonly translated to mean blessed, happy or flourishing (See Ps.1:1, Ps.32:1-2, Ps.84:4-5). This concept has a New Testament equivalent, the Greek word *makarios*, seen most significantly in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12). Seen this way, the Sermon on the Mount could be interpreted as the formula for a truly flourishing human life.

Yet another aspect of the concept of flourishing as seen in the Bible, is the use of the Hebrew word *tamin* and its New Testament/Greek equivalent *teleios*. These words are used to describe a life, or a way of living that is complete, mature and whole (Pennington, 2015, p. 12). According to Hackney (2021), "Christ is a prototype of human flourishing" (p. 28), although "a Christian's vision of the good life is that of a suffering servant" (p. 107).

In contrast to this rich understanding of *flourishing* handed down by a Judeo-Christian heritage, the version that is offered by Positive Psychology and Positive Education is a more egocentric concept, making no reference to becoming "the person that God had in mind in creating you" (Ortberg, 2010, p. 15). Rather, positive psychology rejects "the idea of a need for salvation by an external transcendent source" (Charry, 2017, p. 7). In fact, Seligman (2002) denounced the doctrine of original sin as a "rotten to the core dogma" which he intended to overthrow (p. xii) and acknowledged that he was unable to believe in a supernatural Creator because he was unable to reconcile this with the existence of evil in the world.

Further, Hackney (2021) argued that Positive Psychology offers nothing in terms of a *telos*, or purpose in life, and "no moral vision of the good life" (p. 260). This, perhaps, is the key question: what is (or ought to be) the telos of a human life? Or, in the words of the Shorter Westminster Catechism of 1647, "What is the chief end of man?". In contrast to the original answer, "To glorify God and to enjoy him forever", Positive Psychology offered a more subjective and self-centred purpose, "a life wrapped up in successfully using your signature strengths to obtain abundant and authentic gratification" (Seligman, 2002, p. 249).

Mindfulness has been questioned by Christian scholars on the grounds that it is founded on Buddhism and transcendental meditation (as acknowledged by Seligman, 2002). However, as Thompson (2018) noted, many who have embraced mindfulness may be unaware of these origins because mindfulness "has been repackaged and mixed with popular psychology to give it credibility" (p. 2).

In summary, I suggest that Positive Psychology, as originally described by Seligman and as popularised in the form of PERMA (and the associated Values in Action character strengths model developed by Peterson & Seligman, 2004), ought not be implemented in Christian schools without some form of adaptation: specifically, by only including those elements of the models which align with the school's understanding of scripture. While some of the language used by Positive Psychology, including flourishing, meaning, wisdom, and transcendence is language that is used within a Christian worldview, the interpretation of these terms is quite different, being grounded in a secular worldview. In the Christian school these terms derive meaning from a biblical world view, including shared supernatural wisdom and personal transcendence by the leading of the Holy Spirit and salvation assured by gospel grace.

"Rather, positive psychology rejects 'the idea of a need for salvation by an external transcendent source'"

Conclusion

Many schools have adopted some form of 'Positive Education' in response to the growing needs of students for wellbeing education. However, it has been suggested that, in the rush to implement the PERMA framework (and the Values in Action character strengths model), certain weaknesses have been overlooked and criticisms ignored (Banicki, 2013). Crucially, Soutter (2011) identified a gap in the literature concerning "what it means to be well in contemporary schooling contexts" (p. 2). Specifically, in much of the literature, the spiritual nature of human beings is not considered as part of wellbeing (Dodge, et al., 2012; Phan & Ngu, 2015). This is undoubtedly a reflection of the *secularisation* of Western society

> *The inclusion of spirituality as part of … a holistic education provides faith-based schools with opportunities to address issues of meaning, transformation and connectedness*

(Dowson et al., 2012).

Fundamental to the aims of faith-based schools is an acknowledgement of the spiritual nature of the students we educate. The inclusion of spirituality as part of the scope of a holistic education provides faith-based schools with opportunities to address issues of meaning, transformation and connectedness (to self, to God and to others). Miner and Dowson (2012) emphasised both altruism (giving to others) and spirituality (attachment to God) as having "unique and important psychological consequences for human flourishing" (p. 22).

I propose that Anglican schools in Queensland (and Christian schools everywhere) should carefully consider whether all aspects of positive psychology ought to be uncritically implemented, or whether a more critical approach is warranted. TEACH

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Author information

Nigel Grant has had a career in education of more than 40 years. He is currently the Executive Director of Faith & Community at St Paul's School in Brisbane. This literature review was written as part of a MEd (Leadership) research project thesis at Morling College in 2022.

When ‘service’ isn’t enough: Taking the next step for transformative service-learning

Jerry Unser Gold Coast Christian School, Reedy Creek, QLD, jerryunser92@gmail.com
Carol-Joy Patrick
Griffith University, Griffith, QLD
Carol.joy.Patrick@gmail.com

Keywords: Civic responsibility, diversity, engagement, learning, reflection, respect, service, service-learning

Abstract

Service practice is reasonably well recognised in education, especially Christian education which seeks to emulate the example of Jesus. However, service-learning has emerged as a transformative educational practice that provides a framework and curriculum producing transformative positive outcomes for students that equip them for their role as future democratic citizens, and further as representatives of Jesus.

> *Like everything modelled on the example of Jesus, service-learning is based on relationships.*

> *“We are all woven together in the great web of humanity, and whatever we can do to benefit and uplift others will reflect in blessing upon ourselves. The law of mutual dependence runs through all classes of society” (White, 1890, pp. 534-535).*

Christian author Ellen White asserts an interconnection within all humanity, As educators, we build on that theme by making service an important aspect of school life. Engaging students in service outside the classroom is often valued by schools as a practice that builds character and community. Indeed, the research evidence is that high-quality service-learning programs in K-12 “affect students in multiple positive ways, primarily in the areas of personal-social development, academic achievement, citizenship, and career awareness”. (Billig, 2002)

Christian education has a particular affinity with service as a core value because it is part of the example and message of Jesus Christ. It would be difficult to find a Christian school that didn’t incorporate some form of service into its teaching practice, and most would agree that involving students in service to others is a good thing. But research in the area of service-learning suggests that service alone might not be producing the positive outcomes that schools are after.

Service-learning, identified as a transformative educational practice in the last 55 years, goes beyond just ‘doing service’ to being grounded in a deep learning experience that is facilitated by skilled teaching. There is a difference, and to achieve profound personal and academic transformations, that difference matters. The difference is not necessarily the activity that the student does, but rather what the educator facilitates for the student to ensure that service is meaningful, purposeful, and ethical. Importantly service-learning develops a reciprocal interaction with the entity or person receiving the service. Like everything modelled on the example of Jesus, service-learning is based on relationships.

It might be a bit like the difference between giving kids a ball to play with at recess, and coaching them in the skills needed to play as a team. With one, the activity is positive in itself. With the other, the learning acquired through the activity is designed and intentional. The team has a goal requiring initiative, strategy and planning; the coach guides players to understand and interpret how each contributes to the team goal; and reflection on performance is incisive and thorough.

Likewise, when we consider service-learning beyond just enacting a service activity, a similar framework for the service activity matters. What are the needs of those we serve, what do our students have to offer, and how will the individual or community reciprocate to develop a partner relationship with our students? Once we are clear on our purpose, how do we guide the deep, critical reflection that ensures positive outcomes?

We know that when service-learning is done well, the experience can be transformative. (Barton, T, 2020) The key to effective service-learning is not just in the activity but rather in giving

meaning and structure to the activity through relational teaching. A skilled teacher with a good framework and curriculum can be the difference between just doing service and facilitating life-changing service-learning.

In this article we want to promote the value of service-learning practice and provide an evidence-based direction for those who want to be intentional in this area. Whether you are just contemplating service-learning, or are already well versed in what service-learning can achieve, we would like to encourage you to be even more intentional and focused on transformative outcomes in your own practice – and suggest you share your learning with others.

The research in service-learning is abundant and we will focus on summarising key issues in future issues of TEACH. If service is a passion for you and your school, then dig in with an open mind and see where God leads you and your students. There is much to learn, the rewards are great, and future articles will help you along the way. Education that changes lives is contagious.

Service-learning Brief Facts

What is Service-learning?

Although definitions of service-learning vary, common elements include the integration of community service with academic learning, the development of reciprocal relationships and guided critical reflection as a way to develop students' civic responsibility (Brandes & Randall, 2011). As noted by Bringle and Clayton (2012):

> Despite variations, there is broad consensus that service learning involves the integration of academic material, relevant service activities, and critical reflection and is built on reciprocal partnerships that engage students, faculty/staff, and community members to achieve academic, civic, and personal learning objectives as well as to advance public purposes (p.105).

Short Answer: The integration of community service with structured learning.

*Note: A service activity, whether a local visit or an extended trip is **not** considered 'service-learning' without academic curriculum and purposeful engagement to achieve educational outcomes. The reason is that research shows that 'service-learning' achieves higher transformational outcomes for both students and communities than service alone and minimizes any chance of negative outcomes which can happen when all aspects of quality service-learning are not recognised or practiced.*

How do you know if Service-learning is done well?

Not all service-learning produces great outcomes, hence the need for an evidence-based framework and curriculum. There is sufficient research in service-learning at a university level, and at secondary and primary levels to inform fundamental principles as a robust starting point.

Foundational to the research literature are the K-12 service-learning standards. Shelley Billig, who has led the research in K-12 service-learning identified eight standards of best practice for service-learning in secondary schools (Billig, 2007). The K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice were published by the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) and provide a set of standards designed to inform effective service-learning experiences for students (Billig, 2011). These standards provide a framework for the implementation of high-quality service-learning initiatives that foster student engagement, civic responsibility, and academic learning. If you are presently involved in delivering service or service-learning activities for students, a consideration of these standards will ensure quality approaches to your endeavours.

1. **Meaningful Service**: Focuses on service that is authentic, addresses a community need, and allows for student involvement in planning and implementation.
2. **Link to Curriculum**: Emphasizes the integration of service-learning into the academic curriculum, aligning service experiences with learning objectives and academic standards.
3. **Reflection**: Encourages deliberate reflection activities that help students process their service experiences, connect them to academic learning, and promote personal growth.
4. **Partnerships**: Highlights the importance of collaborative partnerships between schools and community organizations to create meaningful service opportunities.
5. **Student Voice and Choice**: Values student input, empowering them to have a say in selecting and designing service projects that resonate with their interests and the needs of the community.

> *Education that changes lives is contagious.*

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Christian Education in the Metaverse

Julia Price
College of Education, Carson Newman University, Jefferson City, TN, USA
jprice@cn.edu

Kelly Price
College of Business and Technology, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN, USA
pricekb@etsu.edu

Keywords: Metaverse, Christian education, digital learning, virtual reality

Abstract

The metaverse, an immersive virtual reality space where users interact with other users, has become a legitimate consideration for organizations as they strategize for the long term. Education is one industry, among many others, which has joined the metaverse with the hope of engaging students in a new way. Given the reach of the metaverse, Christian education and other faith-based educational institutions have the opportunity to interact and learn in a new way on a global scale. The purpose of this reflection is to offer a starting point for Christian educators and organizations to discuss this new endeavor of the future of education.

> *The metaverse … a 3D-based virtual reality in which daily activities and economic life are conducted through avatars representing the real themselves*

Education in web 3.0

Web 3.0, the era of the Internet which is characterized by advances in technology such as virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI), has prompted major changes in culture and society. These technologies have altered way industries operate and how they are planning the future. Industries such as healthcare, commerce, manufacturing, and agriculture have all been and continue to be impacted by Web 3.0 accompanying technologies.

An additional area which has felt the impact of VR and AI is education. Educators and students from pre-school to university are continuing to assess, learn, implement, and utilize AI and VR technologies in the classroom. While challenges exist with these technologies, opportunities are available, as well.

One of the unique opportunities Web 3.0 has presented is the metaverse. The metaverse, can be described as, "a 3D-based virtual reality in which daily activities and economic life are conducted through avatars representing the real themselves" (Go, et al. 2021). It has also been defined as, "concept of a future iteration of the internet, made up of persistent, shared, 3D virtual spaces linked into a perceived virtual universe" (Hackl, 2021). Though the metaverse has been in existence in some form for many years, it wasn't until Meta (Facebook) began to focus upon its presence in this space, that it garnered attention in media and academia. Consequently, the metaverse has grown significantly. For example, global brands such as Nike and Walmart are present there.

Along with these corporate brands, education has also entered the metaverse. The metaversity, or a "campus created in the metaverse" (Viano, 2023), has emerged as a new channel for educators and students to achieve educational goals. Morehouse College, Stanford University (U.S.), and Soonchunhyang University (South Korea) each have digital twin campuses in the metaverse. While studies are still being conducted on the efficacy of the metaversity, it has been found that Morehouse experienced a 10% increase in student grade point averages (D'Agostino, 2022), and that a metaverse education has positive outcomes in regard to personalisation of the course (Kahla, 2021).

The initial success of a metaverse education and of the metaversity brings creates new questions for educators, students, administrators, and other collaborators regarding finances, enrollment, security/privacy and other issues. However, Christian education and its stakeholders may have special opportunities and a unique calling to the metaverse. Higher education entities that are specifically faith-based offer environments which emphasize servant leadership, a holistic view of students, caring and concern for all individuals, and a global outreach for missions. The metaverse can encompass all these traits. The metaverse offers multiple opportunities for Christian outreach in addition to formal education. Podcasts, church services, Christian conferences, faith-based concerts, and other venues are possibilities. However,

Christian higher education offers one of the most applicable and effective methods of involving persons in a realistic and pragmatic faith-based environment. Three areas of Christian involvement and efficacy include learning experiences, inclusion, and mission and outreach.

Opportunity #1: Learning experiences

Kye, et al. (2021) found education in the metaverse to be a space for social communication and high immersion through virtualization. With the continued popularity of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), the metaverse may be a place where personalized emotional and social skills may be practiced and perfected. In addition, a learner can be immersed into a learning experience not found in a physical classroom. The metaverse is an environment devoid of time and space. Therefore, the learner could be fully engaged in a Bible story just as easily as learning a chemistry lesson. For example, at Morehouse College, students were able to witness what it was like to be on a slave ship and have a discussion after the experience (Bellamy, 2022). Christian education could use the same model to discover what it was like to be in the crowd as Jesus entered Jerusalem, for instance.

Opportunity #2: Inclusion

Henschke, (2011) suggested elements of an inclusive classroom. These are setting a learning climate of respect and support, mutual negotiation of learning needs and learning experiences being planned by both the learner and facilitator. The metaverse provides a space where people with disabilities may thrive. No matter the type of disability (physical, mental, social, etc.), the metaverse possesses minimal barriers to participation. Cultural boundaries may be removed as avatars (digital representation of a human) dissipate stereotypes and language barriers. With the inclusiveness of the metaverse, a culture of acceptance may be realized in the Christian educational classroom. The Christian ethos of equity for all was exemplified by Jesus and his acceptance and compassion for the poor, the mentally and physically disabled, and the culturally shunned. The metaverse is an impartial environment for all persons.

Opportunity #3: Mission and outreach

In the metaverse, learners have the opportunity to perceive and observe from a different perspective and to collaborate with people they would not have in the physical world (Hwang and Chein, 2022). For Christian educators and students, this is an opportunity to engage in discipleship in a new way. The metaverse provides an avenue to extend mission work not possible in a physical environment. Constraints on funding, time, and travel are no longer problematic. The educational institution can embark on Christian outreach to places they never thought possible. In addition, students have the chance to participate in servant learning and leadership in an environment where they help and empower others, build relationships, and foster faith-based connection around the world. The metaverse offers a truly global Christian perspective to missional opportunities.

The Future of Christian education in the metaverse

Within the metaverse, challenges have already been seen. For example, scholars have noted privacy risk, legalities, and addiction issues (Lin, et al., 2022). In addition, the metaverse has been a destination for inappropriate activities. However, this is no different than the internet in general and the physical world. Some argue the metaverse is too negative and that faith-based organizations should refrain from entering the space. However, there are currently numerous churches and other faith-based entities in the metaverse holding church services and connecting with other users on an almost daily basis. Therefore, faith-based education has a responsibility to be present, as well.

It is predicted the metaverse will be mainstream within the next decade. If this is accurate, Christian educators and institutions have a major opportunity to not only be a participant in the virtual world, but to play a role in its ever-changing culture and to make a difference in a world yet established. It may be posited this is the most important reason for Christian education to be present in the metaverse.
As society continues to transition into Web 3.0, it is crucial that Christian education transition, as well. Christian education has made a difference in the world. But, the next world, the metaverse, awaits. TEACH

> *The metaverse provides an avenue to extend mission work not possible in a physical environment. Constraints on funding, time, and travel are no longer problematic.*

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Author information
Julia Price, Ed.D., is the Director of the Ed.D. and Ed.S. Program at Carson Newman University. As a public-school educator, she was awarded the Tennessee Principal of the Year. Her achievements at CNU include Advisor of the Year and the Exemplary Research Award.

Kelly Price, PhD, is a three-time recipient of the ETSU College of Business and Technology Excellence in Teaching award and the Outstanding Teaching Emeritus Award. She is the Director and designer of the 100% online M.S. Digital Marketing degree.

Re-generation: The Missional Imperative of Christian Schooling

Cameron Pearce
Flinders Christian Community College, Carrum Downs, Victoria
cameron.pearce@flinders.vic.edu.au

Chris Prior
National Institute for Christian Education, Springwood, NSW
chris.prior@nice.edu.au

Keywords: Christian Education, cultural change, identity, missional lens, transformation, unification

Abstract

We live in a time where the Christian church and our Christian faith have been pushed to society's peripherals. Operating in environments that are increasing secular, where consumerism abounds, it can be easy to define Christian schooling in almost oppositional terms. There is another way. What if those of us involved in Christian schooling were to reimagine Christian education through a shared missional lens grounded in the foundation of the Missio Dei (God's Mission)? The potential of the missional lens for Christian schooling is considerable. It grounds the Christian school movement, and identity of the teacher, in the larger biblical narrative. Additionally, with each generation invited to engage in mission in way that is contextual, it allows for a multiplicity of ways to participate in the outworking of God's mission within the context and setting in which each school has been placed.

Introduction

We live in a time of quite dramatic societal change. The decline of Christian church and the rise of the modern self is clearly before us. In this postmodern, post-enlightenment time there are challenging questions with respect to the relevance of the Church in the broader community, not to mention the traditional message underpinning Christian education. The Church, and our Christian faith, have been pushed to society's peripherals, dwelling in the private margins of our personal lives rather than the town centre. In the midst of this cultural change schools, secular or otherwise, are increasingly becoming the communities' educational and moral hub.

Parents often understand schools as places to see their children advance in their intellectual capacity and holistic formation as human beings. Christian education is no exception to this trend, creating both an opportunity and a challenge for Christian schools regardless of their heritage and purposes. Underpinning this shift in the Western context is a relentless focus on the "how", a fixation on educational outcomes as a ticket to prosperity, rather than the "why" of education. For the past century, the educational focus has been on practice and ignored two essential questions: "Why all this education? To what purpose?" (Knight, 2006, p. 4). The exciting prospect within these challenges is that Christian education is effectively placed to reimagine a story about the purpose and outcomes of education.

As followers of Christ, we should not recoil in response to this shifting tide of Christendom. Instead, we should embrace the opportunity by refocusing on a particular "why" that is common to us who profess faith in Christ. Christian schools routinely operate in a pluralistic and consumeristic marketplace where God is often perceived as absent, where pleasure and self-fulfilment rule the day. A challenge before us is that a society shaped by consumerism and entertainment can generate a church and educational environment defined by reductionism and deeply ingrained in Western culture (Guder, 2015). This may be at play in Christian schooling where, at times, we have described ourselves in almost oppositional terms. For example, schools use language such as open vs closed enrolment, church-based vs non-denominational, and community vs covenantal.

While these descriptive words will mean different things to different people, at play in all three is the suggestion of homogeneity against heterogeneity. The language of *community* or *open*

> *Christian education is effectively placed to reimagine a story about the purpose and outcomes of education.*

enrolment has been used to describe Christian schooling that seeks enrolment from a cross-section of the community. Whereas *covenantal* or *closed enrolment* is used to describe Christian education for young people from Christian families. *Church-based* Christian schools tend to describe Christian schooling in a manner consistent with their denominational background. *Non-denominational* schools take a different approach. Regardless of what oppositional issued, rather than understand ourselves as competitors, it is suggested that, together, we engage in a complete paradigm shift that embraces the emerging reality that all Christian schools, regardless of model or creed, are missional communities in their core purpose. A missional paradigm provides the way beyond these challenges. It invites schools into a mindset where we are shared participants caught up in a "bigger and bolder vision of the kingdom of God" (Greer & Horst, 2018, p. 43). Put another way, the missional lens affirms a covenantal model as much as it does an open-enrolment approach by providing a consistent telos, while affirming the specific calling that has been placed on each specific school.

> *A missional paradigm … invites schools into a mindset where we are shared participants caught in a 'bigger and bolder vision of the kingdom of God'*

What do we mean by a "missional lens"? The central nature of God's mission permeating the whole bible is in itself a "missional phenomenon" that renders a glimpse of the story of God's people called to participate in the mission of God for the sake of all of creation (Wright, 2006) To pursue Christian education in its missional form is to embrace a missional theology that continues on from the teleological calling of the Israelite people to be a blessing to the nations through Abraham; God's self-revelatory act through Christ and his Great Commission; and the consummation of all of history as defined in Revelation 5:9-10 where God's reign is universal through the sacrifice and blood of Christ. The underpinning tenets of missional theology are trinitarian in nature, eschatological in purpose, contextual in its application and praxeological in its hands-on focus (McKinzie, 2014).

When viewing Christian education through a missional lens, it becomes clear there might be a multiplicity of ways rather than one "right way" to do Christian education. Certainly, each generation is called to engage in ongoing interpretative translation of the Gospel with a missional located connectedness to the context in which they are placed (Guder, 2015). This calling recognises that the Christian Church and Christian education are all part of the theological foundation of the Missio Dei (God's Mission). Bosch (1991) defines this most clearly as God's self-revelation and involvement towards a world He loves, revelling in God's ongoing nature and redemptive activity that embraces both the Church and the world in which the Church is privileged to participate. This imperative calls Christian educators to welcome the opportunity to redefine a new identity within a missional philosophy of Christian education. Through accepting and responding to this need for the re-generation of Christian schooling, the movement is presented with a comprehensive foundation that brings a new lens, language, and practice by uniting the call of all Christian schooling forms and becoming a transformational presence by flourishing within the challenges of a post-Christian society.

A missional philosophy of Christian schooling will directly impact praxis in the classroom, leading to a transformational presence and cyclical influence through a missional lens. This process is ongoing in its dynamic response to God's revelation in light of context and experience. The potential of the missional imperative for Christian schooling leads to an opportunity to foster a new season of authentic Christian community nurturing the genuine transformation of young people across the western world. To ignore this imperative is to potentially succumb to the dangers that already confronts us, leading to a movement of Christian education that disappears into the norm of secular society. Knight (2006) summarises the challenge best by stating:

> *All too often, Christian education has not been deliberately built upon distinctive Christian philosophy. As a result many Christian schools have tended to offer something less than Christian education and have thereby frustrated the purpose of their existence. Gordon Clark has noted that what goes by the name of Christian education is sometimes a programme of "Pagan education with a chocolate coating of Christi anity."* (p. 164)

The overarching potential of this missional imperative to unify how we understand the Christian school movement cannot be understated. The surrounding metanarrative of the Missio Dei gives context and legitimises multiplicity across Christian schooling, leading to the emergence of a "hermeneutic of coherence" that provides an orientating point amid diversity (Wright, 2006, p. 40). From this foundation, a unifying narrative emerges that brings cohesive purpose and meaning within the larger biblically missional narrative. Informed by contextual praxis, engagement and responsiveness Christian schools can champion diversity of expression by accepting that all forms of Christian education are missional at their base.

The importance of identity plays a vital role in

empowering teachers to flourish in the classroom. Just as a school finds its identity in the meta-narrative of the Missio Dei, so too teachers find their identity in the collective story of their schooling community. Individual teachers find purpose by placing their story within the context of a broader framework of meaning. Parker Palmer (2017) rightly noted that effective teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher. What teachers know and believe must reveal itself in how they live and teach. To do otherwise is to undermine the transformative effectiveness of a student's learning journey. A missional approach to Christian education provides the lens through which individual and collective identity can be formed. In so doing, a flourishing learning environment is established leading to the genuine transformation of students.

Teachers who find their identity in the broader missional narrative inevitably reshape the epistemology and pedagogy that is applied in the classroom. Few teachers are aware of their presupposed understanding of knowledge formation and how it effects their pedagogy. Secular hidden drivers, often adverse to the Christian faith, are easily championed in the classroom without teacher awareness. Equipped with a missional lens, educators begin to witness these antithetical influences behind proclaimed "best practices" that come packaged in contemporary pedagogical faddism and inadequate theories of knowledge. When teachers dynamically apply this renewed missional awareness to their context, they begin to move into a space of authenticity and relationship. Once missional education reaches the classroom level of an educational community the genuine fruits of true Christian teaching are realised.

At its essence, missional Christian education aims to participate in the outworking of God's mission as witnesses of Christ within the context and setting in which each school has been placed. As a living parable, each educational community looks to embody the revelatory truth of the Gospel in narrative, relational proximity, educational praxis, ongoing renewal, and dynamic responsiveness to God's calling and the Gospel of Christ. The unitive nature of a missional philosophy of Christian education removes the barriers of traditional oppositional paradigms and empowers unification of purpose within diversity of practice. TEACH

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Author information

Cameron Pearce is the executive principal at Flinders Christian Community College, a multi-campus, K-12 school on the Mornington Peninsula in Melbourne. He has a Master of Education, a Master of Business Administration specialising in education leadership, and most recently completed a Master of Practical Theology through Eastern College Australia.

Chris Prior is an experienced Christian educator having worked in Christian schooling and in higher education. Chris lectures in worldview, philosophy of education, and in school leadership. A Christian school principal, his scholarly interests include faith and learning, school culture, worldview, and school leadership. Chris' doctoral studies were on leaders' perceptions and practices of Christian schooling.

"Teachers who find their identity in the broader missional narrative … reshape the … pedagogy that is applied in the classroom."

TEACH[R]

Improving financial policy compliance and internal control at Adventist schools in Thailand: Recommendations from stakeholders

Catherine Chulkasate
Asia-Pacific International University, Muak Lek District, Saraburi Province Thailand
cchulkasate@gmail.com

Wayne Hamra
Asia-Pacific International University, Muak Lek District, Saraburi Province Thailand
whamra@apiu.edu

Keywords: Adventist Schools, auditing, internal control, organisational development, policy compliance, Thailand.

Abstract

This research study examined concerns about financial policy compliance and internal control mentioned in General Conference Auditing Service audit reports at four Seventh-day Adventist schools in Thailand. It focused on how to resolve recurring violations of denominational financial policies and improve control of accounting and administrative functions. A total of 32 in-depth interviews of external and internal stakeholders were conducted to search for practical ways to deal with common compliance and internal control problems. External stakeholders were asked how to resolve policy compliance deficiencies, while internal stakeholders were invited to suggest practical ways to address internal control weaknesses. Raising policy compliance levels and strengthening internal control will better protect denominational assets from careless mistakes and fraud, and help administrators to make wise and timely financial decisions. A key finding was a need to share policy compliance and management letters with school boards and financial staff, respectively, to facilitate rapid resolution of problems. Local contexts should be considered when implementing policies and internal controls. Given significant variations in laws and customs, higher organizations should study how to thoughtfully apply good governance principles in local situations.

> *Raising compliance levels and strengthening internal control will better protect … assets from careless mistakes and fraud*

Introduction

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a small presence in Thailand with only 60 churches and a membership of 16,077 out of a population of 66.8 million (Adventist Yearbook, 2022). *Its work is overseen by the Thailand Adventist Mission (TAM), which operates 11 primary and secondary schools; their approximate locations are shown in Figure 1.*

These schools employ *594 teachers with 5,267 students enrolled [S. Kiatyanyong (TAM Education Director), personal communication, 30 October 2021]*. Seven schools use Thai as the medium of teaching, while English is used in instruction at four others, which are called "international schools".

The financial records of only four out of these Adventist schools are audited by the General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS). Reasons for this partial coverage include the cost of a GCAS audit, and because GCAS-audited schools must utilize SunPlus, a relatively expensive accounting software package.

General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS)

The General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS) (n.d.) provides auditing services to Seventh-day Adventist organisations worldwide. Adventist secondary schools are strongly encouraged to be audited by GCAS yearly; such audits provide assurance regarding their compliance with denominational policies and internal control management. GCAS audit reports include the

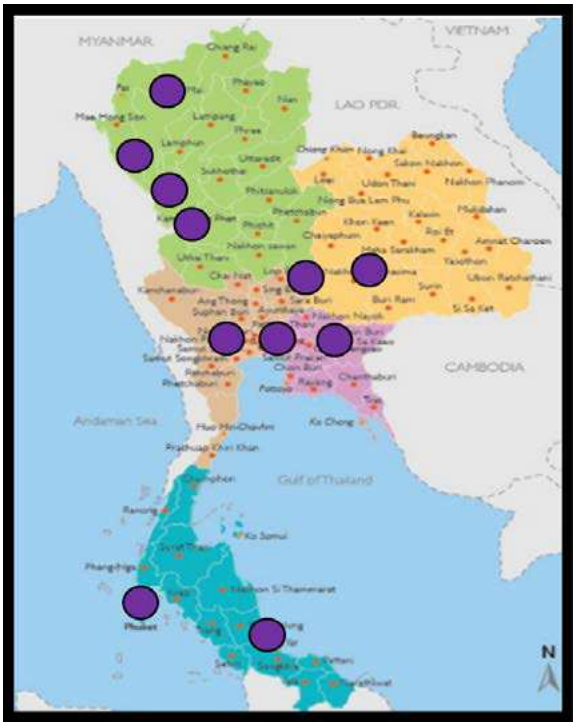


Figure 1: *Locations of 11 Adventist Schools in Thailand*

following components:

1. an opinion on the school's financial statements;
2. a policy compliance report; and
3. a management letter that assesses internal control systems.

GCAS has noted an increase of non-compliance with denominational policies in recent years (Adventist News Network, 2020). Its 2019 report listed 2,353 worldwide clients, 30% of which were educational institutions. The most frequent violations of financial policies are shown in Table 1.

The 2020 report mentioned that 80% of church organizations had violated at least one core policy of the General Conference Working Policy. In addition, the 2018 and 2017 reports showed that 79% and 83% of church organisations respectively were non-compliant with at least one core denominational financial policy (GCAS, n.d.).

A literature review found no previous studies prior to Hamra and Namkote (2020) of financial policy violations and internal control in Adventist schools. Audit information is sensitive, and gaining access to it or reporting about it is not easily done. This study aimed to address this gap by looking for solutions that would improve financial policy compliance and internal control at Adventist schools in Thailand and beyond.

Table 1: Denominational Working Policy Compliance Concerns

No.	Frequency Violations Mentioned	Percent of Organisations
1	Regular Review of Financial Statements	34%
2	Effectively Functioning Audit Committees	32%
3	Adequate Insurance Coverage of Fixed Assets	31%
4	Prevention of Conflicts of Interest	31%
5	Service Records not Regularly Updated	14%
6	Operating Deficits	11%

Source: Adventist News Network, 2020

Internal control

Internal controls are tools that inspire employees to accomplish desirable goals (Oseifuah & Gyekye, 2013; Jahmani et al. (2014). Corns (1971, p. viii) aptly quipped that "Controls protect weak people from temptation, strong people from opportunity, and innocent people from suspicion." Sun (2016) noted that weak internal controls may lead to errors and result in poor management decisions. The goal of internal controls is to improve financial stability and increase stakeholder confidence in financial management (Verovska, 2014). Dimitrijevic et al. (2015) view internal control not as a single event, but as sequences of actions that compare results with organizational goals.

Internal controls consist of processes and policies that improve effectiveness, encourage accurate accounting, safeguard assets, and maintain rules and regulations (Ngwenya & Munyanyi, 2015; International Standards of Auditing, 2017). Organisations must constantly review their internal controls and make necessary adjustments to reduce the risk of fraud. Marais and Ostwalt (2016) found that weak internal controls led to commission of over 60% of fraud cases, while detailed internal controls play a vital role in good management decisions (Morales et al., 2014).

An internal control deficiency occurs when a control fails to prevent, detect, or correct misstatements in the financial statements. A weak internal control environment may create opportunities that lead to dishonest acts such as fraud, misappropriation, or stealing of a firm's property. Sometimes organisations overlook internal

> *Controls protect weak people from temptation, strong people from opportunity, and innocent people from suspicion.*

control weakness until a problem arises. For that reason, appropriate action to proactively comply with denominational policies and promptly resolve internal control deficiencies are vital preventive measures (Hamra & Namkote, 2020). Conscientious managers of Adventist schools should be attentive to the types of mistakes or fraud that might occur so that internal controls can be created or strengthened for these areas of concern.

Brief explanations of key study terms

A *Conflict of Interest* occurs when a director is in a position to influence a decision that allows him/her or a relative to receive an improper financial benefit or advantage (New York State School Boards Association, 2019). To prevent such problems, school managers and board members must sign an annual Conflict of Interest Declaration.

The *Financial Statement Review Committee* regularly monitors a school's financial statements to ensure that resources are used effectively and efficiently, and in ways consistent with financial policies and accounting standards (MIA, 2023).

Internal Control consists of mechanisms, rules, or procedures applied to ensure the reliability of financial and information and to prevent fraud. Internal control increases work effectiveness by improving the accuracy of financial reports (Kenton, 2023).

Policy Compliance is following rules, standards, and laws. Policies outline the goals that organizations wish to accomplish, and compliance ensures that employees understand and act in accordance with policies, laws, and procedures (Leisering, 2022).

A *School Board* maintains governance standards, monitors school operations, and reviews and evaluates policies, budgets/finances, and instructional/educational outcomes (Perry, 2019). School Board members are elected or appointed, and typically include Adventist leaders, school administrators, and parents.

> *"The study asked stakeholders to suggest ways to resolve the ongoing policy compliance and internal control problems identified"*

Research problem, research questions, and conceptual framework

The research problem was divided into two issues as follows:

1. Financial policy compliance violations in Adventist schools.
2. Internal control deficiencies: Accounting and Administrative Control Issues

This investigation built upon a previous study (Hamra & Namkote, 2020) which identified recurrent policy noncompliance issues and internal control weaknesses in GCAS audit reports for four Adventist schools in Thailand over a 3-year period.

The study asked stakeholders to suggest ways to resolve the ongoing policy compliance and internal control problems identified in the GCAS audit reports. External stakeholders included School Board members, TAM leaders, and GCAS auditors, while internal stakeholders included school principals, business managers, and finance office staff. It aimed to better understand the causes of such problems, while searching for solutions that would increase policy compliance and improve internal control.

Research questions

Two research questions asked for suggestions from School Board members, TAM officers, school administrators, auditors, finance officers, and other stakeholders.

1. What practical solutions/suggested actions are recommended by stakeholders to increase compliance with financial policies at SDA schools in Thailand?
2. What practical solutions/suggested actions are recommended by stakeholders to strengthen internal control at SDA schools in Thailand?

It was hoped that interviews with external and internal stakeholders would uncover suggestions that would help school managers to understand internal control and make necessary adjustments to reduce potential fraud or noncompliance.

Conceptual framework

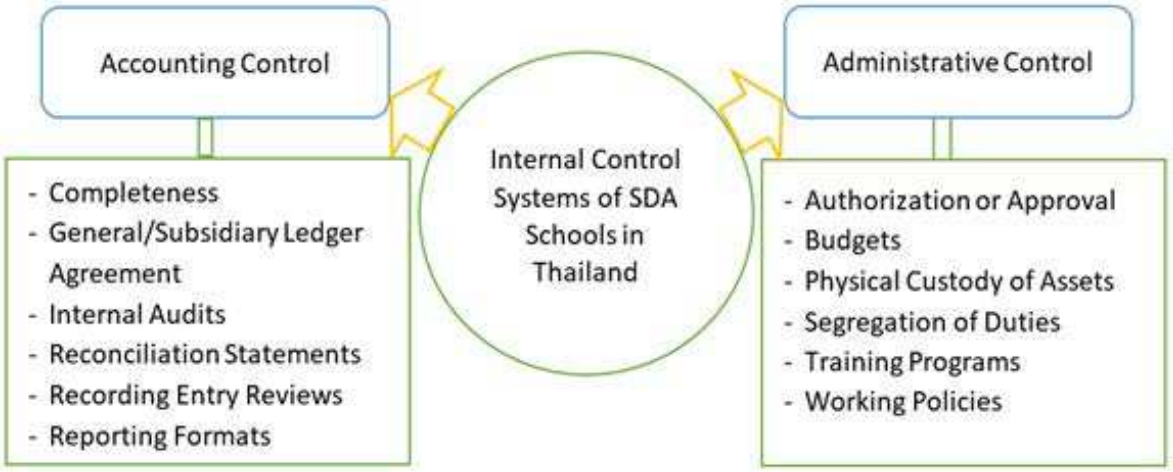
The research model represents two main parts of internal control systems: accounting controls and administrative controls. These are divided into sub-factors as shown in Figure 2.

The research model divided internal control systems into two areas based on issues mentioned in audit management letters. Though fraud cannot be completely eliminated, internal controls can significantly decrease fraud risk. The conceptual framework demonstrates the importance of strong internal control systems in providing an effective guide to compliance with denominational policies.

Methodology

A qualitative descriptive design was employed, using content analysis of GCAS audit reports to gain a clear view of policy compliance and internal control issues.

Annual policy compliance reports and internal control management letters issued to the four Adventist schools for the 2016 to 2018 school years were examined. This data was supplemented with



Source: Adapted from Aguolu (2004), Kenyon & Tilton (2006); Hamra & Namkote (2020)

Table 2: *Brief Profile of Selected Seventh-day Adventist Schools in Thailand*

School	Enrolment	Finance Office Employees	Years of Operation	Language of Instruction
School A	< 1,000	5	< 40	Thai
School B	< 1,200	8	< 70	English
School C	< 200	3	< 10	English
School D	< 400	4	< 80	Thai

Source: Hamra & Namkote, 2020

> *Most policy compliance problems involved governance issues related to supervisory work of external stakeholders*

32 in-depth interviews of stakeholders regarding specific policy compliance issues and internal control weaknesses. Two interview guides were developed, with one set of questions for external stakeholders and a second set for school insiders. Principal decision makers on school boards and in finance offices with first-hand knowledge of these matters were purposively selected, with 11 external and 21 internal stakeholders interviewed. Table 2 shows brief profiles of these schools.

Permission was received from school boards to analyze schools' GCAS policy compliance and internal control reports for three fiscal years. Since audit reports are sensitive documents, the schools were not identified by name. The small population provided an opportunity to listen carefully to participants' experiences with policy compliance and internal control issues.

The researchers scrutinised interviewee responses to see if common patterns and themes were present (Braun et al., 2022; Terry et al., 2017). Most policy compliance problems involved governance issues related to supervisory work of external stakeholders (TAM and school boards).

A similar approach was used with internal control problems; what remedial actions did internal stakeholders (administrators/finance office personnel) recommend to deal with internal control weaknesses? What "best practices" might be adopted by other schools to prevent similar problems?

Results of study

Policy compliance challenges and solutions – Views of external stakeholders

Interviews with 11 external stakeholders revealed that all participants knew of the GCAS policy compliance deficiencies even if serving for less than five years. Table 3 lists the six most common recurring policy compliance problems mentioned at three or more schools during the study period. Each challenge was discussed by an average of five out of 11 external stakeholders via the in-depth interviews. External stakeholders proposed solutions to these common policy compliance problems as shown below.

> *Lower salaries (per church policy) make it difficult to retain talented teachers, so many SDA schools offer larger-than-authorised tuition subsidies*

1. *Excessive medical assistance*: In Thailand, a doctor's prescription is not needed to buy many medications. If a patient sees a doctor at a hospital, however, the medicine must be purchased from the hospital pharmacy at a higher price, which helps cover the cost of doctor visits. Thus, many employees prefer to purchase lower-cost medicines, especially prescription refills, from a pharmacy, which reduces medical expenses for both employees and schools. Some Thai SDA schools have routinely reimbursed such expenses when employees provide receipts and prescription details.
2. *Excessive tuition assistance*: SDA educational benefits cover 60% of tuition and fees for employees' children. Since salaries are lower than market rates, many families struggle to pay their 40% share, especially at International (English-medium) schools. Ironically, some employee families reluctantly send their own children to non-Adventist schools because of the high tuition costs. Lower salaries (per church policy) make it difficult to retain talented teachers, so many SDA schools offer larger-than-authorised tuition subsidies (85–100%) to their employees' children. This non-cash benefit may be viewed as a lesser policy violation than abandoning the denominational salary scale.
3. *Inadequate fixed asset insurance*: Church policy requires full replacement value insurance for buildings and equipment, even if fully depreciated. SDA organisations are urged to purchase insurance from Adventist Risk Management (ARM) (n.d.) rather than from local firms. ARM insurance requires extensive documentation of assets; an employee does not visit the site, as local insurance firms do. ARM coverage is costlier and requires online communication in English rather than in person interaction in Thai. Since the Thai government does not require building insurance, school managers may not see the importance of insuring older

Table 3: *Recurring policy compliance challenges and possible solutions*

	Denominational Policy Violation	Problem Area/Rationale	Strategy	Possible Solution
1	Excessive Medical Assistance	Cheaper over-the-counter medications available	Policy Change Considered	• Allow prescription refills to be purchased from pharmacies
2	Excessive Child Tuition Assistance	To retain teachers/staff in lieu of market-level salaries	Policy Change Request (TAM to Consider)	• Allow a higher level of tuition assistance (> 60%), or scholarship program
3	Inadequate Fixed Asset Insurance	Local insurance cheaper/ easier to claim than ARM	Increase Policy Compliance (Local Firms)	• Allow purchase of local insurance (residual vs replacement value), especially for equipment coverage
4	Regular Review of Financial Statements	Insufficient reviews (admin. committee = 9, board = 4); reviews not recorded in minutes	Increase Policy Compliance	• First item on agenda of regular administrative/board meetings • Review previous statement if current month is not available
5	Unsigned Conflict of Interest Statements	Lack of understanding of need/ importance; good Thai translation needed	Increase Policy Compliance	• Agenda item for first admin. or board meeting each year • TAM prepare standardised Thai translation including rationale
6	Vacation Policy Variances (2 schools)	Differences in government vs church regulations	Policy Exemption Considered (TAM)	• Allow Thai SDA schools to follow government vacation policies

or fully depreciated buildings. In Thailand, buildings are insured according to residual market value. For example, if a brand new building would cost 10 million Baht, but its current market value was 5 million Baht, then insurance coverage would be 5 million Baht [V. Chulkasate (Srikrung Insurance broker), personal communication, 6 February 2022]. This may be done to help prevent insurance fraud.

4. *Regular review of financial statements*: Respondents indicated that time pressures and board meeting schedules were the main reasons for infrequent reviews of financial statements. However, simply adding this as a standard item to board agendas and minutes would likely resolve this problem.
5. *Unsigned conflict of interest forms*: Some school board members didn't understand why they should sign conflict of interest declarations. Since this practice was unfamiliar for Thai stakeholders, the document should be translated into Thai, with the rationale for these declarations clearly explained and any questions answered. Signing them should become a routine matter at the start of a new school year.
6. *Vacation policy variances*: Teachers in Thailand receive longer vacations during school holidays than the 2 weeks given to new SDA employees. A two-week holiday is granted in April, and another two weeks is given between semesters in October. Teachers usually do not need to work during semester breaks. Should complying with the government educational calendar be seen as a violation of denominational policy?

Internal control challenges and solutions – Views of internal stakeholders

Interviews with 21 internal stakeholders revealed that they were aware of schools' internal control challenges, even if serving for less than five years. Table 4 lists eight common recurring internal control issues mentioned in audit letters at three or more schools and by multiple interviewees. They explained the reasons behind these problems, and their suggested solutions are shown below.

1. *Allowance for doubtful accounts is insufficient*: Some school administrators believed that all receivables were collectible, and so no allowance for doubtful accounts was allocated to reduce operating expenses. Some were unfamiliar with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) that require expenses and revenue to be reported in the same accounting period. Some stakeholders found tolerating repeated rebukes from auditors more acceptable than changing their work habits.
2. *Allowance for severance pay is insufficient/ not reviewed*: Some schools considered severance pay to be a minor issue; if finances were tight or the balance seemed adequate, this was not reviewed. Some participants seemed unfamiliar with this requirement even when they had many employees over 50 years old. Since severance fund management is not taught in some accounting courses, staff may not know how to calculate such entries, which may explain why entries were not made.
3. *Cash position wrongly calculated*: Most errors involved including non-current entrance/damage deposits in operating capital and liquidity calculations. Most schools struggle to reach target levels, and may include non-current funds in their totals.
4. *Departmental income/expense over-reported*: Accounting principles were not understood by some administrators; some accountants did not know how to remove inter-departmental transactions from institutional totals. This was a recurring issue at all four Adventist schools, although some amounts were not material.
5. *Equipment general/subsidiary ledger discrepancies*: This was part of a larger problem with infrequent reconciliations; it occurred when items were purchased but not recorded in the system. Some schools also lacked policy guidelines for the purchase, disposal, and capitalization of equipment. They also lacked a system to accurately track their equipment, which may have then been moved without proper authorization.
6. *Physical/recorded inventory values difference*: Schools lacked sufficient personnel to regularly check their inventory; some purchases were improperly recorded.
7. *Journal vouchers, bank and other reconciliation reports not reviewed*: Some schools had only a few transactions with other institutions each year, and so they may have forgotten or neglected to prepare reports on a periodic basis.
8. *Receivables and/or payables misstated*: A common problem was to show a net value for student accounts receivable, rather than separating out student credit balances and showing them as a payable.

Some stakeholders found tolerating repeated rebukes from auditors more acceptable than changing their work habits.

Table 4: *Recurring Internal Control Weaknesses and Possible Solutions*

	Internal Control Problem	School's Rationale	Possible Solution
1	Allowance for Doubtful Accounts – Insufficient	Claim that all student accts. are collectible to reduce expenses	• Explain need to comply with IFRS • Qualified opinion for repeated non-compliance
2	Allowance for Severance Pay – Insufficient or Not Reviewed	Staff taught how to calculate severance allowance; trying to reduce expenses	• Explain need to comply with IFRS • Administrators request auditors to teach staff how to make entries • Qualified opinion for non-compliance
3	Cash Position Wrongly Calculated	Non-current deposits/funds listed as part of liquid assets	• Explain need to comply with IFRS • Administrators request auditors to teach staff how to make entries
4	Departmental Income/ Expenses Over-reported	Inter-dept. transactions not removed from year-end financial statements	• Explain need to comply with IFRS • Administrators request auditors to teach staff how to make entries
5	Equipment Ledger Discrepancies (General/Sub.)	Physical checks not conducted/ledgers reconciled; lack of staff	• Use student/intern help to conduct during summers • Install software to reduce errors
6	Inventory Value Discrepancies (Ledger vs Physical Count)	Physical checks not regularly conducted; lack of staff	• Use student/intern help to conduct during summers
7	Reconciliation Reports/ Vouchers Not Reviewed	Inadequate grasp of need to do this; lack of staff	• Explain need to comply with IFRS • Qualified opinion for repeated non-compliance
8	Receivables and/or Payables Misstated	Staff taught to adjust receivables/ payables	• Administrators request auditors to teach staff how to make entries

Rather than ignoring audit violations, managers could carefully document these issues and propose alternative solutions.

Discussion and recommendations

Denominational financial policy violations

Study findings revealed that many recurring policy violations were related to governance issues handled by school boards. Two basic strategies mentioned in Table 3 underlie suggested ways to improve compliance performance, both of which rely upon direction from Mission leaders and board members.

The first strategy is for policy violation items to be placed on board agendas, with improvement reports periodically monitored and approved. Compliance reports may be filed away and forgotten after an audit. However, these issues should be shared with boards so that improvement plans may be prepared and carried out. For instance, a Thai version of the Conflict of Interest Declaration could be briefly explained to board members at their first meeting, and then signed by stakeholders. Reviewing the financial statements could be an automatic item at board meetings and recorded in the minutes. Such initiatives are not difficult, time consuming, nor costly to implement; they just require increased organization and effort.

The second strategy addresses policy compliance challenges common to all SDA schools in Thailand. Differing local practices regarding medicine purchases, tuition assistance, fixed asset insurance coverage, and school vacations have made it difficult for managers to comply with some worldwide policies. Rather than ignoring audit violations, managers could carefully document these issues and propose alternative solutions. Mission leaders could review these suggestions, and if deemed advisable, the Mission could submit policy change/exemption requests through proper channels to higher-level organizations. Could reimbursement of medicine refills be authorized without a doctor's visit? Could educational subsidies be raised in some situations, and less costly local insurance policies be permitted, especially for older buildings?

Table 5: *Stakeholder recommendations to strengthen financial policy compliance*

Change Agent	Proposed Recommendation
School Boards	• Board members sign conflict of interest statement at first meeting • Travel allowances provided for board members when needed • School boards meet quarterly; an online option for some meetings • Plans to implement GCAS recommendations reviewed/approved by boards, with progress reports/ annual summary of accomplishments
TAM Treasurer/ Education Director	• Recruit school board members with financial management expertise • Draft orientation guidelines (Thai & English) for new school officers and treasurers that outline duties, responsibilities, and core policies • Study costs/benefits of buying building/equipment insurance with ARM or a reputable local firm; combined purchases may lead to lower rates • For excessive medical/tuition assistance and vacation policies, TAM leaders to consider recommending policy change/exemption requests for submission to higher bodies through proper channels

Stakeholders also made a number of recommendations to strengthen policy compliance in general; these are shown in Table 5.

Recurring internal control weaknesses

Many SDA work cultures are based on trust, and employees are assumed to be honest individuals. Even when mistakes or violations occur, a redemptive approach is often employed, with no serious penalties for offenses. Since few controls are in place, internal control deficiencies tend to recur even though resolving them is not difficult; a lack of initiative to fix systems/processes may be attributable to this culture. If properly explained, however, most employees cooperate with efforts to increase accountability. In an imperfect world where temptations abound, safeguards should be established to prevent errors or intentional manipulation of financial records or assets.

Four basic approaches (Table 4) were suggested to strengthen internal control in schools; these involve school administrators, TAM leaders, and GCAS auditors. The first is taking a proactive approach to educating administrators about the need to follow accounting principles even if they seem inconvenient. Relevant issues include doubtful accounts, severance allowances, and inter-departmental transactions. No cash expense is required to comply with such guidelines. If schools have good success in collecting their receivables, then an aging accounts receivable analysis may justify a smaller allowance for doubtful accounts.

A second approach encourages managers to invite auditors to teach finance office staff how internal control may be improved. An auditor's main duty is to express an opinion on the financial statements, not to spell out how accounting work needs to be done. But since policy compliance/ internal control reports are part of GCAS's mandate, the same adjusting entries may be needed year after year. If auditors were invited to teach staff how to prepare problem entries (e.g. severance allowance calculations, elimination of inter-departmental transactions, proper reporting of cash, receivables/ payables, etc.), the number of future adjusting entries could be substantially reduced. However, protocol demands that such help be requested by school managers.

A third suggestion is that if staffing shortages make it difficult to conduct regular physical checks of equipment or inventories, greater use may be made of high school student workers or interns. Since the school financial year ends during the summer, this work could be done with temporary workers during school breaks at a modest cost. One author assisted with this work as a high school student, and accounting students have helped to set up equipment ledgers during school breaks.

A fourth and final way to strengthen internal control would be to consider tougher enforcement measures for repeated non-compliance with audit recommendations. If control weaknesses affect multiple operations, a qualified audit opinion may be appropriate, especially if a defiant attitude is shown toward measures that increase transparency and accountability. Several general recommendations to strengthen internal control were also made, and are shown in Table 6.

Some internal control issues from previous audit reports have been successfully resolved, as evidenced in interviewee responses and recent GCAS audit reports for two schools. These include regular reviews of bank reconciliations, more frequent cash deposits, and better control of cash.

If auditors were invited to teach staff how to prepare problem entries … future adjusting entries could be substantially reduced. … protocol demands that such help be requested by school managers.

Table 6: *Stakeholder recommendations to strengthen internal control*

Change Agent	Proposed Recommendation
School Management	• Prioritise work on most important policy compliance and internal control items first to protect organisational resources • Assign English translators during audit meetings with finance office staff to facilitate a wider understanding of problems and auditor recommendations/suggestions • Ask auditors to teach finance staff how to make difficult entries (e.g. severance allowance, remove inter-departmental transactions, etc.)
TAM Treasurer/ Education Director	• Discuss policy compliance issues/solutions at TAM educational leadership meetings • Advise administrators how to implement audit recommendations • TAM to create a LINE App Chat group in Thai as a support team for Adventist school treasurers to facilitate discussion of policy compliance and internal control issues

This shows that the schools are trying to improve their internal control systems to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their work.

Using an internal control framework to assess work systems may help schools to identify problems faster, so that timely efforts are made to prevent, spot, and remedy small errors or possible misuse/fraud. Though risks cannot be completely eliminated, knowing that internal controls are in place can significantly decrease fraud risk. A strong internal control system provides an effective wall of protection for all parties.

> *A key finding was the need for policy compliance letters to be shared with school boards so that progress in addressing problems may be periodically reviewed*

Conclusion

This study found that financial policy challenges commonly experienced at four Adventist schools in Thailand were similar to those mentioned in GCAS worldwide reports. The recurring nature of many violations and internal control deficiencies raises concern as to why progress in resolving them has been elusive. While internal control weaknesses are less serious than policy violations, if uncorrected they may eventually result in unintentional errors, allow misuse of resources, or lead to outright fraud.

A key finding was the need for policy compliance letters to be shared with school boards so that progress in addressing problems may be periodically reviewed, with a goal of reducing future violations. Management letters should be shared with financial staff to facilitate discussion and rapid resolution of issues. Administrators should be educated about the need to comply with accounting principles. They may invite auditors to teach staff how to make problematic accounting entries if expertise is lacking.

Since denominational policies were developed in Western settings, an important consideration is the advisability of using a single "one-size-fits-all" approach to policy and internal control issues, irrespective of local contexts. Given significant variations in laws, customs, and practices, higher organizations should study how management principles may be thoughtfully, but more flexibly, applied given these differences.

The successful resolution of some recurring issues in several Thai schools gives hope for progress in this area. Future studies might look for schools with exemplary policy compliance or internal control, and share approaches/best practices that have led to their success. They might also investigate how a more flexible approach to church policy application in different settings might improve compliance. How could important financial management principles be maintained while giving careful consideration to local laws, customs, and practices? Future studies may use advanced methodologies or be extended to larger populations in other countries.

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Author information

Catherine Chulkasate has worked for many years as a teacher and administrator at Ekamai International School in Bangkok, Thailand and completed her Master of Business Administration degree at Asia-Pacific International University (AIU), Thailand.

Wayne Hamra is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Business Administration at Asia-Pacific International University (AIU), Thailand; he currently serves as Chair of the Master of Business Administration Program.

TEACH[R]

Implementation strategies to pervade lecture capturing technologies using Panopto in Moodle: An exploratory case study in Singapore Bible College

Jason Chen
Singapore Bible College, Singapore
jasonc@sbc.edu.sg

Keywords: Distance learning, blended learning, lecture capture, lecturer support, Panopto

Abstract

Singapore Bible College (SBC) recognises that the mere purchasing of any education technology tools is not sufficient to pervade its use. Implementation strategies based on sound principles of barriers to technology integration were formulated, implemented and measured to gauge its effectiveness. Its final goal is, that the use of Panopto technology is fully leveraged to benefit the teaching and learning community within SBC.

Introduction

It is well known that recorded lectures used in asynchronous learning can provide valuable revision materials, particularly for students who may find it difficult to comprehend a lecture fully at the time of delivery (Luke, 2022; Bišćan, Milanović, Petrović, & Pale, 2021). In addition, recorded lectures can provide the full context of a lecture, such as placing of emphasis in explaining an important point (Banerjee, 2021) as compared to note-taking. The digital nature of the recorded videos enables online delivery on web-based platforms such as a Learning Management System (LMS), that expands on the affordances of accessibility to allow creative use of recorded lectures not only in lesson delivery but assessment as well. For example, students can create their own recordings of their presentations and submit for assessment, without gathering synchronously onsite or online. Moreover, the on-demand access to appropriate digital materials to review for assessment tasks, allow modification of assessment objectives to a higher order (Limniou, Varga-Atkins, Hands & Elshamaa, 2021; Faize & Nawaz, 2020). Lecture capturing technologies such as Panopto, allows all the above to be realised seamlessly in seminaries, namely by simplifying the process of video recording and editing with effective management of marking and feedback. This was especially important so during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, when the lockdowns and social distancing imposed by governments to control the epidemic, resulted in a suspension of traditional face-to-face classes in educational institutions worldwide (Bišćan, Milanović, Petrović, & Pale, 2021; Wong, Li, Chan & Cheung, 2022). In response, videos capturing lectures has been popularly adopted in the widely adopted hybrid learning and teaching, and flipped learning context—as a substitute teaching pedagogy to cope with the COVID-19 impact (Li, Wong, Kwan, Chan, Wu & Cheung, 2023).

> *Panopto is a video recording, organising, and sharing tool that's designed specifically for education purposes.*

Panopto: Lecture capturing technology

Panopto is a video recording, organising, and sharing tool that's designed specifically for education purposes. It is built to integrate with LMS systems such as Moodle, as well as video conferencing tools, making it possible to integrate this with your current setup. Panopto allows better communication of ideas through recording presentations and webcasts using multiple cameras and making digital notes. This makes it a useful way to offer students packaged content but also to flip the classroom for a learning experience both onsite and online. On top of that, Panopto uses smart algorithms to package video content so it can be accessed even from slower internet connections, making it widely accessible. Panopto enables multiple camera angles and feeds in the one video, allowing for a slides presentation or quiz to be integrated into a lesson. Educators and teaching staff can record and share safely, confident in the

knowledge that any content will only be viewed by those it is supposed to be shared with.

Panopto allows creation of a library of videos for public or private viewing. Once the lectures are captured, viewers can access video in the library via computers and mobile devices, and logins and video views can be integrated with different learning management systems and Active Directory-compatible portals. On-demand and live videos can also be made available for general web viewing on computers, though notably, mobile devices can't view live webcasts at this time. Not only it simplifies video recording and editing, it also allows students to take notes while watching the video recordings. In addition, students were able to skip through the recordings to relevant portions, either by using the Smart Chaptering feature or clicking through the video. The inbuild ASR feature within Panopto, allows easy captioning of the videos and this is particularly helpful for students who may not be native speakers and required additional visual subtitles to aid in understanding the video lectures. Lastly, the Panopto video file could be easily added to Moodle, which is the primary Learning Management System used by Singapore Bible College.

Adoption of technology in teaching

In using the Panopto lecture capturing technology, particularly in Singapore Bible College, there was resistance exhibited by Faculty and Adjunct teaching staff. This does not come as surprising as many research works have documented it. Cuban (2001) questioned the contemporary premise that equipping schools with technology would invariably result in high technology usage in classroom teaching and learning. In a quantitative study that used data from interviews with teaching staff, students, and administrators, classroom observations, a review of school documents and surveys of teachers and students in two high schools, he found that, contrary to belief, access to equipment and software seldom led to widespread teacher and student use (Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001). In the two schools studied, the main reasons for the lack of technology use in lessons were teaching staff having no time to find and evaluate software and secondly, that the training was inadequate. In other words, the training was offered at inconvenient times and/or too generic in general computer skills rather than applied to the teacher's specific classroom needs. Furthermore, Vrasidas (2015) enumerated more practical barriers to technology integration for teaching staff: teaching staff lack of time to learn new software and technology in order to devise lesson materials; lack of ongoing support; lack of technology infrastructure; lack of specific technologies that address specific needs of teaching staff and students; lack of the use of ICT in teacher preparation programs and the lack of policy curriculum and assessment support.

Moreover, they identified that teachers were resistant to changing their traditional approaches, and there was an incompatibility between their traditional, didactic teaching methods and constructivist frameworks fostered by ICT. Gkrimpizi et al. (2023) asserted that the teachers' pedagogy beliefs and particularly, their adaption to online pedagogies were major factors influencing the successful integration of technology in the classroom. Considering ICT's affordances that support constructivist approaches and student centred pedagogies, the teachers least successful in implementing such ICT in the teaching were those who persevered with more teacher-led didactic styles. In addition, Sugar et al. (2004) also found that teachers' beliefs that equated technology with entertainment rather than education were least inclined to adopt technology.

Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Sadik, Sendurur and Sendurur (2012) defined two types of barriers to technology integration, first order (external) and second order (internal). They claimed that the external barriers were resources (both hardware and software), training, and support. The second order barriers, internal, were the teachers' beliefs about how students learned, and the perceived value of technology to their teaching and learning process. Tondeur et al (2017) revisited the question of alignment between pedagogical belief and practice, where they found that teachers having student-centred beliefs tended to enact student centred curricula despite technological, administrative or assessment barriers. Therefore, teachers' own beliefs and attitudes about the relevance of technology to students' learning appeared to have the biggest impact on successful integration and use (Ertmer, et al., 2012). In summary, the literature has identified a series of factors that can inhibit (or encourage) the sustained use of technology in teaching and learning. Hence, deliberate and calculated change management strategies need to be formulated and implemented within a certain time horizon, to shift teachers' beliefs to one that is favourable to the adoption of online technologies.

> *"the teachers least successful in implementing such ICT in the teaching were those who persevered with more teacher-led didactic styles."*

Case study in Singapore Bible College

The Singapore Bible College (SBC) is redesigning itself to enter into the online learning space through five different Course Models. The Models are

differentiated primarily by Location and Modality. A programme may consist of courses using only one consistent Model or a combination of Models. (Singapore Bible College EduTech Team, 2021)

1. Face-to-Face: This course is conducted Onsite and has mainly Synchronous Instructional Input. While the Modality is through Onsite classroom technology, some Online technology also can be used in the classroom (blended learning).
2. Hybrid: The Synchronous session of this course is conducted Online and/or Onsite, as scheduled by the Course Developer. When Onsite, the class will be conducted in a Smart Classroom. The Modality will always include the internet. The Synchronous sessions can include students who cannot attend class onsite (not by choice).
3. Hyflex: This Model is similar to the Hybrid Model except that students can attend the course either Online or Onsite by their choice. The Synchronous session of the course is usually conducted Onsite in a Smart Classroom (unless no student chooses to be onsite). The Modality will always include the internet.
4. Fully Online: The Synchronous session of this course is conducted fully online, as scheduled by the course developer. There is no Onsite Instructional Input. This model can have a mix of Synchronous or Asynchronous Instructional Input or a fully Synchronous Instructional Input.
5. Asynchronous Online: All Instructional and Learning Inputs are offered Asynchronously online, and are self-paced.

> *we have developed a [training] course based predominantly on asynchronous video lectures on relevant features of Panopto on our LMS*

Across all of these five course models, Panopto plays an important role, both in the asynchronous and synchronous instructional inputs. Captioned video recordings of lectures, and classroom interactions, embedded with formative assessments in the Moodle LMS, enable the course models to be implemented across all five schools in Singapore Bible College. Therefore, we formulated strategies to encourage the adoption of Panopto lecture capturing technologies among our teaching staff (Faculty and Adjunct staff), based on the barriers to technology integration enumerated by Vrasidas (2015) above.

To address the teaching staff's challenge of lack of time to learn Panopto, we have developed a course based predominantly on asynchronous video lectures on relevant features of Panopto on our Learning Management System for initial training. This was at first a pre-planned response to normal loads and being 'time poor', but the need was exacerbated by the impending potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic including possible isolation of faculty from both their workplace and from students, as experienced to a lesser extent in the SARS epidemic. Actually COVID-19 "lockdowns lasted about 8 weeks from April 7, 2020, to June 1, 2020" (Tan & Chua, 2024, p. 197) and 9 days in May, 2021 (p. 198). Perdana and Chu (2023) assert Higher education institutions (HEI's) faced "many challenges in changing their pedagogy and maintaining students' learning during the pandemic" (para. 3). The Singapore Bible College was not exempt.

The videos were structured in a logical manner of increasing difficulty levels. We also intentionally captured these video lectures using Panopto so that teaching staff experienced the features of Panopto first hand e.g. captions, smart chaptering, video quality, quiz features. The affordances of asynchronous bite-size videos allowed teaching staff to access them anytime, anywhere, within a stipulated period configured on Moodle. Bite-size content of less than 20 mins chunks, were deliberately designed so that busy teaching staff would feel motivated to complete the video. The smart chaptering capability, together with video speed allowed the teaching staff to exercise ownership of their own learning as well as being able to review certain segments if necessary. According to the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI) (Rogers, 2003), teaching staff have varied cognitive learning paces and different motivational levels in picking up a technology tool. This was seen in SBC as well.

Using Figure 1 nomenclature, to cater to the late majority, a considerable number (34% predicted), we have arranged additional synchronous online class sessions of less than 1 hour, to address any questions about Panopto. The questions addressed were collected beforehand by Instructional Designers, in order to customise the sessions. Moreover, these sessions addressed any motivational gaps as well through real-time interactions. The shared reactions and responses from experienced teaching staff who used Panopto, were also included in this training program, to illustrate the practicality of Panopto use in SBC. Again, the availability online provided flexibility of location for busy teaching staff to attend and they could also join in and exit anytime, once their questions were answered.

The entire Panopto initial training programme forms one module in our initial onboarding training programme for our teaching staff. This improved

training addresses the second challenge of lack of use of ICT in onboarding programmes within the two schools studied.

Subsequent training segments and updates for Panopto, were provided on Google Space, where we pushed out bite-size learning objects such as infographics and short training videos that included staff sharing about their use of Panopto. We found that such unstructured bite-size training design, allowed Just-In-Time (JIT) training for teaching staff, with minimal disruption to their busy work schedule.

The initial training on Panopto earlier on, provided the necessary prior knowledge and schema for teaching staff to learn this JIT content easily.

In addition, SBC's subscription to the full Panopto, Google Education Suite and Moodle plans provided the necessary technology infrastructure to integrate Panopto seamlessly and easily across these technological platforms. For example, teaching staff could easily add a Panopto video into any Moodle page, by clicking on the Panopto icon. Similarly, teaching staff can do a Single Sign on (SSO) using their Google work credentials to

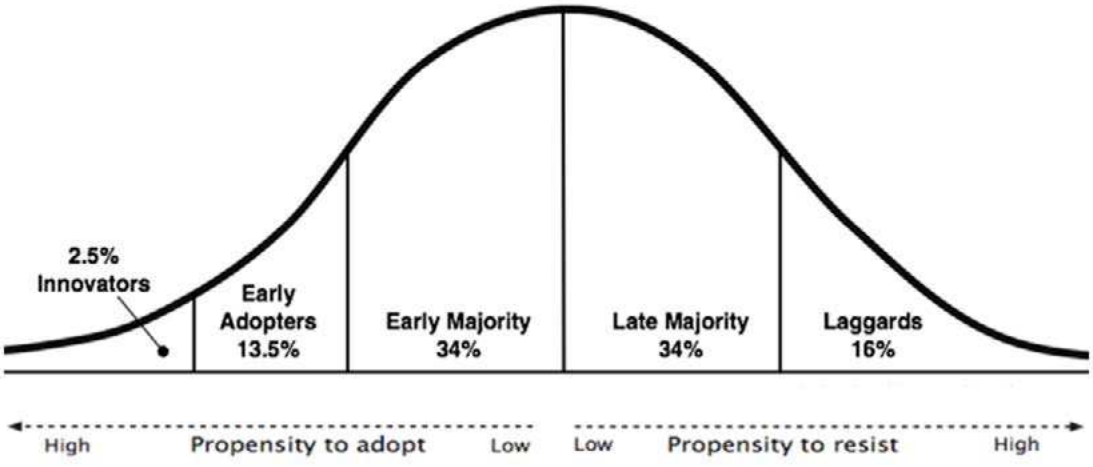

Figure 1: *Diffusion of Innovation (DOI Theory Curve*

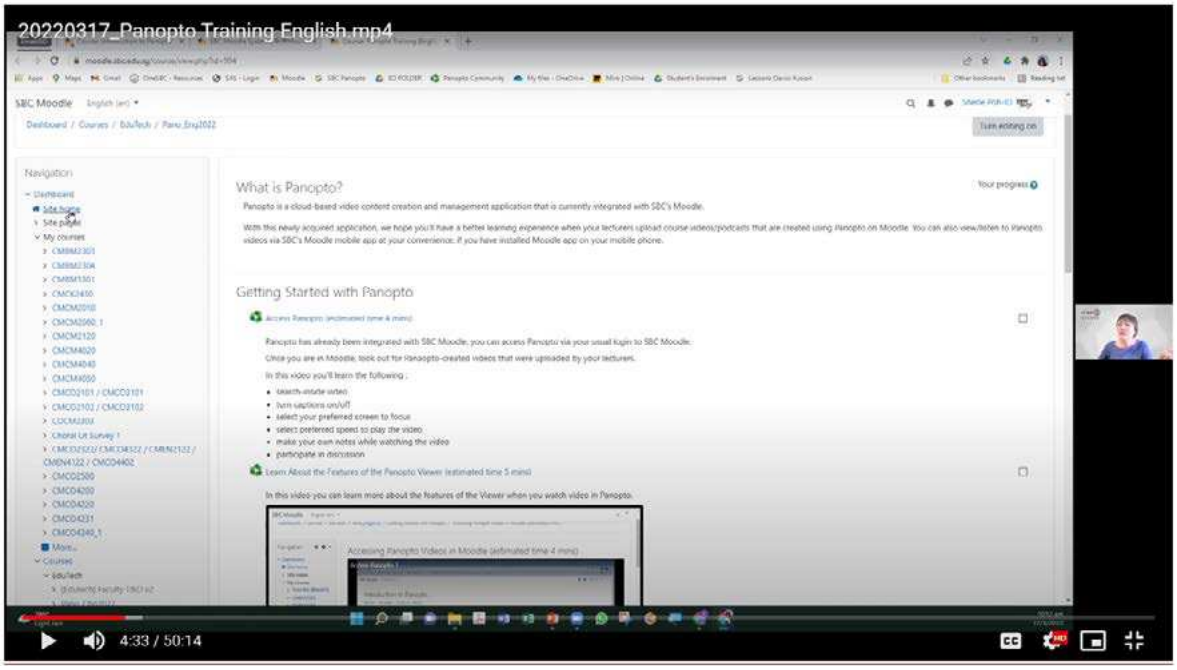

Figure 2: *An online synchronous Panopto training conducted by a member of SBC CTL (Centre for Teaching and Learning) team*

> *updates for Panopto, were provided on Google Space, where we pushed out bite-size learning objects … that included staff sharing … their use*

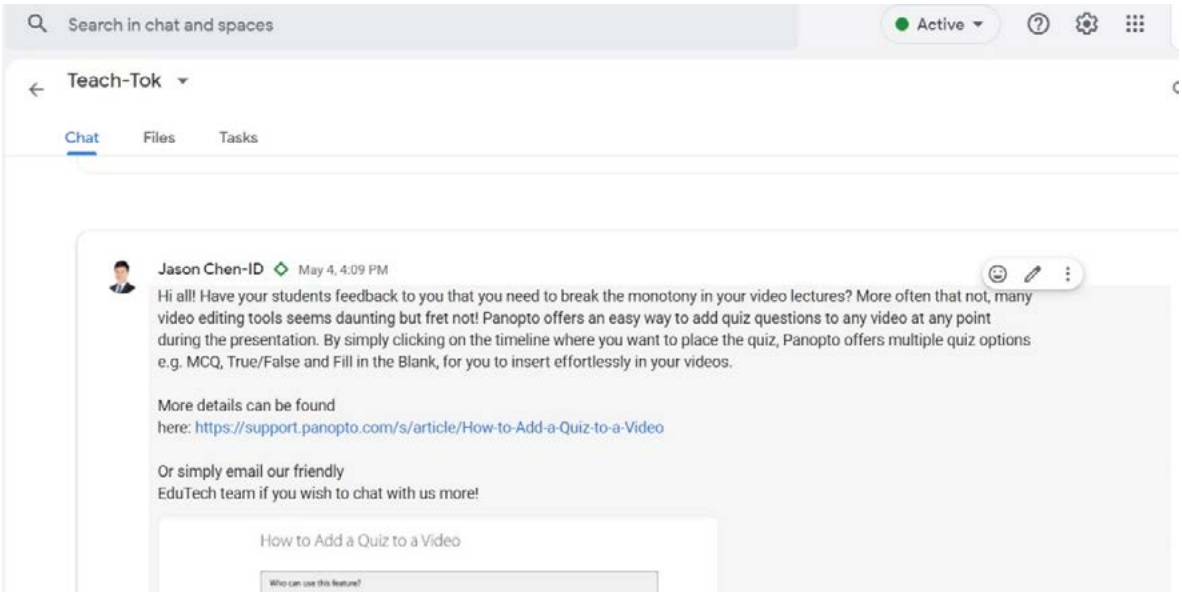

Figure 3: *Unstructured bite-size training delivered on Google Space*

> *build a group of "champions" to spearhead the adoption of Panopto technologies among the teaching community.*

access Panopto and allow the addition of Panopto videos into Google applications. In addition, three to four Faculty representatives from respective schools have been chosen to work with the Instructional Designers in the semester to produce high quality online courses.

This strategy was adopted to build a group of "champions" to spearhead the adoption of Panopto technologies among the teaching community. These produced online courses set the 'gold standards' on how the Panopto technologies could be effectively leveraged to produce good quality video lectures and the crafting of formative assessments for students. Hence, this contributed as part of the seminary's support for teaching staff to adopt the technology in their courses from the bottom up. Moreover, practical incentives such as performance appraisal, were created to encourage adoption of Panopto technologies as well as a show of support from top management.

Lastly, students were encouraged to use Panopto in their assignments both through training sessions and publicity. Panopto with Moodle, now makes it feasible for lecturers to expect their students to create and submit their own recordings for assessment, whilst the platform makes management of marking and feedback simple and effective. Students can normally see only what they have uploaded and can upload multiple times. There are no practical limits on file size. All recordings are date-stamped and identified by the user's authenticated ID. Lecturers can easily view all the recordings for the course and give feedback viewable only by the student. Depending on settings, students can extend the visibility of recordings to other users for peer assessment or group access. Similarly, lecturers can extend the visibility of individual recordings to other lecturers for moderation and to external examiners and others for quality assurance.

Students now have the tools for easily creating screencasts - to record a demonstration of a system they have built, to produce a critical evaluation of a website or to present their ideas or the results of their research. Video recordings, using Panopto on mobile devices, of presentations, interviews or performances is also possible. Adding video to a screencast may help ensure the authenticity of assessment, particularly if all students have previously recorded a short personal introduction (as part of induction to the institution) that may provide comparison. Assessment can be either formative or summative, with easy facilities for lecturers to give context-specific feedback.

This platform gives many advantages to students over alternative assessment methods. The skills they gain enable them to produce video CVs or online demonstrations for prospective employers. Viewing their own recordings is an excellent opportunity to reflect on their own skills and to try out new ideas. The process of recording is simple and uploading can be automated. There are no issues with file sizes and students can manage their own uploads by renaming or deleting them or making them available to others for review or sharing.

We designed Panopto training for students as well, both through asynchronous training as well as

synchronous training, to cater to the wide-ranging students' demographics. The training offered to teaching staff and students, ensured coherency and alignment on how the affordances of Panopto can be leveraged effectively for learning and teaching, as well as provide a platform for bidirectional feedback between teaching staff and students. We find this an effective way of supporting both teaching staff and students.

Future plans

As we are slightly over a year into adopting Panopto, and are in the midst of monitoring the use of Panopto by teaching staff. We plan to administer data collection instruments e.g. surveys and interviews at the end of the semester to find out what teaching staff and students think about Panopto and if the strategies that were described above were adequate and effective.

These components are part of strategic plans aligned with the Ministry of Education (MOE) intentions (Tan & Chu, 2024):

to make education:

1. **self-directed**, by developing pedagogies, tools, and structures that develop intrinsic motivation and self-ownership
2. **personalised**, by creating learning experiences catered to each student's needs
3. **connected**, by developing collaborative learning experiences
4. **human-centered**, by leveraging data-driven understanding of students' interests, attitudes, and motivations

Strategies include using artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance personalisation, digital making to connect students in collaborative networks, and using technology for learner-centered assessments. (p. 205)

Conclusion

It is without a doubt necessary that deliberate change management strategies need to be formulated and implemented to encourage the adoption of Panopto technology among teaching staff and students. Singapore Bible College (SBC) has adopted Vrasidas' (2015) five barriers to technology integration, as guiding principles in the analysis, designing, developing and implementation of contextualised strategies and processes in the hope of pervading the use of Panopto technology within the seminary. This has provided a systematic and coherent structure and created a synergy between and within teaching and learning fraternities. The strategy implements the MOE (2023) "Key enabler 3: EdTech ecosystem" item which advises:

> Establish *[a]* network of partnerships and facilitate crowdsourcing of resources and solutions from teaching fraternity
> - Establish local and global network of EdTech partnerships, with other government agencies, industry and research centres.
> - Facilitate school-level creation and sharing of teacher resources, and partnership with teacher-developers to amplify ground-up innovation.

Singapore Bible College shares this organisational development experience to encourage other institutions in the Christian education community to consider this organisational approach to "bearing one another's burdens" Galatians 6:2. TEACH

This has provided a systematic and coherent structure and created a synergy between and within teaching and learning fraternities.

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Author information

F.H. (Jason) Chen serves as Director/ Lead Instructional Designer with the Centre of Teaching and Learning and Adjunct Faculty with various schools at the Singapore Bible College (SBC). He holds several postgraduate credentials in Education (M.Ed, PhD and Diploma in Adult Continuing Education), Engineering (B.Eng and M.Eng) and Theology (MCS and M.Div). He is currently completing his Master of Theology programme with AGST Alliance. His current research interests lies in teachers' use of technology in the classroom and use of AI tools in theological education. is Director/Lead Instructional Designer, within the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Singapore Bible College.

Designing a supervision training program with research supervisors' voices

TEACH[R]

Peter Kilgour
School of Education and Science, Avondale University, Cooranbong, NSW
peter.kilgour@avondale.edu.au

Maria Northcoate
School of Education and Science, Avondale University, Cooranbong, NSW
maria.northcote@avondale.edu.au

Lynnette Lounsbury
School of Humanities and Creative Arts, Avondale University, Cooranbong, NSW
Lynnette.Lounsbury@avondale.edu.au

Carie Browning
Research Office, Avondale University, Cooranbong, NSW
researchoffice@avondale.edu.au

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to design a series of workshop training events for new or novice supervisors of higher degree by research candidates using input from the novice supervisors, experienced supervisors and a panel of experts. A mixed methodology was adopted where the novices and experienced supervisors completed a Likert-style questionnaire and participated in semi-structured focus groups and interviews. Data from experts were collected from a hosted panel. The novice supervisors were most concerned about managing the supervision process and dealing with candidate issues, giving feedback, working with different methodologies they may not be familiar with, and supervising in areas outside their field of expertise. The experienced supervisors added that the workshops should include advice about relationships and the wellbeing of candidates. The outcomes of the study were pragmatic because they fed into the content of the workshops, thereby training novice supervisors with aspects of supervision they felt they needed, along with aspects recommended by experienced supervisors. This study suggests that, when institutions are designing training events for higher degrees by research supervisors, key stakeholders, including the potential learners (novice supervisors), should be systematically consulted. This form of teaching in a Christian institution includes all the basics of recognised good supervision but adds the elements of Christian care and support.

Introduction

Overview

Being a Christian higher education institution comes with all of the teaching responsibilities of a Christian school, but adds the equally important area of research and guiding Higher Degree by Research candidates through a focused and sometimes stressful but rewarding part of their career. The teaching component involves not only the teaching of candidates how to research and build a thesis worthy of their effort, but also the training of new PhD supervisors in the skills of quality supervision. This study was designed to discover from new

> *design … training events for … novice supervisors … using input from the novice [and] experienced supervisors, and a panel of experts.*

and experienced supervisors the areas of training and development they see as vital in learning to become a competent mentor to PhD candidates in a Christian setting. It was hypothesised that the Christian values of care, compassion, positive relationships, and trust in God's guidance would surface in this study, along with the same academic and administrative responsibilities of higher degree supervisors at other institutions.

As a form of teaching, the process of guiding research candidates through their research-focused degrees is often overlooked, understandably, in place of a focus on the research topic itself and the research candidate's needs (Bruce et al., 2009). While the selection of research supervisors is contingent on their existing disciplinary or methodological expertise, they also require skills to facilitate their candidates' learning about research. The act of supervising research candidates, who are typically enrolled in doctoral or masters by research degrees, involves a particular form of teaching, often referred to as the pedagogy of supervision (Bruce et al., 2009, Baxter et al., 2016, Green & Lee, 1999, Qureshi & Vazir, 2016, Sinclair, 2004, Zeegers & Barron, 2012). The extent to which researchers as supervisors are proficient in this form of teaching, essentially providing researcher education to the candidates they supervise, is partially dependent on the quality of their own experience of being supervised (Robertson, 2017) and through on-the-job experiences (Spowart et al., 2019). This mimicking of supervision experience, drawn from experiences of being supervised and transferred to situations in which they are supervising others, can be a positive experience if the original supervision practices were worthy of imitation. However, when the opposite is the case, novice research supervisors have little on which to base their practice, without an additional form of professional learning. Whether their own experience of being supervised as a research candidate was positive or otherwise, the benefits of engaging in supervisor training programs are well documented (Emilsson & Johnsson, 2007, Huet & Casanova, 2021).

> *The act of best practice research supervision can be taught, modelled, and developed … the more guidance a supervisor receives, the better the experience of the student*

In recent decades, universities and higher education institutions have acknowledged that, just as research candidates require guidance from their supervisors to conduct research, the supervisors themselves require instruction on how to provide such guidance. The act of best practice research supervision can be taught, modelled, and developed as the supervisor transitions from novice through to experienced and, eventually, to an expert level of supervision. Gaining relevant experience and instruction on the path to developing as a skilled supervisor can involve a range of professional learning activities including participating in mentoring programs, engaging in informal corridor conversations with more experienced colleagues, attending professional development workshops and gathering advice from panels of expert supervisors. The design, construction, and delivery of supervision training programs to guide the development of research supervisors is usually undertaken by those with experience and expertise in research supervision. Based on a recent literature review, few studies into supervisor education have addressed the issue of how to engage supervisors themselves in the development of their own professional learning activities. This article reports on the findings of a mixed methods research project in which a university's cohort of novice supervisors and other stakeholders were consulted during the process of designing supervisor training workshops for novice supervisors. The findings of the project were twofold:

1. A set of research-informed recommendations used to guide the design of a suite of supervisor training workshops; and
2. The supervisor training workshops themselves.

As well as drawing on data gathered from key supervisor-stakeholders during the early stages of the project, the researchers consulted literature, experts in the supervision of higher degree by research (HDR) candidates and publicly available supervision resources to guide their construction of the above-mentioned practical recommendations and supervisor training workshops. The literature consulted during the early period of the study is now outlined.

Background

It should be noted that the words 'students' and 'candidates' are used interchangeably by authors when referring to those studying higher degrees by research.

Our literature review was focused on finding the most important aspects of supervisor training to enhance both the supervisory and student experience with the goal being timely completions and an overall satisfactory experience for all involved. Recent literature indicated that studies of HDR supervision show that the more guidance a supervisor receives, the better the experience of the student. Cryer and Mertens (2003) suggested that training a PhD supervisor, providing support, advice, and recognition, would in turn enhance the relationships between supervisor and student, as well as delivering better final outcomes in terms of research and completion. This targeted training of

supervisors not only benefits the student, but allows the supervisor themselves to acquire new skills, develop a deeper relationship with the pedagogy, to develop a supervisory person and to build relevant networks (Swai, 2019). Creating this targeted training is the responsibility of the University and procedures should be created around the question '*What makes a qualified supervisor?*', a concept that may evolve over time (Lee, 2018).

Further studies have discussed specific topics that should form the basis of supervisor training. One common issue arising for HDR students and supervisors is a mismatch in expectations. Cardilini et al. (2022) found that there was a disparity between how much guidance supervisors think they provide students, and how much students perceive that they receive. Training may help to increase the communication skills needed to plan and manage those expectations. These expectations will vary across different students and supervisors. Madan suggests that supervisors need to be trained in different supervision styles so that they can find the right one for each student and given that the PhD experience is formative for students in their future careers, supervisors need to be aware of expectations, management styles, and the whole supervision experience (Madan, 2021). This expectation of individualised care is further explored by Schmidt and Hansson (2018) who contend that doctoral student wellbeing is one of the most important parts of the supervisor's experience, something that may well be out of their usual area of expertise and therefore, something that should form a part of any supervisor training program.

A study in 2021 also suggested that professional learning workshops for supervisors should be broad with different skill sets taught and targeted so that supervisors would have the opportunity to learn about "different concepts of supervision and become aware of their personal conceptions, for such awareness could encourage a more thoughtful approach to supervision practice, and one aligned with the needs of individual students" (Kreber & Wealer, 2021). These different skill sets could include such things as interpersonal skills, learning around providing feedback to students, working within a team of supervisors, understanding and teaching autonomy and the monitoring of well-being across both supervisor and student (Woolderink et al., 2015). Haven et al. (2022) claim that supervisors must also be trained in responsible research practices for students to learn these themselves. Knowledge of responsible research practices, along with interpersonal skills development, will allow supervisors to pass these skills on to students in a practical and valuable way. Another important part of supervisory training is developing within supervisors the ability to teach and mentor writing skills, as one of the things students feel they need the most guidance in, is academic writing (Guerin et al., 2017).

The way in which supervisors are trained is also important. As many will be supervising online in distance mode using online technologies, it is important that training includes not only instruction on this style of supervision, but training in this online mode itself. This allows the supervisor to make the paradigmatic shift around coping with the challenges of modern supervision, much of which will occur in the online space. To this end, it is suggested that at least part of any supervisor training be done in the online space so that the supervisor can understand the dynamics of the mode (Huet & Casanova, 2021). This would also allow them to be more effective supervisors of students engaged in international distance learning and further training may be necessary to spend time acknowledging, learning, and explaining situational differences so that communication between supervisor and student can be optimised despite cultural divergence (Alebaikan et al., 2023). Research by Van Veldhuizen et al. (2021) suggests that one-off professional development programs are just the beginning for supervisors and that reflection, sharing and further professional development is needed for supervisors to put new ideas into practice with their students. Even seasoned supervisors can benefit from ongoing training and development as students' learning needs change over time.

> *"there was a disparity between how much guidance supervisors think they provide students, and how much students perceive that they receive."*

The review of current literature identified a variety of areas of practice that could form part of the supervisor training, and provide valuable information on the modes of training, reflective practices and ongoing support that could be put into place around our workshops. The information was used to create a targeted list of topics and skills to cover within the workshops as well as a multi-modal format that would include both in-person and online modalities, and involved panels, discussions, lectures, and activities.

Methods

The intention of the research project reported in this article was to design a novice supervisor training program (including workshops supplemented by online resources) informed by stakeholder input, relevant literature, and current best practice. The project adopted a two-phase action research approach, the design of which was built upon the involvement of stakeholders (Bergold & Thomas,

2012; McTaggart, et al., 2007) and consultation with experts in the field of research supervision.

This methodology fostered project participant ownership, especially from novice research supervisors, while also producing a training program to improve supervisors' capabilities. This paper reports on the first phase of this project which comprised the following three stages:

1. Review of literature and best-practice existing resources in research supervision.
2. Stakeholder and expert consultation to determine current capabilities and needs of novice supervisors, including gathering data and advice from novice supervisors, experienced supervisors, and experts.
3. Workshop design of three two-hour interactive workshops with resources embedded.

Gathering data from … experienced supervisors ensured … workshops incorporated institution-specific aspects of supervision that were seen as important.

This capacity building project, intended to promote the professional development of research supervisors, was designed and implemented by research teams at two collaborating universities: one in Australia and one in Papua New Guinea. The processes and outcomes of the project that were designed for and implemented in the Australian university are reported in this paper[1].

Participants and data collection

In the first stage of this project, three groups of participants were invited to contribute data in the form of self-assessment of supervision skills, perceived needs of research supervisors and expert advice. Together, these data were pooled and used to inform the development of three training workshops (with associated resources), outlined in the Findings section of this paper.

Firstly, all the novice supervisors at the Australian university were selected using the following inclusion criteria:

- qualified to supervise research candidates or has the potential to supervise research candidates.
- available to attend three 2-hour workshops and two 1-hour data collection sessions.
- not currently enrolled in their own PhD studies.
- willing to be involved in the project.
- supported by their Head of School and Dean to be involved in the project; and
- not intending to take substantial periods of leave, beyond regular annual leave periods, during the duration of the data gathering and workshop implementation stages of the project.

In total, thirteen novice supervisors were selected and invited to join the project and eleven accepted the invitation. The novice supervisors were requested to complete an online questionnaire in which they self-reported on their current supervision skills. They were also invited to contribute to a semi-structured interview in which they were asked to further comment on areas of supervision they were concerned about and to articulate their preferences for the content and style of future supervision training workshops. Gathering data from the novice supervisors ensured the supervision training workshops, designed specifically for novice supervisors as part of the project, incorporated the views of the key stakeholders to which the project was targeted.

Secondly, the researchers consulted a group of experienced supervisors at the same university, to gather their views of the skills, knowledge and capabilities required of research supervisors. The most experienced supervisors at the Australian university were selected using the following inclusion criteria:

- more than five years of successful research supervision experience.
- qualified to supervise research candidates and/or classified as research active according to the university's relevant policy.
- willing to be involved in the project.
- supported by their Head of School and Dean to be involved in the project; and
- available to attend a 1-hour data collection session at the beginning of the project.

A total of eight experienced supervisors from the Australian university were invited to participate in the project and all these supervisors accepted the invitation. The experienced supervisors were requested to complete an online questionnaire that identified key skills and knowledge required of research supervisors. In follow-up focus group interviews, the experienced supervisors were given opportunities to share their views on the content and style of supervisor training workshops. Gathering data from this group of experienced supervisors ensured that the supervision training workshops incorporated institution-specific aspects of supervision that were seen as important by the university's experienced supervisors. The data gathered from experienced supervisors also provided advice to the workshop designers from those who had engaged in recent, successful, and authentic supervision experiences.

[1] Outcomes of the project's final phase, in which the supervisor training workshops were implemented and evaluated, are reported elsewhere.

Lastly, experts in the field of research supervision were sought from four additional universities in Australia to ensure the design of our research training workshops featured issues central to national research guidelines, reflected expert voices and included key issues relevant to modern supervision practices. The experts were selected according to the following criteria:

- has a reputation as a successful and experienced research supervisor.
- currently holds a leadership role within an Australian university that comprises governance or management of higher degree supervisors and/or candidates.
- available to attend a 1-hour Expert Panel session at the beginning of the project and a 1-hour Expert Panel session at the conclusion of the project.
- ideally, is active and holds membership of relevant HDR-related organisations such as the Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR).
- willing to spend one hour preparation for each of the two Expert Panel sessions mentioned above; and
- willing to be involved in the project.

The expert panellists were requested to provide commentary on the way in which research training workshops should be designed, along with their views and experience of key issues relevant to higher degree research and supervisor training practices. The expert voices in this project were also supplemented by a comprehensive literature review, completed by the project's researchers in the early stages of the project, which sought recent practical recommendations from experts in the fields of research supervision, supervision training and professional learning/development, researcher education and the pedagogy of supervision.

Table 1 summarises the type and number of participants involved in the first phase of the project, along with the data collection instruments used to gather data from these participants.

In addition to the participants from an Australian university, outlined above, approximately 19 novice supervisors and four experienced supervisors were included in a parallel version of this project from a university in Papua New Guinea. Results of the analysis of the data gathered and the workshops developed for the university in Papua New Guinea are reported elsewhere.

> *"experts in the field of research supervision were sought from four additional universities in Australia"*

Data analysis methods

All data gathered from novice supervisors, experienced supervisors and expert panellists were analysed with the intention of identifying a set of practical recommendations to inform the design, development, and implementation of a suite of research supervisor training workshops that served to promote the professional learning of a group of 11 novice research supervisors in one Australian university. Data gathered from the online questionnaires, contributed to by the novice

Table 1: *Participants and data collection methods*

Participants	No. of participants	Data collection instrument	Type of Data
1. Novice research supervisors	11	Online questionnaire[2]	Quantitative: Likert-style question responses
		One-to-one semi-structured interview[3]	Qualitative: Open-ended questions
2. Experienced research supervisors	8	Online questionnaire[4]	Quantitative: Likert-style question responses
		One-to-one semi-structured interview[5]	Qualitative: Open-ended questions
3. Expert panellists from universities in Australia	4	Panel discussion questions[6]	Qualitative: Open-ended questions

[2] Items drawn from, and modified and updated, page 14 of the self-auditing matrix for supervisors in the Improving HDR Supervisor Practice book (Edith Cowan University, 2014). .
[3] Questions drawn from issues revealed in literature review about research supervision.
[4] Items drawn from, and modified and updated, page 14 of the self-auditing matrix for supervisors in the Improving HDR Supervisor Practice book (Edith Cowan University, 2014).
[5] Questions drawn from issues revealed in literature review about research supervision.
[6] Questions drawn from issues revealed in literature review about research supervision.

and experienced supervisors, were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequencies, standard deviations) to determine the key areas of supervision that required emphasis in the supervisor training workshops.

The qualitative data from the interviews with novice supervisors, focus group interviews with experienced supervisors and the expert panel discussion were analysed using a coding/analysis matrix (Miles & Huberman, 2013). This method was used to collate and categorise (code) the data, firstly, by using the research project's intention and the questions used in the interviews and focus groups as deductive categories and, secondly, by identifying the emergent themes using inductive analysis[7].

Toward the end of the coding process a thematic map was developed to reflect the essence of the collated data's meaning, to represent the supervisors' and experts' combined views. During this point of the data analysis process, signposts in the data were sought that provided evidence of:

- the novice supervisors' self-evaluation of their own skills.
- information regarding the design, content, style, activities, and structure of the workshops (from novice supervisors, experienced supervisors and expert panel members); and
- suggestions for improvement of the workshops for future workshop offerings (from novice supervisors and expert panel members).

[7] Items drawn from, and modified and updated, page 14 of the self-auditing matrix for supervisors in the *Improving HDR Supervisor Practice* book (Edith Cowan University, 2014).

> *"the qualitative data comprised most of the data gathered, and the quantitative data were used to supplement the findings of our … qualitative data"*

As advised by St. Pierre and Jackson (2014), only substantial themes and sub-themes, made up of meaningful collections of data, were retained in the final thematic map.

Overall, the qualitative data comprised most of the data gathered, and the quantitative data were used to supplement the findings of our analysis of the qualitative data. Together, our analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data enabled us to pinpoint the key skills and knowledge required by research supervisors, along with a set of practical recommendations that were used develop a suite of professional learning supervisor training workshops.

Method used to report the findings

The findings that follow are twofold. They provide an outline of the research-informed design recommendations that were drawn from an analysis of the data gathered during the first stage of this

Table 2: *Skills to be incorporated into the workshops*

Skills the experienced supervisors believe are important, and the novice supervisors are already confident with. **These should *not* feature strongly in the workshops.**	**Category**	Skills the experienced supervisors believe are important, and the novice supervisors are not confident with. **These should be included in the workshops.**	**Category**
Communicates effectively	Skills	Gives appropriate feedback	Skills
Motivates and inspires	Skills	Broad knowledge of research paradigms	Knowledge
Gains respect and trust	Skills	Manages the process	Skills
Establishes rapport	Skills	Expertise in scholarly publications	Knowledge
Establishes research purpose	Action Imperatives	Listens to candidates concerns	Attitudes
Timely responses	Action Imperatives	Confronts progress issues	Attitudes
Celebrates successes	Action Imperatives	Identifies barriers to progress	Skills
		Assists candidate to reduce barriers to success	Skills
		Extends candidates capability	Skills

project, and an outline of the training workshops that were developed from these recommendations.

Results

Before the supervisor training workshops were designed, the pools of data gathered from multiple stakeholders were analysed to establish a set of research-informed recommendations to guide the design of a suite of supervisor training workshops. These results are outlined below, followed by a description of the workshops themselves.

Online surveys

The online surveys consisted of 44 questions that novice and experienced supervisors were asked to answer. The questions were categorised into groups labelled as skills, knowledge, attitudes, and action imperatives. It was established that if experienced supervisors thought the characteristic or skill was important and the novice supervisors believed they were already proficient in that area, that aspect became a low priority in providing training in that area in the workshops. If, however, the experienced supervisors saw a characteristic or skill as important and the novice supervisor felt inadequate in that area, it was decided those areas would be helpful to include in the workshops and became a priority.

Table 2 provides both the list of elements not seen as vital for the workshops because the novice supervisors were already confident in these areas, and a list of those that needed to be included in the future workshops.

The elements that the novice supervisors felt confident in were relationship skills and important timely responses. The areas the novice supervisors felt less confident in included knowledge and attitudes.

Interview data – Experienced Supervisors

Focus group interviews were conducted with the experienced supervisors. These revealed that, despite their experience, this group found working on research methodology to be one of the least enjoyable aspects of supervision. Understandably, another area they did not enjoy was working through candidate challenges, specifically the difficult conversations relating to lack of progress, focus, motivation, independence, and personal challenges.

The feedback from experienced supervisors also indicated there were three areas in which most felt they would benefit from further training and development:

1. Mentoring – this included learning to be a mentor to candidates and other supervisors and having opportunity to be mentored by other supervisors.
2. Supervising – outside their area of expertise.
3. Thesis writing process – training, resources, advice (reviewing and editing, developing skills, where to start first, where to go for help).

> *Experienced supervisors found working on research methodology to be one of the least enjoyable aspects of supervision.*

Interview data – Novice Supervisors

While experienced supervisors took part in a focus group interview, one-to-one interviews were conducted with each of the novice supervisors. Table 3 outlines the top responses from each group.

From the interviews, several common themes

Table 3: *Common responses from participants*

	Least enjoyable aspects of supervision	Areas identified for further training
Novice supervisors	• Managing candidate challenges such as lack of motivation, focus and progress. • Research methodology • Lack of clarity on the roles and contribution within the supervisory team • Editing candidate drafts	• Research methodology • Mentoring candidates and being mentored by experienced supervisors. • Thesis styles • Working with topics outside area of expertise • Assisting with writing the thesis
Experienced supervisors	• Research methodology • Candidate challenges, specifically the difficult conversations relating to lack of progress, focus, motivation, independence, and personal challenges	• Mentoring - candidates and other supervisors • Supervising outside area of expertise • Thesis writing process – training, resources, advice (reviewing and editing, developing skills, where to start first, where to go for help)

emerged from both groups of supervisors:

1. The desire for more information and resources relating to research methodology.
2. The need for mentoring in supervision:
   - Novice supervisors were interested in being mentored by an experienced supervisor.
   - All supervisors were interested in training on mentoring candidates as researchers; and
   - Experienced supervisors were interested in training on mentoring less experienced supervisors.
3. The difficulties of managing candidate challenges, particularly lack of progress.
4. The desire for information and resources relating to the process of writing of the thesis.
5. The need for reassurance and guidance for supervisors working outside their areas of expertise.
6. The difficulties of managing expectations and responsibilities within the supervisory team.

> *[Experts] saw the value in ensuring that research and writing is not done independent of … the candidate's faith and world view in their research,*

Expert Panel data

Four experts from universities in Australia and New Zealand were invited to provide guidance for this project. At their first meeting with the research team, they were asked to provide opinions on what capacities, skills, and knowledge supervisors need to develop to work effectively with their candidates. Furthermore, expecting there would be a long list of answers to this question, they were then asked which of these would be the most important for a novice supervisor to be exposed to first as they begin their supervisor journey.

The panel were keen to instil in candidates a 'big picture' view of research and research journeys. This included helping candidates to think and write critically. They also saw the value in ensuring that research and writing is not done independent of culture. This includes consideration of the candidate's faith and world view in their research, and the culture of a desire for ongoing learning and reflective practice for both the candidate and supervisor.

There were also specific aspects the expert panel suggested were especially important for novice supervisors to learn in the early stages of their candidature. The process of the novice supervisor transitioning from a candidate to a supervising guide is important. They will inevitably reflect on their own experience as a PhD candidate and their relationship to their supervisor and need to decide which of those experiences and relationships they would like to retain, and which they desire to do differently.

Other aspects of supervision that the experts suggested were important 'up front' included: being authentic and empowering the candidate, giving constructive feedback, making plans, and setting milestones with the candidate, being able to distil the core questions to be answered and knowing how to navigate the ethics process. While these are all process type skills, the experts also commented on personal attributes that supervisors need to be able to demonstrate. These include: nurturing the students' strengths, dealing with doubts and uncertainties, listening and responding, working

Table 4: *Content of workshops constructed from the data*

	Workshop 1	Workshop 2	Workshop 3
Title	Expectations and Relationships	Management and Leadership	Communication and Feedback
Content	• Recognising good practice in supervision (c) • Identifying responsibilities of candidates and supervisors (a) • Considering the issues of multiple supervisors (b)	• Understanding the milestones • Choosing topics and methodologies (a) • Considering supervision types and styles • Looking at types of projects possible	• Verbal communication • Written communication • Feedback
Mode	Online and on campus	Online and on campus	Online and on campus
Delivery	• Sharing and reflection • Survey and discussion • Case study analysis	• Discussion and quiz • Activity stations	• Presentation • Discussion • Reflection

a. Derived from novice supervisor data
b. Derived from experienced supervisor data
c. Derived from the expert panel

collaboratively, being able to engage and stimulate the candidate.

Apart from the skills the expert panel suggested should be included in the workshops, they also gave advice on the style and activities of the workshop. It was suggested that the workshops needed to be authentic and collaborative, engaging the novice supervisors in the discussion. They should be encouraged to express their fears and aspects or supervision they are less confident with.

It is interesting that while novice supervisors were more concerned with their own specific knowledge and skills base, the experts were more concerned that the novices learned global skills first such as the place of culture, relationships, and empowerment.

Workshop content

The result of this project was the development of workshops for higher degree by research supervisors. The data that were used to structure the workshops were collected based on the perceived and stated needs of the supervisors - both novice and experienced. The data therefore took the following form:

- online surveys of novice and experienced supervisors and their comparison;
- interviews with novice and experienced supervisors; and
- comments and ideas coming out of the initial expert panel.

The content of the workshops that was a result of this research is found in Table 4.

Discussion

The purpose of the research reported in this paper was pragmatic in nature. The project was initiated from a desire to provide relevant and practical workshop training to novice higher degree by research (HDR) supervisors. Therefore, it was clear that the input of novice supervisors through surveys and interviews to find out what they believed would be the most helpful for them in a workshop would be vital data from which to plan the workshops.

Based on the knowledge that novice supervisors have not had the experience to recognise the types of needs they may have, experienced supervisors and a panel of experts were also consulted about useful additions to workshops for beginning supervisors.

When collated, the data collected from the different groups provided us with content that informed the workshop programs. The first priority was planned to be the aspects of supervision that novices knew were important, but they were not confident in. The second priority was aspects experienced supervisors thought were important that novices were not confident in. The third and fourth priorities were aspects the novice supervisors were confident in. A decision-making matrix was constructed (Table 5) to help in our planning.

The diversity of ideas for workshops seen as necessary by novice supervisors, experienced supervisors, and the expert panel confirmed the ideas of Kreber and Wealer (2021) who maintained that novices need to be exposed to different approaches and philosophies of supervision because they are dealing with individual PhD candidates with different ways of experiencing their research journey. Without such exposure a novice supervisor could easily replicate their own PhD experience because they have not had the opportunity to envisage alternatives.

With the input from our groups of participants, it was found that, as reported in the literature, there was a need for workshop training in all three areas: knowledge, attitude, and skills. While the need for specific *knowledge* is pointed out by Haven et al. (2022), and the focus on skills is recommended by Guerin et al. (2017), multiple authors emphasise the necessity for supervisors to have or to develop attitudes that allow them to understand their candidate and care for their wellbeing (Madan, 2021, Cardilini et al., 2022, Schmidt & Hansson, 2018). The area of attitudes is particularly important

> *novices need to be exposed to different approaches and philosophies of supervision because they are dealing with individual[s] … with different ways of experiencing their … journey.*

Table 5: *Decision matrix for workshop design*

	Novice supervisors not confident with this aspect	Novice supervisors confident with this aspect
Seen as important by novice supervisors	**Priority 1**	**Priority 3**
Seen as important by experienced supervisors and experts.	**Priority 2**	**Priority 4**

in a Christian institution where, in caring for the candidate's wellbeing, helping the new supervisors to understand the importance of connecting their candidate with God's care should be integral to the supervisor.

Conclusions and implications

The obvious outcomes of this study were primarily pragmatic. As part of our Supervisor Training Program the need to invest in the knowledge and confidence of new HDR supervisors was recognised. By using several methods of determining the type of training that they perceived was most needed, the design of the workshops was 'fit for purpose' and appreciated by the novice supervisors, especially because they were invited to have input into the design of the workshops that were specifically designed for the novice supervisors themselves.

The most significant outcome from this study is the efficacy of including academic staff of all levels of experience in the training design process. We therefore recommend that when designing any professional learning experience, time is taken to systematically seek the perceived needs of the learners, along with input where possible from experienced staff, stakeholders, and experts in the area of training. TEACH

> *in caring for the candidate's wellbeing, helping the new supervisors to understand the importance of connecting their candidate with God's care should be integral to the supervisor.*

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Author information

Peter Kilgour is Dean of Research, an Associate Professor in the School of Education and Science, teaching professional development and experience to 4th year teacher trainees getting them ready for the workforce. His research interests include Christian education, mathematics education, multicultural education and classroom environment research

Maria Northcote is a researcher and educator who has worked in the Australian higher education sector for over 20 years. She has managed research projects on topics including assessment design, professional learning, researcher education, pre-service teaching and online learning. She is the Director of Higher Degree Research at Avondale University in NSW Australia.

Lynnette Lounsbury is a Senior Lecturer and Head of School in Arts and Business. She lectures in Ancient History and Communications, particularly writing. My work is based around the cross-over between history and creative writing, particularly speculative-fiction and history and covers both theoretical explorations as well as creative practice. I also educate and write for film and television.

Carie Browning is the Research Services Manager at Avondale University. Her work involves administrative and management tasks for research at Avondale, with a specific role working with higher degree by research candidates from enrolment to graduation.

Students rank their experience at Avondale among the best in Australia

Brenton Stacey
Avondale University, Cooranbong, NSW
brenton.stacey@avondale.edu.au

Keywords: Avondale, quality indicators, learnig experience, Student Experience Survey

Avondale is a top-tier university for domestic and international student experience, according to the latest and only comprehensive national survey of higher education students.

The 2022 Student Experience Survey ranks us first (international students) and second (domestic students) among undergraduates for quality of educational experience compared to the 41 other universities in Australia.

When you include both student cohorts and aggregate data over two years, we are the top-ranked university in Australia for quality of educational experience and quality of teaching practices.

Our Bachelor of Nursing course is number one across all focus areas—skills development, learner engagement, teaching quality, student support, learning resources and quality of the educational experience. This is the best result—for the third consecutive year—of the 37 universities and higher education providers offering the course.

And our teacher education courses are number one for quality of educational experience, quality of teaching practices and learner engagement, compared to the 36 universities and higher education providers offering similar courses.

> *our teacher education courses are number one for quality of educational experience, quality of teaching practices and learner engagement,*

"Our students appreciate the personalised experience and the care they receive from our staff members," says Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Kerri-Lee Krause. "They value the sense of belonging that comes from feeling like they're part of a community—both on campus and online." Kerri-Lee mentions co- and extra-curricular offerings such as the Avondale Character Experience Laboratory wellbeing program and activities and services—including chaplaincy and service learning—provided by the team from Avondale Student Life as helping create this sense of belonging. "These complement top-quality teaching and the rigour of academic study."

Almost half of the students enrolled at Avondale in September this past year completed the 2022 Student Experience Survey, well above the national average response rate of 37 per cent.

Avondale is an independent higher education provider, and they typically rank well in the survey. But "when you have a relatively small sample, one or two dissatisfied students can make a big impact on your results," says Kerri-Lee. "So, feedback from students is key to keeping us on our toes. We take commitment to quality seriously, which means integrating a student voice in our planning and decision-making to ensure we're listening to and learning from their experience."

The Student Experience Survey helps higher education institutions and the government improve teaching and learning outcomes for students. It is part of the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching survey program and funded by the Australian Government Department of Education.

Visit www.compared.edu.au to explore and compare higher education institutions and study areas. The website aggregates data over two years and includes domestic and international student and graduate responses for more consistent and accurate results. TEACH

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Author information:
Brenton Stacey is Avondale University's Public Relations and Philanthropy Officer. He brings to the role experience as a communicator in publishing, media relations, public relations, radio and television, mostly within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific and its entities.

Guidelines for new grads: Understanding the unspoken rules of the workplace

Cindy Cox
NNSW Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Cooranbong, NSW
nnswhr@adventist.org.au

Keywords: C areers, employment, attributes, unspoken rules, personal traits, values

Graduation later this year will officially bring to an end your time at university. But, many of you, particularly teachers will find jobs before you march. If you are a new graduand, how have you found the transition from the classroom to the work force, from knowing what is expected of you to learning it all over again? The following four guidelines are my take on the unspoken rules of the workplace. Following them will make you an even more valuable employee and save you from having to learn through trialand error.

1. Ask questions in your interview
Think about what you want from a job and ensure you cover these dealbreakers in the interview. An employer will always give you an opportunity to ask questions in an interview. Make the most of this. I've always asked questions about my potential boss because working relationships are important to me. What qualities do you bring to the working relationship? What's important to you in an employee? You get a sense of their values.

2. Be reliable
I've known casual employees who just didn't turn up for work if they got a better offer. Their lack of engagement surprised me. But employers, especially Baby Boomers and gen Xers, want you to be engaged even with basic or mundane tasks such as data entry (see point three below). So, my advice: show enthusiasm and make yourself useful or, even better, indispensable. If you can fix the photocopier when no one else can, you're highly employable.

3. Say yes to the basic tasks
If you learn to do all the basic tasks well, then you'll be given more responsibility for other tasks. Good leaders understand how their organisations work because, at one stage, they mastered the basics, too. You can't just take a leap off the bottom to the top. You have to step up, gradually.

4. Earn your stripes
This may sound blunt, but you don't get to take over anybody else's job until you know yours really well. Thinking, "I've got this. I'm ready for the next stage," is healthy: employers want to see drive. How will you know you're ready, though? Adopt an attitude of "I'm willing to learn" rather than one of "I already know it." You probably do know something about your job your employer doesn't but you don't know everything.

A Millennial who thought he'd done his job well—and he had—wanted to apply for his boss's job. He put his name forward even though others said to him, "This is not a job for you." They recognised he had yet to learn the necessary skills. I had mixed feelings: admiration for his boldness but frustration with his lack of self-awareness.

Having said all this, there are many things employers can learn from you. Here are two:

1. There are better ways to communicate than by email. You bring expertise in other forms of communication—chat, instant message, social media. Show your employer the benefits of these mediums.

2. You don't have to be at work to get the job done. Negotiate workplace flexibility with your employer—if they value you as an employee, they should at least consider your proposal. If successful, repay trust by demonstrating any productivity gain. Perhaps COVID has helped employers become less rigid in their thinking. TEACH

"I've always asked questions about my potential boss … What qualities do you bring to the working relationship? What's important to you in an employee?"

Author information
Cindy Cox has trained in psychology and human resource management and draws from industry experience in sharing suggestions to advance both careers and progressive entities.

Article continued from page 21.

6. **Diversity**: Promotes an inclusive approach that honours and respects diverse perspectives, cultures, and backgrounds within service-learning experiences.
7. **Progress Monitoring**: Advocates for ongoing assessment and evaluation of service projects to track progress, assess impact, and improve future initiatives.
8. **Duration and Intensity**: Stresses the importance of providing adequate time and depth for service experiences, allowing for meaningful engagement and a deeper impact on students and the community.

"Service-learning practitioners recognise that implementing service-learning curriculum is labour-intensive."

What can service-learning achieve for students?

Service-learning practitioners recognise that implementing service-learning curriculum is labour-intensive. Hence, they want to be sure that the outcomes warrant the time and emotional energy expended. Billig (2000), identified the impacts of service-learning in the following domains:

1. Service-learning has a positive effect on … personal development…
2. Service-learning helps develop students' sense of civic and social responsibility and their citizenship skills.
3. Service-learning helps students acquire academic skills and knowledge.
4. Service-learning results in greater mutual respect between teachers and students.
5. Service-learning leads to more positive perceptions of schools and youths being reported by community members.

"When service-learning meets an authentic community need and includes meaningful planning, service, reflection, and celebration, it typically succeeds in engaging students in the learning task. Most studies attribute this outcome to the nature of service-learning as an activity that students perceive to be relevant, interesting, meaningful, and fun." (Billig, (2000) TEACH

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Author information

Jerry Unser is an educator whose career has focused on building character through service and adventure. In 1993 he developed Storm Co, a service-based approach to engaging students with rural and outback communities. He has continued his passion through 30 years of study and experience in immersive service-learning practice.

Carol-Joy Patrick developed an award-winning service-learning elective for Griffith University, winning both a Citation and Program Award in the national Australian Awards for University Teaching. The awards recognised the transformative personal and professional development in students participating in the course.

Jameekka says course helped her grow in confidence

Brenton Stacey
Avondale University, Cooranbong, NSW
brenton.stacey@avondale.edu.au

Keywords: Gap year, outdoor leadership, STORMCo

Jameekka Galindo grew up on Lake Macquarie, "so I love the outdoors and outdoor activities." Inspired by the experience of her older sister, she began studying at Avondale the same year many of her friends began their Higher School Certificate. Now, she's on the verge of graduating from university with a Diploma of Outdoor Leadership and a wealth of life experience. "We go to some pretty intense places and our lecturer, David, challenges us to safely engage in activities that test our limits. I used to think, I can't do this, but now, with practise, I know I can. That's built self-confidence and improved my discipline—you have to think carefully about what you're doing both before and during the activity.

"We've been canyoning in the Blue Mountains, where we also did a multi-pitch abseil of 300 metres. We've kayaked out on the sea and around some of the secluded bays and coves of Sydney Harbour. I remember David dropping us off at different locations, giving us a map, a compass and a radio, and telling us he'd meet us at the destination. I kayaked across a shipping channel and past an island and thought, *What an adventure!*. We've also hiked into Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, camped overnight and hiked back. That was tough with a lot of climbing, but we kept motivating each other.

"I've just returned from helping run a resilience activity called Pinnacle Challenge for the STORMCo teams out west. [STORMCo is a service-learning adventure that presents Christian faith in action by building long-term relationships with communities.] It's been tiring but so fulfilling. We've also organised a few school camps, including one at Bungonia National Park and another at Royal National Park, where the coastal walks are beautiful and the scenery so different.

"I can't wait to work in the industry and have potential work at adventure camps near the Central Coast, Lake Macquarie or on the Mid North Coast.

"The Certificate IV in Outdoor Leadership is an excellent course for those considering a gap year. It teaches you essential life skills without assuming any prior outdoor experience. It's also fun and fosters a friendly atmosphere. You create such strong connections in places you've probably never seen before.

"These past two years have been the best years of my life. I've grown so much." TEACH

Author information
Brenton Stacey is Avondale University's Public Relations and Philanthropy Officer. He brings to the role experience as a communicator in publishing, media relations, public relations, radio and television, mostly within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific and its entities.

> *I used to think, I can't do this, but now, with practise, I know I can. That's built self-confidence and improved my discipline*

Figure 1: Jameeka abseiling a rock wall

BOOK REVIEW

A Plan Larger than I Could Draw: Stories and Perspectives from the Mind and Heart

Neville Clouten. Year date of publication (2022).
Signs Publishing, 148 pages.
ISBN: 978 1 922373 82 3

Graeme Perry

Avondale University, Cooranbong, NSW
graeme.perry@mm.net.au

> *Clouten's work illuminates the back story of Jørn Utzon's non-conforming submission being drawn into consideration, … and perceptual insights gained from Utzon's personal confiding.*

The iconic Sydney Opera House (SOH), this year, celebrates the 50th Anniversary of it's opening on the 20th October 1973 (Dow, 2023; Sydney Opera House, 2023). It's significance resonates with Noeville Clouten. In early 1963, as a recent Sydney University graduate from architecture, he gained a six-month contract as Sydney Opera House: Researcher and Guide. He was to interact with architect Utzon, project engineer Ove Arup and the NSW Government PR Committee, supporting the latter in combating the barrage of misinformation that asserted mismanagement and incompetence in the planning and construction process.

The first chapter of Clouten's work illuminates the back story of Jørn Utzon's non-conforming submission being drawn into consideration, exposure of a typical Sydneysider assessment of cultural needs in cartoonist Molnar's image, and perceptual insights gained from Utzon's personal confiding. The text then shifts to recount a personal narrative of 'critical incidents' in career progression that defines this whole work. Clouten offers some structural form for this work by sharing, "The eight essays in this book tell stories from my life experience as a student, an architect, an academic, an artist and traveller … each essay explores issues 'of the mind' … or 'from the heart'(p. ix)." Each issue type is illustrated within the three months of camping in Europe, working in Scandinavia, cars driven - Renault to Covair, presentations at Harvard and Yale on the SOH, and finally teaching at Ohio State University, all encompassed in this initial chapter. All combined evidence of a providential 'plan larger than I could draw' (p. 22).

The second and third chapters redevelop life periods quickly passed over within the preceding chapter. Both dwell on unique 'coincidences' and the themes of the artist and traveller. The unpredictable outcomes of admiring both the MGB and the Citroen, of mumps and Le Corbusier, fjord cruise speculation and the Cunard water colour workshops, and a final resolution of the missing Kiama canvases are examples. Neville notes with sensitivity, the mutual interaction with Norene in planning and enjoying their shared experiences. The long way to Scotland via Mexico including the Mayan ruins, visits in Guatemala opening an itinerary to Panama, and safe arrival in Barcelona, confirmed for the Cloutens that

> There are times when Christians can know they are in the right place at the right time. It would be wonderful to know this all the time, but God ordains that it is not so. The exercise of faith is fundamental to the Christian life amid the turbulence of … events and ideas. (p. 49).

Faith helped look past 'stolen goods' and alternative outcomes for eye conditions encountered.

For science-oriented readers, Chapter Four will be of special interest as it investigates the application of photogrammetry (deriving measurements from a pair of stereoscopic photographs) to indigenous art, but the consequent outback adventures will potentially engage all readers.

Finding Faith in Kenya becomes the catalyst bringing earlier Ugandan and Nigerian architectural consulting and soliciting of philanthropic funding contacts, mostly resulting in unfulfilled plans (Chapter Five) into an expanding and currently continuing successful involvement with Rapogi Lwanda Primary School in western Kenya.

Clouten confides, "It was the belief that architecture could give life a gentler structure that turned my attention towards paying more than lip service to designing for human activities" (p. ix) and this professionalised goal is evidenced in this volume's sharing of reflections on a fulfilling life, personal beliefs and persisting divine motivation.

This work is recommended for all persons sensing the value of hearing other stories of faith, particularly the experiences of Christian professionals. Those knowing doubt, but seeking assurance within their personal journey of 'a larger plan' and affirmation of personal guidance, perhaps only known later in the backward glance. Neville's engaging style makes it an easy, pleasurable, positive read. TEACH

References continued on page 64.

ADHD is Not an Illness and Ritalin is Not a Cure : A Comprehensive Rebuttal of the (alleged) Scientific Consensus

Yaakov Ophir. (2022).
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Jared M. Bartels

Department of Psychological Science, William Jewell College, Liberty, Missouri

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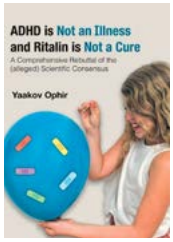
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is often described as a brain disorder, a description which lends scientific credibility to the diagnosis. There are, however, numerous problems with viewing ADHD or any other mental health struggle in strict biological terms. Our understanding of mental health in general and ADHD specifically has implications for how we understand ourselves in terms of agency, our identity, and the way that we treat such struggles. Research does not support conclusions about ADHD as caused by brain abnormalities and, even if this were the case, such research would not by itself legitimize ADHD as a disorder. Putting mental health struggles including ADHD in the proper biological, psychological and theological context allows us to both mental and spiritual growth.

Yaakov Ophir's, *ADHD not an illness and Ritalin is not a cure* is one of several recent books critical of ADHD (e.g., Armstrong, 2017), but it is certainly not redundant as Ophir, unlike the others, provides a comprehensive assessment of the scientific status of ADHD and stimulant medication. At the very least, even if one refuses to accept Ophir's conclusions, the reader is forced to consider a well-articulated and scientifically credible alternative to the orthodox ADHD narrative. As such, this book is a must-read for parents, teachers, and school administrators.

The first part of the book is devoted to refuting the notion that ADHD is an illness. In doing so, Ophir asks the reader to consider deviance from a statistical perspective. Though not employed in the diagnosis of ADHD or any other disorder, Ophir argues that one might consider two standard deviations below the average on any given characteristic (e.g., attention) to be a reasonable cutoff (i.e., 2.5%). Yet, as Ophir notes, relative to ADHD, the prevalence is much lower for other Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) diagnoses for children including Autism Spectrum Disorder and Intellectual Disability both at roughly 1%. For the latter diagnosis, individuals would likely have an IQ score at least 2 standard deviations below the mean of 100 (i.e., 75 or lower). With prevalence estimates for ADHD as high 20% in some studies, it is not hard to argue that at the very least overdiagnosis has become a significant problem. As Ophir points out, however, the other three d's that are crucial for establishing a clinical disorder, dysfunction, danger, and distress, are not met either.

In terms of dysfunction, given the aforementioned prevalence, it is tempting to draw on anecdotal experiences with children diagnosed with ADHD who, outside of a school setting appear behaviourally indistinguishable from a child without the diagnosis. As Ophir points out, this is all the more likely as the DSM-5 does not require "significant impairment" (i.e., dysfunction) for diagnosis but only that it "interferes with" or "reduces the quality" of functioning. This is significant in that it helps explain the inflated prevalence and it allows for one to make the argument that the behaviour is not confined to the school environment. With the bar lowered, in other words, it's easier to find examples of the behaviour outside of school. Ophir goes on to argue, as other ADHD critics have (e.g., Armstrong, 2017), how highly situational the ADHD behaviours are, by the DSM's own admission. Moreover, if not confined to school settings with particular behavioural expectations and attentional demands, why do kids prescribed medication often take drug holidays when not in school?

At this point in the book, though only a few chapters in, the difficult-to-answer questions like this begin to mount. Is the behaviour deviant if 10-20% of the population supposedly meets



> *Is the behaviour deviant if 10-20% of the population supposedly meets the criteria for diagnosis?*

the criteria for diagnosis? Is it normal to expect a child to sit still in school all day? Are these children simply bored? Is this best characterized as a brain disorder? Additional questions surface when Ophir considers the criterion of danger. Are physical games and risk-taking behaviours, common among boys, viewed by some teachers and parents as deviant? If not, why is it that a disproportionate number of boys are born with a brain disorder? Lastly, concerning distress, Ophir argues that an educational system that places inappropriate demands on the attentional and self-regulatory capacities of children, pathologizes normal boyish behaviour, and fail to appreciate the strengths of children labelled with ADHD is the source of distress. In summary, Ophir makes a strong case that the overwhelming majority of the 10-20% children with ADHD do not meet the "four D's" criteria. Moreover, for those diagnosed with ADHD that do exhibit deviant behaviour and experience significant dysfunction and distress, ADHD is not the appropriate diagnosis given DSM criteria not to mention the significant comorbidity associated with ADHD.

In chapter 6, Ophir addresses the notion that ADHD is a neurobiological deficit. He reviews evidence that there are neurological differences between those with and without ADHD and chemical imbalances account for ADHD. As Ophir notes, brain differences by themselves would not validate the diagnosis of ADHD or any diagnosis for that matter. While there are studies documenting small differences in subcortical regions between children with and without ADHD, no such differences exist between adults with and without the diagnosis. As for the chemical imbalance theory, there are no reliable findings documenting a chemical imbalance as the cause of ADHD or any other psychiatric diagnosis.

In the second half of the book, Ophir questions the short and long-term efficacy of stimulant medications and the extent to which the drugs are harmful and dangerous. The evidence for the short-term efficacy of the drugs is underwhelming. Ophir reviews research demonstrating a benefit in terms of compliance among those taking the medications. Yet, not only does this compliance come with the cost of less initiative and responsiveness, there is no benefit in terms of academic performance.

see it is a mode of thought or personality trait rather than a medical condition,

The longitudinal research on the long-term effectiveness is even more conclusive in terms of a lack of efficacy. Ophir cites research documenting a significant drop in medication benefits from 12 to 24 months on the medication and no benefit a year later at 36 months. He then documents the costs associated with stimulant medication including stunted growth and non-serious (e.g., tics) and serious events (e.g., cardiac abnormalities, psychosis and mania) that appear to be far more common than typically reported. Ophir uses several case studies to illustrate the clear link between the medication and psychotic symptoms.

In chapter 12, Ophir addresses the well-established conflicts of interest in the science of ADHD (see also Schwartz, 2016). Ophir draws our attention to the publication bias in which positive findings on ADHD medications are more likely to be published. This brings to mind the significant publication bias in antidepressant drug trials leading to the mistaken impression that most trials produce positive results when in reality only half the trials are positive (Every-Palmer & Howick, 2014). Ophir concludes the book with recommendations that include changing the way we think about ADHD (depathologise) – see it is a mode of thought or personality trait rather than a medical condition, encourage parents to provide a supporting, loving environment sensitivity to the child's mode of thought, pursue non-pharmacological interventions that may include neurofeedback interventions, and nature-based activities. Like fellow critic Thomas Armstrong, Ophir argues that the educational system should emphasize a child's strengths rather than weaknesses and one way to accomplish this is through the promotion of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence and providing more play opportunities for students. In sum, Ophir provides compelling evidence that ADHD is not an illness and that Ritalin is not an appropriate treatment. At the very least, the evidence should convince even ardent ADHD proponents that the diagnosis is grossly over- diagnosed with the aid of softened DSM criteria.

There are several concepts in the book that are important for Christian teachers, school administrators and parents to understand. These need to be fleshed out and considered within the context of Christian education. I will use some

representative blog posts to illustrate several common misunderstandings surrounding this issue and propose a theologically-informed perspective on the diagnosis of ADHD and mental health in general.

ADHD is real

"My faith keeps me from going insane when dealing with my ADHD child. I do not care if other people don't believe that ADHD is real. If they have seen my child or me on and off our medication, they know that ADHD exists." These words were written by a mother on a faith-based ADHD blog who felt understandably frustrated. ADHD does exist in the sense that there is agreement among many clinicians that it is a mental disorder, yet, as Ophir argued, if by "real" one means a brain disorder with a clear biological etiology, ADHD is not real. The issue is not the realness of hyperactivity and impulsivity, but the status of ADHD as a disorder, the brain-based assumptions that underlie it and the appropriate treatment. It is crucial to understand that impulsivity and inattention are observable and obviously real as are individual differences in each trait. ADHD is not observable - no psychiatric diagnoses are - it is a construct held together by agreement among clinicians about the significance of the observable behaviours. Thus, "ADHD is real because my child is impulsive and inattentive" is a specious argument. Yet, one might counter that it is not just the child's behaviour that is different, it is their brain.

It is a brain disorder

"The key is to understand that doctors and scientists have lots of data on ADHD and know that it is in fact a medical condition that involves a lack of neurotransmitters in the brain," states an individual on a faith-based ADHD blog. Medication supposedly corrects for a dopamine deficiency at the neurobiological root of ADHD. Yet, the fact that a child acts better under the influence of a drug that increases dopamine does not prove that ADHD is caused by a lack of dopamine any more than the relief I feel from acetaminophen proves that my headache was caused by an acetaminophen deficiency (i.e., this is an example of an intervention-causation fallacy). The assumption that an exclusively biological model will eventually be discovered is logically dubious as it rests on a hypothetical future discovery. Yet the search for answers always begins and ends with the brain because materialism, the assumption that the world is entirely physical, offers no alternatives.

Materialism

"Hello brains. I say that to you because if you think about it, it wasn't really you who decided to come here today. It was your brain" begins the speaker of a popular TED Talk on ADHD (McCabe, 2017). She goes on to state unequivocally that Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is real, that abnormalities in the brain cause ADHD, and that stimulant medication is a highly effective treatment. The speaker was not a neuroscientist or physician, but an actress diagnosed with ADHD. The fact that she spoke with an air of scientific certainty on this matter is revealing in terms of the widespread acceptance of this ADHD narrative. "It wasn't really you, it was your brain" implies "you" or your sense of will, your mind and thoughts do not determine your behaviour. However, the assumption of a seamless causal relationship between the brain and behaviour is not supported by science. Consciousness, though it interacts with the physical brain, is not reducible to it. Not only can psychological treatment produce changes in the brain, but the mere expectation of psychological or pharmacological treatment can produce healing through the placebo effect (Beauregard & O'Leary, 2007).

This materialistic view of nature is inconsistent with the Biblical concept of dualism; we have a physical body and immaterial soul. The way we think, behave, and feel changes the brain, the relationship is a two-way street. Research showing that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for treating Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) causes changes in the brain serves as a powerful demonstration of this relationship (Beauregard & O'Leary, 2007). Changing patterns of thought and behaviour change the patterns of brain activity. Recognizing this, brain scan differences in ADHD can be recognized for what they are, unremarkable. Of course, the brain of a child who is hyperactive looks different than the brain of the child who is more docile. This does not establish the hyperactive brain as abnormal, the

"ADHD is real because my child is impulsive and inattentive - is a specious argument."

docile brain as normal, or ADHD as caused by the brain.

Medication Fix

"Unless your church rejects all medical treatments for any medical condition, I do not believe ADHD should be singled out. It is a real neurodevelopmental disorder" states a contributor to a faith-based ADHD blog. Here you have the juxtaposition of a modern and seemingly scientifically informed take on ADHD and an antiquated theological rejection of modern medicine. Yet, we need not accept the premise that one must reject or accept all forms of medication nor the assertion that ADHD is no different than any other medical condition treatable with medication. The notion that ADHD medication is correcting for a known biological deficit simply is not supported by the evidence. The predominance of the medical model and biological assumptions has led to a medication-first mindset when it comes to dealing with struggles with attention, concentration and impulsivity.

> *one can ask about the legitimacy of the ADHD diagnosis, … the potential for the school or home environment to be broken rather than the brain,*

A Theological Approach

From a scientifically sound theological perspective, we can recognize biological predispositions as influential factors in terms of behaviours associated with ADHD. However, the brain is neither the sole determinant of behaviour nor is medicine the only way to produce changes in the brain and behaviour. When we put mental health struggles in the proper context of a Biblical worldview, it does not necessitate disregarding medical interventions. There is room for medication and therapy. God surely works through individuals providing mental health services.

The late Thomas Szasz noted (cited in Davies, 2013):

> Our age has replaced a religious point of view with a pseudoscientific point of view…Now everything is explained in terms of molecules and atoms and brain scans. It is a reduction of the human being to a biological machine. We don't have existential or religious or mental suffering any more. Instead we have brain disorders. (p. 276)

Mental health struggles are not themselves pathological, but part of our human nature as fallen people in a fallen world. They afford us opportunities for spiritual growth, drawing us closer to God. They can be used in the service of Christ, our source of identity and comfort. They also provide us opportunities to model a Biblical worldview by seeking guidance in God's word and turning to God in prayer.

We should recognize fallacious arguments and affirm that there are reasonable questions one can ask about the legitimacy of the ADHD diagnosis, the rising prevalence of ADHD, the potential for the school or home environment to be broken rather than the brain, and the extent to which school personnel medicalize disruptive student behaviour. Ophir's answers to these questions should give us pause. A brain-based explanation of ADHD offers to relieve us of our personal and societal accountability for our mental health struggles, but such a constricted view rooted in materialism is neither scientifically nor theologically sound. We should reject this Faustian bargain, think clearly and critically about ADHD, and appreciate mental health struggles as opportunities for growth.

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