

TEACH JOURNAL

OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



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schoolies week

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CONTENTS

3 Editorial

TEACHING & PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

4 Reflection: The value-adding component of service learning

Wilf Rieger

12 The Road to Bethlehem: Connecting school and community

Brenton Luchow

15 Transforming classroom practice

EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

16 The Adventist school system and values transmission

Barry Gane

RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

26 Literacy programs as an empowering agent for women: A case study from Papua New Guinea

Jillian Thiele

32 Reactions, reflections and responsibility: A 'responsive evaluation' of an emerging blended elearning subject

Peter Kilgour & Phil Fitzsimmons

42 Forms, foci and forces: The need for overseas pre-service teacher professional experiences

Jason Hinze & Phil Fitzsimmons

REFLECTIONS, IMPRESSIONS & EXPERIENCES

50 Connecting the dots

Braden Blyde

52 MC's Vanuatu 'schoolies week'

Aaron Williams & Nicki Clark

54 Help yourself: What I learned from my Development Studies placement

Chelsea Mitchell

55 Students help bring Jesus to Buddhist community

Brenton Stacey

56 Two countries, one mission: Students partner with NGOs on projects

Lawson Hull

57 Tessa's Temple of Solomon: Model of architectural masterpiece a recreation of scientist's vision

Charlotte O'Neill

58 Community-minded scholars bring gospel to life: Launch of a book to help others find meaning in Scripture

Brenton Stacey & Sara Thompson

59 Book reviews:

Signs to life: Reading and responding to John's gospel
Bruce Manners

Captive in Iran: A remarkable true story of hope and triumph amid the horror of Tehran's brutal Evin Prison
Andrea Grant

When helping hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor...and yourself
Harwood Lockon

Dictionary of Christian spirituality
Kelvin Mutter

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Ministry Of Teaching



EDITORIAL

Graeme Perry

Is your staffroom periodically sullen and silent, or spasmodically resounding to aggressive reactionary comment? How does it matter? Are there implications? Twenty-seven percent of a cohort of early career teachers have been identified as “on the path to burnout” or were “worn out” already” (Richardson, Watt & Devos, 2013, p. 240).

This longitudinal study was initiated in 2002 by surveying a group of students beginning their courses in primary and secondary teaching. Watt (as cited in Marshall, 2013, para. 5) comments that their altruistic initial motivations included “wanting to enhance social equity, making a contribution to society, or having a personal interest in teaching and working with youth”. However, after eight years in the classroom more than a quarter had become “a dangerous group” (para. 7) reporting greater negativity in their student interaction including the use of sarcasm, aggressive responses, and reacting inappropriately to mistakes. Lack of administrative support and facing tougher emotional conditions than expected, were offered as reasons for this outcome of early imminent burnout and lower quality teaching.

In this issue of TEACH, Gane, researching values transmission and quality of school life in Adventist schools, indicates students consider only half of their teachers care about them, listen to them or reward work well done. Similarly, only about forty percent agreed that teachers try to avoid embarrassing students. What are the influences producing these outcomes? Current concerns for quality teaching (Dinham, 2013; Gore, 2012) assert that findings of negativity, like these, be addressed. Discussion by Gane suggests teachers and system administrators research contextual elements and act to achieve more positive experiences for students.

The concepts of service learning and associated reflection are thematic initiatives offered by authors of this journal as contributing experiences, for both students and teachers, that enhance authentic learning and support quality teaching.

Hinze and Fitzsimmons, suggest that pre-service, overseas professional teaching experiences (OPTEs), better integrate both personal and professional identity, enhancing commitment to the profession since “doubts and perplexities” are resolved during reflection. Kilgour and Fitzsimmons show e-spaces in learning support student reflection and ownership of learning. In professional practice,

Reiger asserts reflection, guided by effective questioning adds value to service learning. Illustrative classroom applications and a typology of strategies, practices and expressions are discussed.

The experiential beneficial outcomes of participation in service for local communities, usually with associated Christian outreach by students and staff, are recounted in sharing “The Road to Bethlehem”; implementing alternative schoolies weeks—Macquarie College’s Vanuatu trips; Thiele’s explanation of providing literacy experiences for women in developing countries and the recollections of service project participants. Blyde suggests service can “connect the dots”. Yet Lockton in a book review, shares warnings that helping can hurt!

Haloviak Valentine sees “Signs to Life” in the insights of reflective reading of the Word, suggesting “the more we are aware of what we bring to the experience, the more we will be aware of the wonder we find there that is beyond us”. In the stress of teaching, can the strain be limited by motivations sourced from supernatural grace?

The Word expressed—is our life of service learning. **TEACH**

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“**Twenty-seven percent of early career teachers have been identified as “on the path to burnout” or were “worn out” already**”

[Photography: Gлены Perry]

Reflection: The value-adding component of service learning

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Abstract

The current pervasiveness of service learning (SL) in school communities is reinforced by an increasing recognition of SL's wide-ranging benefits. To maximise these, however, necessitates an effective process of reflection—the processing of experiences and posing of searching questions (numerous suggestions are offered in the article) at levels appropriate to the activities, situations, and participants' ages and abilities. The process calls for critical thinking that, ultimately, should lead to personal growth, evidenced in the changed attitudes, perspectives and behaviours of participants.

Background

Service learning has come of age during the last two decades. A brief scanning of the literature and available websites shows it to be *de rigueur*, spanning the educational continuum from pre-schools to universities. The latter institutions currently offer free-choice elective courses for academic credit, with undergraduates engaged in community internships¹ or volunteering locally and overseas with non-government organisations²; with the school of dentistry at one U.S. university pleased to adopt “Service is our Calling” as its motto.³ The 20th century historical roots of service learning may be found in John Dewey's educational philosophy, and evident in the goals and activities of such bodies, groups and associations as the Peace Corps Movement, Scouts, Guides, Pathfinders, Apex, Lions and Rotary. From a biblical perspective, its origins may be traced back to Old Testament times and seen in the Schools of the Prophets that probably were founded in ancient Israel, by Samuel.⁴

What exactly is service learning?

Defining it becomes problematic because of its almost endless diversity. Service learning ranges from individual random acts of kindness, to pre-schoolers making biscuits for the residents of an aged-care centre, to a group of tertiary students providing medical support in a developing country. Although there are no hard and fast criteria for

SL experiences to be categorised as *bona fide*, the National Service-Learning Clearing House (NSLCH)—drawing on several publications—has proposed a number of criteria. These include that SL should be “positive, meaningful and real to the participants,” involving “cooperative rather than competitive experiences,” that “promote skills associated with teamwork and community involvement and citizenship.”⁵ Furthermore, these experiences (which would not ordinarily happen) address a perceived need in the community and

...offer opportunities to engage in problem solving by requiring participants to gain knowledge of the specific context of their service-learning activity and community challenges, rather than draw upon generalised or abstract knowledge such as might come from a textbook. As a result, service-learning offers powerful opportunities to acquire habits of critical thinking.⁶

Overall, the NSLCH regards service learning as “a dynamic process, through which students' personal and social growth is tightly interwoven into their academic and cognitive development;”⁷ all of which are furthered when the process is characterised by quality orientation and supervision.⁸

Numerous benefits have been claimed for service learning. Researchers have reported that students who volunteered for civic activities scored much better on follow-up tests of civic and democratic knowledge than non-volunteers⁹; some curriculum writers have deemed SL to be a teaching method¹⁰; while its advocates—for more than a decade—have listed real-life settings, improved academic achievement, the formation of values through altruistic service and enhanced student motivation, among its benefits. Lindsay (2013), an Australian Christian secondary educator, sees positive student growth from SL in terms of leadership, stewardship, discipleship, scholarship and relationships.¹¹

Benefits, however, are not limited to students, but are claimed to extend to teachers, schools and communities in delivering outcomes such as renewed teacher enthusiasm, developing a more inclusive and cooperative school climate and culture,

“Service-learning offers powerful opportunities to acquire habits of critical thinking”

as well as recognition of young people's efforts to address community needs, among others.¹² According to U.S. data (Billig & Weah, 2008), over 90% of school principals attested to the positive effects of service learning.¹³

Some advocates¹⁴ of SL point out the symbiotic relationship between service and learning; each strengthens and reinforces the other. There are also commentators such as Howard and Fortune (2000) who place importance on equality between beneficiaries and service providers in SL:

When the relationship among participants involved in a service project is defined by equality, all persons develop, rather than are given, the voice necessary for stating their needs, goals and responsibilities.¹⁵

A distinct Christian viewpoint on SL¹⁶

Service is not merely a humanitarian idea, but a deeply biblical concept; references to it in Scripture stretch from Genesis to Revelation. Jesus' own words testify, "...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..." (Matt. 20:28, NIV). In his parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus highlights that in serving (particularly the needy and vulnerable) we simultaneously encounter God on the vertical, and our 'neighbour' on the horizontal dimension of our personal lives, as Christians. Thus service to others is a tacit recognition of the value of human beings, as avowed by English theologian John Stott.¹⁷ In turn, U.S. educational philosopher George Knight, within the context of Christian schools introducing their students to service opportunities, asserts: "...a crucial function of Christian teaching is to help students not only to *internalise* God's love but also to *externalise* it."¹⁸ Service learning provides an avenue for students to put this into practice. It is through selfless experiences that we truly understand and learn how to live, for it is *how we live* that ultimately defines us, according to Jesus (Matt. 25:35–40; 22:37–39; John 14:15, 21).

That externalising God's love has a reciprocal effect has been recognised by previous generations of Christian educators: Ellen White (1903) spoke of those who ministered to others as being blessed themselves, "...for we receive heaven into our hearts,"¹⁹ while M.V.C. Jeffreys (1955), former Professor of Education in the University of Birmingham (UK), pointed out, "...devoted service [i.e. given in love, and not coerced] liberates and fosters personal growth."²⁰ Shane Lavery from Notre Dame University asserts that service learning is a pre-requisite for adult spiritual formation.²¹ A recent Australian research study (Gane, 2012) tends to

support such viewpoints. Of a total of 1,359 Christian youth surveyed, 63% reported that service activities had contributed to their religious faith development.²²

For secular apologists, service learning creates many opportunities; in providing a context for intercultural understanding, restructuring oppressive power relationships, achieving liberal democratic ideals and developing civic responsibility, to name some.²³ For Christians, SL takes place in the context of the Gospel and has the potential to achieve many if not all of these outcomes, including some that are uniquely different; namely—through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit—transformed minds and lives (Romans 12:2), by the demonstration of Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) and the discerning use of Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 12:1–31).

In a Gospel context, the 'locus of motivation' for service learning changes from one primarily driven by a socio-political agenda of rights, equity and justice (although these goals should not be discounted given the warnings of the Old Testament Minor Prophets and the self-authenticated mission of Jesus in Luke 4: 18–21, prophesied in Isaiah 42) to one centred in *shared grace*. "Freely you have received, freely give", Jesus told his disciples (Matt. 10:18, NIV), who in turn remind us, "Indeed, every one of us has shared in his riches—there is a grace in our lives because of his grace...love and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:16–17, Phillips). A striking exemplification of this Gospel challenge is the courageous unselfishness of Katie Davis who, as a teenager, went to serve short-term in an Ugandan orphanage and came to a daunting realisation. She wrote:

...someday I would return. I was forever ruined for comfort, convenience and luxury, preferring instead challenge, sacrifice and risking everything to do something I believed in.²⁴

She did return to Uganda. After several years of continuing in teaching and caring for young orphan children she participated in the following dialogue:

[Questioner:] You have written that we are called by God "to love with abandon." How has that path changed you as a person?

[Katie:] There is truly no greater gift than to give yourself away. The more we give the more He fills, and this is fullness of joy. I give and I trust Him, and as I trust, I overflow with joy and peace (see Romans 15:13). We pour out and He fills us, time and again.²⁵

Having provided some background, an overview and justification, it is appropriate now to focus on a particularly significant aspect of service learning.

We are called by God to love with abandon. How has that path changed you as a person?

Reflection as part of service learning

Importance

Reflecting on a SL activity is not only an integral but essential task—regardless of participants' educational level—whether carried out formally or informally. For students to engage in service learning *without* reflecting is analogous to eating a meal without gaining any nutritional benefit from it.

Through reflection, Bringle & Hatcher (2003) point out, experience becomes *educative*.²⁶ And yet, surprisingly, reflection is often a neglected aspect in service learning activities. It is insufficient for students merely to report descriptively on their SL experience without exploring or examining how they and the beneficiary/ies may have been impacted and changed. When students become aware that as a result of the SL experience they have grown (*changed* in attitudes, behaviour or points of view), reflection has become *reflexive*, with cause and effect affecting one another; a kind of 'boomerang' effect.

The complexity of the reflection and evaluation process in which participants engage, as expected, will differ greatly according to age, developmental, cognitive, cultural and situational factors. Despite these differences, it is apposite and necessary to reflect, and critically assess even *before* an SL task begins, i.e. during the beginning phase which often involves investigating, planning, preparing, and initiating. For reflection to be effective, it should take place during all three phases of a service learning experience—before, after, as well as during service.

Avoiding pitfalls

Despite the best of good intentions, an SL activity can go 'pear-shaped'. Take a hypothetical example of students collecting, washing, bundling up and sending a hundred pairs of pyjamas to an orphanage in a developing country: What might the potential outcomes of such a praiseworthy activity be? In a worst case scenario the following unanticipated predicaments could eventuate: Excessive costs for postage, freight or distribution; recipients (or eventually the sender) having to pay import duties on landed goods (otherwise they are impounded or confiscated); garment unsuitability for a particular climate; fire safety concerns regarding some garments; and the possibility of the livelihood of small local garment makers, at the recipients' end, being negatively impacted. Consequently, in some cases, helping may actually hurt,²⁷ and one may justifiably ask: Would it have been more effective for students to have engaged in fund-raising activities and donated money for the needed pyjamas through means and avenues that would have maximised

benefits 'all round'? Clearly, we do not have all the answers to perceived needs—particularly when *need* is in the life of the other—although many times we think we do. With prior reflection many pitfalls may be avoided.

A deliberative process

The process of reflection focuses on taking time to *think*—clearly, logically, critically, constructively, creatively ('outside the box'), practically and (in faith-based schools) christianly in relation to the SL activity under scrutiny.

It should not escape educators' notice that Jesus was a master teacher of critical thinking and penetrating critique through the use of narrative, questioning and 'interrogation'. He provoked people to reflect on their cherished, long-held beliefs and to re-think issues, as illustrated by his exposure of:

- Hypocrisy/selfishness – in the case of *corban*, a 'future' temple gift which released one from financial responsibility to one's parents (Mark 7:11).
- Distorted professional identity – when professionals show a total lack of empathy for those in distress (Luke 10: 31–32).
- Faulty reasoning – in reasoning from cause to effect regarding spiritual matters (John 9:2–3; Luke 13:2, 4).

Reflection will often require participants to discuss, weigh up, and attempt to resolve the priority of competing values in a world of limited resources and flawed human beings. Students may learn that, taken to extremes, even important values such as *equality* may be seriously distorted and misrepresented as to be unacceptable in particular contexts.

A case in question is Peter Singer's²⁸ claim that in certain instances human rights do not necessarily have priority over animal rights. Singer, an evolutionist, believes "there's really no overt qualitative difference between us and the animals. We just have evolved into something different from what they did, that's all."²⁹ Similarly, under the banner of equality, 'progressive' special interest groups tend to portray or brand—particularly in U.S. courts, according to Alan Reinach (2012)—the biblical view of marriage (defined as between a man and a woman) as *discriminatory*. Thus it appears that increasingly, "[o]nly 'inclusive' value systems are permitted legal status under the new tyranny of equality."³⁰

Reflection and analysis give students an opportunity to examine the validity of arguments presented, decisions made, actions performed, and values espoused, following the gathering of data

In some cases, helping may actually hurt

through service experience/s. Carefully undertaken, the process should lead to synthesis with students owning conclusions that help them to understand the world in which they live; how they can make a difference, by integrating prior knowledge with what they have newly learned and then applying it in future situations.

Process particulars

Stages

The NSLCH (2007) provides some helpful general guidance (in summary form) regarding the reflection process, at different stages of the SL activity:

In *pre-service reflection* activities, students examine their beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes about issues. They do this when they choose service projects and prepare to engage in service. *During service*, students have the opportunity to learn from their peers, share observations, ask for and receive feedback, ask questions, and solve problems. Teachers can evaluate student work and provide feedback as the reflection process continues. *After service*, students look back at their initial beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes to assess their own development. They also evaluate their projects, apply what they learn, and develop ways to solve problems that may arise in the future (emphases added).³¹

It is instructive, now, to look at what kind of questions might feature in the three stages of the reflection process.

Questions

Outcomes of reflection, to a large degree, are a function of the quality of the questions posed. Questions in relation to service learning may designate, *inter alia*, tasks, articulate problems, frame issues and point to possible solutions.

By raising or asking questions, we initiate ‘cognitive probes’ that challenge students to think. To accomplish this teachers must differentiate between low and high order questions as well as convergent (close-ended) and divergent (open-ended) questions. Students who can rely on recall to give correct pat answers to low order convergent questions, are unlikely to be cognitively stimulated and ‘stretched’. On the other hand, students will be challenged to engage in critical thinking by divergent questions that more often require a higher level of cognition involving analysing information, issues or situations and weighing up competing claims, before eventual conceptual integration and reaching an acceptable conclusion.

And how does this rather theoretical ‘stuff’ work out in real life classrooms? In response, a practical illustration involving service learning is offered

below, relating to a primary school curriculum unit of work in Studies of Society and the Environment, at Level 2 (approx. Gr. 3–4)—common to many state education jurisdictions.

A unit of work: “The human-made environment”

Some of the listed outcomes of the unit are that students are able to: *Draw* a map of the school’s locality, *label* specified places; *list* the facilities and the services provided by the council; *discuss* the convenient placement of these services and the contrasting problems of city environments—safety, air and noise pollution, litter etc.

During the course of the unit, in one of the class discussions, students report that the local park is “not a nice place to play, because of all the rubbish.” After some disagreement as to whose responsibility it is to keep the park tidy and what can be done, students want to “make a difference” as part of Clean Up Australia Day and clear the nearby park of litter. Following careful preparation and observing planning initiatives that are in line with the school’s excursion policy (half day), the whole class, teacher, and four parent helpers set out to collect litter from the park. The group are ‘armed’ with gloves, tongs, litter receptacles, etc.

On completing their collection task, the group returns to school and deposits all the litter in an assigned place for sorting into several categories with the help of the school caretaker, on the following day. Two days later, when the students have gathered their information, there is a discussion about what to record, how to display it, and with whom to share it.

Given this brief illustration, it is pertinent to ask: What kind of reflection question might be posed *before*, *during* and *after* these students’ service experience? The suggested examples given in Tables

“**Outcomes of reflection, to a large degree, are a function of the quality of the questions posed**”

Table 1: Sample pre’flection questions

Is the park our responsibility? Why (not)?
As a class, can we make a difference? How?
From whom can we find out more about the problems that spoil the park?
Shall we invite a local councillor to speak to us and/or get some students to report back to the class (after having walked through the park after school with their parents)?
If we collect the litter in the park, shall we do it as part of <i>Clean Up Australia Day</i> , or do it separately?
What planning and preparation needs to be done?

1, 2 & 3 address this question, being neither intended to be exhaustive nor prescriptive, but illustrative.

In summary, according to Ash et al. (2008), the essence of all reflection questions can be 'distilled' into: "What did I learn? How did I learn it? Why does it matter? What will I do in light of it?"³² Effective teachers do not merely pose reflective questions (such as those in Tables 1, 2 & 3) intuitively, but they do so intentionally.

Table 2: Sample intra'flection questions

Who do you think might have dropped this litter? What makes you think so?

Where do you think the litter originated from?

How do you feel when you see this litter in the park?

Is there some litter we should NOT pick up? Why? How should the litter be dealt with?

Which litter problem discourages you most (and perhaps other people)?

How many rubbish bins or signs have you noticed in the park? Should there be more or fewer? Why?

Have you spoken to other class members, asking what litter they have picked up?

Table 3: Sample post-reflection questions

How can we sort/group and record the litter collected and determine the top scoring category?

Should there be a refundable deposit for bottles (glass and plastic) and all drink cans? Why (not)? If yes, how much deposit? Would it solve the litter problem, in your opinion?

What would Jesus do? (WWJD?) Why?

What did you learn from this service learning activity (Can you draw a 'mind-map?') and how can we share this knowledge?

Is there anything that you would do differently after having done the project?

What did you learn about other people from our service project? How is that helpful to you?

How would our lives be affected if no-one cared about littering?

Do Christians have a responsibility to care for the environment? Why? The Bible refers to "being a good steward". What does that cover?

Which new skills that we learned could be applied to other tasks?

If we conducted a second litter pick-up in the park four weeks later, what might we learn, additionally?

Should we 'celebrate' our service learning experience? If so, what would be the most appropriate way to celebrate?

Next it is fitting to turn to the manifold strategies, practices and expressions (SPEs) that may be utilised for reflection purposes.

The significance of SPEs

The SPEs are of interest and importance on several counts. First, the numerous listed reflection strategies, practices, and expressions that make up the proposed typology in Table 4, may be perceived as being positioned on several axes:

- Nature of expression – ranging from concrete to abstract.
- Conceptual level – stretching from rudimentary to complex.
- Time frame – before, during and after the service learning activity.

Flexibility is evident as a hallmark of the typology catering for differences in students' developmental and conceptual levels offering learning that spans simple to sophisticated engagement. In relation to the time frame, it has already been made clear that reflection questions may occur during any stage of the service learning activity and this principle also applies to the SPEs. While many of them fall into the *post-reflection* category, others may also be used to advantage in the *pre'flection* (before) and *intra'flection* (during) phases of the reflection process.

Second, the range of the SPEs cater for Howard Gardner's concept of multiple intelligences, allowing all students to contribute to and participate in the learning journey, according to their giftedness and providing both students and teachers a good deal of freedom over choices regarding expressions and materials.

Third, in the current educational climate where performance curricula predominate, SPEs may present learning opportunities, as part of reflection, reminiscent of Elliot Eisner's expressive objectives which are evocative (*vis a vis* being narrowly prescriptive), describing educational encounters that, according to Eisner, have many positive 'yields' in the more sophisticated modes of cognitive functioning and intellectual work.³³

Fourth, it should not be overlooked that information technology and multimedia readily interface with many of the SPEs in the typology; a convenient mesh with IT skills that form an integral part of functioning in contemporary society.

Last, and perhaps most important, the reflection strategies, practices and expressions, help students to *process* the service learning experience. Reviewing, reconstructing and evaluating a SL experience should facilitate self-understanding, on the part of students. They are helped to make sense

of the ‘jig-saw puzzle’ of life and that life is lived in relationship with others, the environment—and for Christians, with God. To this end students are encouraged to examine life in the context of whether our humanity exhibits the *Imago Dei* (Genesis 1:27).

Many of the SPEs provide a record of the SL experience to which students (and teachers) can look back to with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. Furthermore, when interfaced with multimedia and information technology, the results may be shared with a wider interested audience and act as encouragement for them to take up the challenge of service learning.

A word of caution and encouragement

It is absolutely essential that the selection of reflection SPEs—by consultation between student/s and teacher—is *age, ability, context, culture, time-taken, resources-available and ethically appropriate; meeting the school’s IT policy and guidelines*. Consultation and choice should enable students to use their preferred gift/s for effective learning and understanding. Additionally, reflection should not become ‘burdensome by overkill.’ Carefully chosen SPEs will always put emphasis on quality before quantity. If there is to be a formal evaluation/assessment of students’ reflection (particularly at upper secondary or tertiary education

levels) there is a need for students to be clearly informed, in advance, regarding expectations and marking criteria (for an example, see Bradley’s criteria for assessing levels of reflection³⁶).

Conclusion

Service learning experiences are often memorable and enjoyable. But *without intentional reflection* they may merely reinforce existing paternalism and stereotypes; in the end running the risk of becoming trivialised. What matters in the final analysis is whether or not the process of reflection in service learning facilitates the development of responsible citizens who have learned to think clearly for themselves, see issues and problems from a wide perspective, (re)examine their espoused values, and live authentic lives that contribute actively to peace and progress in local and global communities. For many individuals, this growth and development will be augmented by the framework of a Christian world view as they participate in making a difference in the lives of others. **TEACH**

“Without intentional reflection, service learners may merely reinforce existing stereotypes, becoming trivialised”

Endnotes

¹ For the 2013 academic year, see for example: 3002GIH: Community Internship, on Griffith University’s Homepage. Retrieved from <http://www3.griffith.edu/03/STIP4/app?page=CourseEntry&service>. Notre Dame University (Australia) offers a specific *Christian* service learning unit titled:

Table 4: A proposed typology of reflection strategies, practices and expressions³⁴

oral-aural communication: speaking & listening	writing, print, text types	performing & creative arts
inter-section/face with multiple intelligences—giftedness a student’s preference may be for one or more of the following: Linguistic, spatial, musical, bodily kinaesthetic, logical mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and [super]naturalistic ³⁵ intelligence.		
show & tell; discussion: WWJD; oral presentation; reading of relevant selected texts (including the Bible); listening to invited speaker/s; speech, oration, debate, mock trial, monologue; other	diary, journal, scrap book, log; poem: cinquain, limerick, haiku, acrostic; letter: personal, to newspaper; pen pal, greeting card, poster prayer, psalm, parable, slogan, Big book, short story, summary, publication, report, essay, field notes, statistical report, graph, flow chart, diagram, map, sign, budget; other	write/produce/stage: news report, TV show, radio commercial, a play, a skit; music/songs: compose and play/sing, write lyrics, (e.g. rap); photograph, drawing, collage, pattern, design, mural, cartoon, painting, crafts; dance; sculpture: play dough, origami, clay, wire, papier-mache, Lego blocks; model, diorama; other
inter-section/face with multimedia & information technology word processing, video filming, phone camera, chat room, Skype, twitter, email, blog, text messages, power point, Facebook, digital photography, webpage design, other		

Education, service and community engagement.

- ² Purdue, S. (2013). I am who I am because of who we all are. *Global Child*, 35, Winter, pp. 16–17 is typical of autobiographical accounts of young people's passion and service performed in developing countries.
- ³ See Loma Linda University, School of Dentistry: Motto, vision, mission, and core values. Retrieved from <http://www.llu.edu/dentistry/mission.page>
- ⁴ Refer to 1 Samuel 10:5, 19:20; 2 Kings 6:1–7
- ^{5,6,7} National Service-Learning Clearing House (2003). What are the characteristics of service-learning? New York, NY: Corporation for National & Community Service.
- ⁸ Association for Middle Level Education (2009). NMSA research summary: Service learning, August.
- ⁹ Hunter, S. (2000). The impact of service learning on democratic and civic values, pp. 1–9; http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m2139/365241268/print.jhtml
- ¹⁰ Lindsay, D. (2013). Service, in Goodlet, K. & Collier, J. (Eds.), *Teaching well. A guide for educators in Christian schools*. Sydney: Anglican Education Commission.
- ¹¹ Hopkins, G. (1999). What makes a true service-learning experience? *Education World – Curriculum Article*; http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr188.shtml
- ¹² Service Learning Australia. Benefits of service learning and TTT. For an extended list of claimed benefits refer to <http://www.servicelearning.org.au/index.php/component/content/article/...>
- ¹³ Billig, S. & Weah, W. (2008). K–12 service-learning standards for quality practice. In J. C. Kielsmeier, M. Neal, N. Schultz, & T. Leeper (Eds.) in *Growing to greatness 2008: The state of service-learning project* (pp. 8–15). St. Paul, MN: National Youth Leadership Council.
- ¹⁴ Prentice, M. & Garcia, R. (2000). Service learning: The next generation in education. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 24, pp. 19–24.
- ¹⁵ Howard, A. & Fortune, J. (2000). Service learning as the meeting place for ethics and pedagogy. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 4(4), 22–29.
- ¹⁶ The two paragraphs that follow draw on a co-authored paper: Millar, R. & Rieger, W. (2002). Pastoral care and service learning: A Thai case study. *Journal of Christian Education*, 45(3), 49–60.
- ¹⁷ Stott, J. (1999). *New issues facing Christians today*. London: Marshall Pickering, p. 431.
- ¹⁸ Knight, G. (1998). *Philosophy and education: An introduction in Christian perspective*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, p. 204 (emphases added).
- ¹⁹ White, E. (1903). *Education*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, p. 16.

- ²⁰ Jeffreys, M. (1955). *Glaucon: An inquiry into the aims of education*. London: Pitman & Sons, p. 17.
- ²¹ Lavery, S. (2007). Christian service learning—does it make a difference? *Journal of Religious Education*, 55(1), 50–53.
- ²² Gane, B. (2012). *Valuegenesis 2, study 1, core report*. Cooranbong, NSW: Avondale Academic Press, p. 98.
- ²³ See Australian Commonwealth Government, (2003). *Engaging community: Service or learning?* Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.
- ^{24,25} Davis, K. with Clark, B. (2013). *Kisses from Kate*. Crownhill, Milton Keynes, UK: Authentic Media Ltd., pp. 4; 280.
- ²⁶ Bringle, R. & Hatcher, J. (2003). Reflection in service-learning: Making meaning of experience. In Campus Compact. *Introduction to service-learning toolkit: Readings and resources for faculty* (second edition). New York, NY: NSLH, p. 114.
- ²⁷ See Corbett, S. & Fikkert, B. (2012). *When helping hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.
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- ²⁹ Gibson, L. (2013). Stewardship and the environment. In Clifford Goldstein (Ed.). *Origins: Adult teachers Sabbath school Bible study guide*, Jan. – March, p. 118.
- ³⁰ Reinach, A. (2012). Wake up and smell the equality: Same-sex marriage and religious liberty, p. 230. In R. Gane, N. Miller & H. Swanson (Eds.). *Homosexuality, marriage, and the church: Biblical, counseling, and religious liberty issues*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press.
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- ³⁴ Acknowledgement is made of, and credit given to a table of categories on Towson University's website (See reference 31 below) suggesting how "[s]tudents can reflect in four main ways throughout the service-learning experience."
- ³⁵ Some Christians would make a claim for *spiritual intelligence* (on the scriptural basis of 1 Cor. 12:7–11; Rom. 12:6–8; Eph. 4:11–13), indicated by the square brackets [], but which is not claimed by Howard Gardner.
- ³⁶ Retrieved from: <http://www.towson.edu/studentaffairs/civicengagement/servicelearning/f>

TEACH JOURNAL CALL FOR PAPERS.

Readers are encouraged to share their experience and expertise with others. TEACH welcomes contributions on a wide range of topics related to education.

Submissions may include:

- research and scholarship
- critical reflections
- innovative practice
- case studies
- educational administrations
- reflections, impressions and experiences of teachers

The editor is happy to receive queries or submissions at: TEACH.editor@avondale.edu.au

For guidelines, go to: www.ministryofteaching.edu.au/journal/call_for_papers.html

AVONDALE SHORT COURSES OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor education involves contact with nature, small groups, and adventure, to provide a unique approach in the development of health and wellbeing for school students.

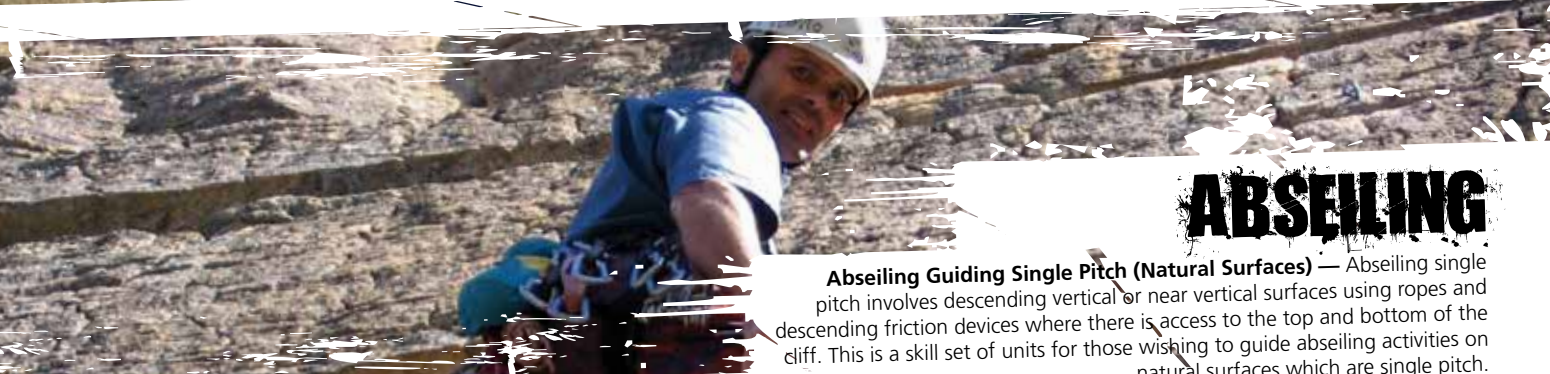
Effective outdoor education programs are best run by teachers who are trained to guide and facilitate outdoor education activities. Avondale is proud to announce the commencement of Outdoor Education short courses for teachers.

These courses will train teachers to be guides in the three activity areas of Bushwalking, Abseiling, and Canoeing/kayaking. The competencies are from the Sport, Fitness and Recreation Training Package (SIS10) and the qualification is a Statement of Attainment from the Certificate III in Outdoor Recreation, which is the recommended qualification for teachers, and others, who wish to guide outdoor education activities. Short courses are available on-line with a practical assessment in your local area.



BUSHWALKING

Bushwalking Guide Controlled Environments — Controlled bushwalking involves walking in the natural environment for a day or overnight bushwalk. This a skill set of units for those wishing to guide bushwalks in locations such as tracked and easily untracked areas that are reliably marked on maps, and are obvious on the ground.



ABSEILING

Abseiling Guiding Single Pitch (Natural Surfaces) — Abseiling single pitch involves descending vertical or near vertical surfaces using ropes and descending friction devices where there is access to the top and bottom of the cliff. This is a skill set of units for those wishing to guide abseiling activities on natural surfaces which are single pitch.



PADDLING

Canoeing/kayaking Guide Flat Water — Canoeing and kayaking has a broad scope. It involves paddling activities done in a variety of different locations from rivers and lakes to estuaries and protected waters. This is a skill set of units for those wishing to guide canoeing/kayaking trips on flat and undemanding water.

The *Road to Bethlehem*: Connecting school and community

Brenton Luchow

Community Relations Officer, Central Coast Adventist School, Erina, NSW

It is a balmy summer evening and Central Coast Adventist School is preparing to open their gates. Everything is ready for the ‘hordes’ about to stream through the gates. Camels are saddled, farm animals are in their pens, tax collectors are out in force and the Roman soldiers are ready to maintain order. As the sounds of the marketplace are heard beyond the gates and the aromas of curries, burgers, hot chips and baked potatoes are wafting through the air, it is clearly not a regular school day.

Each December, for the past 11 years, *Road to Bethlehem* has transformed the school campus into a bustling, 1st century theatre. The local Adventist churches and Central Coast Adventist School join forces to launch an event of truly biblical proportions. With a drama cast numbering close to 200 plus another 200 or so stallholders, street vendors, entertainers, technicians and guides, this community event is like no other event on the Central Coast in NSW.

The drama tour, set across seven distinct scenes, is the real draw card of this event. The nativity story is presented with a firm biblical foundation but interpreted in a fresh way. It is this element that draws over 3,000 people each year. Participants come from Wollongong in the south to Port Macquarie in the north and range in age from babies to grandparents. The core audience is Central Coast locals from all walks of life and representing a range of Christian denominations and religious faiths. They all share, in common, a desire to walk the road that leads to the infant Jesus and to remember the true message of the Christmas story.

The event also engages a family audience with plenty of quality food options and retail stalls, plus activities including face painting, crafts, carpentry lessons, camel rides, farm animals and the *Coastline Pinnacle Challenge*—an activity for youth aimed at developing motivation, resilience and self-worth. There is also stage entertainment from a variety of local performers and artists hosted by local Christian radio station *Rhema FM, Central Coast*.

So why does *Road to Bethlehem* take over the school campus each year?



“All share a desire to walk the road that leads to the true message of the Christmas story.”

Each of the Adventist churches on the Central Coast has a desire to share the message of Jesus in an authentic and engaging way. This is a desire also shared by Central Coast Adventist School. The *Road to Bethlehem* partnership allows resources to be combined to present an event on a scale that would be challenging for a single entity. The event also presents a united front to those who attend the event and allows people to ask questions and talk about the true Christmas story. Put simply, *Road to Bethlehem* is our gift to the Central Coast community.

Central Coast Adventist School benefits from the *Road to Bethlehem* event in a variety of ways. It provides an opportunity for the wider community to view the campus and experience the unique community within which we operate—to get a better picture of who we are and what we do. While it is difficult to quantify, well over 50% of people who enrol their children in the school reflect on *Road to Bethlehem* as a significant factor in their decision to choose Central Coast Adventist School.

The impact of the event goes far beyond the school gates. *Road to Bethlehem* is a significant opportunity within the school community for the engagement and expression of faith. A significant number of the actors in the drama are sourced from the school community—students, parents and staff. The stallholders and food vendors are also largely from within the school community. There is something incredibly powerful that takes place



“*Road to Bethlehem is a significant opportunity within the school community for the engagement and expression of faith*”



[Photography:
David Geoffrey
Gosling
Photography]

when you have such a diverse group of people from a range of faith backgrounds and family situations, all working together towards a common goal. Differences can be put aside to focus on the things that are held in common, new friendships can be formed, and ties strengthened.

Central Coast Adventist School is well known in the community for being a school that truly cares about its students and community. The relationship between staff and students is not typical of most schools. To staff, students are much more than a name on an attendance roll; for students, staff are approachable and willing to engage above and beyond the usual expectations. *Road to Bethlehem*

provides an opportunity for this to be observed by prospective families. Throughout the event staff, students and parents are seen interacting as a team, working together for a common purpose. The bonds that are forged here carry through into what happens during the school day and contributes to the unique nature of the school.

Road to Bethlehem provides an opportunity for the Central Coast community to experience Jesus, whom the Adventist churches and Central Coast Adventist School know and love.

Visit www.roadtobethlehem-erina.org for further details about *Road to Bethlehem* on the Central Coast. **TEACH**



Endnotes

¹ *Road to Bethlehem* programs also take place in Nunawading, Victoria and in Livingstone, Western Australia.

² Central Coast Adventist School is a K–12, non-selective, co-educational school with an enrolment of over 900 students in 2013. The school has been providing quality Christian education on the Central Coast, NSW since 1969. You can find out more about Central Coast Adventist School online www.ccas.nsw.edu.au

Some recent *Road to Bethlehem* statistics

- 200+ involved in drama production
- 200+ involved in serving, hosting, logistics and technical production
- Live animals include: 3 camels, 1 donkey, 6 sheep, alpacas, goats, calves, ponies, chicken, ducks, rabbits, plus crocodiles, snakes and spiders
- 10 food vendors
- 12 retailers
- 20+ tents
- 3 mobile refrigerators
- 35 bales of straw
- 2 shipping containers for storing props, costumes and sets
- 50 café tables
- 2000 gift bags distributed
- 5 tax collectors
- 8 soldiers
- 2700 drama tickets available
- 800+ curries sold
- 500+ hot drinks sold
- 300+ burgers sold
- 700+ cups of hot chips sold
- 500+ fairy floss cones sold
- 400+ pancakes sold
- 400+ pies sold
- 300+ potatoes sold
- 200+ cups of popcorn sold
- 1000+ drinks sold

TRANSFORMING

CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Is it possible to teach students about service using a classroom management system?

Justin Fraser, a Year Five teacher at Northpine Christian College, wants his students to understand that there is more to life than material gain. Using a class management system, he adapts the program and adds a twist to help his students recognise the value of service.

“As a teacher of Year 5 students, I want my kids to realise the value of serving others. Our Classroom Behaviour Management system involves the students earning BEANs for Behaviour, Effort Achievement and Neatness.

To reflect real life as much as possible, students make choices as to how to spend their BEANs. Some choose to buy various products from the BEAN shop (including desk title deeds, water tanks, solar panels, market places and farms) which can help them earn more beans if managed wisely. Others choose to spend their BEANs in different ways.

In order to help students develop a respect for nature and a desire to care for their environment, students are given the opportunity to buy nature reserves. This enables them to learn about protecting endangered animals.

Alternatively, students may choose to donate as many BEANs as they like to the classroom service jar. Students are made aware that any BEANs which are donated to the classroom service jar are converted to real money which is then donated to various projects throughout the year.

Past service projects have included purchasing school supplies for a school in Cambodia, donating to various natural disaster appeals, contributing to Operation Christmas Child and various Adventist Development and Relief Agency projects.

About one week before school ends for the year, I explain to the students that we have reached the cut-off date for donations to service. At the end of classes on the last day we discuss

how the BEANs, which have had so much ‘value’ throughout the year, are now worthless. We discuss what it has been like to put all your energy into earning, spending and attaining more ‘possessions’ which will eventually mean nothing.

We contrast the experience of those students who chose to pursue selfish gains with the experience of those who chose to give to others through the Service Jar. When we reach the end of our life on earth our possessions will mean nothing. Only what we’ve done to build others up, serve them, and inspire authentic relationships with God will truly matter.

Matthew 6:19–21 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” **TEACH**

“*Only what we’ve done to build others up, serve them, and inspire authentic relationships with God will truly matter*”



Justin Fraser and students, with the Service Jar

[Photograph: Tina Swanson]

The Adventist school system and values transmission

Barry Gane

Head of the School of Ministry and Theology, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW

Abstract

In 2011 *Valuegenesis*, a major survey of beliefs and values and how they are generated was undertaken for a second time twenty years after it was completed in 1992. It revealed the strength of the concert between the home, the church and the school in generating the values and beliefs of adolescents. This article exclusively discusses the impact of the Seventh-day Adventist school system in this process.

There is a growing body of literature in this area. The most prominent has grown out of the Valuegenesis studies of North America where they have systematically surveyed cohorts over the past 25 years (Benson, & Donahue, 1990; Dudley, 2000; Dudley & Gillespie, 1992; Dudley, 1995; Gane, 2005; Gillespie, 2002; Gillespie, Donahue, Gane, & Boyatt, 2004; Rice & Gillespie, 1992; Strahan, 1996). Both the Valuegenesis studies of North American students (Dudley & Gillespie, 1992; Gillespie, Donahue, Gane, & Boyatt, 2004) and the first Valuegenesis study of Australian students (Hughes, 1993) found that the religious school system had a profound effect on the student and the acceptance of the beliefs and values of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church.

There is significant literature that overlaps with and supports the findings of the North American studies (Allport & Ross, 1967; Clark, 1998; Davidson, 1993; Flor, 2002; Hoge & Petrillo, 1978, 1982; Junkin, 2002; Kirschenbaum & Simon, 1974; Ozorak, 1989; Schmidt, 1999). Benson examines the relationship between the school and values transmission and his findings highlight that religious schooling does have a long-term impact on adolescent religiosity (Benson & Donahue, 1990; Benson, Donahue, & Erickson, 1989; 1993). Arweck and Nesbitt (2004, 2004a) did a year-long study on how religions and education interconnect. They looked specifically at Living Values: An Educational Program (LVEP). This program is constructed around talking about, experiencing, and practicing values in various ways. Arweck and Nesbitt (2004) state:

Through reflection, visualisation, silence and artistic expression, values are defined and explored in relation to self and others, made relevant, are intended to be felt, and represented artistically; creative skills are stimulated and social skills developed. Stories, songs and games are used as stimuli and vehicles for conveying values—components whose relevance for allowing spiritual qualities to develop is recognised and which are indeed used by other educators. (p. 135)

Arweck and Nesbitt believe that redirecting values can only happen through education, and although they see the classroom as the primary place for this to happen, they also see value in the family and in its process and refer to a similar program to LVEP for use within the family. They recognise that the individual pupil's temperament and the climate of the home contribute to the children's receptivity of values.

A provocative article by Steven Cohen (1995) looked at the effects of the American Jewish school system, both orthodox and non-Orthodox schools, concluding that they had a profound effect on the level of Jewish identity.

This article looks at four indicators of quality in a school program (Items E1–21). It considers responses to items investigating the impact of Adventist schools on the behaviour of students. A discussion of the relationship between a quality school program, Christian commitment and denominational loyalty leads to asserted conclusions.

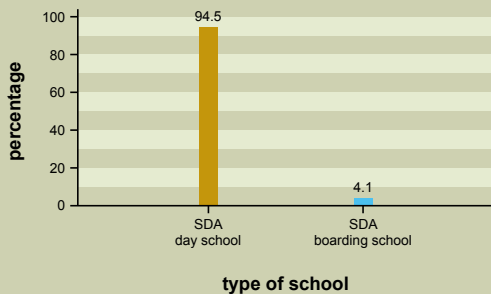
Throughout this article comparisons will be made between the results of the 1992 study and this most recent research. To allow clear comparisons, the students within this study were divided into two groups based on religious attachment, SDA and non-SDA.

The research instrument

This study reports on responses to part of a larger survey of 331 items investigating adolescent attitudes to beliefs, values and behaviour (Gane, 2012). All items used Likert-type scales, with from four to seven categories (Donahue, 1990). Higher scale values indicated stronger agreement, or more positive and desirable behaviour.

The individual pupil's temperament and the climate of the home contribute to the children's receptivity of values

Figure 1: Type of SDA school attended: What type of school do you attend (Item E23)



Student demographics

The sample for this study was taken from the Seventh-day Adventist school system across Australia and New Zealand¹. A number of students did not take part in the study and a small number of surveys were removed from the final report after the data cleaning process. The report includes 80% of the possible SDA students in the Adventist school system.

Of 3168 respondents, 1359 were identified as coming from a home with at least one Adventist parent. The Valuegenesis report (Gane, 2012)

¹ The sample in the first study of 1992 (Hughes, 1993) used randomly selected churches across Australia and New Zealand. The names of adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18 were collected and they were personally sent an invitation to participate in the study. In the intervening years this approach has been deemed inappropriate and hence the school system was used and parents were alerted to the study and asked to grant permission for their children to be involved in the study.

focuses on the responses of students having at least one Adventist parent, however in this assessment of school quality the responses of all students are considered, including 1809 non-Adventist students. Of the 1359 Adventist youth, 1281 attended Adventist day schools, and 56 attended an Adventist boarding school. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to distinguish group differences.

Quality school factors

Teacher quality

Student perceptions of teacher quality were assessed by questionnaire items E1, 4, 12, 13, and 14. Table 1 presents the percentage agreement for these items. Sixty percent of students attending Adventist schools believed that their teachers do their job well. This is a 5% improvement that was reflected by the SDA and the non-SDA students as well. The criteria that students are using to make this assessment needs to be investigated since these responses indicate a large number of teachers (40%) are not meeting their students' expectations. Some evidence may come from student evaluation of teacher behaviours.

Sadly, only a slight majority (54%) consider teachers cared about them. Half of all the students believe that their teachers do not listen to them; while a larger percentage (54%) do not recognise the offer or receipt of any reward for work well done. It is the belief of many students that teachers use or may use embarrassment to control students. Only about forty percent, of both groups, agreed that teachers try to avoid embarrassing students.

The data presented in Table 1 illustrate 'student perceived' difficulties within the teaching profession and consequently the relatively low opinion that some students hold concerning the performance

“Sixty percent of students attending Adventist schools believed that their teachers cared about them and that they do their job well”

Table 1: Perception of teachers

	percentage agreement		
	SDA students		non-SDA students
	n = 1811	n = 1359	n = 1809
E1. My teachers do their job very well	55	60	60
E4. My teachers reward me for work that is well done	44	46	45
E12. My teachers care about me	56	54	54
E13. Teachers at my school listen to me	55	50	50
E14. Teachers try not to embarrass students	38	41	42

Note: 1. Percentage agreement includes both *moderately agree* and *strongly agree* categories.
2. Valuegenesis II results are in bold.

“
The largest changes were in attachment to the school (-15%) and ‘feeling responsible for my actions’ (-14%)
”

of their teachers. Individual schools may have somewhat different scores, but this report only deals with the combined data.

School climate

There is an obvious relationship between teachers and school climate. If teachers are perceived not to care, or to be punitive in their approach to students, this will obviously colour the students view of the school climate. Items E15–21 in the questionnaire dealt with school climate (see Table 2). In the first study, statistical analysis indicated that there were no significant differences between school climate scores for Adventist schools and non-Adventist schools. The scores have dropped by 10–15 percent in this study, but the data show that non Adventist students in the same school feel about the same

way as their Adventist counterparts. The largest changes were in attachment to the school (-15%) and ‘feeling responsible for my actions’ (-14%), both being lower for non-SDA students. No longer do a majority consider discipline to be fair. Has a change in the ratio of SDA to non-SDA student enrolment coincided with a change in SDA students’ attitude towards the non-SDA norm? What may have caused this? Is it shared social change or the influence of this increasing segment of non-SDA students? In this study 38% of students attending Adventist schools agreed that they had a voice in the running of the school. Forty-nine percent of students attending Adventist schools preferred their own school to any other. Changes in sampling strategy resulted in having no data from state and other independent schools to make current comparisons.

Table 2: School climate

	percentage agreement		
	SDA students		non-SDA students
	n = 1811	n = 1359	n = 1809
E15. I like the way things are done at my school	41	41	41
E16. The discipline at my school is fair	53	43	42**
E17. My school is a good school	66	57	55**
E18. I am proud of my school	60	51	47**
E19. Students have a voice in running the school	44	38	37
E20. At school I feel responsible for my actions	73	59	55**
E21. I would rather go to my school than any other	64	49	43*

Note: 1. Agreement includes both *moderately agree* and *strongly agree* categories.
2. *Valuegenesis II* results are in bold.
3. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01 applies to the difference between the *Valuegenesis II* group means.

Table 3: Relevance of school program

	percentage agreement		
	SDA students		non-SDA students
	n = 1811	n = 1359	n = 1809
E9. What I learn in class will help me in later life	72	66	61***
E10. At school I learn how to accept myself	51	50	54*
E11. At school I learn how to care for others	55	58	58

Note: 1. Agreement includes both *moderately agree* and *strongly agree* categories.
2. *Valuegenesis II* results are in bold.
3. *p < 0.05, ***p < 0.001 applies to the difference between the *Valuegenesis II* group means.

Relevance of the school program

Items E9–11 dealt with the perceived relevance of the school program. Student responses are presented in Table 3. Sixty-six percent of students believed what they learned in class would help them in later life, a six percent drop in perceived relevance of learning. The Adventist students had a mean score of 4.38 for perceived relevance of the school program while their non-Adventist counterparts had a score of 4.32. Although this may appear to be a small difference it is statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$). Fifty percent agreed that the Adventist school teaches them how to accept themselves while the figure was 54% for non-Adventist students. Fifty-eight percent of both categories of students attending Adventist schools agreed that they learned “how to care for others” at school.

Christian impact of the school

Items E6, 7, and 8 address the issue of the extent to which students perceive a Christian influence to be operating within the school program. A summary of student responses is presented in Table 4.

All of these scores have improved with the non-Adventist students scoring higher than the Adventist students from Valuegenesis I. Fifty-four percent of students attending Adventist schools agree that their teachers show them how to relate to God (only 5% of SDA students in non-SDA schools said this was true of their teachers in Valuegenesis I), 58% agree that they learn Christian values in their classes (only 5% of SDA students in non-SDA schools said this was true of their classes in Valuegenesis I) and 52% agree that they are able to talk to their teachers about God, (only 11% SDA students in non-SDA schools said this was true of their teachers in Valuegenesis I).

The impact of Adventist schools on behaviour Alcohol consumption

A number of differences in behaviour were observed in students attending Adventist schools when compared with Adventist students attending state schools in the first study. In that study students at Adventist schools were significantly ($p \leq 0.01$) less involved in binge drinking and attended significantly ($p \leq 0.005$) fewer parties where alcohol was served. Almost twenty years have passed since the first survey and we now have real change in this area. There are now more students attending parties where alcohol is served and getting involved in binge drinking than reported by their counterparts from state schools in the first study. Differences are shown in Figure 2 and 3. The mean score for the current student is somewhere close to the second category of “1–2 times” for attending parties where alcohol is served. The mean score for binge drinking (had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row) is lower and closer to the “0 times” category. Sixty-seven percent of SDA students have never been to a party where alcohol was served and a further 13% stated they had been to only one party while 83% have not tried binge drinking. Highly significant differences ($p < 0.001$) exist for both attending parties serving alcohol and binge drinking between students with increasing alcohol involvement, depending on whether they have two ($M = 1.64$), one ($M = 1.89$) or no SDA ($M = 2.14$) parent respectively.

Attitude to Adventist standards and culture

Items I1–I11 of the questionnaire address the issues of Adventist standards and culture. For reasons that will be explained in the main report (Gane, 2012), items I1, I2, I6, I7, I8, and I10 refer to Adventist standards while items I3, I4, I5, I9, and I11 refer to Adventist culture. Adventist standards

“Fifty-eight percent of students attending Adventist schools agreed that they learned ‘how to care for others’”

Table 4: Christian impact of schools

	percentage agreement		
	SDA students		non-SDA students
	n = 1811	n = 1359	n = 1809
E6. My teachers show me how to relate to God	45	54	50**
E7. I learn Christian values in my classes	51	58	54***
E8. I am able to talk to teachers about God	47	52	50**

Note: 1. Agreement includes both *moderately agree* and *strongly agree* categories.
 2. Valuegenesis II results are in bold.
 3. ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ applies to the difference between the Valuegenesis II group means.

relate to the use of tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, whether sex should only occur within marriage, the use of unclean meat and Sabbath observance. The Adventist culture sub-scale includes attitudes towards heavy rock music, watching movies at

movie theatres, dancing, AO movies and the use of caffeinated drinks. While these issues will be dealt with in more detail in the main report it is interesting to note that in the first study students attending Adventist schools had a significantly ($p \leq 0.005$) more positive attitude to Adventist standards than did those who attended state schools. The mean score of 5.02 is interpreted as being moderately in agreement with the SDA church position. The mean score ($M=4.16$) for the non-SDA places them in the category of slight agreement. Figure 4 presents this difference. In the current study we have no data from those attending state schools but we have shown the results for non-SDA students attending Adventist schools. Although the concurrence with Adventist standards has dropped a little, students still “moderately agree” with Adventist Standards. It is gratifying to see that the non-SDA students in Adventist schools continue to “slightly agree” with Adventist standards, even if with a lower mean score.

In the first study there were no significant differences between Adventists students attending Adventist schools and Adventist young people attending state schools in the areas of frequency of alcohol consumption (item G1), marijuana use (item G2) shop lifting (item G6) and the viewing of pornography (item G7) or sexual activity (item G8). In the current study there is significant statistical difference between those from an SDA background and those not from an SDA home for all of the above items with the exception of viewing pornography (G7). Seventy-two percent of SDA youth have not taken alcohol while only 58% of their non-SDA school-mates make the same claim. Thirty-two percent of SDA young people have attended parties where there was alcohol present while 44% their non SDA had had this experience. Fewer SDA youth, (14%), have had sexual intercourse than their non-SDA school mates, (19%). Recent research has investigated a potential behaviour-belief gap (Leonard, 2010). In all these items (except G7) an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with $\alpha=0.05$ and the determined probability was $p \leq 0.005$.

Commitment and loyalty

Do Adventist schools make any contribution to Christian commitment and loyalty to the Church? The analysis result concerning denominational loyalty is very clear. Students attending Adventist schools scored significantly higher ($M=4.12$, $p \leq 0.05$) on the denominational loyalty scale than did Adventist young people who attended state schools ($M=4.03$, $p \leq 0.05$), however the current data only gives us information on those in Adventist schools but the

Figure 2: Drinking parties: Gone to a party where kids your age were drinking (Item G4)

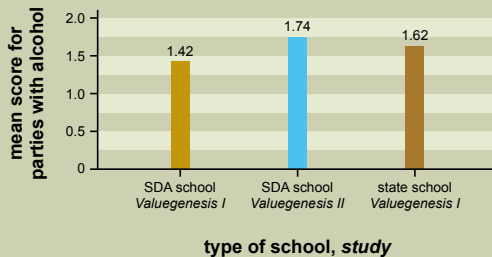


Figure 3: Binge drinking: Had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row (Item G5)

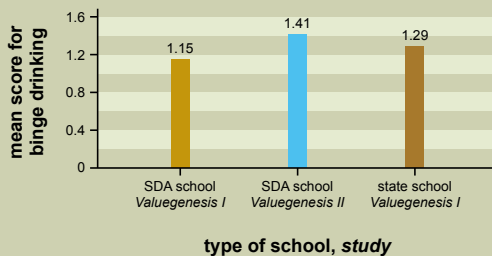
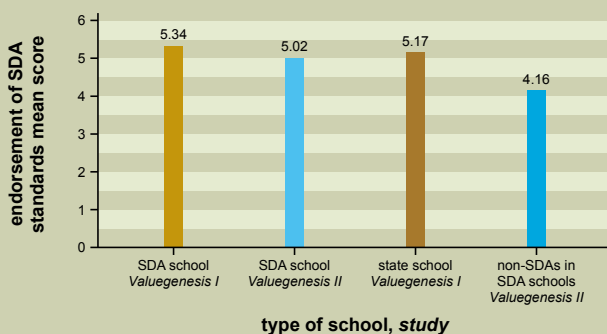


Figure 4: Endorsement of Adventist standards: Mean scores



“Non-SDA students in Adventist schools continue to ‘slightly agree’ with Adventist standards”

mean score has changed very little ($M=4.09$) though participation in religion has changed significantly over time (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

While there is only a marginal relationship between attendance at Adventist schools and

Christian commitment and denominational loyalty scores, there is a highly statistically significant relationship between each of the school quality factors within Adventist schools and denominational loyalty and Christian commitment. Table 5 lists

Table 5: Adventist school quality factors related to denominational loyalty, Christian commitment and social responsibility

	correlation coefficients					
	denominational loyalty		Christian commitment		social responsibility	
teacher quality sub-scale	0.40	0.24	0.40	0.33	0.24	0.18
E1. My teachers do their job very well	0.27	0.22	0.28	0.24	0.16	–
E12. My teachers care about me	0.37	0.20	0.38	0.29	0.25	0.15
E13. Teachers at my school listen to me	0.34	0.19	0.33	0.30	0.24	0.15
E14. Teachers try not to embarrass students	0.33	0.16	0.34	0.22	–	–
E4. My teachers reward me for work that is well done	0.22	0.20	0.21	0.29	0.16	0.18
Christian impact sub-scale	0.37	0.27	0.45	0.39	0.30	0.18
E6. My teachers show me how to relate to God	0.32	0.23	0.38	0.35	0.28	0.17
E7. I learn Christian values in my classes	0.36	0.24	0.40	0.32	0.28	0.15
E8. I am able to talk to teachers about God	0.29	0.24	0.40	0.34	0.22	0.15
personal relevance sub-scale	0.34	0.26	0.39	0.37	0.27	0.20
E9. What I learn in class will help me in later life	0.31	0.21	0.30	0.30	0.15	–
E10. At school I learn how to accept myself	0.23	0.26	0.29	0.37	0.20	0.20
E11. At school I learn how to care for others	0.31	0.22	0.37	0.33	0.30	0.23
school climate sub-scale	0.46	0.29	0.42	0.39	0.23	0.19
E15. I like the way things are done at my school	0.39	0.18	0.31	0.28	–	0.15
E16. The discipline at my school is fair	0.28	0.19	0.23	0.29	0.16	–
E17. My school is a good school	0.42	0.28	0.40	0.33	0.20	0.17
E18. I am proud of my school	0.43	0.28	0.41	0.37	0.27	0.16
E19. Students have a voice in running the school	0.34	0.19	0.30	0.29	–	–
E20. At school I feel responsible for my actions	0.28	0.28	0.35	0.38	0.25	0.20
E21. I would rather go to my school than any other	0.42	0.25	0.35	0.31	–	0.15
additional items						
E5. I have a clear idea of the important goals of the school	0.23	0.16	0.35	0.30	0.25	0.20
E2. My school expects me to master the basic skills	–	0.17	0.15	–	–	–
E3. My school expects me to do my best work	0.22	0.18	0.19	0.17	0.15	–

Note: 1. $p \leq 0.01$ for all items.
 2. A dash (–) signifies a correlation less than 0.15.
 3. *Valuegenesis II* results are in italics.
 4. Correlation with whole subscales are indicated in bold.

each of the school quality indicators grouped in four major sub-scales—Teacher Quality, Christian Impact, Personal Relevance and School Climate that are significantly related to Denominational Loyalty, Christian Commitment and Social Responsibility within the context of Adventist schools. Correlations between each of the sub-scales and Denominational Loyalty and Christian Commitment are presented in bold type with Valuegenesis II values being in italics. Correlations between each of the individual items are presented in plain type. These data are consistent with the view that what happens within an Adventist school has a far more significant bearing on the development of loyalty and Christian commitment than does mere attendance at the school. Table 5 only lists the school quality factors that are significantly related to Denominational Loyalty, Christian Commitment and Social Responsibility within the context of Adventist schools.

The relationships between School Quality subscales and Denominational Loyalty have reduced by between 0.08 to 0.17, the change being largest for School Climate Sub-scale (-0.17), followed by the Teacher Quality Sub-scale (-0.16), both being changes from moderate correlation to weak correlation. This might be expected with a more denominationally diverse school population and recent trends (Mason, Singleton, & Webber, 2007; McCrindle, 2008, 2009). Moderate relationships between School Quality sub-scales and Christian Commitment have shown a smaller decrease (0.02 to 0.07) becoming weaker, the change being greatest for Teacher Quality (-0.07) and slightly less for the Christian Impact Sub-scale (-0.06). The Social Responsibility scale shows greatest decrease in association with the Christian Impact Sub-scale (-0.12); all School Quality sub-scales being weakly associated with Social Responsibility.

Discussion

This analysis compares changes over time in the attitudes of different cohorts of students. Further, although all students in this Valuegenesis II study attend an SDA high school, useful comparisons to earlier work can be made since it was possible to isolate those who went to an SDA or non-SDA school in the first study. From this analysis a number of important school quality outcomes are immediately apparent. Students' perception of teachers indicate more now think their teachers do their job very well (60% compared to 55%). However, fewer believe that their teachers care about them or listen to them. An increased minority, but only close to half, are aware teachers reward them in any way for work well done and about 60% consider teachers likely to embarrass them.

These results reflect the broader finding that there has been a drop in the mean for overall School Climate, and for each item of that scale. Less than half of the students attending Adventist schools would rather go to their school than any other, compared to about two thirds earlier. A minority (about 40%) like the way things are done at their school, agree discipline is fair or consider students have a voice in "running the school". The factors potentially affecting school climate need further investigation but do include teacher performance.

While a majority of students (about 60%) judged the school program relevant to future work (-6%) and caring for others (+5%), only half considered schooling addressed acceptance of themselves. This awareness of personal development in adolescence appears to need considerably greater emphasis.

Anecdotal discussions with system administrators indicated these results differ from the type of responses they experienced when interacting with school-administration-selected focus groups during school evaluation visits. The system-wide, anonymously collected data of research reported in this article, however, asserts the need for systemic responses on multiple levels. Firstly, professional development for teachers should address the issues of apparent demonstration of care; fair, visible, appropriate discipline; respect for students, particularly avoiding embarrassing them; and perceived rewards for work completed well. Given this last factor has increased the most in its association with Christian commitment within this study, its positive impact needs to be utilised, but also further investigated. These teacher skills, expected in the performance of quality teachers, need to be included with other essential elements in the system instruments guiding individual teacher assessment, development and categorisation.

Administrators of schools across the system need to be involved in school climate analyses that evaluate and guide actions to increase positively contributing elements, and reduce detractors so as to ensure a strong majority affirm their school experience, school pride and preference. A 13% lowering of "feeling responsible for my actions" and a (-6%) lower awareness of voice in school operation implies a significant systemic, social and/or cultural disconnect with experiences in schooling. Social confinement, low self-efficacy, peer priorities, prescribed educational or school system structures and expectations should be considered. Is there a linkage to the low priority in the curriculum sensed by students for "learning to accept myself"?

The system-wide, anonymously collected data in this article asserts the need for systemic responses on multiple levels

The spiritual purposes of a Seventh-day Adventist School have shown increased student identification. More (54%, up from 45%) students believe that Adventist teachers show them how to relate to God; a majority of students in Adventist schools believe they learn Christian values in their classes (58%, up from 51% in the Valuegenesis I study); and that they can talk to their teachers about God (52% up from 47%). In Valuegenesis I comparative figures for non-Adventist schools were below 10%. It would be conjecture to suggest how these may have varied over time. However, these more recently achieved, small majorities, while being a positive development, are disappointing within the 'big picture', and should motivate educators to develop more effective, more influential outcomes.

Valuegenesis I revealed students attending Adventist schools had a significantly lower incidence of alcohol consumption and binge drinking than Adventists attending state schools and although we do not have the data to make a comparison, other studies (Cancer Council of Victoria, 2012; Gilligan & Kypri, 2012) would suggest "at-risk drinking" behaviours have not improved overall in the state school system. Students attending Adventist schools continue to have a positive attitude to Adventist lifestyle standards.

Conclusion

The Adventist school system was designed to give a holistic and balanced education that included connecting students to their religious roots and leading them to a lasting relationship with Jesus that guides their behaviour. It is encouraging to learn that students attending Adventist schools still have high denominational loyalty scores. This system, with its stakeholders, are challenged by this data and recent research into both teenage brain development (Begley, 2000; Brownlee, 2005; Monastersky, 2007) and current culture (Saulwick & Muller, 2006; Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2007; Sayers, 2011), to assess the potential for making an even stronger daily Christian interaction with its students through an intentional, planned and carefully designed, teaching ministry. **TEACH**

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Literacy programs as an empowering agent for women: A case study from Papua New Guinea

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Abstract

Basic literacy is recognised as the means for equipping citizens of a country. In PNG, literacy for women empowers them socially, politically and economically. Literacy gives women the means to improve their economic status and subsequent standard of living, provides access to the power of written knowledge, provides skills and knowledge that has a direct relationship to the improvement of the health and wellbeing of the family, leads to enhanced quality of life for their families and improved education outcomes for their children, gives voice in decision making, self-development and self-value; thus reducing marginalisation. Oyitso, & Olomukoro (2012) have observed, “Access to literacy is considered one of the main factors for empowerment particularly empowerment of those excluded from [a] formal system of education” (p.67). Literacy is identified as a catalyst of cultural and societal change.” In PNG, there are numerous agencies offering literacy courses, such as Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and Pacific Adventist University (PAU). It is discovered that these adult literacy programs should be well-designed, organised and authentic, and structured around topics relevant to the students: social and gender issues, health and nutrition issues, marriage issues, family support systems, and practical communication methods, such as using the mobile phone, electronic banking and filling out official documents. Literacy programs are more than teaching the rudiments of reading, writing and mathematics, it is about empowering a person to become an effective and contributing member of society. Literacy is therefore, a basic instrument for empowerment. Oyitso, & Olomukoro, (2012, p.73) assert “When women are literate, it is all society that gains.”

Introduction

Education is recognised as the means for sustainable development, for both men and women.

Broadly speaking, literacy empowers and is the most important means through which people and especially women, can be developed socially, politically and economically. For women, literacy gives them the means to improve their economic status and subsequent standard of living, access to the power of written knowledge; literacy provides women with the skills and knowledge that has a direct relationship on the improvement of the health and wellbeing of the family and reduces infant mortality; literacy leads to an enhanced quality of life for their families and improved education outcomes for their children. Just as importantly, literacy gives women a voice in decision-making, self-development, self-value and reduced marginalisation. Educated “women are more able to engage in productive activities, find formal sector employment and earn higher wages, and enjoy greater returns...than the less educated women” (Oyitso, & Olomukoro, 2012, p. 72). Further, “The provision of quality literacy to nearly half of the population will no doubt have a great and sustainable social and economic impact on the womenfolk. Access to literacy is considered one of the main factors for empowerment of those excluded from [the] formal system of education and development,” Oyitso, & Olomukoro (2012, p.67) further “the World Bank reports that societies that discriminate on the basis of gender have greater poverty, have slower economic growth, weaker governance and a lower standard of living” (Babu, 2011, p. 4).

Definition of literacy

A definition derived from Oyitso and Olomukoro (2012) states that

Literacy is not just the ability to read and write but also, ...the ability to [effectively] use the printed and written information to function in society. ...to be literate is not just to have mastered the skills of reading, writing and computing with numbers, but more than that, ...to be able to use those skills effectively for communications in all aspects of one’s life in social, cultural, economic and political sphere[s].” (p. 57)

“Societies that discriminate on the basis of gender have greater poverty, slower economic growth, weaker governance and a lower standard of living”

Literacy can be described as an effective means for poverty reduction as people have the knowledge to access financial and social opportunities. Functional literacy is therefore, “a competence that goes beyond grammar and semantics” basic to daily communication (Kagitchibasi, Gosken, & Golguz, p. 473).

Benefits

Human capital development

Human development is defined as the process of enlarging a person's...capabilities to function in a range of activities they choose to do (Armytra, Sen, 1989)...[Encouraging] development is about removing the obstacles to what a person can do in life, obstacles such as illiteracy, ill health, lack of resources, or lack of civil and political freedom. (Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012, p. 68)

Literacy is recognised as one of the cornerstones in removing obstacles in a person fulfilling their potential. The *Education for all Global Monitoring Report* (2008) states, “that there are 771 million adult illiterates in the world today and two-third of them are women. For women to be integrated into [a] development process, they need basic education, to enable them to become co-partners in meaningful and effective development” (Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012, p. 66). “Sustainable human development cannot be effective if half of the human race remain ignorant, marginalised or discriminated against” (Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012, p. 67.).

Social benefits: Life expectancy, reduced child mortality

Kagitchibasi, Gosken and Gulgoz (2005) note that Goody (1977) and Olsen (1977, 1996) suggest “Literacy has been seen as a highly potent catalyst of cultural and societal change” (p. 473). Ramdas (1990) (cited in Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012) has argued that increased female literacy is the key to benefits for society in general. A literate mother has the skills and knowledge to provide better child care and healthier children, understands the importance of providing balanced nutrition, comprehends the advantages of a small family norm, has the skills to promote learning and education, and can instil “in her offspring the right attitudes and behaviour expected from them by the society” (p. 71). “Boliva (2010) stated that investing in women’s literacy carries very high returns: it improves livelihoods, leads to better child and maternal health, and favours girls’ access to education” (Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012, p. 70). “They also use more family planning and have fewer and healthier children

than non-literate women” (Kagitchibasi, Gosken & Gulgoz, 2005, p. 473). “Literate women are found to enjoy a higher status in the family than non-literate women” (Olateju, 2007, p. 158).

“Educated mothers are more likely to send their children to school than the uneducated ones” (Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012, p. 73). Links have been established between parents’ educational level and children’s achievement and “research studies show that children whose parents have less than a high school education tend to have the poorest performance on reading tests” (Kogut, 2004, p. 28) and further that mothers’ literacy level predicts children’s literacy development (van Steensel, 2006). “Effective adult literacy programs are not only important for adult literacy learning but are also important for the literacy development of children and adolescents” (Lynch, 2009, p. 509). Purcell-Gates’s (1996) research, cited by Lynch (2009), “also showed that children’s early literacy achievement related to parents’ engagement in specific types of print literacy activities, particularly those with more complex levels of discourse for leisure and entertainment” (p. 510). A child denied their right of a quality primary education is disadvantaged and handicapped all through life. Literacy, reading, writing, arithmetic and life skills are important to have the ability to succeed in life.

Economic benefits

Educating women also improves the level of economic development in a country. The higher the level of educational status for women, the more developed the nation. Imhabekhai and Olomukoro (2007) (cited in Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012, p. 70) have pointed out that “literacy is a basic instrument in social transformation,” including for empowering women in the process of economic development and reduce poverty. Further, Oyitso, & Olomukoro, (2012) observe that, “Aderinoye (2004), quoted in Adekola and Abanum (2010) says that the difference between the developed and underdeveloped countries of the world is related to the level of literacy among the populace” (p. 70). In short, newly literate women have a positive ripple effect on all the economic development indicators. “The role of women in the economic development of the nation cannot be overemphasised. They constitute 70% of the group that produces food for the nations. They cultivate and grow food to feed the families and the nation at large” (p. 73). “Efed (2008) said literate women create income or wealth for the family through their good and benefitting employment whether in private or public sector” (p. 73).

“There are 771 million adult illiterates in the world today and two-third of them are women”

Table 1: Church and university programs contributing to women's literacy

church		
program	program details	contributing elements
Sabbath School	engagement with Bible based life development principles and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - program planning - participation in performance - discussion and rational support
Annual International Women's Day celebration	celebration of womanhood including adapting to the establishment of social equity	day of celebration – church program, discussion, luncheon and social interaction and networking, promoting determination to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preach in church - pray in church - share written material and if necessary communally read before the formal presentations - discuss written material to be used for the formal presentations - engage in all aspects of life
Partners in Ministry programs	monthly sessions incorporating both teaching skills and sharing information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - health programs - sharing and reading together religious written material - health programs on women's cancers - budgeting and financial issues - how to read and fill-out government forms
Women's Ministry programs	outreach – services directed to the broader community	visits to the local hospitals to read Bible verses and to sing
	inreach – services directed to a personal community	Sabbath morning special prayer sessions and devotions taken by the women
Adventist Youth programs	each Sabbath afternoon, the AY program includes sessions that enable people	some topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how to choose a marriage partner - parenting skills - systematic Bible reading skills
Branch Sabbath Schools	Sabbath morning visits to local villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sharing of written material - presentations of worship programs, with an emphasis on engaging children
Health Summit	yearly health summit	information sharing and network establishment

Political benefits

Personal empowerment through literacy can translate into participation in the political process, and through informed discussion of policies, the enacting of democracy. "Educated people are to some extent more likely to vote and voice more tolerant attitudes and democratic values" (Hannum and Buchman, 2003; cited in Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012, p. 73). Literate women have contributed to the political stability and peace of their country.

In summary, educating women has the potential to improve all aspects of life: everyone in society benefits if women are educated.

Literacy programs in PNG

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is desperate to improve women's access to basic literacy. Basic Literacy Programs in PNG and the access by women's to literacy programs must be well-designed, culturally appropriate, linked to authentic reading and writing resources, consider social and family issues, and as well financial facilities.

Provision of literacy programs

Designing and implementing well-planned, organised and non-formal adult literacy programs can empower women. In PNG, most of these

Pacific Adventist University		
program	program details	contributing elements
social inclusion activities	gender equity programs	counselling and ongoing support
	family and social learning	- sewing classes - cooking classes - banking and financial sessions
	HIV education	clinic support
	disabilities provision	achieved by: - acceptance and access to support if needed - physical access provided to spaces - sign language in church programs
	child protection and development	Sabbath Schools, Pathfinders, education programs
	environment	- campus communication regarding feral animals - recycling ideas and practices
Food for Life	improving life for people who are disadvantaged	- providing food for people living on the local rubbish dumps - building, equipping and financially supporting new elementary schools in the Port Moresby district - supporting HIV sufferers in hospitals
academic schools	School of Education	- yearly literacy training course for all teachers - service type education program to education providers that cater for students with all forms of disabilities (eg Cheshire Homes, Red Cross) - week of activities to celebrate Christian Education
regular health services to residents of PAU and surrounding villages	nurses	individual medical appoints
	specialised services	- diabetics testing - HIV testing - malaria test
	prenatal and postnatal care	- birthing facilities - regular times for baby clinic - regular times for immunisation

programs are provided by church agencies. Literacy programs have a flow-on affect, strengthening the churches' capacity for development. By building the institutional capacity of PNG churches, churches are better able to contribute to strengthening governance in PNG, and improving service delivery (Anderson, 2011, p. 1). Church literacy programs, based on 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10), entails reframing the mission of the church to address issues of social and political concern, or 'living the gospel' through social action; holistic service for integral human development; and transformation. Through generating an understanding that men and

women should be living in 'Christian partnerships', more equal and equitable gender relations can be fostered. Churches, with their networks and influence, have the potential to effect significant change in attitudes and behaviour (Anderson, 2011, p. 11; see Table 1).

Church sponsored courses are usually free of charge, commonly held at a church community hall and organised by female trainers. Churches, with sponsorship from Aid Agencies have a choice of programs. The most common program conducted consisted of a 120-hour curriculum, the Basic Literacy Program, provided by the Ministry

Literacy skills can incorporate practical communication methods, such as using the mobile phone, electronic banking, following electronically recorded instructions, and filling out official documents

of Education, and run over three to four months involving participants for three to four hours, three times a week. Some churches have designed their own programs. All have varying levels of success.

Provision of broader educational training

Whichever type of literacy program is used, research has shown that adult literacy levels remain low despite a large number of adult literacy programs being implemented (Guy, 2005). Some research (Duffy, 1992; Janes & Kermani, 2001) has shown that providing literacy skills only is seldom enough. When people learn to read, they do not automatically gain access to all the information they may need because privilege or prejudice, such as that associated with class or gender, is a strong determiner of who can know what. In the PNG context, physical and social isolation, status in the family and lack of access to practice one's new skills, can deter and diminish the usefulness of the literacy classes.

To address the ineffectiveness of some adult literacy programs, it has been suggested that programs should have strong links to adults' daily lives (Kagitcibasi, Goksen, & Gulgoz, 2005).

Learners must use discourse within the community to engage in authentic activities, and engage in value placed literacy events.

For example, Lynch (2009, p. 510) cites the following three sources.

Zubair (2001) found that in rural Pakistan, some of the print literacy practices of women entail reading prayers, newspapers, magazines, novels, medicine labels, cards, and calendars. Writing activities included letters, diaries, record keeping, messages, poetry, and short stories.... Participants in another study, who were all low-income mothers, liked word games, romance novels, and autobiographical writing that may support the need to express feelings, the need for recreation, and to escape from daily life stresses and activities (Finlay, 1999). Mace (1998) claimed that literacy might serve as a temporal excursion from the mundane...Purcell-Gates (1996) found that engagement included fliers, coupons, advertisements, television notices, grocery lists, name writing, and more. Indeed, for many of the reported studies, children would observe parents engaging in many of these literacy events (p. 510).

It is also suggested that participants use their literacy skills to discuss subjects such as communication in the family, child discipline, first aid, health and family planning, and citizenship rights. These topics can approach social and gender issues, such as the importance of marriage records, issues relating to marrying late, having a

small family, and supporting the education of the girls in the family. Literacy skills can incorporate practical communication methods, such as using the mobile phone, electronic banking, following electronically recorded instructions, and filling out official documents. Literacy programs are more than teaching the rudiments of reading, writing and mathematics, it is about be[com]ing an effective contributing member of society.

Linking literacy programs to financial services

Literacy is linked to economic empowerment. In the PNG context, the majority of women wish for economic security. Microcredit is more than access to money; it is access to financial services. It is a self-help program that enables women to secure economic and financial strength. The effect of women having the capacity to save, access credit and banking services, has been more successful than when women just have access to credit subsidies (Babu, 2011, p. 7). The effect of women having contributed to the financial situation at home, earned greater respect from both their husbands and children; and more importantly, has avoided family quarrels about money (Babu, 2011, p. 6). Generally, women feel empowered, more confident, enjoy mobility and have a greater ease in visiting banks and financial institutions.

Women empowerment initiatives such as microfinance operations and micro enterprises have been a powerful tool to assist women to operate and own their own business. Basic literacy, linked with these opportunities, has an enabling factor for women. The main benefits for linking literacy and access to financial opportunities is in inducing a multiplying effect. First, the income to families improves. Secondly, women have the confidence and self esteem to be independent, communicate, network, interact and enhance personal freedom. Lastly, economic independence can raise the family finances above the poverty line.

Conclusion

The UN secretary General Ban-Ki-Moon said, "that if women are empowered through literacy, considering their multiple roles in the society, they will contribute greatly to the development of the nation. Women need greater access to educational opportunities, skill acquisition and positions of authority to be truly empowered" (Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012, p. 69). Literacy programs, with a link to financial opportunities can improve [the] living conditions of women; and, allow women to participate in

processes that will enhance their development at home, in the community and at national levels. Basic literacy education is linked to skills acquisition, access to information regarding health, nutrition status, legal rights and financial services, enhancing women's development socially, economically, [and] politically. "Education, formal or non-formal, is the foremost agent of empowerment" (Oyitso and Olomukoro, 2012, p. 67).

Effective programs, such as Functional Adult Literacy Programs, connect women to the public sphere and have the potential to create a sense of competence. Thus, while most learning still takes place within the context of the community, the public nature of the activity broadens the participants' horizon. Literacy provides a distinct advantage to these previously illiterate women in urban society. Literacy is therefore, a basic instrument for empowering women in the process of social transformation, modernisation and economic development. When women are literate, everyone in society gains! **TEACH**

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“When women are literate, everyone in society gains!”

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Reactions, reflections and responsibility

A 'responsive evaluation' of an emerging blended elearning subject

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Abstract

This paper discusses the findings of a qualitative investigation that sought to illuminate the perceived benefits of undertaking a blended learning subject at one tertiary institution. While there are several studies detailing the benefits of online learning, this study focussed on the student's perceptions. What emerged from the analysis process were a series of themes related to the notion of authentic learning. Key processes of this perceived optimal learning site and space were the elements of group and individual reflection, and risk taking. Thus a heightened sense of ownership was developed. While the students believed that this form of tertiary learning had a 'goodness of fit' with how they used the Internet in their everyday lives, it would appear that they also required more explicit foci and instructions. Hence there is a need for further refinement and research in order to develop greater optimal learning spaces.

The research base has been skewed as it has not fully taken into account the understandings of the front line users: the students themselves

1. Introduction to the efocus and econtext

In the decade since Schrum and Hong's (2002, p. 57) comment that that "online learning has rapidly become a popular method of education for traditional and non-traditional students", this approach to tertiary learning has morphed through several generational forms and platforms to the point where it has become firmly entrenched in the Australian tertiary landscape. As a broad generalisation, elearning, online or flexible learning in many universities represents a spectrum of 'information communications technology' (hereafter referred to as ICT) usage that ranges from little or no actual

real time interaction or 'face to face' contact with associated viewing linkages such as 'You Tube', through to teaching attempts at fully interactive programs. However, despite the numerous studies purporting the benefits of this form of study, a few voices have argued this rapid shift has been "accepted uncritically" (Palmer & Holt 2009, p. 366). Of late, there has also been a gathering chorus of research that suggests that the research base has been skewed as it has not fully taken into account the understandings of the front line users: the students themselves (Marcoux, 2012). This leads to the rationale of this paper in that what actually constitutes authentic 'flexible learning', its actual efficacy and effects, remain unclear (Brabazon, 2007; Normand, Littlejohn, & Falconer, 2008; Partridge, Ponting & McKay, 2011; Van Doorn & Eklund, 2013).

Emerging out of the context of standard 'online' delivery is the notion of 'blended learning' or 'mixed mode learning' (Nunan, 2005). In this learning mode, the ideal is that students retain some of the benefits of constant face-to-face interaction with peers and tutors, as well as the flexibility and less restrictive nature of learning through technological access (Swan, 2009). However, blended learning in the Australian context has itself become situated across an ICT spectrum that ranges from the "provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue" (Keegan, 1996, p. 50) to the attempt at quasi-virtual situations of the 'ClassSim' project (Ferry, Kervin & Carrington, 2010).

Despite the research during the past decade that has shown that 'blended learning' in the general tertiary student populations has the potential to enhance student engagement (Picciano, 2009), raise

learning outcomes and prepare students to become more responsive to new technological advancement (Riel & Becker, 2009), it would appear that less research has been undertaken in regard to pre-service teachers. In a profession deeply grounded in constant social interaction, and the socio-emotional facets of the classroom, do online courses have a place in teacher training?

While acknowledging that online learning has become a firmly entrenched component of the overall tertiary learning space, Marcoux (2012) believes that elearning educators still have to deal with two critical questions: "...what is to be learned and how it will be learned" (p. 68). This paper deals with an investigation that was centred on these two questions, but also asked, 'what was the perceived efficacy of a form of 'blended approach' as understood by one cohort of pre-service students'? The impetus for this project began with a group of final year pre-service teachers approaching the first author, who is head of school in the Faculty of Education, Business and Science at Avondale College of Higher Education, New South Wales, Australia. They requested a change in the timetable that would provide them with a learning environment that would challenge, as well as provide the opportunity to gain teaching experience, which would hopefully 'fast track' their chance of full time employment. Acknowledging that this was a valid request, this also appeared to be an opportunity to take the already established use of online connectivity through the platform of "Moodle" to another stage of innovation and development with the introduction of 'blended learning'. In designing this course, another layer of improvement was added in that the students were given the opportunity to take more responsibility for all aspects of the 'teaching-learning-evaluation cycle'.

To this end the students were given 7 online forum tasks to complete. These forums were one per week for 7 weeks. Each group was comprised of 7 students chosen randomly from the whole cohort of Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary education students along with those learning about school systems from the chaplaincy course. Each week a different member of each group was self-appointed as the facilitator for the group for that week. Their brief was to keep the forum going and allocate marks to the other members of the group according to specific criteria. The facilitator would email the lecturer at the end of the week with a one page synopsis of the forum discussion and a mark for each member of the group. The lecturer would allocate a mark for the facilitator for that week.

2. Framing the efocus within the eforum: A summary of the related literature

While the more skeptical researchers believe that online learning in all its forms 'settled digitally' into the tertiary milieu in Australia, because of its supposed cost effectiveness without debate or criticism, more recently there are numerous studies reporting the positive impact of online learning on students (Palmer & Dolt, 2009; Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2010). There is also a smaller set dealing with staff perspectives, relatively few reporting the viewpoints of both stakeholders (Palmer & Dolt, 2009), and even fewer dealing with pre-service teacher's perceptions. Hence the developing need for the study outlined in this paper.

Notwithstanding the economic reasons for the introduction of online learning, within the framework of the relatively new paradigm of the "enterprise university" (Senate committee 2001, p. 3) there is a general consensus that the use of the web as a learning space fits within the generational 'online social media' world view (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Morrison, 2009) and 'digital lifestyles' (Dede, 2005; Prensky, 2001) of the current generation of students. Often termed 'millenials' (Howe & Strauss, 2000) or 'digital natives' (Bennet, Maton & Kervin, 2008; Prensky, 2001) this 'goodness of fit' between the 'techno-visual generation' (Fitzsimmons & Lanphar, 2010) and the use of technology as a learning modality would appear to be more than simply an affinity of use but a resonance with a generational schema. As such, the use of the web for these students would appear to be grounded in a life long or long term immersion of 'collective connectivity' through an array of computer or digitally based social network systems. It has been suggested that they have a worldview that learning that is non-hierarchical, utilises the development of online relationships, interaction and discussion as taken for granted processes. With the rapid proliferation of hand held devices and phones, this generation seems to be more than comfortable in using technology as part of their 'personal space' with a corresponding expansion of cognitive, and socio-emotional horizons characterised by a high degree of public connectivity, collective memory, openness and transparency (Appadurai, 2003).

The interactive 'web based' sites, which this generation typically inhabits in their leisure hours, are also by their very nature being constantly refined, updated and remixed. Conole, de Laat, Dillon and Darby (2006) acknowledge, in a somewhat surprised tenor, that while based in the notion of enjoyment, this interaction and conjoint

“It would appear that less research has been undertaken in regard to pre-service teachers [and blended learning]”

learning is a highly sophisticated mode of “finding and synthesising information and integrating across multiple sources of data” (p. 5).

In regard to the latter points, while there is little evidence that the thought processes that occur in the leisure hours of ICT use is transferable into the tertiary online learning there is a developing anecdotal evidence that universities need to cater for these open, generationally based and very public learning facets. However, one of the critical issues is the possible learning divide that could be created when a generational mind-set used to fluidity of connectivity intersects with the demands of tertiary outcomes and a hierarchical curriculum structure. Over a decade ago Levy (1998) predicted the possibility of this generational-learning chasm in regard to technology, and believed that there needed to be a corresponding form of learning experience which he termed ‘nomadic experiences’. In other words, students would at best only partially engage with the learning experience, and never fully make deep connections.

While it would appear that engagement is not always realised in current tertiary elearning modalities, developing this mode of ‘nomadic’ learning encounter is now even more relevant than ever. Toledo (2007, p. 84) has characterised this current generation of learners as “digital tourists” as they are supposedly completely at home in visiting new far-reaching aspects of the web, “leaping from network to network, from one system of proximity to the next” (Kaminski, Switzer & Gloeckner; 2009, p. 229). Legg (2005) takes the previous commentator’s understandings one step further believing that this generational schematic viewpoint is far different to previous generations in that it is connected at multiple levels, typified by characteristics such as being “outward looking, multi-leveled and transnational” (Legg, 2005, p. 20). With the possibility that this younger generation may possess this far reaching predisposition, it has been suggested that tertiary teachers using online learning must therefore take into consideration not only the collaborative inclinations of this generation but the probability that they intuitively tend towards building online communities of understanding through synchronistic dialogue, self evaluation and reflection that is based on non-hierarchical expectations. Prior to the online revolution, Jonannsen (1991, 2000) made similar recommendations and connections to the use of computer mediated communication and suggested that their use had the potential to generate ‘authentic real world connections’. While several suggestions have been put forward regarding how to actually accomplish this, such as Toledo’s (2007) recommended transference of older modes of literacy and Toppings (2005) use of peer tutoring, Wood,

Mueller, Willoughby, Specht and Deyoung (2005) have suggested that a lack of an ideological framework related to elearning is perhaps a key inhibitor in computer mediated spaces. Without praxes related to connections or a full understanding of the links between tutor and tertiary learners is it any wonder “little has been done on assessing the benefits of ‘computer mediated communication’ or CMC, in a university context” (Van Doorn & Eklund, 2013, p. 6)?

While there is a growing consensus that the use of the web provides a learning platform that appears to have ‘goodness of fit’ with the current generations affinity with technology and mindset, there appears to be a developing understanding that there are ongoing issues to be addressed so as to increase this connectivity and efficacy. On the surface it would seem that elearning provides tertiary students with the opportunity to easily access learning materials, enter into communication with online teachers and discussion periods with peers. Despite this, the work of several researchers have found that the most simple and taken for granted assumptions could divert student’s attention and focus away from the social and positive aspects of the elearning space. Jones and Johnson-Yale (2005) believe that students could be more susceptible to social alienation, when experiencing difficulties in the initial stages of an online class as they commence using the learning tools as found in platforms such as Moodle and Blackboard. This appears to be linked to Paik, Lee and McMahon’s (2004) findings that a lack of explicit of requirements, insufficient technological directives and an assumed understanding that students were technologically savvy were inhibitors to collegial development or engagement with their lecturer. Indeed, the literature base further suggests that exacerbating these issues and the generational need for connectedness includes attempting to integrate traditional forms of tertiary classroom teaching into the online space, lack of structured sharing processes between all participants and lack of appropriate assessments (Passerini & Granger, 2000; Paik, Lee & McMahon, 2004; Ferry, Kervin & Carrington, 2006). Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, and Archer, (2001) believe that genuine participation in online groups requires the establishment of a ‘community of enquiry’ that is underpinned by the development of engaging cognitive social challenges and a genuine teacher presence. Barab, Squire, and Dueber (2000) insist that authenticity occurs:

...not in the learner, the task, or the environment, but in the dynamic interactions among these various components...authenticity is manifest in the flow itself, and is not an objective feature of any one component in isolation. (p. 38)

“*One of the critical issues is the possible learning divide created when a generational mind-set used to fluidity of connectivity, intersects with the demands of a hierarchical curriculum structure*”

As for educational faculties, Zibit and Gibson (2005) took this notion of authenticity and online learning and suggested that for pre-service teachers these formats provided “an environment for aspiring teachers to practice making decisions about planning, task design, and responding to other students with complex personalities and cognitive profiles” (p. 3). However, while online learning has the potential to facilitate greater understanding to perhaps facilitate pre-service teachers taking ownership of their learning, many student teachers report experiencing problems understanding the relationship between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ in teacher education and often report finding ‘theories’ irrelevant to the development of teacher competences in the traditional face to face mode (Commonwealth Department of Education, Science & Training, 2002; Education & Training Committee, 2005; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education & Vocational Training, 2007). In many instances of online learning it would appear there is a disconnect between the design, implementation and connectivity to real world issues.

Stacey and Rice (2002), and Shin (2006) have suggested that in order to overcome this apparent deficit in the praxes connection, an integrative and reflective approach is needed. Shin had further suggested that pre-service teachers should be intellectually coerced through group interaction and reflection to construct their own linkages between personal ideology, knowledge about learning and classroom practice. This form of learning space could also provide on going integration of personal classroom experiences with the broader educational theories taught in other classes. As Lamont and Maton (2008) have come to believe, if this process of thinking and connectivity to real world experiences is not taking place in an elearning environment then a ‘code clash’ occurs. That is, unless there is a constant and emerging line of connection between the way in which a student commences to think and act, and the ‘code’ or schema underpinning success in the site they are ‘acting’ in then a rupture occurs that is almost impossible to repair within the context of a university semester.

However, despite the issues raised in the previous paragraphs, there still appears to be another important point that needs to be addressed regarding the methodological approach conducted in this field. It has been argued that many have been quantitative in nature, in which the control groups and the variables identified have been poorly organised. Indeed it would appear that even those conducting the actual research admit that

perhaps the variables are impossible to control and these could have profound unknown effects on the outcomes (Emerson & MacKay, 2011; Kuo, Kwang, & Lee, 2012).

Given all of the facets of concern and need, briefly dealt with in this section, this study sought to begin to add to the qualitative understanding of the field, as well as address the overall concern that

little of the contemporary research focuses on student perceptions, however. It remains unclear whether students themselves perceive CMC mediums as possessing pedagogical benefit. In other words, what do the learners gain from the technology and its usage? (Van Doorn & Eklund, 2013, p.5)

3. From eforum to research forum

This qualitative inquiry (Mertens, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Creswell, 2009) investigated the perceptions and reactions of one cohort of one hundred pre-service teachers undertaking a blended learning course that focussed on professional development. Key components of a qualitative investigation includes the use of ‘respondents operating in natural settings’, the researchers as a ‘key instruments’ in data collection and the inductive approach to data analysis and the emergent design of the entire study (Creswell 2009; Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006).

In regard to these components the researchers had access to all aspects of the elearning Moodle site and decided to electronically look over the shoulder of the respondents as ‘distanced virtual ethnographers’ (Morton, 2001). Semi-structured interviews with the students were initially planned to be a key component of this study, however due to the axiomatic foundations of ‘emergent design’ and ‘methodological appropriateness’ of this data gathering tool, this was not undertaken. As will be discussed in the ‘findings’ section of this paper, because the students took ever-increasing responsibility for their own learning, the methodological lens shifted from a qualitative investigation using interviews into one based within ‘responsive evaluation’. This methodological approach focuses on giving primacy to the “stakeholders about the meaning of their practice” (Abma 2006, p. 31). In creating a form of ‘critical separation’ from the students, this “allowed them to make meaningful and useful distinctions” (Patton, 2011, p. 252) unhindered by researcher interference. Thus, “enabling the researcher to have theoretically a better understanding of the identity performance of the user, and the significance of the interactions taking place” (Kendall, 1999, p. 71).

“Pre-service teachers should be intellectually coerced through group interaction and reflection to construct linkages between personal ideology, knowledge about learning and classroom practice”

Table 1: Data types and focus

data type	no. of data sets	focus of data collection / analysis
reflective group forum summaries	25	explore developing understanding, and key markers of learning and reactions
facilitator's reflections	5	explore links and issues related to their interactions and interjections
post questionnaire	100	provide insight into response to this form of learning, and key points of decision making and learning
focussed examination of student's online responses	20	provide insight into response to this form of learning, and key points of decision making, refinement of coding trajectory and overall learning development
emails	3	illumination of instances of critical learning

Table 2: Coding phases, emergent themes and data examples

coding phases and processes of analytic delineation	data example	emergent codes and themes
1. line by line memoing, application of emic labels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - October 24 forum: initial critical sentence - the <i>second phase</i> of the forum settled into <i>general discussion</i> - the <i>third phase</i> reached <i>consensus</i> 	examples of memos: shared personal reaction, broached and gained currency with the forum, critical appraisal development, developing sense of responsibility, learning to conceptualise through focussed discussion
2. collapsing of memoed labels into emergent codes, application of critical clustering of themes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. post questionnaire—I think it's a good way to <i>step back</i> and see what other people are <i>thinking</i> (student 75) 2. week 11 forum—in this forum we also <i>put ourselves in other shoes</i> 3. connecting week 9 group K forum and posts—we've learnt about <i>our own learning</i> (student 32) 	clusters of collapsed categories: (reflection, stepping back, appraisal, engagement, tool of distance, creative discussion, self reflection) / (group learning, comparing learning approaches, empathy) / (authentic learning for self, self-belief, ideology transfer, changed perceptions)
3. collapsing of codes into emergent categories, application of gerunds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reflecting / distancing - engaging - conditions of learning - authentic learning 	learning <i>about</i> authenticity, conditions of learning, self

“Multiple forms of data gathering enabled a process of triangulation across methods as well as data sources to ‘increase the expressiveness of the data’”

Respondents were recruited as a convenience sample (Creswell, 2009; Kervin, Vialle Herrington, & Okely, 2006) and approached prior to commencing the course. The majority of research took place through a ‘bricolage’ of data gathering approaches (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2011), which included the use of student’s elearning journals, reflective blogs and weekly group reflective summaries. Table 1 summarises the data collected for this study was in the form of e-observation, reflective summaries, facilitator reflections, post class questionnaires and email responses. Hence we were able to

...collect information about multiple factors—and at multiple levels—simultaneously. Like a smart bomb, the human instrument can locate and strike a target without having been pre-programmed to do so’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 194).

This collection of multiple forms of data gathering and data sets enabled a process of triangulation across methods as well as data sources and to “increase the expressiveness of the data” (Flick, 1998, p. 140). As can be seen in Table 2, after data was printed from the actual site, the data analysis process consisted of three coding phases whereby

data were analysed via a “constant comparative method” (Creswell, 2009, p. 451). This process finally resulted in a series of themes or higher order concepts that emerged from and explained the data.

4. From eforums to research findings

While not without its issues, which will be discussed in the final section, it was clear from the first level coding, that in asking ‘what did the learners gain’ in the elearning space in focus, the students appreciated the freedom in this subject that allowed them to explore the breadth of related issues to a larger degree than in their previous experience with the lecture-tutorial process. It also allowed them the opportunity to drill down into the topics at hand as well as explore the ideas and ideals of others. As one student summarised the overall outcomes: “I definitely feel more aware and knowledgeable on the topics, and about my own beliefs” (Student M: Student Evaluation Questionnaire). As such, the framework for this entire subject was seen to be much more authentic

Unpacking these overarching outcomes of exploration, freedom and increased awareness, the following sections represent the related emergent themes arising out of the data. The range of data sources used in this project have been used to illustrate and unpack the means by which the pre-service teacher’s blended elearning experience emerged as self directed learning. The data selected to illustrate these sections were chosen on the basis that it is a representative sample of the datasets. It should be noted that these themes have been discretely discussed in the next section for the purposes of exploration and understanding, but in actuality they were overlapping and circular in development. While there were definitive learning outcomes for these first time learners in a blended learning space, underpinning these were several points related to the ‘hidden curriculum’ or the actual nature of authentic learning. As detailed in the following section, data from these students suggests that these elements were just as important as the subject’s outcomes, revolving ‘about’ three key areas of understanding.

4.1 Learning about the core of authentic learning

As this was the first time these students had experienced this form of learning space, the setting up of the weekly response forums in this subject, in which the students had to take control over both the discussion and evaluation processes, had the ‘flow on’ effect of leaving the students initially in a state of ‘cognitive dissonance’. In essence there

was an almost instantaneous point of recognition that they had to re-learn how to learn, come to grips with how to navigate the trajectory of their learning, and figure out the conditions which could enable or inhibit their learning. For this subject they were no longer alone with a set of course notes and three assignments, but part of a group effort that required thought and appraisal. However, this sense of unease did not last long. In this instance, rather than being an inhibitor in regard to their learning the specific requirements of the subject, participating coerced them into resolving this dilemma by taking up a key understanding, which was taking responsibility for their own learning, both as individuals and as a collective. This entailed entering into a pedagogical self-directed flow of interaction to their forum posts, and with the posts of others. Through this interaction with the students the facilitator, who was initially worried about the efficacy of this subject, understood this taking up of responsibility was due to the IT mindset of the students. “I should have known that anything of an IT nature the students would take to effortlessly” (email reflection, 16/9).

However, as the students initiated the discussion process in tandem with the required self-evaluation they began to realise that they had previously become conditioned to a linear and non-reflective response to tertiary learning. While some initially struggled with this new approach, most engaged with this learning site and space realising they were now forced to become ‘innovators of thought and response’, whereas previously they had been ‘replicators of other’s ideas’. Perhaps for the first time these students began to take ownership of their own learning. Thus, through the online discussion and debate the majority came to realise that the lock on their poorly developed intuition, or ‘tacit knowledge’ (Smith, 2001, p. 314), dealing with how learning occurred had to be released, and could be easily broken through Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, and Archer’s (2001) ideal of a ‘community of enquiry’. Working within an online coterie of engaged individuals in a space that seeks to solve a collective problem provides more than elements of discussion; it additionally provides mechanisms making it possible to take full ownership of the learning process. In doing so pre-service teachers can begin to operate within, and move out of “their zone of proximal comfort” (Labbo, 2005, p. 284)

It would appear that this subject enabled these students to move out of this zone, by the taking up of personal responsibility. Thus, their learning became cyclical, and gradually became characterised by a sequence of learning processes typified by ‘reacting,

“*They had to re-learn how to learn, come to grips with how to navigate the trajectory of their learning, and figure out the conditions which could enable or inhibit their learning. Perhaps for the first time these students began to take ownership of their own learning*”

reflecting, critically responding and refining'. While Rourke, Anderson, Garrison & Archer's (2001) ideal of a 'community of enquiry' was certainly seen to be in play, more importantly these students came to realise that this entailed an authentic form of IT literacy: one that involves 'more than just being able to read and write, it is the ability to comprehend, interpret, analyse, respond, and interact with a growing variety of complex sources of information' (Sensenbaugh, 2000, p. 6).

4.2 Learning about the conditions of authentic learning

Linked to the previous component of learning, it would appear another indirect outcome of this subject was the realisation by these students that learning was underpinned by a multifaceted set of conditions. While taking responsibility was crucial in the decisions made, and perhaps the initial process in the change from 'tacit knowledge' (Smith, 2001) to more explicit realisations, once ownership became a critical factor it appears that this elearning space also enabled these students to 'take risks'. While one of the operational drives was to complete an assignment, the students came to realise they were now free to offer up their own opinions without the added layer that they believed was related to judgement. While these opinions could be challenged, each of the groups found the forums spaces free from direct criticism, and in fact they could now begin to challenge their own thinking.

Within this new found freedom to explore and respond accordingly, the students found at times it was difficult to disengage from thinking about this subject. "I found myself constantly thinking about the posts that were there" (Student 73: Forum Reflection). Not only did reflection become a key component of learning as a whole, but they also believed that in using technology within a learning space the notion of 'reflective distancing' came to the fore. While initially these students engaged in a process of posting a retell of their reactions to the focus at hand, they gradually became engaged in a process of incubating their ideas and responses. Prior to this learning exercise it would seem that they had used technology as a very superficial means of communication, as opposed to a mode of social-collective reflection. Having access to a group of learners with a communal focus and imperative, provided a platform by which they not only had to return comments and developing understandings, but they also needed time and distance away from the learning space and the technology to internally unpack and crystallise their reactions to the weekly

focus. "I was doing lots of stuff at the same time, like writing and reading. This subject made me think of how I was learning" (Student 4: Final Assessment).

While critical for students, the previous points are perhaps more relevant to the need to identify an ideological praxes for those designing these forms of learning spaces. O'Reilly (2010) notes, that as tertiary institutions move more and more into this approach, course facilitators set up learning processes that provide opportunities related to knowing "how to mine the data that users are adding, both explicitly and as a side-effect of their activity on your site."

4.3 Learning about the authentic self

While these students appeared to begin to understand the constituents of authentic learning through this subject, they also came to understand themselves both as learners and as teachers. Through the ongoing discussions, critique, self-assessment processes and the apparent reflection that was naturally engendered, a series of realisations related to the teaching-learning nexus came into play. The core element of this new awareness was 'empathy'. "The whole forum went really well, and the forum members became really empathetic,...and sensitive. This was new for me, as this was a confronting topic" (Student 14: Week 9 Forum Summary).

In having to negotiate their way to personal and group understanding, the ongoing discussions produced a degree of tension. However, this too was resolved through the recognition that if optimal learning and understanding were to occur then in the discussion and sharing processes, they each had to come to understand other's points of views in a much fuller sense. "We came to some similar resolutions as a group, but we had to see others' points of views and understand them to get to this" (Student 27). Having gained this initial understanding of the need to develop empathy, their responses were now mitigated by the need to push other's understanding as opposed to defending a position without consideration. As one student summarised this awareness, she termed it "respectful relationship" (Student 52 Forum Reflection).

Linked to this previous point was the increasing awareness of 'resilience' as a facilitation of learning process amongst these students. "Everyone is really contributing but we're learning something else as well. This group was able to take this topic down to a personal level and feel free to share personal stories, reflecting on what they had learned first hand. The members have matured and are

“*Not only did reflection become a key component of learning, but they also believed that, in using technology within a learning space, the notion of 'reflective distancing' came to the fore*”

empathetic towards one another, and can manage and cope” (Student 68 Forum Reflection). As they began to see the need to reflect and then react to others with an empathetic lens, they also developed a resilience of thought. As the posts to the forum developed, and a corresponding self-reflection process began, these students began to peel back the layers of their beliefs systems through the writing process, gradually refining their thinking. In other words resilience in this situation was related to not trusting that their first reaction was correct and engaging in a kind of critical cynicism. This was not undertaken in a negative position of thought but in a positive aspect and direction of really wanting to know what they believed and what others believed. Thus, perhaps for the first time these students began to see the concept of ‘multiple realities’ (Pitney & Parker, 2001) in action, as well as think and write their way into a more focussed set of meanings.

5. From here to where, and for whom: A final summation

While the findings of this study indicate the broad positive outcomes an elearning site and subject can provide for students, more importantly it is also clear that elearning provides a platform for both discursive pathways of understanding as well as the intersection of both personal and collective meaning making. It therefore has the potential to break the learning mindset of transmission and receiving information. However, this gives rise to another key issue. Given the focus these students engendered in regard to developing knowledge from within a focussed conversation, or rather from within a ‘discuss-read-reflect-write’ framework of peer collaboration, can such a collaborative space sit comfortably with the competitive assessment tertiary institutions demand? Is there another way forward that encompasses authentic learning and authentic assessment?

Certainly the limitations of the project suggested by the students reveal more focussed investigations need to take place into these questions, and other issues that surfaced in the final evaluation. While research needs to further clarify facets such as the specific conditions of elearning space necessary for developing optimal learning, how writing in a forum situation can be used to enhance understanding as well as understanding the full array of outcomes elearning can develop, it is also clear that the perceived needs of the students that were not incorporated need to be included and evaluated.

The elements that were deemed necessary by these students in order to create optimal learning to occur were the perceived need for:

- An introductory tutorial on the mechanisms of posting and using forums.
- More face-to-face interaction with the facilitator.
- More focussed assessment criteria.
- A space for deeper personal discussions in order to clarify other related issues.

While possessing a common language alone was once the means through which communities were forged, it would appear from this study that language unpacked in an elearning space has the potential to be the new semiotic currency with a, “capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities” (Anderson 1991, p. 6). **TEACH**

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Forms, foci and forces: The need for overseas pre-service teacher professional experiences

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Introduction to the notion of story

This paper represents the first analytic foray into a “narrative inquiry” that focused on collecting data centered on understanding the impact of an overseas professional teaching experience on twenty pre-service teachers. Research in this paradigm seeks to explore the breadth and depth of individual’s ‘lived experience’. A key axiomatic position regarding data collection and data analysis in a ‘lived experience’ project is that the human condition is grounded in the nature and nuances of the narratives we each tell ourselves. These narratives are deeply hermeneutic in nature

and are contextually situated, cyclical, transient, multi-voiced and are constantly being reframed.

...the human experience is basically a storied experience, ...humans live out stories and are storytelling organisms (Connelly and Clandinin, 1994, p.4046).

However, in order to understand the multi-threaded strands of the ‘storied worlds’ of others, one of the key facets of analysis in this form of inquiry is the development of an understanding of the background findings, or responsive narratives, of other researchers. In developing an understanding of these

“*The human condition is grounded in the nature and nuances of the narratives we each tell ourselves*”



[Photography: Peter Beamish]

research threads the elements they reveal and define offer “mobile spotlights” (Gitlin, 1980, p. 49) so that the “acts of daily living become understandable because of some primary framework that informed them” (Goffman, 1975, p. 26).

Hence, the following pages and paragraphs represent our initial ‘mobile lens’ of understanding in regard to how an overseas professional teaching experience can provide an opportunity to develop greater skills and more global understandings that can be transferred back into the national domestic sphere.

Introduction to a global story

First time teachers in Australia are more likely to find their first jobs in hard-to-staff, low performing, rural, and central city schools. These have higher proportions of minority and low-income students (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). In order to cope with these types of teaching positions it has been proposed that pre-service teachers would benefit greatly from being exposed to the types of experiences that reflect both the demands and responsibilities indicative of their first year of teaching. Initial research suggests that professional teaching experiences, including those in developing countries, are a powerful alternative to be included in a pre-service teacher preparation program; particularly when faced with a shortage of school placements in some Australian cities. However, there are more important reasons.

Globalisation and an increase in international mobility over the past decade have heightened the need to provide young Australians with an “appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship” (Melbourne Declaration, 2008, p.4). While in the past schooling may have played a role in preparing learners to understand and relate with their own culture, learners now require the added ability to build relationships with people from other countries and develop a global identity. Teacher education institutions are called to demonstrate that they are adequately preparing their pre-service teachers for this mandate by demonstrating knowledge, understanding and teaching strategies for students from “diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds” (AITSL, 2011, p.8). Some argue that an educational response aimed at achieving this outcome will be ineffective without a real life encounter involving people from diverse backgrounds, in overseas contexts (Pettigrew, 2001).

Pre-service teachers often choose ‘domestic’ professional teaching experiences more out of convenience and the potential to achieve a pleasing

grade, than to ensure an adequate preparation for their first year of teaching. While a well-meaning ‘sheltered’ supervision of pre-service teachers may create an unrealistic experience, there is also the real risk of developing ‘teacher identities’ that prove to be inadequate when graduates commence their role as independent full-time teachers. It appears that by attempting to protect pre-service teachers, programs are essentially preventing them from the necessary growth that is required for their survival. Initial teacher education programs would thus benefit their pre-service teacher education students in designing professional teaching experiences that ensure deep involvement in a wide range of settings, by including culturally diverse communities, and also non-school settings (Ramsey, 2000).

Overseas professional teaching experiences—the stories others tell

Benefits outlined

It is important, firstly, to note that there is a variety of potential overseas professional teaching experiences (OPTE). Cwick & Benton (2009) mention, “Short Term (2-3 weeks), Long term (8-16 weeks), one way exchanges, bilateral exchanges and multilateral exchanges”. Other stories being told include the experiences of cultural immersion and language programs. While we have no doubt that these stories are worth listening to, the stories we have focused on primarily feature overseas professional teaching experiences. In particular, there appears to be a need to fully understand the impact that an overseas pre-service teaching experience has in creating a nexus between personal and professional identity. In doing so, the problems of ‘teacher fragility and vulnerability’ in the first years of teaching could be overcome (McCormack, Gore and Thomas, 2006).

Student teaching placements in international destinations have been found to result in personal and professional growth greater than one might expect in a traditional domestic student teaching placement (Stachowski, Bodle, Morrin, 2008). From listening to the stories of others it appears that the major benefits of overseas professional teaching experiences include increases in genuine multicultural education, global mindedness, reflection, flexibility, commitment, and the development of personal identity. A closer look at some key areas may be instructive in building a case for OPTE for pre-service teachers.

Cultural diversity

Overseas professional teaching experiences are linked, most commonly, to an improvement in a pre-service teacher’s cultural competence in the classroom (Meaney et al., 2008). While Australian

“Major benefits of overseas professional teaching experiences include increases in genuine multicultural education, global mindedness, reflection, flexibility, commitment, and the development of personal identity”

“*They are far more likely to understand the concepts of global community and interconnectedness and seek to instil this transformational way of thinking in their future students*”

classrooms are becoming more culturally diverse, most teachers do not see themselves as ready to teach in multicultural classrooms and have not been prepared to teach for diversity (Gibson, 2004). For teachers to truly understand how it feels to be perceived as the ‘other’ they must leave the comfort of their home communities for an extended period of time. This highlights the need for pre-service teachers to have significant cross-cultural experiences that enable them to teach and work with, and continue to learn from, people different from themselves. “Overseas student teaching can be the catalyst that starts teachers on a path of learning from others: Their students, their colleagues, the community, and their world,” argue Cushner & Mahon (2002, p. 56).

University teacher preparation programs recognise the importance of multicultural education. It is a requirement in their courses, but it continues to be taught from a ‘cognitive orientation’ despite the extensive research that demonstrates the critical role that *experience* plays in enhancing intercultural development (Cushner, 2007). Involvement of pre-service teachers in readings, discussions and even domestic relationships with different ethnic and linguistic minorities has proved insufficient in multicultural education (Quezada, 2004).

Interaction with different cultures overseas, on the other hand, has proved to be the only real way to break down cultural barriers and create understanding (Pettigrew, 2001). Faulconer (2003) reported on the importance of observing children in Mexico as a way of challenging and breaking down pre-service teachers prejudices of culturally different others. Pettigrew (2001), after conducting an extensive review of more than 200 studies of ethnic contact, highlighted the fact that international contact—excluding tourist experiences—was shown to be far more beneficial in reducing prejudice than inter-ethnic contact at home.

Prospective teachers, report Hollins and Guzman (2005), often hold negative attitudes about different cultures and are unwilling to teach in schools that tended to be more ethnically diverse. This is obviously a major challenge currently facing teacher education institutions, as teachers are increasingly required to work successfully with an increasingly diverse pupil population, including children who differ in language, culture, ethnicity and race (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005).

Today’s teachers are expected to approach learning and teaching inclusively. Hence it is vital that they have an appreciation of all learners in their classrooms and value their differences. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) suggest that the best way to

reduce intergroup prejudice is by way of intergroup contact. Not only do attitudes between immediate participants involved in the contact become more favourable, but also the attitudes between the entire out-group as well as out-group members in other situations, and “even out-groups not involved in the contact” (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006, p. 766). This study suggests that an experience such as an overseas professional teaching experience is likely to have a profound effect not only on how pre-service teachers approach their future students from diverse backgrounds, but also on how they approach all students—once thought of as different.

These conclusions are positively supported by other researchers. They have commented that students engaged in international field experiences become “less prone to prejudice students, based on cultural background, linguistic differences, or even learning disability” (Willard-Holt, 2001, p. 515). Fung King Lee, (2011), mentions that participants in overseas experiences have been found to be more open to cultural diversity, more accepting of difference, and more understanding of people from different ethnic backgrounds.

Pre-service teachers on overseas professional teaching experiences are challenged by the place and culture they find themselves, as they are often forced to “wrestle with complex thoughts, emotions, and behaviors” (Mahon, 2010, p.9). Participants in these contexts often begin to question parts of their own culture that may have previously gone unexamined, in light of the new world in which they find themselves. Consequently, they often increase in cultural sensitivity, viewing their own country, their existing beliefs and themselves from a different perspective (Quezada, 2004). OPTEs have also been found to help increase students’ patience and empathy (Willard-Holt, 2001; Faulconer, 2003).

Effective multicultural education goes beyond an understanding about different cultures and results in a deep respect and value for others. Pre-service teachers involved in OPTEs become advocates for teaching practices that embrace diversity, including empathy for students from other cultures and of different language backgrounds (Bryan and Sprague, 1997).

Global mindedness

All now live in a global society. Alfaro (2008) highlights the importance of OPTEs in enhancing and increasing the global skills needed as educators to enter internationally-minded schools and classrooms of the future. Similarly, Stachowski and

Sparks (2007) state that when pre-service teachers are given the opportunity to gain international classroom experience they are far more likely to understand the concepts of global community and interconnectedness and seek to instil this transformational way of thinking in their future students.

If teachers are truly responsible for “preparing today’s students to take their place as global citizens”, as Mahon suggests (2010, p. 7), then incorporating an overseas professional teaching experience in a pre-service teachers preparation program will be highly beneficial. Consequentially, pre-service teachers often return home with a broader outlook on how they see the world and themselves, which can impact their future classrooms (Quezada, 2004).

Creativity and resourcefulness

A typical comment from student teacher’s involved in OPTEs includes “We had limited resources overseas. We were forced to be creative!” (Bryan and Sprague, 1997, p. 201). Studies have highlighted the increased flexibility and resourcefulness that resulted from overseas professional teaching experiences (Fitzsimmons & McKenzie, 2006). It appears that when pre-service teachers participate in OPTEs, specifically in developing countries, they are often without internet, libraries, and technology (including photocopiers and data projectors) and subsequently have to rely more heavily on their own creativity and resourcefulness.



Heightened self-efficacy

For many students, the overseas professional teaching experience represents the first time they have had to rely solely on themselves (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). Challenges are often encountered by pre-service teachers while overseas, including culture shock, dislodgement and the new environment that they are required to live and teach in (Fitzsimmons & McKenzie, 2006). Typically pre-service teachers experience a bell-shaped phenomenon where they initially experience excitement, followed closely by significant dysphoria, and ending in enjoyment (Firmin, Firmin, & MacKay, 2007). It is during the dysphoria that pre-service teachers are provided with the opportunity to overcome difficulties and develop strategies to cope with demanding experiences.

To successfully overcome these challenges, they are often forced to face their personal anxieties and test their own perceived limitations (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). Empowerment and efficacy result from drawing on inner resources through times of challenge and cognitive dissonance (Fitzsimmons & McKenzie, 2006; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008). The process of successfully overcoming their personal anxieties and “testing their own limitations” facilitates major growth and participants report an increase in “self confidence and esteem, increased adaptability, resourcefulness, and persistence” (Cushner & Mahon, 2002, p. 51).

Accordingly, one would expect pre-service teachers with a heightened level of self-efficacy to be optimistic and resilient about their abilities even in the face of adversity. As a result of increased confidence and self-belief—related to who they are as persons and teachers; their personal identity and professional understanding is more likely to be resilient and durable in the future. Teaching experience in domestic practicums appears to be a space less likely to develop these necessary traits.

Increased commitment

It has been suggested that a relationship may exist between those students who have completed an overseas professional teaching experience and high levels of commitment to the teaching profession (Bryan and Sprague, 1997). Hackett and Lavery (2010) highlight the importance of pre-service teachers developing a deep sense of their vocation as teachers when they describe vocation as work that is of service to others, while at the same time providing people with a sense of identity and meaning.

In a study of ten teachers involved in an overseas professional teaching experience, it was found that this cohort showed increased levels of long-

“Empowerment and efficacy result from drawing on inner resources through times of challenge and cognitive dissonance”

term commitment to the profession of teaching on their return as demonstrated by higher levels of teaching time and higher rates of further study. While this area needs more investigation, if overseas professional teaching experiences were shown to conclusively increase the commitment of pre-service teachers, OPTEs would be extremely valuable for initial teacher education institutions to implement, including combating current dilemmas with regard to teacher drop out.

Enhanced collaboration and collegiality

Rather than sending individual teachers to separate locations, overseas professional teaching experiences often involve *groups* of pre-service teachers together. This is referred to as ‘clustering’ and allows for pre-service teachers to support each other within learning communities, including university mentors available to support both the pre-service teachers and their supervising teachers (Le Cornu, 2010, p. 197). The notion of a learning community contrasts the ‘sink and swim’ and ‘do it yourself’ view of student teaching in the typical practicum. Experiences that incorporate a learning community approach, like OPTEs, indicate that learners not only take responsibility for their own survival but also take on responsibility for the well-being and learning of their peers (Le Cornu, 2010).

Pre-service teachers quickly learn the importance of working collaboratively with their team members in overseas professional teaching experiences as it is only by sharing ideas and supporting each other that each teacher is able to overcome the challenges faced. From a social constructivist viewpoint, where learning occurs by constructing meanings, *vis a vis* ‘absorbing’ them from another, involving pre-service teachers in an active, communal and collaborative environment is theoretically sound (Bruner, 1987).

OPTEs include many shared experiences. As a result, collegial relationships are often developed between university academics and pre-service teachers and between pre-service teachers and their peers (Robertson & Weber, 2000). The trust and respect that exists in this learning community may well provide the pre-service teacher with the perfect environment to be willing to be themselves, share their story with their peers and teachers collegially, and possibly for the first time experience real learning in an air of freedom.

Challenges that reflect reality

It has been suggested that in many ways OPTEs may closely reflect the experiences of a first year graduate teacher. Both experiences are exposed to significant challenges and high levels of responsibility (Walters,

Garii & Walters, 2009). While this causes increased stress, it far better simulates the environment that teachers find themselves in during their first year of teaching. The advantage of experiencing the true nature of teaching earlier is that they are sharing this experience with other pre-service teachers and are therefore able to support and relate to others experiencing the same crisis. Pre-service teachers are therefore given the opportunity to grow in a supportive environment and develop personal confidence, which should sustain them in their future teaching careers. This supportive environment offers the individual the opportunity to take risks in regard to developing the nexus between what they have learnt in lectures with their own personal belief system. Thus, the personal and professional identity can more fully mesh. It has been suggested that this nexus is vital for a teacher’s ongoing commitment to the profession, as well as the development of authentic learning spaces (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust & Schulman, 2005).

Reflection

Simply experiencing classroom culture is not enough. As Cattley (2007) has argued, deep reflection is the key to developing a sound teaching identity whereby the concepts of teaching and learning become glued into a professional whole. This melding through reflection would appear to ensure a more focussed classroom. Smith (2009) argues that overseas professional teaching is a powerful professional development opportunity that further enhances this force. It should be nurtured and supported, as students are forced to question many of their perspectives. As a result, in such times of transition, reflection is always promoted as people are making sense of their new environments and of making sense of who they are professionally.

Two significant transitions occur during any overseas teaching experience. The first transition occurs during entry into the host country and the second upon re-entry into the home country. Students always return changed as a result as they see themselves, their world, and their professions differently. There is agreement that pre-service teachers have been found to become more reflective as a result of an overseas professional teaching experience (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Robertson & Webber, 2000).

Probably the single most important attribute in becoming a quality teacher is reflective practice. When pre-service teachers develop the art of consistently reflecting on teaching experiences they continually grow and discover their voice in explaining why they do the things they do in the

“*Reflecting on teaching experiences, they continually grow and discover their voice in explaining why they do the things they do in the classroom*”

classroom. Dewey (1933, p.12), describes a two-part process in reflection which helps to explain why overseas teaching experiences are so powerful in developing the art of reflection.

First, learners experience a state of doubt and perplexity in which thinking begins. OPTEs are ideal for creating mostly unavoidable difficulties to ensure real thinking results. The environments and cultures the pre-service teachers live and work in are often far removed from what they once considered normal. These challenges often lead to pre-service teachers questioning who they are as people and teachers and reflecting on their own ability to cope with the demands they are facing. “It is precisely the difficult experiences encountered during the adjustment process that seem to be what people remember and that facilitates the resulting growth” (Cushner, 2007, p. 32).

The second part of the reflection process, according to Dewey (1933), involves the learners searching to find answers to resolve the doubt and settle and dispose of the perplexity. OPTEs promote this part of the process also. The doubts and perplexities that pre-service teachers experience are not hypothetical and therefore foster a real life teaching experience, where answers to doubts are essential. If pre-service teachers are to survive their teaching experience, they are required to develop adequate answers to resolve doubts they initially experienced.

OPTEs in developing countries: Stories yet to be told

Very little research has taken place in relation to the impact of overseas professional teaching experiences in developing countries on pre-service teachers’ ‘stories of self’. Despite the limited existing knowledge in this area, it appears there is much to be learned, and this motivates the current research project investigating pre-

service teachers on overseas professional teaching experiences in developing countries. The story of present understandings is shared to provide enough evidence to justify the continuation of our OPTEs allowing ‘our real story’ to be told in the not too distant future. In the process, this story will undergo some changes. Present understandings, will be questioned, but ‘the voice’ is expected to become stronger, clearer, and increase in trustworthiness in the process.

The context of and platform for the continuing story

Providing the context of stories is often as important as the stories themselves (Cresswell, 2009) and here enables better understanding of these OPTEs and MOTO in particular.

MOTO stands for the *Ministry Of Teaching Overseas* program run by the School of Education at Avondale College of Higher Education. The college’s motto ‘A greater vision of world needs’ highlights the emphasis it places on preparing its graduates for a life of service in their communities.

Each year, all primary and secondary pre-service teachers—approximately 500 or more—are expected to complete a professional teaching experience component. Every student is given an opportunity to complete one professional teaching experience (15 days of teaching) in a developing country, as part of their four-year degree course. Presently, about one half of all pre-service teachers choose a MOTO experience in place of one of their ‘normal domestic’ professional teaching experiences.

The 2013 cohort who completed a MOTO experience chose between three different locations: India, Cambodia or Nepal. All three experiences provided the pre-service teachers with the opportunity to teach in classrooms with very basic facilities, few resources or little equipment.

“All MOTO experiences attempt to facilitate a learning community through the demonstration of quality teaching and running professional development workshops for the host teachers”



The selected overseas schools highly value the opportunity to host pre-service teachers from Australia, as many of their teachers have had little higher education and see it as an opportunity to learn. All MOTO experiences attempt to facilitate a learning community through the demonstration of quality teaching and by an Australian lecturer running professional development workshops for the host teachers

Whenever possible the pre-service teachers live as part of the community in which they are teaching, learning and serving. The accommodation chosen, the food eaten, and the lifestyle maintained while teaching closely reflect the lives of the locals. Pre-service teachers are each required to daily become involved in a service based community activity in addition to their teaching responsibilities. This aims to connect pre-service teachers individually with the local community and build quality relationships with the local people.

A MOTO experience, however, is not limited to the teaching component alone. In total, most MOTO experiences run for approximately 30 days with another 8 months of preparation time. An overview of the process might be helpful at this point.

Decision to go — Pre-service teachers sign up for the experience in November of the year before they take part in the experience.

Pre-trip course — Beginning in March of the year of departure all MOTO participants take part in a weekly preparation program run by the academics responsible for supervising the teams overseas. Some weeks all of the participants meet together to discuss common areas and other weeks they meet according to the country team they are involved in. The pre-trip course covers topics such as culture, safety, team expectations, teaching strategies, language immersion, and logistics. Pre-service teachers generally begin bonding as a team during these experiences.

Social events prior to departure — In recognition of the value of a united team, each country team plans two social events prior to departure as an opportunity to get to know each other before being thrown into the challenge of overseas teaching. These events attempt to build community, facilitate supportive relationships, and build excitement prior to departure.

Planning with family — While planning takes place at a team level, individuals also plan individually often with the help of their individual families. The families are highly involved in the preparation process prior to departure, support

is provided via emails and phone calls during the experience, and in sharing the many stories told by the participant on their return.

Teaching experience — While the operating time of each school differs, what does remain consistent is the independence and responsibility that each pre-service teacher experiences in their overseas classrooms. Typically the host supervisors open up their schools and classrooms and require that pre-service teachers take full teaching responsibilities on arrival. Teaching takes up the majority of the school day, often with little involvement from the local teachers. Generally, pre-service teachers can choose to teach on their own or with a peer.

Team workshops/reflection — In addition to teaching responsibilities all MOTO participants meet each morning before school begins to take part in a short (approximately 15-minute) team worship. Generally these workshops are taken by a different team member each morning and are a chance to share what they have learnt about themselves, their everyday or spiritual life, from their experiences. It is also a time of encouragement and team bonding. Each evening all teams gather again and for approximately 20 minutes are involved in a team debriefing session. This usually begins with a team affirmation session and opportunity for individuals to share the highlights and challenges of their day. This is usually a real highlight of the day as participants share their stories, support each other, and make decisions as a team that will direct the next day's events. Journal writing also occurs on an individual level each day.

Service project — Each participant, independently, is involved in their local community with a focus on service for an hour a day while teaching. Their service project must involve working with locals; and whenever possible, this is completed apart from their team members. This encourages participants to once again step out of their comfort zone and form relationships with local people. In the past pre-service teachers have helped with cooking, read to/with children in orphanages, helped locals plant rice, or entertained children by playing games.

Travel component — This takes place after the teaching component is completed. As a team, all participants are involved in a joint-adventure while overseas. The India team travelled across India exploring places such as Varanasi, the Taj Mahal, and Delhi. The Cambodian team travelled to a rural village before flying to Luang Prabang (Laos), while the Nepal team was involved in a 9-day trek to Annapurna Base Camp.

“While we have been ‘given a glimpse of the conductor at work’, the score has yet to be fully developed and written—a story that is still forming”

Although the context of the story may be helpful for a fuller appreciation, in a sense it is only what a frame is to a picture. Much more of the story needs to be told.

An unfinished story

Using a music metaphor, what has been heard at present is really an 'unfinished symphony'. It is not unlike a cantata in which the voices of soloists and that of the choir have yet to be heard. There is a reason for this, of course. While we have been 'given a glimpse of the conductor at work', the score has yet to be fully developed and written—a story that is still forming; consisting of many individual stories that will contribute to the 'genre of authentic teacher identity'. **TEACH**

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Connecting the dots

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I met Esta deep in the Papua New Guinean highlands after a flight with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency's Flying Clinic into her isolated community. She, and the 100 others she share the valley with, were certainly amongst the country's poorest. But she spoke to me about luck.

She felt lucky that the four year-old son she held wouldn't die from malaria like her daughter had 12 months previous. She felt lucky that she now knew what caused diarrhoea and how to prevent it. She felt lucky to be have access to basic health care, even though her other needs were so massive.

From the youngest grades right through to senior school the increasingly consumer driven society which we inhabit fuels the fight for our students to fulfil both wants and perceived need, contributing to what is often vocalised as a sense of privilege. So maybe you've said it, or maybe you've just wanted to—*You guys have no idea how lucky you are.*

The 'first world problems' meme (the term given a unique form of online virality) is perhaps one of the most prolific to spread across inboxes, Facebook pages and twitter streams in the previous twelve months. Classic examples include; 'Sick of eating at the restaurants close to work', 'Tried to spread cold butter on my toast, and it ripped' and 'Had to park a long way from the door'.

But amongst the ironic humour is an increasingly worrying realisation that the connection between our world of privilege and the world of the poor is quickly disappearing. While globalisation and technology is bringing the world together, the noise and pace of our lives means developing world has never been so easy to forget, nor seemed so far away.

As a result, the challenge laid out by Bev Christian in this very publication 12 months ago, for schools to help their students 'become informed, responsible and compassionate citizens' is increasingly difficult. But this is not a battle you need to face in isolation.

The Adventist education system has a deep, institutional tie to a widely respected, faith-based non-government organisation—the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). ADRA operates community development and emergency response projects across the globe.

In addition to impacting communities through providing access to health, education, water and income generating opportunities amongst other basic rights, we are passionate about opening young people's minds and hearts to the needs of the world's poor.

We are intentionally investing in opportunities to help you and your students connect the dots; to bring poverty closer to home, to make development and aid understandable and to provide avenues to engage in real, life-changing service.

How we can help you

I'll keep it brief—we want to help. Schools, churches and other organisations across the country have discovered how forming a relationship and utilising the skills and resources of an aid agency like ADRA can have a positive effect on almost all aspects of their operation. In the school context, we have seen how student recruitment, behaviour, learning outcomes and esteem can be improved by intentional partnership, be it through fundraising, service opportunities or the involvement of guest speakers and teachers. Below are just a few examples of how ADRA has helped schools just like yours.

In the classroom

We have a staff more than willing to appear as a special guest in your classroom, chapel or week of spiritual emphasis. From those with decades of experience in the field across the Pacific, Asia and Africa, to those who have been blessed with the gift of reaching people with God's heart for the poor and a biblical basis for justice, we can help bring an extra voice into your plans for broadening your student's horizon and instilling a sense of justice, compassion and service.

In addition, we are currently laying the ground work for the development of a range of curriculum based resources that will help you enrich your classes with current, relevant and engaging activities that bring the reality of injustice into your classroom—be it Geography, Bible, Food Tech or English to name a few. (If you are interested in being part of this journey please contact us).

The noise and pace of our lives means the developing world has never been so easy to forget, nor seemed so far away

Significance outside the classroom

The Poverty Challenge is an immersive poverty simulation exercise designed by ADRA Australia to allow groups of young people to come face-to-face with the reality so many face around the world. For home groups, classes or perhaps student leadership the Poverty Challenge is a memorable event that will have students talking and acting.

During the previous 12 months ADRA Australia impacted more than 3 million people through community development and emergency response projects here in Australia and around the world. If you're searching for significance nothing could top being a part of this. So, if you are looking for a way to engage meaningfully with a project in your own community, or one on the other side of the world, talk with us about your interest and passions and we will find something to match.

The trip of a life-time

In the last year 13 groups, ranging in size from 8–22, have taken part in an ADRA Connections trip and gotten their hands dirty helping to bring an ADRA project to life. The cross-cultural, eye-ball to eye-ball with poverty experience, is truly life changing. If you are looking for an event to bring your school together or celebrate a significant event (say the completion of year 12) ADRA Connections is for you.

How you can help us

Raise awareness

If there is one thing students are good at it is being heard. Bringing the issues of poverty and injustice to attention, and calling for action against them, is an important part of any global action. ADRA participates in a range of advocacy campaigns each year, many of which are of global significance. Providing opportunities for your students to take part in campaigns such as the Movement to End Poverty, World Water Day and Anti-Poverty Week is a great way to build in relevance and significance throughout the year. And yes, we have resources to help.

Raise funds

Fete's, walk-a-thons and charity auctions are just some of the creative ways schools have raised funds for ADRA over the years. For many, the fundraising becomes an annual event celebrated by the entire school community. Many schools choose to base their fundraising around items found in our Grant a Wish gift catalogue as it provides tangible examples of what their impact can be (for example, \$15 can provide chickens to a Mongolian family to improve their income, nutrition and provide fertiliser for their garden).

Pray for us

How God's heart must break for those who suffer in this broken world. As Christians we are driven by the responsibility we have to show love and compassion to the world's poor, and are inspired by Christ's model of service. Each and every month hundreds of people, including school home-groups and classes pray for our work as part of ADRA's Prayer Warrior team. We'd love to have your class part of this powerful movement by reading, considering and praying for our monthly prayer emails.

What now?

If you've had enough of hearing your students first world problems, or just really want to provide a way for your students to engage in a life-changing service opportunity, visit ADRA Australia's website for resources, news and opportunities to help connect the dots.

Despite her disadvantage Esta felt lucky. Together, we can help students across the country recognise theirs, connect the dots and act to make the world a better place for all. **TEACH**

Braden Blyde started his professional career as an English teacher at Prescott College, Adelaide. He now works as the Communications Coordinator for ADRA Australia.

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MC's Vanuatu 'schoolies week'

Aaron Williams and Nicki Clark

Program Coordinators, Macquarie College, Glendale, NSW

“*Surely taking away 34 eighteen-year-olds for a school trip to a foreign country is the definition of madness—are you mad?*”

In an ABC radio interview, the announcer asked, “...surely taking away 34 eighteen-year-olds for a school trip to a foreign country is the definition of madness—are you mad?”. The question still amuses me. The experiences and lessons learnt on the Vanuatu Storm Co. trips are the opposite of madness. It always inspires me that year after year the Year 12 students at Macquarie College step forward and raise significant funds with the express focus of helping others.

The spark of an idea for the Vanuatu Storm Co. came from discussions with former Macquarie College teachers Peter and Glenda Roberts, who, after retirement, had been travelling to Vanuatu to train teachers in Port Vila. The schools they visited—the workplaces of the trainee teachers—needed obvious and overdue help. The photos of one school, Olwi SDA Primary outside Port Vila, motivated groundwork in my mind.

With inspired zeal for an adventurous service trip overseas, and with the overwhelming belief that this was a noble action for Year 12s, I ‘pitched’ the idea to the graduating class. Not a single student was interested, or even showed an inkling of curiosity. A few months later when, quite embarrassed, I told Peter Roberts of this, he simply replied, “Maybe another time, Olwi School is not going anywhere”.

Disheartened and quite saddened, the spark of an idea lost quite a bit of its glow. That was until a few years later, in 2008, Nicki Clark and I shared it with the Year 11 roll class. Nicki was incredibly open to the concept and we timidly pitched the idea in term 4 of 2008, to a lukewarm, but importantly,

not a disapproving response. In roll class over the rest of the term we prayed about the idea and, with the emerging idea gaining momentum, Nicki and I thought it wise to tell our spouses what we were hatching, and to our great relief we gained strong support. We cannot thank our families enough for their ongoing patience and encouragement.

In the last weeks of the College year in 2008, the idea was again pitched to Principal Dr Bruce Youlden, all to the backdrop of yet another appalling Schoolies season in QLD. He instantly gave the trip his ‘blessing’. The idea of a Vanuatu Storm Co. simply reflected the long established ethic and beliefs of the College. Most of the interested students had prior Storm Co. experience with the College and collectively had far more capability to operate within the Storm Co. tradition than Nicki and I. Parents became incredibly interested and supportive of an alternative to the Schoolies week.

In 2009 Peter Roberts kindly came and spoke to the Year 12s about Olwi SDA School and what they could expect. The students were quite shocked by images of the Olwi classrooms, compared to the luxuries they enjoyed daily. Those images galvanised the trip and were constantly spoken about in preparing for the Storm Co. adventure. In hindsight the first parent meeting for the trip was astonishing. With no real idea where Olwi village exactly was, no contact with the Olwi school Principal, and only a broad idea of where we might stay, every parent at the meeting was incredibly supportive.

[This photograph:
Aaron Williams]



Funds were, and are still raised through movie nights, mufti days, cake stalls, milkshake days and appeals to some incredibly generous, often anonymous, donors. In 2011 and 2012 we gratefully took on corporate sponsorship of the trip and this made a significant difference to each year's total. Students pay for their airfares and accommodation, with each fundraised dollar going to Olwi school.

Throughout the planning process we could not find accommodation close to Olwi school. After discussing this with Peter Roberts, he simply said, "Why not just camp on the school oval?" We did, and this immersion into the life of the village has, for most students on the trip, been unforgettable. Living in the heart of the village, experiencing its daily ebb and flow, attending Sabbath programs and eating food cooked by Olwi villagers each night, students take away not just the pride of work well done, but the feel, smell and sensitivity of village life.

The days of the first trip were a source of considerable wonder. After arriving safely in Vanuatu just on dark, we carefully packed up all the students and their luggage to leave for Olwi village. Driving through the suddenly darkening night we finally arrived to a great fanfare and a vast welcoming ceremony. Suddenly, we realised we had left Nicki at the airport. She arrived later in another vehicle arranged for us. After great speeches were exchanged, and delicious coconut juice gulped, the tents went up and the Vanuatu Storm Co. had begun.

Most of the 2009 students had limited camping experience. As the night settled, awareness of the drop toilets, no electricity, supersized bugs and mostly open air but separate gender showers, took effect. A few girls vowed not to go to the toilet for the entire village stay, quietly concerning Amber, our nurse.

On the first morning, jobs were decided, fixing furniture began, and painting was to start. With no swatch of colours, the Olwi teachers gave us a

green plastic plate that almost matched the uniform, and said that would do. Off we marched down the dusty tracks to hardware shops for supplies, quickly learning that 'not too far away' has quite a different interpretation in Vanuatu. This scenario feels quite ridiculous now, as on later trips, hardware has been paid for and delivered to the village before our arrival.

The first group set an incredibly high standard, and the remarkable effort students make in Olwi each year amazes us. Although the Vanuatu trip is not compulsory, the vision was to continue a Storm Co. tradition into Year 12 and finish Macquarie College with a gift to those with far less—a vision now experienced by well over one hundred Vanuatu Storm Co. students, and one that has become an integral part of Macquarie College culture. Some participating students are brothers and sisters of previous participants, seeking their own Olwi stories and Vanuatu adventure. Each Vanuatu Storm Co. group meets the standard set by the previous year.

Each year students and teachers alike laugh when I tell them to take their watch off at Sydney Airport; it only takes a day in Olwi village and working in the school, to realise why. Vanuatu Storm Co. always underpins that life is really made up of moments, not days and weeks. Moments taken to paint faces, blow balloons and act stories in kids clubs, to sing and praise at Sabbath School, to sit and chat to Olwi students and villagers.

This year is the fifth anniversary of Macquarie College's Vanuatu Storm Co., an achievement to be justly proud of. The planning and organisation has not been without its challenges and issues, at its heart Micah 6:8 remains its motivation, "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God". **TEACH**

Endnote

STORM Co. stands for Service To Others Really Matters Company (<http://stormco.adventistconnect.org/about-us>)



[Photography: Brad Cox]



Help yourself: What I learned from my Development Studies placement

Chelsea Mitchell

Bachelor of Arts student, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW

“*From different places, employment situations and backgrounds, they come with a shared purpose—to help people help themselves*”

Development is contagious. This is the lesson I learn during my visit to Mok Mai, a district in northern-central Laos. I also learn about the wet season. If you're going to drive up a mountain, you're going to get stuck, literally, in the mud.

I visit the remote villages of Ban Tham loy, home to 49 families living in 41 houses. With the help of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, toilets have been built and water systems installed. The villagers are now building a school.

A 'cow bank' provides income—a cow is lent to a family who, when the cow gives birth, give the calf to another family. The bank has grown from five to seven cows.

The head of the village smiles. “Before ADRA, we didn't have toilets, hospital, water system. Now because of the project, we have.”

After lunch (soup with a turkey's foot), the primary purpose of the visit begins. The 2012-13 yearly report meeting brings ADRA staff, government officials and village leaders together. They discuss the activities of the past year, the 11 villages and what can be improved, and most importantly, how to improve according to the need, skill and interest of each village. They emphasise the importance of teaching people how to use the water system and toilets, rather than simply having them installed.

The 47 people in the four-hour meeting are an inspiration. They come from different places, employment situations and backgrounds, but they come with a shared purpose—to help people help themselves. **TEACH**

Chelsea travelled to Laos as part of her placement for her International Poverty and Development Studies course.



A woman from the villages of Ban Tham loy in Laos

[Photograph: Chelsea Mitchell]

Students help bring Jesus to Buddhist community

Brenton Stacey

Public Relations Officer, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW

Pre-service teachers from Avondale have modelled its ethos of holistic education during their annual mission trip to one of India's most impoverished states.

Students from the School of Education first visited AoZora Adventist Academy with lecturer Jason Hinze seven years ago as part of Ministry of Teaching Overseas. MOTO is now the subject of Jason's PhD thesis. Senior lecturer Dr Andrew Matthes joined the students in 2008 and has been leading the teams since.

The team's holistic approach included caring for the physical wellbeing of the children, their families and the community—the students prepared meals and organised health, hygiene and outdoor activities. This provided social opportunities—a concert showed parents the progress their children were making during the students' three-week teaching experience. The team added a spiritual dimension

after the school asked Andrew to share his belief in God. He extended the invitation to his local church minister, Pastor Peter Watts, an Avondale alumnus who is also the evangelist for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in northern New South Wales. Peter's 10 presentations encouraged 160 Hindus to follow Jesus and five to join the Adventist Church through baptism.

A former sponsor child of not-for-profit Christian organisation Asian Aid is now ministering to the group each Saturday under a nearby mango tree.

AoZora is located in Bodh Gaya, Bihar, where Gautama Buddha is said to have obtained enlightenment. It is supported, in part, by the 1% Club, alumni and friends of Avondale who donate a small percentage of their wages. Additional funding has also been raised to purchase land and a school building. The first level with six classrooms has been completed. Levels two and three will as funds become available. **TEACH**

“*The team's holistic approach included caring for the physical wellbeing of the children, their families and the community*”



Pr Peter Watts, with Dr Andrew Matthes, baptises Ramu Kumar

[Photograph: Madeleine Talty]

Two countries, one mission

Students partner with NGOs on projects

Lawson Hull

Bachelor of Arts student, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW

“*The students, who raised enough money to cover the costs of all the building supplies and hygiene products, also funded two toilets in another village—very little here makes a big difference there*”

Students from an Avondale mission club partnered with two non-governmental organisations to complete community development projects in Bangladesh and Cambodia during their mid-year holidays. The college of higher education’s Cambodia One Mission team and Cooranbong-based Restore One built a house and a toilet for a village family near the capital Phnom Penh, presented a hygiene class at a school, and visited hospitals and orphanages. The students, who raised enough money to cover the costs of all the building supplies and hygiene products, also funded two toilets in another village.

Education students Brooke Davidson and Alex McAndrew, on their second visits to the country, led the team of 21. Alex describes the experience as

“challenging and exhausting, but highly rewarding.” Alumna Megan Townend, a member of the Restore One association, who lived in Cambodia at the time, managed the team during its visit to the country.

The Bangladesh One Mission team of 11 ran a children’s club at an Adventist Development and Relief Agency-supported school in the capital Dhaka. The students also presented a health seminar in conjunction with a local Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, they did most of their work before arrival, raising money to provide 36 scholarships, about half of which went to students at the school and half to students at the college.

“Very little here makes a big difference there,” says Odailson “Dada” Fialho, a theology and ministry student who led the team with wife and nursing student Leticia Marquardt. “God looks after us when we’re willing to look after His children.” **TEACH**



One Mission and Restore One built this home for a family in Cambodia

[Photograph: Elise Graf]

Tessa's Temple of Solomon

Model of architectural masterpiece a recreation of scientist's vision

Charlotte O'Neill

Bachelor of Arts student, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW

It is imposing. A model of the Temple of Solomon on display in Avondale Libraries (Lake Macquarie campus) is the work of Dr Tessa Morrison, who constructed it based on descriptions in a circa-1680s manuscript written by physicist and mathematician Sir Isaac Newton.

Tessa found the manuscript in the digital archives of the Horn Library at Babson College (Wellesley, Massachusetts, USA)—she had been studying utopian cities. Written predominantly in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, the manuscript “was a scriptural exegesis of the book of Ezekiel.” Tessa, a senior lecturer in the School of Architecture and Built Environment at The University of Newcastle, translated the “scratchy handwriting” to reveal a detailed architectural description of the temple.

After successfully applying for an Australian Research Council Post-Doctoral Fellowship, Tessa

began the painstaking construction process. She initially recreated Newton's reconstruction using the building information modeling software program ArchiCAD. The physical model, at over two metres square, features 1000 columns and 1200 window grids, all of which had to be sanded and painted. “I could have painted my house several times over in the time it took me,” says Tessa. Her favourite aspect of the project: the relief of finishing it. “But [in] saying that, I am immensely proud of it.”

Avondale vice-president (research) Professor Anthony Williams, formerly head of the School of Architecture and Built Environment at Newcastle, describes the model as “the pulling together [of] 5000 pages of writing.” It combines not only architecture and history but also two iconic figures, “one of the greatest scientists that has ever lived and the biblical figure of Solomon—both people who are associated with wisdom,” says Tessa. **TEACH**

“*It combines not only architecture and history but also two iconic figures, ‘one of the greatest scientists and the biblical figure of Solomon—both people who are associated with wisdom’*”



A model of the Temple of Solomon, as constructed by Tessa Morrison

[Photograph: Brenton Stacey]

Community-minded scholars bring gospel to life

Launch of a book to help others find meaning in Scripture

Brenton Stacey

Public Relations Officer, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW

Sara Thompson

Public Relations Assistant, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW

A book about John's gospel initiated by an Avondale lecturer invites readers to find meaning in the text through their own understanding and that of others.

“The more we are aware of what we bring to the reading experience, the more we will be aware of the wonder of what we find there that is beyond us”

Signs to life: Reading and responding to John's gospel launched in Ladies Chapel, August 17, at the end of a symposium presented by the college of higher education, the Institute of Worship and Signs Publishing Company. The keynote speaker: Dr Kendra Haloviak Valentine, the book's author.

Kendra began the symposium by explaining three reading theories: the world behind, in and before the text. Reading Scripture with a knowledge of history, literature and culture helps us find meaning by providing a “check-and-balance,” she says. “The more we are aware of what we bring to the reading experience, the more we will be aware of the wonder of what we find there that is beyond us.”

Illustrating Kendra's point about each reader of a text making possible a new reading, four contributing authors—all scholars at Avondale—reflect on their reading of and response to the gospel.

Dr Carolyn Rickett, a senior lecturer in communication and English who studied testimonial and therapeutic writing for her Doctor of Arts, validates Mary and Martha's grief as they mourn their brother's death. Associate Professor Daniel Reynaud, dean of the Faculty of Arts and Theology who has published a book about the Bible as literature, notes John's repeated use of irony. Professor Jane Fernandez, vice-president

(learning and teaching) who has published a book about the psychology of violence, reflects on Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan

woman. And Nathan Brown, a Master of Arts (research) student who is an advocate for social justice, brings a new perspective to the foot washing scene.

“The gospel invites us to celebrate unity in diversity, and reading in community is an invitation to appreciate and to empathically engage with perspectives other than our own,” says Carolyn.

Daniel expressed this differently during the question and answer forum at the launch. “We need to get comfortable with being uncomfortable,” he said. “It's about knowing Somebody, not something.”

“So, is the interpretation of John, and of Scripture, now merely a subjective exercise?” asked Avondale president Professor Ray Roennfeldt in his remarks. “I'd suggest not. We're all reading the same text, we're listening to each other's readings and we're all led by the same Spirit who leads us into all truth. Reading in community may be somewhat more variegated but is certainly richer.”

Inspired by a sermon of Kendra's about the wedding at the well, Carolyn and then colleague Dr Robyn Priestley wrote a research grant proposal to publish in print and on CD a series of sermons Kendra preached about the seven signs found in the first 11 chapters of John. “Anyone who has heard Kendra's presentations will know the profound readings she brings to biblical narratives,” says Carolyn. “This project means more people, particularly those in regional areas, will now have access to her scholarship and to her pastoral insights.”

“It's the mission of both entities to provide resources for the church—and we've always imagined the book and the CD as being read and used in churches and by families,” says Nathan, who also edited the book in his role as book editor at Signs Publishing Company. “While we enjoyed a weekend hearing from Kendra and interacting with each other, the book now shares something of this experience in a wider way.” **TEACH**



Signs to life editor
Nathan Brown
with author Kendra
Haloviak Valentine
and contributing
authors Carolyn
Rickett and Daniel
Reynaud

[Photograph:
Brenton Stacey]

BOOK REVIEWS

Signs to life: Reading and responding to John's gospel

Kendra Haloviak Valentine (2013). Warburton: Signs Publishing Company

Bruce Manners

Senior minister, Lilydale Seventh-day Adventist Church, Vic¹

***Signs to life: Reading and responding to John's gospel* is fascinating. It recognises and encourages readers to bring their own background and understanding to add meaning to the Bible book.**

This sounds similar to literary theorist Tzvetan Todorov's suggestion that text is a picnic where the author brings the words and the reader brings the meaning. The writers of *Signs to life* would disagree and say, "It is based on the conviction that we understand Scripture best when we invite others to 'sit beside' us and read together in community" (p. 139).

Kendra Haloviak Valentine has based her seven chapters on a series of sermons about the seven signs found in the first 11 chapters of John (if you've heard her preach, you can "hear" her voice as you read).

Kendra, who teaches New Testament at La Sierra University (Riverside, California USA), is a gifted communicator who brings insight to these passages. She draws from the Old and the New Testaments and from original languages to give deeper understanding.

Part two of the book has four writers "responding" in a chapter each. They don't respond to what Kendra has written but rather to the challenge of bringing their own reading to the gospel.

Three of them work at Avondale College of Higher Education. Dr Carolyn Rickett writes from her background in literature and communication, Associate Professor Daniel Reynaud teaches the Bible as literature and Professor Jane Fernandez takes what she calls a text-based approach. Nathan Brown, book editor for Signs Publishing Company, writes as a "student of stories and storytelling." What they do well, is demonstrate the added depth possible from this approach.

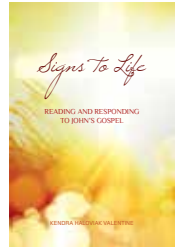
Signs to life ends with an invitation to 'sit beside' the writers to read John further together—in community.

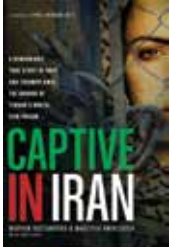
Fascinating. Worth reading². **TEACH**

Notes

¹ Bruce is a former editor-in-chief at Signs Publishing Company.

² *Signs to life* is available from Adventist Book Centres for \$19.95.





Captive in Iran: A remarkable true story of hope and triumph amid the horror of Tehran's brutal Evin Prison

Rostampour, M. & Amirizadeh, M., (2013). USA: Tyndale Momentum

Andrea Grant

Teacher Librarian, Central Coast Adventist School, Erina, NSW

***Captive in Iran* is a recount of how Maryam Rostampour and Marziyeh Amirizadeh survived 259 days of imprisonment under harsh, cruel and unjust conditions for daring to be Christians who shared their faith.**

It is not illegal to be a Christian in Iran, which is an Islamic nation, however the authorities interpret the laws to suit their situation without any accountability. Maryam and Marziyeh were observed for a period of time and were under suspicion of proselytising. In actual fact these two women had for three years been actively sharing their faith in Tehran with anyone who showed an interest. The women had very deliberately divided a map of the city into squares, and had been working through each sector for four hours every night. They had given away 20,000 Bibles in this time!

When Maryam and Marziyeh were arrested, they were, by the laws of the country, illegally held in a detention centre for two weeks without being formally charged. They were interrogated numerous times without a lawyer present, and suffered filthy conditions, hunger and sickness. Despite all this, the young women encouraged every woman detainee they met by praying for each of them, speaking words of compassion, sharing what little they had or received, and showing God's love to their guards. For example Maryam and Marziyeh cleaned the blocked toilets and bathrooms of the centre and prayed for their guards.

When the two women were moved to Evin Prison, notorious for its torture and brutal treatment of prisoners and concentration camp-

like conditions, they continued to minister to the prisoners and guards without compromising their beliefs or faith. The prison became their church where they found the blessing of being able to openly worship, and also to share with everyone—something they could not do outside the prison walls! Surrounded by despair, ignorance, the confronting lesbian behaviour of many inmates, cruelty of the guards, and debilitating, physical sickness, Maryam and Marziyeh displayed outward calm and courage. At times they cried because of their illness and physical hurts or the pain suffered by other prisoners, and the inhumane treatment meted out. But they were not crushed by the oppression on their spirits and minds because they fully relied on the Holy Spirit and their trust in their relationship with Jesus.

The story of the Maryam and Marziyeh is delivered in a candid and factual voice, but the passionate response to the injustice suffered by the Iranian people, especially Iranian women, resonates loud and clear. The unfair plight of women living under a repressive religious dictatorship is highlighted with many examples over and over again in the book. Every action and word of an Iranian woman is controlled by a man. For example, religious laws give men a way to engage in activities with prostitutes without censure from society or family. Maryam and Marziyeh want the world to know that Iranian women, in fact the Iranian people, can be free from this repressed life because of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice, just as they are. The women are convinced that the people of Iran have a hunger to know Jesus. Many of the people they prayed for, requested prayer, including many of the guards and prison wardens

As I read this book I felt myself comparing these amazing women to Paul and Silas singing in prison, to Joseph and the dreams God gave him, to Daniel for his courageous prayer life, again to Joseph and Daniel standing firm in the face of temptation that could have eased their way, and to Paul for all the afflictions that fell on him because of his missionary zeal—these women's faith stand as tall as these Bible greats. The Beatitudes flow like a psalm of praise

through the words and actions of Maryam and Marziyeh, especially, “Blessed are they who are persecuted for My sake...”

‘You have to have more faith’; ‘just trust in God’; ‘this is God’s will’—these are some clichés to which we give lip service. *Captive in Iran* will challenge you—not so much in what you believe, but actually putting that belief into practice and living it; not so much in whether you have faith, but how much faith, raw faith, put-it-all-on-the-line-faith do you really have in God?

This book is frank and descriptive of the conditions in prison, the crimes committed by people, and the actions lived out by prisoners in prison. It is recommended for mature readers.

Maryam Rostampour and Marziyeh Amirizadeh left their mark on the prisoners and guards, and the prisons of Tehran where they were incarcerated. They willingly gave up their will to the Holy Spirit, and many who would have never known about the love of God were profoundly touched. Through them, the light and hope about Jesus Christ will be passed on to other lives in Iran. Read their story; be challenged, be strengthened in faith, be filled with gratitude. **TEACH**

Website: <http://captiveiniran.com/>

When helping hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor...and yourself

Corbett, S. & Fikkert, B. (2012, expanded edition) Chicago: Moody Press. 274pp, paperback.

Harwood Lockon

Adjunct lecturer in international development in Australia and PNG¹

Can doing good ever do harm?

Short term volunteer service and mission trips have captured the imagination of Christians in Australian Christian schools, often as a

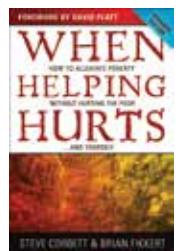
constructive alternative to schoolies week.

Such involvement by young Christians is highly commendable and would seem to fulfil well-known Christian teachings about loving our neighbours (Matthew 22:38–9), doing good for the ‘least of these’ (Matthew 25:40) and being good Samaritans (Luke 10:25–37). But is all this ‘do good’ activity actually doing good for the recipients *or us*? Could it in some instances be harmful, and worse still even counter productive by reinforcing entrenched situations of poverty? Is it enough to have good intentions when trying to help the overseas poor?

Very little attention has been given to the impacts—for good or ill—on the beneficiaries of these activities. However a couple of recent books targeting the broader Christian audience have focussed on the potential for harm of our western efforts to help those in need.²

The authors of *When helping hurts* are senior academics in a small US Presbyterian college and both have considerable personal experience in poverty alleviation in the inner city and the developing world. While the book targets North American Christians, it is highly relevant to Australian Christian schools planning overseas service trips. However a warning: this book may well disturb your world view and your good intentions.

The authors’ central concern is that our approach to helping the poor may not only waste our financial, human, organizational and spiritual resources but actually exacerbate the problems we are trying to solve. Part 1 is the core of the book and grounds its two central arguments in solid theology. First, westerners view poverty as material shortages whereas the poor see poverty as all embracing—humiliation, shame, hopelessness, inferiority, social isolation, rather than shortage of things. Our materialistic view is not the biblical view of broken relationships being the root cause of poverty. Rather it is an uncritical acceptance of the prevailing secular, material world view. This is a critical point as it governs our ‘solutions’ to make good the material lack and so we like to build things and provide handouts. In our doing we reinforce the secular message that all you need in life are money and things.



Reflections, Impressions & Experiences

Second—and this is more difficult to accept—is that we often exhibit ‘god-complexes’ towards the poor: a subtle and unwitting superiority that we have the answers and they do not, that we can ‘save the world’ and that they have nothing to contribute to solving their own problems. Such attitudes demean and diminish the image of God that is present in all including the non-western, non-Christian poor. The authors’ comments about our theological syncretism and evangelical gnosticism are worthy of deeper consideration. It is disturbing to think that much of our helping is not only harmful to the beneficiaries but indeed theologically suspect! Hence the authors’ repeated call us to repent before we even think of helping the poor.

Part 2 provides some general principles for helping the poor which include: deciding whether relief or development is appropriate (relief is best used sparingly and only for dire emergencies otherwise it generates dependency upon others); hand ups contribute to helping people get themselves out of poverty whereas handouts invariably perpetuate poverty; never do for the poor what they can do, or have the resources to do, for themselves; and remember that social change is always long-term and can not be effected in a two week trip, whatever the promotional hype may suggest.

Part 3 provides some practical strategies for helping the poor. The chapter on short-term missions is particularly valuable for schools planning overseas service trips. A key issue is our real motivation: ‘Why do we wish to take our students overseas for service?’ Is it to ‘save the poor’? Is it—and I hear this often—to give *our* youth a life-changing experience³? Or is it to learn from the poor and show solidarity as we are all God’s children? If the primary motivation is to benefit *our* youth even at the expense of the poor then it is selfish and unchristian. This Part raises the question of our stewardship of scarce financial resources—would the high cost of sending a group overseas achieve more if the monies were sent directly to an agency that specializes in poverty alleviation? The book could have included the question of environmental stewardship as international travel makes a large

impact whether through the carbon footprint of flying or through the disposal of dozens of used plastic water bottles⁴.

Part 4 provides ‘how to’ guidance, though focussed more on activities with poor urban Americans and on mission relationships between US churches and poor-world churches. The important message however is universal: don’t stop helping the poor—rather, do it more thoughtfully and with a greater consideration of the potential negative impacts upon poor communities.

Christian schools are charged with educating the whole person—the mind, body and heart. Unfortunately there are too many ‘headless hearts’ around. It is imperative that in their service activities schools also educate the mind and not be driven solely by the heart (Matthew 22:37). This book provides a highly readable and Christian perspective that might just help your school, as well as the poor overseas. **TEACH**

Notes

¹ Harwood Lockton taught about issues of poverty and international development at Avondale College of Higher Education for three decades. Whilst there he initiated short-term mission trips to the Pacific (and wishes this book had been written twenty years earlier!). He also served as the director of the overseas aid program for a mid-sized church development agency. In retirement he serves on a couple of national committees for the non-government development sector and is an adjunct lecturer in international development in Australia and PNG.

² Lupton, R. (2012) *Toxic charity: How churches and charities hurt those they help (and how to reverse it)*. New York: HarperOne; and the book of this review. *When helping hurts* is a better written and more thorough treatment of the issues.

³ The research evidence is mixed as to the benefits for westerners. Research conducted during or immediately after the trip invariably suggests participants feel the experience was life-changing. However longitudinal studies suggest that impacts are not long lasting and that Christian commitment and involvement in the mission of the church is little different from that displayed by those who have never been on such a trip. See www.calvin.edu/academic/sociology/faculty/verbeek/short-term-missions/ and Friesen’s doctoral research at www.mission.org/files/staff/rfriesen/friesen_stm_thesis_summary.pdf

⁴ For an Australian Christian take on the stewardship question, see Jackson, L. (2008) “So you’re planning a mission trip...” *Zadok Perspectives* #99, Winter, pp13–4.

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Glen G. Scorgie, Simon Chan, Gordon T. Smith, James D. Smith, Eds. (2011). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Kelvin Mutter

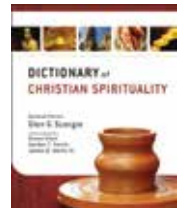
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The *Dictionary of Christian spirituality* is an important resource for those who are engaged in the spiritual formation of children, youth and adults.¹ While this is not the only dictionary of Christian spirituality on the market,² the book is significant in that the contributors are broadly representative of the evangelical tradition. Indeed, it is remarkable that a group of evangelicals would write a book like this since up until latter part of the 20th century evangelical spirituality was largely confined to the practices of prayer, reading scripture, and hymn singing; with the practice of fasting restricted to a select few.

In organising this book, the editors have chosen to divide it into two parts: “Integrative Perspectives” and “Dictionary Entries”. The first section consists of 34 essays that serve to introduce and contextualise spiritual practice within the Christian tradition. Included with each article is a brief reference list to guide those who wish to know more. Within this section, the reader will find articles which outline the OT and NT Foundations of Christian spirituality; articles that address particular theological themes (i.e., “Jesus”, “The Holy Spirit”, “Human Personhood”, “Eschatology and Hope”; “Spirituality in Community”); a series of articles reflecting on the global history of Christian spirituality (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Global Christianity, Evangelicalism, etc.); articles on specific spiritual practices (“Liturgical Spirituality”; “Prayer”; “Mysticism”; and “Music and the Arts”).

Given the evangelical character of this book, some of the more intriguing chapters discuss “Spirituality in Relationship to Psychology and Theology”; “Spirituality in Relation to Creation”; “Contextual Spirituality” (i.e., an indigenisation of spiritual expression that is grounded in Christ’s incarnation); and, “Christian Spirituality in Interfaith Encounter” (i.e., the role accorded to and played by spirituality when engaging individuals from traditions that are outside the Christian tradition). While these articles are generally well done, the reader is likely to find that some articles are lacking either in depth or breadth. For example, the article on Global Christianity focuses on trends in spirituality within regions and peoples impacted by Catholic and Protestant missionary activity but makes no mention of either the South Pacific Islands, Australia or New Zealand. Notwithstanding possible limitations in scope, the value of these essays is that they serve to ground the practice of Christian spirituality within the broader context of the Christian story.

The second section (600 pp.) contains almost seven hundred entries, each of which includes a brief list of resources for further reading. The scope of these entries extends far beyond the understandable list of historically significant theologians and spiritual practitioners (i.e., Aquinas, Augustine, Barth, Basel, Benedict, Bonhoeffer, Calvin, Chrysostom, Evagrius, Francis, Gregory, Gutiérrez, Hildegard of Bingen, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Jerome, Joachim of Fiore, Luther, Origen, the Wesleys and George Whitefield). Indeed, the editors have included entries for culturally prominent individuals (i.e., Bach, Chesterton, Dante, Emily Dickinson, Donne, Hammarskjöld, Handel, Herbert, William James, Martin Luther King, Jr., C.S. Lewis; Milton, Flannery O’Connor, Scott Peck, Pascal, Tolkien, and Desmond Tutu). Also included are significant recent voices to the conversation about spirituality (i.e., Anthony Bloom, Dom Hélder Câmara, Maxie Dunnam, Shusako Endo, Gutiérrez, Francis MacNutt, Henri Nouwen, Mother Teresa, Howard Thurman, and Dallas Willard). Finally, the biographical entries include a host of lesser-



Reflections, Impressions & Experiences

known figures (i.e., Gertrude the Great, Pastor Hsi, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Raimon Panikkar, Pandita Ramabai, Henry Suso, Watchman Nee, and Ming Dao Wang).

In addition to featuring key individuals, this dictionary highlights significant spiritual movements within the Christian tradition (i.e., “African-American Spirituality”; “Asian Christian Spirituality”; “Benedictine Spirituality”; “Catharism”; “Celtic Spirituality”; “Feminist Spirituality”; “Franciscan Spirituality”; “Ignatian Spirituality”; “Korean-Christian Spirituality”; “Liberation Spirituality”; “Moravian Spirituality”; “Pentecostal Spirituality”; “Puritan Spirituality”; “Russian Spirituality”; and, “Syrian Spirituality”). Curiously, however, one wonders how it is that “Baptist Spirituality” and “Quaker Spirituality” are included within this dictionary but “Adventist Spirituality” is not.

Of significance for those who work with families, children and youth is the place given to describing spirituality within the perspectives of human development and family life (i.e., “Adolescent Spirituality”; “Children and Spirituality”; “Family Spirituality”; “Marriage”; and, “Parenting”) as these entries speak to the intersection between spirituality, family, and faith development.

Given the practical character of Christian spirituality, the editors have included entries on many significant practices and disciplines. Indeed, the list of practices moves far beyond pietistic practices known to evangelicals and is inclusive of all Christian traditions (i.e., “Breath Prayer”; “Celibacy”; “Centering Prayer”; “Chastity”; “Dance”; “Examen”; “Fasting”; “Glossolalia”; “Icons”; “Imagery”; “Inner Healing”; “Lectio Divina”; “Meditation”; “Penitence”; “Pilgrimage”; “Relics”; “Retreats”; “Rosary”; “Sacrament”; “Sacred Heart”; “Silence”; “Solitude”; “Spiritual Direction”; “Spiritual Journaling”; “Spiritual Marriage”; “Sanctification of Time”).

In contrast to what may be expected of a book reflecting the evangelical tradition this dictionary contains a number of surprises. To begin, relatively few entries highlight the spirituality of specific biblical writers and

genres: i.e., James; “Johannine Spirituality”; “Lukan Spirituality”; “Pauline Spirituality”; “Psalms”; and, “Song of Songs”. Next, the dictionary includes descriptive rather than evaluative entries on “Christian Science”; “Daoist Spirituality”; “Mohandas Gandhi”; “Hindu Spirituality”; “Jewish Spirituality”; “Muslim Spirituality”; “Mormon Spirituality”; “Native American Spirituality”; “Neo-Pagan Spirituality”; “New Age Spirituality”; “Scientology”; “Sufism”; “Transcendental Meditation (TM)”; “Yoga”; and, “Zen”. Other surprises include entries on “Creation-Centered Spirituality”; “Ecological Spirituality”; “Exercise”; “Internet”; “Spiritual Geography”; “Sports and Spirituality”; and, “Technology and Spirituality”.

As with any book of this type there are always topics which one wishes were included. Indeed, readers in the South Pacific and ANZAC regions are likely to wish for topics reflective of their current and historical setting (i.e., Aboriginal spirituality and Maori spirituality as well as spiritual leaders who have played a significant role within these regions). For this reason, it is important to remember that the editors’ intent is to introduce the readers to the subject (as opposed to providing a comprehensive discussion) and point the way for further study and reflection. To this end the editors have provided an important reference work that roots our understanding of Christian spirituality within the broader Christian story and thus expands the intellectual and experiential horizons of students, teachers, and academics alike. **TEACH**

Notes

¹ It is available as an ebook.

² Compare: Michael Downey (Ed.), (1993). *The new dictionary of Catholic spirituality*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, and Philip Sheldrake (Ed.), (2005). *The new Westminster dictionary of Christian spirituality*. Westminster: John Knox Press.

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