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Wooring them to vocation

TCFNSW Dinner 23 March 2019 at Castle Hill Baptist Church provided a reminder to Christian teachers of their calling into a vocation, not only a job. Eddie Woo the award-winning teacher of mathematics outlined how we are all created in the image of God even the most difficult and seeming unlovable students. As Christian teachers our distinctiveness is shown by how we relate to all students, not only the bright or the eager or the polite but even the ones who don't like our subject. Showing all students that we care about them is one distinctive feature of a Christian teacher.

Eddie went on to also explain how our identity is not found in our work, be it successful or otherwise, but grounded in our relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. How others saw him was not a concern - his concern was to be faithful.

The dinner was attended by about fifty Christian teachers and educators and Eddie was well received and many bought his book.

John Gore

Breaking the mould: Is there a place for service learning in the revised NSW curriculum?

Introduction

The current revision of the NSW curriculum has received various inputs and included a reference to the community involvement possibly like the project modules available within the International Baccalaureate (IB). In NSW, attempts to introduce students to learning involving both group and individual projects is not new. Even within HSC courses there are personal interest projects and major works which are externally assessed as well as projects that form assessment tasks in other subjects like Business Studies. But most of these are individual and not group tasks.

One of the attractions of the IB is that students will learn from individual and group projects that involve an element of community service or engagement. Is that where the curriculum review is heading? As Christian educators, with a concern for others and a servant attitude, service learning is of particular interest.

Service learning

Most commonly, schools, more in the non-government sector, have sought to capitalise on the social benefits of service learning to provide students with a community-oriented approach to life where serving others is seen as a priority. It could involve charity work, working with a service organisation or community volunteers. Some schools have added a service learning component to excursions, especially when students travel overseas. By working in another community, students learn about that community and develop relationships with the people. Students may develop a sense of personal fulfilment and individual worth by helping others.

For others, service learning is to use community work to reconnect socially alienated students to other people and communities so they are more likely to value learning and see purpose in their schooling.

As programs in both primary and secondary schools have expanded, service learning has taken on its own pedagogy and methodologies with statements like: *students are engaged in tasks that stretch them cognitively and developmentally; student voice is maximised in selecting, designing, implementing and evaluating the service project; student reflection takes place before, during and after service that include higher order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation and/or problem solving as a way to understand the service activity.* (Billig 2000) As a result, schools have increasingly looked to include elements of service learning to achieve curriculum outcomes within the disciplines. However, impediments such as the amount of content to be covered and the time needed for service learning, have led to it being viewed as a less efficient way in achieving curriculum outcomes. The key question is whether service learning is valued enough to see the curriculum modified to facilitate such learning. Can service learning deliver in the values (affective domain) better than traditional subjects? Do we want to reduce students' screen time and give more time to them engaging the community in which they live?

Service learning and social justice

One of the forces promoting service learning is a desire for social justice. In service learning, students become increasingly aware of others, their circumstances and the factors leading to social privilege and disadvantage. But here is where the whole direction becomes a bit messy as evidenced by Jones (2019), working with US Christian college students, who argues that in service learning social justice learning goes through four stages and that knowledge of these stages is needed by teachers to help students achieve this learning. Teachers are to assist students to move from one stage to the next. Knowing about others is different from knowing them. Knowing about their circumstances is different to experiencing them. Developing patriarchal and emphatic relationships is different to reciprocal connections. Recognising privilege and disadvantage is different from understanding and associating with cultural, political and religious issues.

Using a scale adapted from St Cloud University Campus and Deleuzian affect theory, Jones illustrates these stages for a white college in a USA context. His stages are:

Initial stage - Clarity

Emerging stage - Caring

Distance stage - Ataraxia (reflection)

Developing stage - social justice.

The framework (Extract only)

	Initial stage - Charity	Emerging stage - Caring	Distance stage - Ataraxia (reflection)	Developing stage - Social justice.
Service orientation	Do for others	Do for, but in relationship with, others	Be with others, don't "do"	Do with others
White racial identity formation	I don't see race	Acknowledge racism, but I don't know what to do	Listening to minorities, internalising a different narrative	Unlearning internalised racism, an anti-racist ally.
View of the other	Backward, less fortunate, disadvantaged	It could be me	Recipients of my participation in injustice	Equals: recognising everyone's gifts
View of the world	World is simple and good	World is bigger and more complex	Persons of privilege have caused injustice	Injustice is inherent on global level

An example

In the Australian context let me consider how this framework might apply in developing my critical consciousness through service learning in relation to my work over seven years in India.

Stage 1 Charity My service orientation was to do for others, to help achieve a school system that would raise the educational standards of Dalit (lowest socioeconomic group) Indian students in 100 English medium schools. I had to demonstrate my expertise and establish credibility - I had to “do”. I didn’t see race as an issue and believed the very poor children we were working for were less fortunate and disadvantaged. I believed that India wanted to help these people.

Stage 2 Caring I learnt to work more with others and include them in the work and recognise their gifts. I came to understand different races, castes and my attitudes to them. I began to understand the complexities of Indian society, politics and religions. Then I realised that anyone of these children could be my son (adopted from India) or for that matter me by chance of parent.

Stage 3 Ataraxia I began to reflect on my role and train others in the work and “do” less. I listened to the histories of people from different castes, religions and backgrounds. I understood how colonial, English (white) privilege has further entrenched injustices in India and how I as a westerner might be contributing to maintaining many of these injustices.

Stage 4 Social justice I had learnt to work with others and to not be seen as an educational guru. My acceptance of others was stronger and I wanted to work for, and with those, seeking to change the social structures and systemic problems, especially caste, that are inherent throughout almost all Indian society and working against social justice.

There are implications here for service learning and how it might be incorporated into the NSW curriculum either directly or through some form of project requirement. The focus should be on progress from whichever stage a student starts at, not on Stage 4 achievement for all.

Curriculum examples of service learning using the Jones Framework

Two possible contexts for service learning in Australian schools attracted my interest - community service to the aged and a service component in an overseas excursion.

Example 1. Community service to the aged

Students and teacher decide that for a service learning project, the students will visit a nursing home on a regular basis and provide a range of services to participating residents including: listening to their stories, reading to them, helping them with simple tasks like finding things, shopping and communicating with others.

At Stage 1 Charity. Students will do for others; they learn by helping others; they see everyone as the same or everyone as different; they view residents as disadvantaged and be unaware of self in this situation.

At Stage 2 Caring. Students interact with and work with residents to assist them meet their needs; they recognise that they are receiving something back from their relationship with older people; their view of the other changes - this could be one of my parents or even me; they recognise the need for government regulation to ensure basic rights and recognise that the world is more complex.

At Stage 3 Ataraxia. Students do less and empower residents to do more for themselves; they internalise residents' personal histories and reflect on how, for some, their situation is an outcome of other people's privilege; they stand back and evaluate the impact they are having in the lives of the residents and whether it is helping or propping up injustice.

Stage 4 Social justice. Students work together with residents unlearning their fears and prejudices about older people; they recognise that these residents are equals with them and they want to lobby for better conditions and support for residential care while understanding the social and political structures and systems that determine this situation of aged care.

Example 2 Service component in an overseas excursion

Students sign up for an overseas excursion that involves helping an orphanage in an Asian country over a period of one week.

Stage 1 Charity. Students do for others - providing gifts, entertainment and activities for the children; they are unaware of racial difference and see these children as less fortunate, educationally backward and socially disadvantaged.

Stage 2 Caring. Students interact with the children and learn some words in their language; they see the children as racially and culturally different and understand that in other circumstances these children could be them; they understand that the world and the children's backgrounds are bigger and more complex than they thought and recognise some aspects of racial prejudice and cultural superiority within themselves.

Stage 3 Ataraxia. Students spend more time with the children listening to and internalising their histories and current circumstances; they reflect on how their western heritage, local privilege and social injustice have affected the children's situation; they become less certain about the positive impact of their visit and question what long term benefits might come about.

Stage 4 Social justice. Students learn to work with the children as equals for the common good respecting their input and talents; they reflect critically on privilege and how injustice comes from multifaceted interactions between culture, politics and disadvantage globally; they begin to unlearn internalised prejudice and racism and become an ally of systemic change that challenges the status quo.

When viewed through this lens of social justice conscientiousness, service learning could be a powerful tool in assisting students at every level to confront these issues. One of the key insights that affected my thinking was - are my actions assisting or working against the interests of the target group? The Ataraxia stage was a real eyeopener. I also reflected on my experience of orphanages in India and Cambodia where many of the children were not orphans but handed over by poor parents to ensure that living costs and some education were at someone else's expense - the foreign donors. Some of these orphanages were poorly managed and how funds were used became of increasing concern.

Christian concerns

Christians are going to be attracted to service learning because serving others is a basic element of what it means to be a Christian. In a selfish world focused on wealth accumulation and the rights of the individual, many have lamented the loss of community within our suburbs leading to loneliness for older people and alienation for younger people. It's probably

the most radical of Jesus teaching, the parable of the good Samaritan, that establishes a rationale for service learning for Christians. However, intent is not enough, service learning requires action and here the Christian acts out of thankfulness to God for everything that has been done in Christ. Service to others holds particular attraction for Christians but is not without its problems.

Jones' framework provides a model for incorporation into any program of service learning because it goes beyond only providing a service to the heart of social consciousness of the students and how social justice might be achieved. It helps students to question their actions, to face their privilege and understand their part (possibly contribution) in the injustices they are attempting to address.

The teaching emphasis is on movement to the next stage. Students at each stage are respected and helped to move to the next stage. This is a powerful model and one that can be life changing. For Christians it can mould their world-view to focus more effectively on mission.

John Gore

References

- Billig S H 2000 *Research on K-12 school-based service learning. The evidence that builds*, Research Corporation Denver, Colorado.
- Jones A H 2019 *Embodying justice: Situating college articulations of social justice in critical consciousness*, International Journal of Christianity and Education Vol 23 No 1 March 2019.

Indian Mission Trip

In Dec/Jan 2018-19 I had the privilege of going, with six others, on my 5th mission trip to South India to the state of Tamil Nadu. We stayed at the Bethel Centre, a Christian Community, near Salem which was settled by European Christians over 100 years ago. The school day started at 6:30am for chapel and finished at 4:15pm. In the mornings we taught Scripture lessons to all grades based on the life of Joseph. The older students did homiletics. The children sang, danced, learned memory verses and gave their testimonies. It was fantastic to see the enjoyment they had making things, even the older boys got into the craft.

I taught 80 students in Standard 7 and 8 English, using Australian animals to help with writing descriptions, recounts and teaching grammar. I also did conversational English with 35 young people studying to be nurses' aides.

Sometimes, we got on the school bus to visit sponsored children's homes. We were always welcome, and many asked for prayer. I visited one of my sponsored children. Each time I go, I see them growing physically and also spiritually.

Grace Ministries has set up three village centres out from Bethel, where employed managers and their wives feed over 300 sponsored children who come from their homes to have breakfast before going to government schools. In the afternoon they have tutors to give homework help and they get taught from the Bible. The villagers are Hindu, but the Christian teaching is filtering through and some children and families are becoming Christians. The centres give the children guidance in many aspects of life and give yearly dental and health checks. In the holidays they have Vacation Bible School programs with help from many organisations like SU, Gideons, theological students and pastors.

The team was blessed and was kept safe travelling on rural roads. It is always a worthwhile ministry to be involved in. That is why I keep going back. I love being able to sponsor children and give them a chance of learning about a God who loves them and died for them, unlike the Hindu gods all around them.

Lyn Searle (TESOL Teacher in an Intensive English Centre).



Morning School Assembly.



The team is welcomed to village.

News from Colin and Cathy McKay in SE Asia.

What does it take to construct a building? What does it take to construct a team? God is constructing our team, so that we can help others to stay where they are, doing what they are doing for His glory.

The initial stage of any construction work is not pretty. Holes everywhere, dirt all over the place and it does look a bit chaotic. Slowly the chaos is replaced by boards and steel sticking up and if you could view it from above, you could even imagine what the final building will look like. Down in the trenches, it still seems to be a bit of a mess. While, as a team, we get to know each other, define each person's role and construct policies and procedures that will guide and direct us into the future, we are grateful that God has the big picture in mind in building the team we are in.

We are so grateful for His house and church we go to. We are grateful for godly people on our team who seek to serve and honour Jesus.

Secretary's Note: There is still a need for a high school English teacher. If you're interested, contact Colin and Cathy at horsegy@gmail.com

Notice of TCF Annual General Meeting

Saturday 15th June 2019 at 1.30pm

at Unit 21/16 Bobart St Parramatta. (Entrance in King St)

1. Welcome
2. Apology / Proxy
3. Minutes of Annual General Meeting held 19th May 2018 to be accepted.
4. Matters arising:
5. Reports from Committee.
6. Appointment of Auditor.
7. Appointment of Public Officer.
8. Election of Committee - President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Committee members.
9. General Business.
10. Closing Prayer.

Please contact the office if you require a proxy form or Committee nomination form. Contact Pam (0456 203 548) if you require directions or transport assistance.

Date for your calendar:

11th - 13th October 2019 Weekend away at Stanwell Tops. Details later.

Back copies of JCE

George Glanville has a full set of the Journal of Christian Education that he would like to give away either as a full set or individual copies. Please contact him ASAP on 0425325302 if you would like to take advantage of this offer. Ed.

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