Pastoral care, action research, and teaching as a profession
Can ‘joining the dots’ facilitate teacher reflection on practice and identity?

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Introduction
Educators have increasingly demonstrated commitment to, and invested much effort in advancing the cause of pastoral care, action research, and the status of teaching as a profession, over the last two decades. What is largely unrecognised is how these areas of education are linked. A shared focus of attention—evident in educational literature and professional practice—however, constitutes only a minor nexus between and among these three emerging areas of education.

Noteworthy and central to all three areas appears to be the idea of making a difference in the lives of others. This article explores some of the challenges and complexities inherent in existing and potential linkages, including some disjunctions, and their implication for teachers.

Pastoral care (PC)
A needs context and a ministry of care
In western societies, negative influences are impacting many students’ lives and their learning at school. The 300,000 Child Safety Protection reportings in NSW alone confirm the claim the Department of Community Services was ‘drowning’ in the number of cases referred to them.1 Similarly, the diary of a young girl in the print media by a non-government charity organisation, typifies and individualises the challenges of “680,000 disadvantaged kids living in homes where no parent is working”.2 The young age of some of the affected children may locate them outside schools’ domain; never-the-less, they will sooner or later come under the care of schools.

Pastoral care, in a school context, is an ethic of care that demonstrates an active concern for the wellbeing and wholeness of all members of the school community. In the past, pastoral care programs were often perceived as competing with academic ones. Such perceptions of an oppositional relationship tended to be counterproductive. In contrast, recent research findings from the NSW independent schools sector concluded, “pastoral care and academic progress are inextricably linked”3, underlining that effective pastoral care in schools calls for a pedagogy that integrates the cognitive, social-relational, emotional and physical dimensions of students’ lives.

In Christian schools, this occurs in a spiritual environment grounded in scriptural values and teachings that incorporate horizontal as well as vertical relationships; providing hope, healing and direction to individuals. Approaches of this kind emphasise the education of the whole person and frequently employ aspects of experiential education.4 Furthermore, from a structural viewpoint, pastoral care may become the ‘umbrella’ for a number of initiatives which schools might run, such as anti-bullying, Life Education5 and Peer Support6 programs, including a fully functioning chaplaincy ministry.7

Pastoral care is now a sine qua non for schools. They are expected to perform broad pastoral tasks—effected at a proactive, reactive, or developmental level—that may be summarised as providing nurture and healing; facilitating the learning of knowledge and acquisition of skills that develop resilience; promoting responsible self-disciplined conduct for community membership; and a whole-school approach that emphasises awareness and participation—vis a vis a modus operandi that is the preserve of specialist school staff.8 The beneficiaries of pastoral care may range from specific individuals, to (gender) groups and classes, or even whole school communities, as in the case of trauma and crisis management. The various pastoral tasks, levels of effect; beneficiaries and their respective subsets mentioned above, illustrate the rich and diverse framework in which pastoral care occurs.

Caring is viewed by teachers as an important personality trait in their colleagues. US research shows 86% of teachers perceived their colleagues as caring, higher than any other trait.9 Students also
place a high value on teachers’ caring, as Sheila Bethel contends: “Students don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”10 Current Australian of the Year, Professor Patrick McGorry—adolescent mental health expert—in his acceptance speech stated that Australia is “in need of a system of care with early intervention”. Pastoral care endeavours to address that need in a school setting.

Next, before attempting to explore some meaningful initial linkages, it is necessary to provide a brief coverage of the second area under examination.

**Action research (AR)**

**Definition and brief historical background**

There is no agreed definition for action research.11 One educator has defined AR as:

> Any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counsellors, or other stakeholders in the teaching / learning environment to gather information about the ways that their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how their students learn. This information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment (and on educational practices in general), and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved.12

The philosophical antecedents of action research point to phenomenology. Drawing on aspects of the work of various educators, social psychologists and philosophers spanning the 20th century and several continents, AR has built up wide acceptance with a diverse ‘clientele’, mainly in the social sciences. The numerous conferences and journals presently devoted to action research are indicators of its current prominence, together with the AR theses completed at the MEd, EdD, MPhil and PhD levels.

**The nature of action research**

Action research represents a new orientation to research rather than a methodology. Partly a reaction to the logical empiricist approaches to enquiry that emphasise statistical analysis, objectivity and values neutrality, it indicates a paradigmatic shift from a *modern* to a *postmodern* mindset.

AR, in classroom and other educational contexts, challenges teachers to assume responsibility for their work practices (resolving specific, complex and problematic educational situations) and professional development. The AR process, although variously practised and described, basically consists of a cyclical ‘model’13 that involves teachers in:

- identifying a particular problem or focus area for improvement. This leads to formulating key questions and, in turn, necessitates planning that may be informed by educational literature and research. Collegial help may also be sought.

- **ethically collecting relevant, evidential data.** This requires acting on preceding planning. Data collection methods may range, among others, from teachers (and colleagues) observing, journaling and interviewing, to students completing group tasks, projects and questionnaires or doing tests; multiple methods may even be employed.

- making sense of the collected data. Analysing and interpreting the data requires asking incisive questions: Are there sufficient data? Are they valid? What patterns or themes emerge from the data? Is there broad agreement among data from different sources? Do the data facilitate the construction of concept maps? Could the data analysis benefit from the comments of a ‘critical friend’?

- reflecting on what has been learned and deciding: What should be done next? Having reached this point, is it constructive to engage in another cycle of the process; perhaps with some modifications, before deciding on future directions regarding the identified problem?

The four-step cycle summarised above is descriptive rather than prescriptive. It should not be regarded as a scripted ‘lock-step’ process. Indeed practitioners, upon reflection, may revisit any previous step(s) and make modifications before proceeding further. Reflection thus becomes a dynamic element of the process.

Stringer14 condenses the inquiry cycle into a look-think-act process, within the phases of planning, instruction and evaluation (not unlike the ancient transformative practice of reading Scripture, *lectio divina*: read, think, pray, live).15

**Levels, modes and performance texts**

Action research can be conducted at various *levels* and in different *modes*. AR may be carried out at the level of the *individual*; it may target a *group* or *class*, or have a *whole-school* focus and even beyond, with beneficiaries of the inquiry also being ‘collegial participants’.

The literature commonly identifies three AR modes: technical, practical and emancipatory (or critical).16 Any one of these theoretical perspectives may typically characterise an action research endeavour. Respective school examples are, instrumental actions assisting learners master spelling rules in English or creating mnemonics to recall the periodic table in Chemistry; motivating students to participate in cooperative learning; and...

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“AR challenges teachers to assume responsibility for their work practices and professional development”
enabling and empowering victims of disadvantage and / or abuse to become resilient, self-confident and independent individuals. The latter is typified in the literature by such inspirational classics as Sylvia Ashton-Warner’s Teacher,17 an autobiographical account of raising the self-esteem and consciousness level of children in a small school on the north-east coast of the north island of New Zealand; and also Letter to a teacher,18 the reflective educational experiences of the schoolboys of Barbiana and Lorenzo Milani, maverick priest and educator, in northern Italy. The critical mode of AR also aims to expose and change unjust, oppressive or exploitive power relationships and socio-economic structural systems. For Christians, these “social evils: sin embedded in societal systems”19 are fiercely denounced by Old Testament prophets.

In contrast to written and published documents or online text, action research may also be disseminated and shared in creative ways by means of performance texts such as poetry, music, audio-visuals and drama.20 It is not difficult to imagine the powerful effect that some emancipatory AR case studies, creatively presented, might have on audiences.

Some initial intersections
As foreshadowed in the introduction, pastoral care, action research and the notion of teaching as a profession (TP) incorporate powerful common values. Most important, PC, AR and TP uphold a clear commitment to the improvement of lived human experience by addressing social problems of varying complexity; an outcome that might be achieved irrespective of whether one operates from a secular or religious platform.

Perceptions of AR as a moral and ethical stance committed to action resulting in qualitative change21, apply equally to pastoral care in schools and to the conceptualisation of an authentic profession. The latter’s meaning is derived from ‘to profess’, which denotes ‘believing and taking a stand’. It presupposes a commitment to service and the good of others, a value enshrined in many codes of conduct and ethics of professions. Teachers in their roles as carers and practitioner researchers are thus mandated to act in intellectually and morally responsible ways and incorporate values and human interests in their endeavours. This translates into research not being pursued for the sake of curiosity or knowledge per se, but being applied for worthwhile purposes. Knowledge alone does not lead to transformation. Literally thousands of education research reports, gathering dust on bureaucratic shelves are often testimony to ‘lifeless’ knowledge and values. Words and talk are not enough. As has been argued, values remain abstractions until put into practice.22

A Christian viewpoint, such as Eugene Peterson’s, speaks directly to this challenge:

What we know about God and what we do for God have a way of getting broken apart in our lives. The moment the organic unity of belief and behaviour is damaged in any way, we are incapable of living out the full humanity for which we were created (emphases added).23

At this juncture, it is reasonable to conclude that PC and AR both draw teachers’ attention to schools’ human dimension and point toward a particular conception of their profession.

Teaching as a profession (TP)
Continuing issues
The very notion of what constitutes a profession is problematic. The term is beset with ambiguities and conceptual difficulties. As a buzzword clamouring for public attention, it is claimed by or applied to occupations that extend from arbourists, basketballers, plumbers and hitmen, to architects, lawyers and neurosurgeons. Long-standing traits theory presents a list of specific criteria that form an archetype of a profession. It is conceptualised as an occupation that requires skills to solve complex problems; initial and ongoing learning and mastery of theoretical knowledge in a tertiary context; performs a crucial social service; involves socialisation into a set of values; controls its functions, workplace, credentialing and ethical practice.24 This raises the questions: Is teaching a profession? Does it meet the criteria?

Answers are often conditional, depending on contexts of time and location. Two decades ago, teaching would not have been considered a profession, even in western countries. In Japan, teaching is currently not regarded as a fully fledged profession; although nursing is.25 By contrast, in 2009, Holly et al. in North America, perceived education as being among “[t]he classic professions”.26 A strict application of the above criteria finds teaching ‘short of the mark’. For instance, teachers mostly are employees of large bureaucracies. Teachers are not in control of their workplace and, “When was the last time that teachers disciplined one of their colleagues for a recognised misdemeanour, perhaps removing their right to teach?” asks Neil Hooley.27 Just as important, according to McCulloch et al., “may be the way teachers are regarded by governments and the community”, and how teachers see themselves;28 the latter relates to their identity and its formation.
More than a profession

As part of a larger teacher population, Christian teachers are constantly exhorted in the literature and by education bodies to perform their various responsibilities and tasks, as professionals. Is it prudent to borrow uncritically from and conform to the idealisation of a profession? It is questionable; given “the pathologies of prevailing professional practice” and a suspicious public that formerly regarded professionals as ‘social trustees’, but now views them merely as experts who market and hire their skills at a price. A cynic may conclude that the term is merely an aspirational appellation based on a set of ascribed values, or an exclusive idealisation of one’s work that strengthens claims for status and hence increased remuneration in a competitive labour market.

From a Christian standpoint, it seems both biblical and desirable, to perceive teaching as more than a profession; rather as a servanthood ministry that emphasises, integrates and practices the kingdom values lived by Jesus. Technical rationality—as skills and expertise—is not devalued by such a perspective; rather it realigns and validates these on the basis of their values underpinnings and life integration.

A wider exploration of linkages

The link between action research and the notion of teaching as a profession has potential for positive developments. AR reinforces the service orientation expected from the professions, which is so evident in pastoral care. Simultaneously, teachers need to be aware that they don’t ‘lapse’ into an idealised model of the professions where, for instance, affective neutrality—a personal detachment from the client, i.e. students—is a guiding principle.

Symptomatic of the problem is the televised case of Dr. Charlie Teo, a very skilled, but controversial Sydney brain surgeon who “[r]ides a motor cycle. Wears Hawaiian shirts to work. Laughs and cries with his patients. Befriends them; befriends their families. Shows interest in...in them beyond just a neurological aspect.” The specialist is out of favour with many of his peers. He apparently has little regard for ‘objective distancing’ between doctor and patient. Also, his relations with the media leave much to be desired; an area where “[t]he medical profession has an unwritten code of silence, almost.” In short, his ‘colourful’ behaviour doesn’t conform to the accepted norms of the medical profession; professional culture takes precedence over authentic human relationships.

The compelling values advocated by and practised in pastoral care and action research call upon teachers to reconceptualise their professional identity and ‘model’ of teaching as a profession. Such a repositioning will have to compete with the managerial professionalism currently elevated and promoted by state and federal educational jurisdictions in Australia. Managerial professionalism applies private sector enterprise principles, ethics and vocabulary to education. Its privileged vocabulary, signifying what really counts, inter alia includes: performance indicators, tests and measurements, benchmarks, best practice, efficiency, measurable outcomes, achievable targets, appraisals and reviews, and incentives and rewards. One of the touted outcomes is performance related pay (and sanctions). In this context, there is a real danger of governments seeing education both as an instrument of economic policy and a commodity in the marketplace, where students—tracked by proposed identity numbers—and parents are clients, and where principals operate as managers overseeing productivity to set performance standards by a skilled contracted teaching workforce.

Two examples epitomise this viewpoint. First, the response in an interview of the current Deputy Prime Minister; minister for education, employment and workplace relations and social justice and inclusion: “I’ll be happy to be referred to simply as the minister for productivity.” The ‘deep grammar’ of the minister’s language seems indicative of the dominant priorities and ruling market place values embraced.

Second, the recent construction and publication of NSW league tables, in the media, of National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results: This is no different from the listings on the stock market! The data were made available to the general public by the Commonwealth Government for the purpose of transparency, but appear to underline a strategy of ‘naming and shaming’ to improve teacher productivity. A former Director of Education in NSW and more recently Head of the UK Curriculum Authority has clearly stated that NAPLAN results should be used principally for diagnostic purposes. He noted that overseas experience has shown that many teachers spent the term before the scheduled battery of tests teaching to the tests; an observation borne out by the reported comments of a parent, whose children attend a Sydney school that is very highly ranked on the published league tables.

There was enormous pressure at the school on both teachers and students from day one of term one to achieve good results. The ‘preparation’ for the tests was intense, with extreme pressure to practise through regular class time and heavy-duty homework. Many children felt overwhelmed and
stressed by the level of work and the performance expectations. Publishing these tables endorses this type of approach.36

There is thus a credible possibility of the NAPLAN tests becoming an example of ‘the tail wagging the educational dog’.

Even more important, how should one view a profession that accommodates its pedagogies and ethics to performance values? NAPLAN tests are mandatory across Australia and teachers have been required to administer tests and participate in data collection processes, knowing the data are likely to be or will be misused and thus contribute, either directly or indirectly to negative educational outcomes. These include narrowing the curriculum; increasing rote learning; and labelling and stigmatising students and teachers in low-ranking schools, among others.

Furthermore, managerial professionalism operating in a performance culture37 requires time-consuming record keeping, often to the detriment of teachers reflecting on and improving their pedagogies. In this culture, teacher productivity outweighs integrity; also collegial competition and performance comparisons—the NAPLAN test results being just one example—are rife. The culture not only advances a particular model for the teaching profession, but also poses a threat to the identity of teachers—who they are and how they see themselves. Collins and McNiff challenge teachers to “carefully consider the values base of their work and whether or not those values are being realised in practice.”38 further, to endeavour arriving “at a position where they may say that their values are being lived more fully in their practice”.39

One might ask: Which values? Decided by whom? For teachers serving in Christian faith-based schools, this is unlikely to be a contested area. For them the values enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount should act as their guide in reconceptualising teaching as a profession. These values represent a culture driven by God-affirming vis a vis God-denying ground motives,40 as briefly exemplified below:

A servanthood ministry eschews elitism and upward mobility. Teachers in their biblical role as stewards appreciate the gifts and talents entrusted by God to individuals for uplifting, guiding and benefiting their learning communities.

Service rendered by teachers is an end in itself. It is not some abstract notion, but a tacit recognition of the intrinsic value of others for whom Christ gave his life.

Christian teachers find their core identity in Christ. In Him is found the answer to their question, who am I? And through Him they connect with a fellowship of believers that represents a loving support network. This relationship subsumes the recognised function of most professions in having an important socialising effect on, and giving an identity to individuals.

The lives of Christian teachers are not compartmentalised into personal and teaching boxes that are moral disjoint sets. There should be no credibility gaps; committed servants lead integrated lives that are sustained by God’s grace, evidenced by humble, skilled and compassionate service.

One additional point is worth noting. Teachers in the secular arena, who commit to their students and empower them, should be commended for their efforts to make a difference. Christian teachers, however, believe that in teaching, mere human efforts are insufficient, unless empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

In this article I have asserted that both students and teachers benefit from educative relationships that are underpinned by an ethic of care. Furthermore, I have argued that the shared values embedded in pastoral care and action research have the potential to reshape the traditional conception of profession in an educational context. This is particularly important in the present educational environment, where managerial professionalism driven by economic rationalism holds sway. Teachers in faith-based schools, who build their practice on Jesus’ countercultural values, should consequently find an ally in the values embedded in PC and AR, as they reflect on their pedagogical practice and endeavour to make a difference in the lives of their learning communities. TEACH

Endnotes

1 Interview transcript. Conversation between Linda Burney (NSW Minister for Community Services) and Simon Santow, on ABC radio 702, Sydney, March 3, 2009.
2 The Smith Family (2010). Financial disadvantage is about more than just money. The Sydney Morning Herald, Good Weekend, January 23, p.34, and three subsequent issues.
5 A & 6 Independent programs run by organisations that are not part of public or private schools.
Teaching & Professional Practice


10 Sometimes referred to as practitioner-based research.


School and the law

Today’s teachers ‘spooked’ by the law

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Over the last couple of decades there has been a change in our society where litigation and the threat of it in all aspects of life has significantly increased. The schools and, in particular, the teachers have not escaped this change. Child protection laws and increased cases of litigation are part of the teacher’s working environment. Increasingly, educational professionals have to focus on and engage with the legal dimension of their work.¹

We are already seeing litigious proceedings become commonly accepted responses to schools’ management of such areas as student misbehaviour, curriculum choice and attendance in class.²

How are the teachers coping with this school-based rise in ‘litigious proceedings’?

From NSW based studies of those teaching for the Department of Education and Training, it appears the answer, for this group at least, is not very well. These studies indicate that a combination of time shortage, potential litigation and resourcing issues are resulting in considerable stress for NSW Department of Education teachers.³ ⁴ ⁵ These teachers are reported to be taking more time off than ever before and they are blaming stress. Figures show a dramatic rise in the amount of sick leave taken by teachers who are reported to be saying that they simply cannot continue to cope with work pressures resulting from increased change. The NSW Department of Education and Training’s annual report (2007) shows that in New South Wales (NSW) 18,305 state school teachers took stress-related sick leave in 2000. Stress-related sick leave increased by more than 50% in just two years. In 2002, the figure was 27,299—a rise of 9,000. It appears that these teachers were, and are continuing to be, ‘spooked’ by the law.

One could be tempted to see the negative impact of potential litigation on teachers as a public school phenomenon. We would initially speculate that teachers in private schools, with their close connection to their community and consultative ethos, would not feel the pressure of potential litigation to such an extent. However, in a recent private-school based study, where 282 primary teachers within the Australian Seventh-day Adventist school system (ASA) were surveyed, the results suggest otherwise.⁶

The data from the Matthes (2010) study, part of which looked at factors that were challenging teachers in their present role, indicated that teachers were not only challenged by the potential for litigation but were also stressed about their lack of knowledge of the law and how it related to their teaching environment.

This study (Matthes, 2010) reported that 82.1 percent of the participants indicated that increased likelihood of litigation against teachers was indeed a challenge. This finding was not predicted; rather it was thought that as all the teachers belonged to a church-based education system where litigation is normally very infrequent, that this would not be of considerable concern to them. One teacher stated, however, that:

I sometimes experience fear that I am like a flammable liquid, waiting to be ignited. I have resorted to not taking children on excursions anymore, in case something happens to a student.⁷

This study went on to report that all the teachers knew someone or they themselves had experienced an encounter with the law in relation to a school matter. They indicated that sometimes what they had heard was most likely somewhat exaggerated, but the real facts were never communicated to them and this may have highlighted the perception of this challenge. The participants indicated that they perceived that when teachers were subjected to the law, either rightly or wrongly, the formal systems put in place by both the employing body and the government seemed to desert rather than support the teachers. This was very disconcerting.

This concern can be summed up in the following teacher’s comment:
At the whim of a parent’s accusation, I was suspended from my duties. I didn’t even know what the accusation was; meanwhile I didn’t have a chance to defend my innocence as the rumour mill ran rife. I felt very vulnerable, with little support and not much information through proper channels.\(^8\)

Teachers saw the need for a “school-wide implementation of change and procedures for [teachers’] protection”. Another teacher stated:

> A teacher friend of mine is no longer in the ASA System teaching. His career was cut short based on an accusation that was never proven. It seems often that we only receive Admin support when the ‘chips are up’\(^9\).

Once again, it appears that these teachers are ‘spooked’ by the law.

The Matthes (2010) study suggests that in the ASA system, at least, the teachers are considerably stressed by the potential of litigation and their lack of knowledge of the school and the law. Further, it would seem reasonable to suggest that teachers within other private school systems could also be experiencing similar responses. The teachers in ASA schools also have a perception that the school system needs to provide a considerably more comprehensive set of procedures for safeguarding them against potential litigation and for support for teachers when they are confronted by litigation.

The challenge for school and system administrators is to find ways to ‘de-spook’ their teachers as ‘de-spooked’ teachers must surely be more effective teachers.

**Endnotes**

Abstract
Attachment styles profoundly influence human relationships throughout life, including aspects of religion and the workplace. Individual educators as well as educational institutions take on parental qualities in relation to those who rely on them. Depending on the degree of early parental responsiveness and later life situations, humans live with a basically secure or insecure approach to peers, partners, God, and employing institutions. This article argues that it is important for Christian educators to be aware of this, and that core concepts from attachment theory are verified by current neurobiological research. Research in the field of psychology of religion supports John Bowlby’s emphasis on the importance of sensitive, long-term relationships. These relationships in turn enhance optimum functioning in all relationships, including religious and workplace relationships.

Ten years after working in a boarding school, a teacher happened to meet a former student. “Good God, you look older,” said the student. “And you have grown up,” responded the teacher. “I remember you very well,” said the student, “I really liked you, and tried to get to see you and spend some time with you every day.” “It was a pleasure for me to spend time with you, too,” answered the teacher.

This exchange illustrates an attachment relationship, where there is mutual pleasure for the older and wiser, and for the younger and dependent. Secure attachments give mutual pleasure, and have a profound influence. This article will show how an inner model, secure or insecure, is projected onto peers, partners, God and workplace in later life. This provides another framework for explaining pupil behaviour, and the behaviour of self and colleagues, as well as religious expressions of attachment to God. It also offers an explanation for why some educational institutions are more comfortable workplaces than others. What follows is a brief summary of some salient points in an extensive field of study. Even these few examples will give cause for reflection as Christian educators consider how God concepts are developed through bi-directional effects, and how this influences not only familial lives but also functioning in the workplace.

Most educators in the field today have gone through their teacher education at a time when Piaget’s findings on cognition was the predominant focus. Because of the pervasive influence of Piaget’s massive contribution, cognitive processes have received considerably more attention than social emotional processes (Shore, 1994). Investment in the field of cognition has, for a long time, dominated developmental psychology, with cognitive processes being viewed as quite separate to social emotional processes.

Current discoveries in neuro-behavioural and social-emotional development integrate previously disparate factors (Tronick, 2007). Berk (2009) explains that “emotional development—formerly overshadowed by cognition—is an exciting, rapidly expanding area of research” (p.399). Cognitive and social emotional domains no longer seem starkly different! Hart (2008) notes, “We have only just unearthed the Rosetta stone of neuroaffective understanding” (p. xiv). Hart goes on to say that we are moving towards a time when we will more fully understand the interdependence of nature and nurture.

Through the relatively new study of neuroplasticity, we understand that our brains are more well-equipped for change, and more at risk from the impact of the social environment, than was previously thought (Doidge, 2007). There is a growing awareness that our emotional connectedness with others is vital to both mental and physical health (Tronick, 2007). The rapidly expanding field of neuroscience is constantly highlighting the importance of human relations. We may not yet be used to thinking of the brain as a “social organ” (Cozolino, 2006, p. 7) that is developed through our social and emotional experiences with significant others, but there is a growing understanding that social emotional experiences influence the young brain’s development. Cozolino (2006, p. 7) uses the term,
“bidirectional causality” to describe this process. This has profound implications for educators, who are parental figures to large groups of children / students.

Rise and relevance of attachment theory

Attachment theory is a framework for understanding social emotional relationships in early childhood and consequences for development through the lifespan. A large body of research supports the concepts inherent to attachment theory. The theory includes ideas from control systems theory, cognitive psychology and learning theory, and has steadily been used by social psychologists, and in research in the field of the psychology of religion (Granqvist & Hagekull, 2001).

John Bowlby’s attachment theory was developed before the recent explosion in our understanding of brain function. Nevertheless, attachment theory included an understanding of the bi-directional influences between child and caregiver through what Bowlby called “the child’s tie to his mother” (Bowlby, 1958, cited in Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007, p. 7). Bowlby himself had a personal experience of what he later termed “the breaking of affectional bonds” (Bowlby, 1979, p. 126), when his long-term nanny left. Bowlby became sensitive to grieving children and, like some teachers today, was followed around at the school where he worked by a couple of lonely children (Ainsworth, 1974, cited in Bretherton, 1992, quoted in Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Parents and adequate substitutes: The secure base

Bowlby argued that infants are social creatures who thrive in the company of responsive mothers or sensitive substitutes. He terms the sensitive caregivers, other than parents, “a known and trusted substitute” (Bowlby, 1980, p. 320). In short, when safe enough, infants enjoy exploring their environment. When fearful, tired or ill, they hurry back to their secure and trusted base, their attachment figure. Bowlby stressed that attachment relationships need to be permanent, sensitive and intimate. The bi-directional idea is embedded in attachment theory in that Bowlby emphasised that attachment enjoyment needs to be mutual (Berk, 2009). Excessive turnover of carers often negatively affects the child’s ability to form lasting relationships later (Lindon, 2005). Ainsworth, who worked with Bowlby at the Tavistock Clinic in London, extended the theory. She developed what is known today as the “Strange Situation”, which is an assessment tool of attachment styles for infants and young children. Attachment inventories for the assessment of adult attachment styles have also been developed and are in use, but they will not be discussed here. Ainsworth described three main attachment styles which will be used as broad conceptualisations for discussion purposes (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Walls, 1978).

The “strange situation”

The mother and infant are in an unfamiliar environment and there are toys for the baby to play with near the mother. A stranger is present. This assessment task uses departures of the mother followed by reunions with her baby to reveal already established patterns of attachment (Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2007). While the original strange situation was done with mothers, today the “quality of toddler’s play” highlights security between child and father (Diamond & Marrone, 2003, p. 73). Fathers engage in large-muscle activities, while mothers engage with more quiet activities (Clark-Stuart, 1980, cited in Harwood, Miller & Vasta 2008).

Secure attachment (secure meaning “feeling no care or apprehension” Oxford English Dictionary, 1989)

Ainsworth found that securely attached infants appeared comfortable playing in this new setting. They were unhappy when the mother left, but immediately reconnected with the mother, and were comforted when she came back (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Walls, 1978). As a result, it was argued that when the child’s clear expression to the caregiver receives a favourable response, a secure attachment style will be developed (Main, 1990 cited in Ghafoori & Hierholzer, 2007).

Anxious avoidant attachment (avoidant meaning “holding aloof from” Oxford English Dictionary, 1989)
The children who did not seem distressed when the mother left, and who avoided her when she returned, were described as having an insecure avoidant attachment style. They showed more friendliness to the stranger in the room than they did to their mother (Bowlby, 1982).

Anxious ambivalent attachment (meaning "contradictory emotions towards the same person" Oxford English Dictionary, 1989)

These infants who were very anxious and unwilling to separate from the mother, and barely able to play with the toys, were the most distressed when the mother left. They sought closeness when the mother returned, but expressed anger with her, and were slow to settle.

We need to remember that, for the infant, separation from the caregiver is the greatest threat—greater than any mistreatment—because the infant needs someone to care in order to survive (Dozier, Manni, & Lindheim, 2005). Long term, stable, sensitive care is best, but not always possible. It is important to understand that the various attachment styles are adaptive. This is not a matter of right or wrong. For example, when the avoidantly attached child turns away from the mother, it may be to avoid hostile treatment (Bowlby, 1988). Infants make these adaptations in an effort to survive in their environment. Bowlby understood the function of attachment as fundamental for the species to survive. The connection between a weak individual and one perceived as more competent and more capable is essential for survival (Suomi, 1995, cited in Wulff, 2006). Human infants even attach to carers by whom they are mistreated (Egeland & Stroufe, 1981 cited in Kirkpatrick, 2005) because “fear and distress, activate the attachment system” (Kirkpatrick, 2005, p. 83).

Tarabulsy and colleagues found that many parents who grew up insecurely attached were able to be sensitive and responsive in their own care of their babies, with the result that their babies grew up to be securely attached (Tarabulsy et al., 2005, cited in Harwood et al., 2008). Generally, securely attached children remain securely attached in adulthood, at least in the absence of extremely adverse life situations. Securely attached children as well as securely attached adults enjoy life more easily, and are usually more happily adjusted to their own culture (Harwood et al., 2008).

Applying attachment theory to psychology of religion

Lee Kirkpatrick, while a psychology student in America, noticed that religious behaviour was hardly mentioned in his psychology lectures. This led to his research for his PhD and beyond. Religion is crucial to many as the foundation of a sense of meaning, and in dealing with concepts of the sacred (Pargament, 1997, cited in Park, 2005). Kirkpatrick and others have, over the years, applied the principles of attachment theory to concepts of God. Kirkpatrick argues that the function of an attachment is to place us in the presence of someone who can help and enhance our survival, for example, as adults it may be “pastors, rabbis, priests, ministers” (Kirkpatrick, 2005, p. 93). There is general consensus today that attachment theory can be employed in the various manifestations of religiousness (Park & Paloutzian, 2005). Since Bowlby first published, attachment theory has had a powerful influence in the study of both children’s and adults’ constructs of, and relationship to, God (Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002).

This article does not discuss religion or theology as such, but how one’s religion can be experienced and understood through one’s attachment style. Miner (2007, p. 112) has argued that looking at God concepts through the lens of attachment theory needs a “corrective grounding in Trinitarian theology”. Miner affirms attachment theory as “a powerful account of the formation of relational bonds that provide for physical survival and psychological security…Nonetheless their [the psychologists’] theory is limited because it relies on cognitive-affective approaches to attachment, and neglects a fully-developed theological base” (p. 112). This perspective does not acknowledge that all frameworks, including theological bases, can only be understood cognitively and experienced affectively.

Religions across the world provide frameworks to explain the final separation through death (Fricchione, 2002). Death may be seen as the final “strange situation”. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) point out that not only in the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—do believers experience a safe base, but also that “a common Buddhist prayer encourages adherents to ‘take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha’—a mentally represented loving teacher, the scriptures flowing from his teachings, and the local religious community” (p. 248). Conversely, in a Swedish study of older adolescents, Granqvist and Hagekull (2001) found that an orientation to New Age religious expression “directly correlated with insecure attachment to parents” (p. 536). In New Age thinking there is no single obvious attachment figure, which allows “the insecure new ager...to switch dishes on the spiritual smorgasbord without reaching a stable point where the ingredients have potentially lasting beneficial effects” (p. 539).
In the same way that the securely attached child is free to play and explore his environment, a study by Beck (2006) indicated that securely attached people with theological interests who perceived God as a “secure base”, were more likely to be able to consider a wider range of theological ideas. These securely attached people also showed greater tolerance towards Christian groups who differed from their own, which is a way of saying that they were able to play nicely with others! They also seemed to have better capacity for self-regulation, in that they experienced “more peace” and did not find their religious experience distressing. It was very unlikely that they would break their connection to God (Beck, 2006).

Studies show that people who undergo a more gradual religious change had usually experienced greater security in their attachment to their mothers (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004). A secure person’s gradually deepening religious conviction is not likely to be an outcome of a crisis in their life. Instead, a significant other, who is a spiritual person, has a steady influence for change. At the same time, it is interesting to note that the attachment model is not an indicator for qualities like religious participation (Nelson, 2009). While securely attached individuals are better able to cope with negative emotion, and are less likely to develop post-traumatic stress after trauma (Siegel, 1999 cited in Ghafoori & Hierholzer, 2007), they do not necessarily have better church attendance.

Earned secure: The possibility of moving from an anxious attachment to God and others, to a secure attachment to God and others

Research suggests that attachment styles are not static, but develop complexity with maturation (Levy & Blatt, 1999, cited in Nelson, 2009). People who have had the experience of a religious conversion may outgrow an insecure attachment and no longer be insecurely attached. The ability to calmly talk about difficult childhood experiences indicates increasing security. This new state is termed ‘earned secure’. Some formerly insecure parents mature into more secure caregivers; others are extensively supported by family and friends. In situations like this, earned secure attachments are likely to arise (Berk, 2009). Also, a secure relationship with God, partner or therapist, has profound therapeutic influence. This may contribute to a shift in the internal model from insecure to secure (Granqvist & Hagekull, 2002, cited in Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004).

Insecure attachments

People with avoidant attachment are more likely, when stressed, to make use of a distancing style of interaction, and are less likely to forgive perceived wrongs (Davis et al., 2008). Christians with avoidant attachment are less likely to seek “spiritual comfort” when they experience stress (Davis et al., 2008, p. 299) and are more likely to see God as controlling (Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). There are also more agnostics among people who have an avoidant attachment style (Hazan & Shaver 1987; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992; Kirkpatrick, 1998, cited in Byrd & Boe, 2001).

Anxious ambivalent people are more likely to experience emotional fluctuations, showing greater likelihood to convert to another religion, or to turn away from spirituality (Kirkpatrick, 2005, cited in Davis et al., 2008). Although not a large percentage of the general population experience sudden conversions, those who do, have experienced greater insecurity with both mothers and fathers (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004). These sudden conversions often seem reactive to a difficult life situation. In this way, a religious conversion is possibly a way of feeling better and regulating emotion (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004); this seems adaptive and helpful under the circumstances. More Christians with anxious ambivalent attachment report spiritual conflict and anger with God (Exline & Martin, 2005, cited in Davis et al., 2008). Granqvist and Kirkpatrick (2004) also found that converts tended to report that they experienced the relationship with God as renewing; they had a new identity and a newfound sense of love and safety (cited in Paloutzian, 2005). “Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992) found anxious adults to report a higher incidence of glossolalic (speaking in tongues) experiences than either avoidant or secure adults” (Kirkpatrick, 2005, p. 141). It is important to note that in spite of several studies trying to connect speaking in tongues with poor mental health, “very little evidence has been found” (Plog, 1965; Hine, 1969; Richardson, 1973, cited in Kirkpatrick, 2005).

“Let the children come to me; do not try to stop them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14)

The first “God representations” are forming in children from about two years of age (Nelson, 2009). For example, Boyatzis, (2005) described a study by Coles (1990) who analysed a large number of children’s drawings of God. He noted that 87% of these drawings showed God’s face. In an earlier study, Heller (1986) explained that Hindu, Jewish, Baptist and Roman Catholic children saw God as “considerably more than human” (Boyatzis, 2005,
The better the teacher and child bond, the more loving God seems to the child. God seems more loving (deRoos, 2006). Even when a child has negative positive emotions were indicative of “loving, caring in groups and experienced higher self esteem. These children who enjoyed “close, open, and harmonious develops these findings by saying that the young world of play, and their everyday lives (Nelson, 2009). The better the teacher and child bond, the more loving God seems to the child (deRoos, 2006). deRoos develops these findings by saying that the young children who enjoyed “close, open, and harmonious relationships” with their teachers were more involved in groups and experienced higher self esteem. These positive emotions were indicative of “loving, caring God concepts” (deRoos, 2006, p. 92). It is interesting that in this study, the teachers were religious, working with students from non-religious homes (deRoos, 2006). Even when a child has negative experiences in the relationship to primary carers, a teacher can significantly impact the child’s positive God perceptions (deRoos, 2006). It was a great help to children to have at least one warm, positive relationship with a teacher. When home attachments were stressed and negative, it helped the child who had a close, significant relationship with their teacher to experience an intimate relationship with God. The significance here lies in the fact that the child has one important positive relationship (deRoos, 2006), which builds self-esteem.

In contrast, Gur, Mill and Weissman (2004) found that depressed mothers are correlated with less religiosity in the child, possibly due to the home being low in hope and lacking a sense of satisfaction (cited in Miller & Kelley, 2005). A teacher or other who is secure enough to encourage positive feelings in the child will help to influence that child in developing a positive image of God and a child-God relationship (Kirkpatrick, 1998 cited in McCullough, Bono, & Root, 2005).

A Scandinavian study by Granqvist and Hagekull (1999, p. 266) highlighted that the more securely the child is attached to both parents, the more likely the child was to show “intergenerational similarity”. In other words, the safer the child felt with the parents, the more the child identified with the standards that the parents represented. In the same way, adults who were securely attached to their adult partners showed deeper religious commitment and their God concepts were more favourable than those who were insecurely attached to their significant other (deRoos, Miedema, & deDemas, 2001). While securely attached children slowly grew into a lifestyle with similar values as their primary caregivers, the anxiously-attached were more likely to report religious conversions of a sudden nature (Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999). Religious changes tend to come later to people who have an insecure attachment style (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004). Many converts tell about unhappy childhoods, stressful adolescence, problems with mental health, or drug dependency (Hood et al., 2009). A spiritual conversion involves a positive life transformation (Hood et al., 2009). Hazan and Shaver (1987; 1994) highlight the tendency of anxious-ambivalently attached individuals to also fall in love suddenly and deeply (cited by Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999). Suddenly falling in love and suddenly experiencing a conversion are experiences which are common within the same attachment style.

“Call on me, you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)

It has been argued by deRoos (2006) that people’s concept of God mirrors their experience in early formative caregiver-child relationships. When the child experiences interaction with the primary caregiver as conflict producing or rejecting, insecure attachment styles follow (Izerd & Kobak, 1991, cited in Ghafoori & Hierholzer, 2007). An insecure attachment style is correlated with perfectionism (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) and with conversion experiences. Childhood attachment shapes concepts of God through the very socialising process of forming emotional bonds with significant others (deRoos, 2006). Hood, Hill and Spilka (2009) claim that in the years between early and middle childhood, children’s aloofness from parents was in inverse proportion to nearness to God. A sharper focus on God attachment occurs as children grow independent of their primary carers (Granqvist & Dickie, 2006, cited in Nelson, 2009).

In most religions there are concrete places considered sacred, places where people can feel nearer to God. Besides sacred places, there is also sacred time, like the seventh day and specific festival
times; but that which is most frequently sought is proximity to God through prayer. When religion is a part of life from early on, this influences prayer (Byrd & Boe, 2001). Prayer for the believer is a way of addressing God. Prayer is an expression of the wish to be in a knowing relationship with God (Byrd & Boe, 2001). Prayer has been compared to the crying of an infant (Kirkpatrick, 2005). The infant has no language, but calls to his parent through crying. Adult humans cry out in prayer. Hands raised in prayer may constitute proximity seeking.

Different approaches to prayer are indicated by a person’s attachment style. It makes sense that people with an avoidant attachment style are not likely to use meditative or conversation prayer (Byrd & Boe, 2001). People with attachment styles other than avoidant may use meditative and conversation prayer. Securely attached people find closeness comforting and stress reducing (Byrd & Boe, 2001), and are more likely to see God as loving and not controlling. God is usually experienced by secure people as accessible (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992; Kirkpatrick, 1998, cited by Byrd & Boe, 2001).

Attachment statements can be found throughout scriptures and in hymns and spiritual songs. Both Granqvist (2005) and Kirkpatrick (2005) drew attention to the believer’s efforts at being close to God.

[A]chieving a safe haven in times of distress (‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me’; Psalm 23:4), and using a ‘stronger and wiser’ other as a secure base (e.g. ‘On the day I called, you answered me and made me bold with strength in my soul’; Psalm 138:3). (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007, p.244)

The Protestant hymn, ‘Nearer, My God, To Thee’ is given as an example of group proximity seeking.

**Attachment styles and the workplace**

Attachment behaviour and its impact is also in evidence in educational institutional settings. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) define a cohesive group as one that brings about a unique experience of approval and security in being together. A group of people, such as the staff of a school, can serve as a secure base that supports exploration of the environment (Forsyth, 1990, cited in Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). This cooperatively functioning group becomes security enhancing for its members. It is easier for a securely attached individual to experience the group as positive, and be comfortable with emotional interaction. Insecurities in relating to a group may mirror insecurities relating to individuals. Avoidant individuals are often less engaged with their staff, tend to feel less supported and are more likely to view others negatively (Smith et al., 1999, cited in Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

In short, the various attachment styles reflect how individuals relate to their group.

An attachment figure is someone who has people depending on them (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). In 2003, Popper and Mayseless (cited in Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) published a study that demonstrated a strong connection between leaders (including managers and teachers) and the role of attachment figures. In educational settings, this equates to teacher, team leader, principal, head of faculty, or president. Secure leaders are more “sensitive and responsive” caregivers (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007, p.440)—resources are provided, creativity and initiative are encouraged, and competence and self-worth are strengthened. Numerous researchers have found this to be true (Bass, 1985; House & Howell, 1992; Howell, 1988; Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993; Zaleznick, 1992, cited in Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). A secure leader is sensitive to genuine needs among the team members. This stimulates hope and competence among team members (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

In insecurely attached leaders are less likely to encourage their staff in the direction of growth and creativity. Insecurely attached staff are less likely to commit to the institution (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Avoidant leaders, for example, may achieve success in a specific task-oriented area crucial to the organisation, such as finance, while being unable to meet emotional needs and provide growth opportunities for their staff (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Anxious-ambivalent leaders tend to focus on socio-emotional needs within their team, to the neglect of wider organisational goals and values (Davidovitz et al., 2006, cited in Mikulincer & Shaver 2007). Even secure team members working for an insecure leader can feel tense and insecure (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Based on findings by Desivilya, Sabag and Ashton (2007), Mikulincer and Shaver (2007, p.452) conclude that “attachment style differences are relevant to organisational effectiveness and sustainability”. Team cognitions and emotions are influenced by insecure and secure attachments, as are issues such as institutional change and team functioning.

Socialised, transformational leaders tend to function as symbolic attachment figures, bolstering members’ and followers’ senses of safety, security, and permanence, activating and supporting a broaden-and-build cycle of attachment security, and facilitating personal and organisational effectiveness and personal growth. (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007, p.453–454)
Conclusion
Attachment theory is receiving more attention from research in neurobiology and has been successfully applied to research in the psychology of religion. What infants understand cognitively and experience affectively profoundly influences later socialisation and spiritual expression. Research has shown that it is possible to move from an insecure to an earned secure attachment style and that previously insecurely attached parents can raise their own children with secure attachments. Secure / insecure attachment styles inform human interactions at home, at school, with peers, with life partners, at worship, and in the workplace. It is important for educators to be aware that they may be experienced as attachment figures. This provides an opportunity to foster secure interactions. To Christian educators, God is the ultimate attachment figure. In their areas of influence, Christian educators can be stable, long term, sensitive attachment figures for children, students, families and colleagues in their care. TEACH

References


The formation and enactment of teacher expectations of student achievement in private schooling

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Abstract
This study examined how teachers form expectations of the students they teach and how their self-reported behaviours in the classroom reflect these expectations. This qualitative study, theoretically informed by phenomenological hermeneutic inquiry, used in-depth, semi-structured interviews with six teachers in private schools in Melbourne, Australia, and results were critically analysed. The paper reports issues identified by the teachers as being important in the formation of their expectations of student achievement, particularly the idea that low achievement is closely related to students’ poor self-image. It then discusses a paradox evident in the behaviour reported by the teachers: that in their attempts to build student self-image and communicate high expectations, the teachers may unwittingly communicate the low expectations they are at pains to overcome.

Introduction
Teacher expectation has long been considered a powerful pedagogical tool (Good & Brophy, 2000, p. 109), playing a vital role in determining the quality of student learning. Since the 1960s, research has suggested that teachers’ interactions with students are affected by the expectations they hold about those students and there is some evidence that high teacher expectations produce high student achievement and low expectations produce low achievement (Capel, Leask & Turner, 1999). Furthermore, it is likely that student achievement may confirm teacher expectations, effectively creating a cycle of self-fulfilling prophecies (Jussim & Harber, 2005). Teachers adjust their pedagogy in line with their expectations of their students and thereby treat students differently, in line with those expectations (Diamond, Randolph & Spillane, 2004; Good & Brophy, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 2005), setting the stage for self-fulfilling prophecies to come true.

How do teachers form these expectations in the first place? And how do they believe they convey these expectations (or not) to their students? This paper is drawn from a study that attempted to identify the factors contributing to the formation of expectations of students, amongst a small group of teachers in private schools in Melbourne, Victoria.

Recent research (Sadker & Sadker, 2005) suggests that teachers form expectations of their students due to a numbers of factors. These include information typically recorded in schools, such as previous test scores and other documentation from previous teachers, but there is some evidence that less formal information, such as staffroom discussions, identifiable stereotypes, and even children’s physical attractiveness can have a bearing (Sadker & Sadker, 2005). Several researchers (e.g. Jussim, Smith, Madon & Palumbo, 1998; Mandon, Jussim, Keiper, Smith & Palumbo, 1998) argue that teachers use personal characteristics of their students in forming their expectations and, according to Diamond et al. (2004), teachers use race and socioeconomic status to judge students’ academic potential. For example, US teachers’ perceptions of low income and African-American students’ academic capacity are lower than those they hold for middle- and upper-income white students (Farkas 1996; Farkas, Grobe, Sheehan & Shaun, 1990). Diamond et al. (2004) also suggest that widely circulating stereotypes based on racial classification may influence teacher expectations of students.

Research has shown that other types of labelling can have a significant effect on the formation of teacher expectations of academic achievement. For example, Touranki (2003) suggests that in explaining a lack of academic achievement in areas such as reading, the education system as a whole applies labels that may influence teachers’ judgment. There is also evidence that teachers’ attitudes and expectations regarding students vary as a function of labels attached to particular disabilities (Diebold & Von Eichenbach, 1991; Soodak & Podell, 1993). Further, Jussim and Eccles (1992) identify gender
as a variable in teacher expectation, arguing girls get higher grades because teachers perceive girls try harder than boys; teachers then reward girls with good grades for their effort. McMillan (2004) likewise argues that gender stereotypes about ability are partly responsible for teachers’ expectations. For example, elementary school teachers consider boys to be more skillful in tasks that require mental or abstract operations (analysing, synthesising, hypothesising, evaluating, interpreting questions), whereas girls are perceived as more competent in skills related to completing a task (observing, measuring, communicating, graphing, manipulating equipment and material) (Shepardson & Pizzini, 1992). According to Elwood and Comber (1996), girls are generally perceived by teachers to be more motivated and conscientious than boys, but boys are perceived as more confident and carefree.

Researchers argue teachers not only use gender-based characteristics (Myhill & Jones, 2006; Shepardson & Pizzini, 1992; Elwood & Comber, 1996), but even students’ names (Figlio, 2004) to form their expectations of their students.

The claim that “general societal stereotypes seem to be reflected in the attitudes, perceptions, and expectations of many teachers” (Tartar & Emanuel, 2001, p. 216) is hardly surprising, given that teachers are not immune to beliefs and attitudes held by society beyond the school gates. However, there is considerable evidence that the expectations of student achievement held by teachers profoundly affect teachers’ classroom behaviour. In other words, teachers’ expectations are communicated to students, with important consequences for student learning. For example, Brophy and Good (2000) argue that teachers treat high-expectancy students differently to low-expectancy students during classroom interactions. One consequence of this is that high expectancy students receive higher quality interactions with the teacher, which increases the likelihood of those students experiencing greater achievement. Hence, the students’ achievements serve to fulfill the teacher’s prophecy, forming a kind of ‘virtuous circle’. According to Jussim and Harbar (2005), this phenomenon is more pronounced in elementary (primary) schooling than at later levels. Students in the earlier grades have more contact time with individual teachers and if their teacher consistently reveals low expectations, these are more likely to accumulate for students over a period of time, potentially distorting students’ achievement and self-image (Good & Brophy, 2000). In secondary schools, by contrast, teachers have less contact time with their students so low expectations for students are less likely to have a cumulative effect.

The present study
The purpose of this study was to explore and describe how teachers in independent school settings in Melbourne believe they form expectations of their students; determine whether they believe these expectations impact on student achievement; and identify how these teachers believe they communicate (or conceal) their expectations to students.

The participants were five primary school teachers from two private schools in south-east Melbourne, Victoria. The teachers were aged between 20 and 50 years and were a mix of male and female; the ethnicity and social class of the participants was not seen as important in the original selection of participants (an issue that is touched upon later in this paper). The participants had all been in the field of education for at least four years, as it was assumed that experienced teachers were more likely to provide the insight needed to inform the aims of the study. Permission was sought from the principals of the participating schools and the teachers signed consent forms agreeing to participate in in-depth, semi-structured, interviews. These interviews sought to explore the phenomenon of interest and to elicit rich descriptions of the perspectives of the teachers. With the permission of teachers, each of the approximately one and a half hour interviews were tape-recorded for accuracy (Burgess, 1984). The transcribed data was then analysed following Lichtman’s (2006) three Cs of data analysis: initial coding; identifying the categories; and developing concepts / themes.

Findings and discussion
The teachers participating in this study mainly described the basis for their expectations of their students in ways that were consistent with previous research. There was one exception, however, the teachers reported that the support students get from their parents at home was an important variable in influencing their expectations. This may be superficially explained by the fact that the participants were drawn from private schools where, presumably, parents have a considerable investment in their children’s education. However, on closer analysis, the issue of ‘parent support’ was found to intersect with other variables, particularly that of cultural background, a point also taken up later in this paper. In the main, the teachers claimed they base their expectations on objective forms of information about student ability (citing previous test results, previous teachers’ feedback, knowledge about the state curriculum, and direct observation of students). However, the teachers also described, either explicitly or implicitly, a range of variables.

“Teachers treat high-expectancy students differently to low-expectancy students during classroom interactions.”
they believed were influential in the formation of their expectations of student achievement. In this section, two of these variables are discussed at length: student gender and cultural background.

Students’ gender as a variable in the formation of teacher expectations

Student gender clearly impacted on the participating teachers’ expectations, as they explicitly identified it is a factor in student achievement. Mary (all names are pseudonyms) stated that, despite not encouraging gender differences in her classroom:

[I] sort of tend to think that girls are better; boys [being] sort of loud [and] they are more playful than girls. They don’t seem to care as much as girls in their presentations or in their general expectations, that ‘we are boys, it’s okay for us if we miss this’. But again, I am not going to encourage this in my classroom. It should not be in any classroom. But I know from the result, from the work I get, you can just tell. (Mary, Gr. 1)

Malinda’s ideas were consistent with Mary’s, both in claiming the existence of gender differences and claiming she did not allow these to impact on her expectations.

Girls generally are a little bit hard[er] working than the boys. Boys tend to be, particularly at the grade three age, more easily distracted than the girls. But I still have similar expectations though. (Malinda, Gr. 3)

Malinda also believes that teacher expectations influence some (but not all) children, and girls more so than boys.

Oh yeah…not for all children…some children care for what you think…[but] it won’t affect them all. But most kids, particularly girls…it’s] what you think that really matters…and they will do their best to try and please you and most kids will do their best…to fulfil what you requested of them…so [it] depends on the child a lot. (Malinda, Gr. 3)

This expectation, and its impact on practice, was described by Bob (a Grade 6 teacher) who was explicit about his awareness of gender differences in his teaching. Bob explained the way in which his decisions about how much material could be covered in class depended on the ratio of girls to boys present. More girls meant that more teaching could be done with more achievement and fewer problems; more boys meant less achievement and more problems. Bob explained that, up until last year, his focus had been on “managing behaviour” rather than on “teaching” because of the number of boys in his class. However, this year he was more focused on teaching (rather than behaviour) because he has more girls than boys in his class.

I have no bullies. I have more girls than boys, which is a statistically good thing for me in the classroom…Last year I had a class where I [was] often managing the class and their behavioural expectations in terms of calling out and rejecting others and all sorts of behaviour. (Bob, Gr. 6)

This is potentially a circular problem. Are teachers’ claims about the relationship between gender-appropriate behaviour and students’ achievement preconceived or are they the result of hard-won experience in the classroom? In fact, the teachers described their management strategies, instruction, and handling of curriculum as being both guided by their experiences with the different genders, and by preconceived notions about different personality characteristics of girls and boys. They then consciously or unconsciously communicated, through their behaviour, their differential expectations of male and female students, including how much each gender is going to achieve. Bob, for example, stated, “We often let girls to get over things that boys might not necessarily get away [with], especially with regard to Mathematics and Sciences.” Bob had gone as far as asking someone else to observe his teaching to check the gender balance in his classroom questioning, including the gender balance in his use of open and closed questions.

My balance was fine, [although] my questioning to the girls in Science is more closed than to boys. So I know as an experienced teacher. I feel still very guilty of myself trying to elicit correct answers from girls rather than allowing them to come to appropriate answers themselves, so that may be a bit of bias from a teacher’s point of view. (Bob, Gr. 6)

Analysis of the teachers’ transcripts clearly indicated that the participating teachers were consciously or unconsciously gender biased, and that their male and female students receive different educational experiences based on what these teachers believe to be appropriate gender-based behaviour. These findings are consistent with research by Bennett and Bennett (1994). These teachers (see also Myhill & Jones, 2006) reported lower expectations of boys, both in terms of academic achievement and beliefs about behaviour and attitude, but had high expectations of girls, viewing them as hardworking and caring more about what teachers expect from them.

“These teachers reported lower expectations of boys, both in terms of academic achievement and beliefs about behaviour and attitude, but had high expectations of girls.”
**Students’ cultural background as a variable in the formation of teacher expectations**

In addition to differing expectations based on gender, the participating teachers reported that the cultural and linguistic diversity of students contributed to the formation of their expectations of student achievement, with students from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB) eliciting low expectations.

> [When children have a] non-English speaking background…expectations are going to be slightly lower than kids growing up in English speaking backgrounds. Because their ability to understand certain things is going to be a bit lower, naturally, you expect that. (Malinda, Gr. 3)

Rena (a Grade 2 teacher) argued that students’ ESL (English as a Second Language) status was a stronger variable than social class or ethnicity, and stated that language barriers are the most important factor affecting her students’ achievements and, therefore, her expectations.

> Because English is not their first language, that is one factor that is affecting them…but I am hoping it won’t…We have low expectations from the students with ESL background as a whole staff and often discuss how to overcome some hurdles that we face from the problems that arise, [such as] children playing up because there is a language barrier. (Rena, Gr. 2)

Malinda’s ideas were partly consistent with Rena’s:

> Most of the challenges come from their language background, and also their different cultural backgrounds. Sometimes…their language can be a bit of a barrier too. (Malinda, Gr. 3)

Rena also reported how the teachers in her school often thought of ways to help ESL students overcome language barriers, but based on low expectations.

> Again, these teachers’ perspectives are consistent with earlier research, which has shown that teachers rate students differently based on students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Diamond et al., 2004). Paradoxically, the participating teachers also reported high expectations of Asian and Indian students because they believe these cultural groups have a strong work ethic, meaning they are subject to higher expectations based on teachers’ beliefs about their cultural backgrounds. Mary reported that she believes Asian students are very hard working.

> I think last year the Asian students that I had have high percentile [scores] anyway. I was expecting them to be performing above the level my class is at. (Bob, Gr. 6)

**How do teachers communicate their expectations to their students?**

So far, this paper has reported the participating teachers’ descriptions of how they form expectations of their students. The discussion will now turn to how they communicate these expectations through their day-to-day teaching. The teachers reported that they are aware that they project onto their students the kind of expectations they have for them, in direct or indirect ways; furthermore, they consciously do this according to what they believe will be best for their students.

A key concern for these teachers was children’s own perception of their likely achievement. The teachers reported that they convey to their students, through their teaching behaviour, what they see as each student’s strengths and weaknesses. These teachers believe that the students then formulate self-images and expectations of themselves, based on what has been conveyed to them, and that this will consequently influence the students’ achievement. This idea is consistent with the work of Deans (1996), who argued that small children form self images by seeing themselves in the eyes of others (teachers, parents and other adults). Thus, by experiencing high expectations, students are more likely to form high self-images; with low expectations, students’ self-image is lowered. For the teachers in this study, the act of conveying expectations to students was not simply one of direct reinforcement. Instead, the teachers reported a range of complex pedagogical strategies, such as tailoring their instruction and adapting the curriculum to enable their students to experience success. The teachers believed this was a key strategy in promoting self-image. The teachers all reported the attempts they engaged in, based on their expectations of their students, to raise the self-image of low-achieving students. These strategies include adapting tasks to suit each student’s present achievement, so they can succeed in the work and feel motivated.

> A lot of children that we work with [who have] learning difficulties are very prone to low self-esteem…[There are] a whole range of things that they’re really stuck with or they really find challenging, [this makes]…a lot of children…become anxious about coming to school because everything is too hard and challenging…so the children have low expectations from themselves…So, again, if we work with them then we break things down into little chunks to provide things that they can succeed in and to give them feedback on that…to develop feelings and showing a bit high expectations for the students. (Leanne, Gr. 1)

Bob also explained in detail how he adapts the curriculum to match his expectations of his students’ achievements. For example, Bob omits some
activities for children who have learning difficulties because he does not want to lessen their motivation for learning.

Asking children to complete various activities at various times, with a sense of priority for certain students, is very important, so for my autistic child it’s far less relevant to be doing decimals to three places. It’s more relevant to him to be working at his bus timetable and some simple word mathematics questions. So in that manner, I can drop activities for him that he does not have to complete. (Bob, Gr. 6)

The teachers’ ideas reflect Blatchman’s (1992) argument that, with each success at school, children develop enhanced motivation and self-perception. By contrast, with each failure at school, children feel de-motivated and develop low self-perceptions (Chapman, 1988). Montgomery (1994) also found that children with learning difficulties generally have lower academic self-perceptions. The teachers reported that they believed that it is important to convey realistic expectations to low-achieving students.

I try to show them that I believe in them…not in a false way…that my belief and my expectation of them is based on reality…what they can succeed at…and if a child is resistant to have a goal…and they’re too worried about failing…all you need to do is then make it smaller…it’s negotiated in a different way or from a different angle. (Leanne, Gr. 1)

Mary put this more pragmatically.

I won’t be expecting much…only at their own level. I have expectations, if you can’t finish two pages of writing then at least one page would be enough for you…because I know this child can’t go beyond one page. (Mary, Gr. 6)

Rena’s ideas are consistent with Mary’s.

The ones that [you] might de-motivate, you need to watch yourselves with them then work at their level. I don’t push them too much…if you push them too much…they can’t do it…just at their level…That’s why I said ones who want to do more…I challenge them…the ones who can’t…whatever they do I am fine…I am happy with them…so they can achieve as much as they can. (Rena, Gr. 2)

These statements portray how the participating teachers communicate their expectations to high and low achievers differently, by challenging their high achievers and giving lower level tasks to low achievers. At one level, it is understandable that these teachers do not give challenging tasks to students with low ability because they fear that, if their students fail, the students will be de-motivated and develop poor self-images. However, as Good and Brophy (2000) indicate, if teachers communicate low expectations to their students over a long period, it is more likely that negative self-fulfilling effects will occur.

Despite this (or perhaps because of it), all the teachers described how they motivated their students by giving positive comments.

‘Well done’, or ‘I can see you counting on your fingers, that is fantastic’, ‘I can see you working really hard, that’s great’…All of them, not just the low or high…all of them get that…They want to show they can do it…they try hard for me…and I can see it. (Rena, Gr. 2)

Rena believes that these comments boost students’ self-esteem. However, Babad (1990) argues that even though teachers try to provide emotional support and show more concern and vigilance in teaching low-expectancy students, the fact remains that these low achievers are the victims of more negative teacher effects.

Conclusion
This paper argues that teachers’ expectations of their students’ achievements are subject to a number of variables, including student gender and cultural background. As Australia is a highly multicultural country, with many schools having a large number of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, teachers need to ask themselves whether they consciously or unconsciously hold low expectations of non-Anglo-Australian students or students for whom English is not a first language. Likewise, these teachers admit they treat girls and boys differently, which may suggest teachers are not fostering the learning of boys adequately, due to lower expectations.

Second, this paper has argued that the strategies teachers use in order to motivate students for whom they hold lower expectations may instead reinforce those expectations and lower students’ academic self-perceptions. The challenge for teachers is to provide appropriate levels of challenge without telegraphing to students expectations of low achievement. The teachers participating in this study believe in having realistic expectations and working just at their students’ level. Moreover, they do not believe in pushing their students too hard in order to achieve more, fearing that students might feel de-motivated if they fail to accomplish the task. A concern raised by this finding is that, if teachers only provide low-achieving students with a combination of easy tasks and positive feedback, students may become accustomed to these kinds of expectations in the longer term, and will not strive to do difficult tasks, always achieving just at the level expected by their teachers. Students, upon recognising their
teacher expectations, behave in a way that conforms to those expectations (Atwell, 2001; Good & Brophy, 2000; Jussim & Harber, 2005). Thus, teacher expectations may cause students' achievements and vice versa. Furthermore, students may come to depend on teachers' positive comments to develop positive self-concept and motivation to enhance their achievements. Perhaps by displaying high expectations both for their students and for themselves, teachers may indeed break down barriers between students' present and future achievements.

References
**Boys and behaviour**

*Alternative strategies that support boys with ADHD*

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**Abstract**

Boys are diagnosed five times more often than girls with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and frequently medication has become the first option in addressing this condition. Many teachers find it difficult to cope with boys with ADHD due to a lack of understanding about ADHD symptoms and boys’ personalities. This research study examined current practices used for boys with behaviour problems as well as trialling a number of alternative approaches such as music therapy, aromatherapy, yoga, building and construction, gardening and computer generated learning. During the implementation phase, teachers were closely observed and then participated in an in-depth interview with the researcher. The data revealed behavioural improvements when using the alternative strategies and demonstrated that these methods may be a better option than medication for some boys with behavioural problems, including ADHD.

**Background**

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has been described as a neuro-developmental disorder characterised by impulsivity, distractibility, and hyperactivity that manifests in early childhood (Sadiq, 2007, p. 632) and as the display of inattentive, hyperactive or impulsive behaviour observed more frequently and severely than is typically observed in other children of the same age (Efron, Sciberras & Hassell, 2008, p. 1). ADHD prevalence rates for school-aged children in Australia were reported as 11% (NSW Public Health, 2002).

The implications of the diagnosis of ADHD are a matter of concern to both parents and educators:

Children with ADHD commonly experience a broad range of difficulties, including social problems and difficulties at school. They have an increased risk of serious long-term consequences such as slow academic achievement, peer rejection and antisocial behaviour. The disorder also has a profound affect on parents, siblings and teachers of children with ADHD. (NSW Public Health Bulletin, p. 4)

Another implication of an ADHD diagnosis relates to the use of medication to manage or reduce the symptoms. While many research reports describe the benefits of stimulant medication for children with ADHD, others are critical of its use. It is a controversial option due to the young age of the children, the amphetamine base of the medication and the dramatic increase of its use in recent years (Buckmaster, 2004). Between 1993 and 2003, prescriptions for dexamphetamine sulphate in Australia increased by 910% to 249,207 prescriptions in 2003 (Buckmaster, 2004). In the United States approximately 60% of children with ADHD are medicated, whereas in Finland, less than 1% receive drugs and by late adolescence little difference is found between those receiving medication and those not (McGuinness, 2008). In the context of medication, it should be noted, however, that many children who have been diagnosed with ADHD do not receive medication for the disorder (Fulton, et al., 2009).

Efron (2008) found that teachers have inadequate understanding and training in the area of ADHD and schools are frequently not meeting the needs of boys with ADHD.

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limited understanding of the behavioural profiles of children with ADHD (Arcia, Frank, Sanchez-LaCay & Fernandes, 2000). This study also found that while teachers used a broad range of strategies, these tended to be reactive rather than proactive and did not constitute a comprehensive plan of action, which is necessary for managing students with ADHD.

Teachers need to accept that the child with ADHD will have challenging behaviours which, for much of the time, the child cannot control. Kindlon and Thompson (2000, p. 202) recommend that boys with ADHD need four things: understanding, structure, clear guidelines in the classroom and support. West (2001, p. 6) also agrees that structure is the most important strategy in order for students to understand expectations and limitations. Boys with ADHD will usually respond best in structured and predictable environments with clearly defined rules and regulations (Houghton, 2004, p. 18).

Some schools have responded to these findings and have altered their teaching styles and classroom structures, for example, breaking lessons into sections and incorporating breaks for the boys (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2008, p. 1). Houghton (2004, p. 18) recommends the teacher should include a combination of educational structure and support in managing ADHD behaviour.

Additionally, Myers (2009, p. 2) believes that if a child has difficulty following a plan, the teacher should assist in setting long-range goals and breaking the goals into realistic parts. If a child with ADHD has poor time management, use of a time limit, a timer, lists, calendars and charts will assist (Myers, 2009, p. 2). Additionally, attention-getting techniques, humour and a soft voice when giving direction are helpful (Myers, 2009, p. 1).

Using immediate feedback on behaviour, time out strategies and small group instruction lessons have obtained meaningful improvement in the behaviour of children with ADHD (Fabiano, 2003, p. 2). Classroom strategies should also include the use of visuals to support instructions, teaching students how to break their work into sections, monitoring their work frequently and colour coding timetables and books (Houghton, 2004, p. 16).

When applying strategies it is important to consider the reward that will be used. For reinforcement to be beneficial, it must be perceived by the student as good and desirable (Edwards & Watts, 2004, p. 51).

Another useful strategy for boys with behaviour problems is teaching them how to self monitor their behaviour. West (2001, p. 2) noted that boys can be taught to use simple strategies such as looking for instructions on the board, raising their hands, waiting and seeing if they remember or quietly asking another child for help.

While helping the child avoid boredom, the teacher should also help the child alleviate stressful situations. These situations can be averted by having a time-out location, which should be a place for calming down rather than for punishment (Myers, 2009, p. 1).

**Building and constructing activities**

Using body activities and hands-on lessons, boys with ADHD can learn to control their impulsivity and increase their concentration (King & Gartrell, 2008, p. 9). King and Gartrell (2008) suggest the use of block building and wood working and the provision of materials with which students can experiment. Building activities such as Duplo and Lego may be used to calm impulsive behaviour.

These changes were enjoyed both by the girls and the boys in the classroom but, in particular, worked best in calming impulsive behaviour in boys with ADHD. (King & Gartrell, 2008)

**Gardening**

Other building and construction activities such as gardening have been shown to benefit boys with ADHD. According to Byrne (2009, p. 1), gardening improves symptoms of ADHD by promoting team work; boys work together in planning and developing the garden bed and boys develop care, respect and responsibility which motivates their learning in the classroom. Watkins (2008) recommends having boys with ADHD working on tasks in a collaborative learning group with a partner who has been previously trained on the task, as this improves boys’ planning strategies and efficiency in activities.

**Behaviour management and the use of choice**

Giving boys choices in their classroom activities is important (Loe, 2007, p. 8). Choice making, peer tutoring and computer-aided instruction are strategies that will support boys’ appropriate behaviour. Additionally, William Gasser’s Choice Theory is an appropriate behaviour management approach as it allows students to stop and evaluate their behaviour. Choice Theory advocates the utilisation of five key aspects: developing goals, establishing classroom rules, allowing students to make classroom and learning suggestions, achieving commitment from students and implementing consequences (Edwards & Watts, 2004, p. 134). Wilson (2006, p. 1) also agrees with Gasser’s theory and recommends giving boys with ADHD more than one choice in activities. There is no easy solution for the management of ADHD but asking a child with ADHD what will help them, increases teachers’ understanding of how they like to learn. “It is amazing how often their opinions are ignored or not asked” (Hallowell & Ratey, 2005).
Physical activity
Given that fidgeting is one of the symptoms of ADHD, physical activity is important to children with ADHD because they crave movement and need time to use their excess hyperactivity. Loe (2007, p. 9) believes that physical activity is helpful for children with ADHD as it has been shown to reduce disruptive behaviour inside the classroom. King and Gartrell (2008, p. 2) consider the outdoors as a vital teaching tool for boys’ behaviour development and recommend creating indoor and outdoor body experiences, experiments, building and constructing activities and dramatic play to help boys with their concentration and attention.

Gurian (2002, p.47) found that movement for boys seemed to help not only in the stimulation of their brains but also in the management of their behaviour. Incorporating exercise activities into the daily classroom schedule is believed to be an appropriate way of enabling boys with ADHD to control their movements and to increase the likelihood of experiencing school success (Mulrine, Prater & Jenkins, 2005, p. 1).

Aromatherapy
Smells can influence our moods and levels of anxiety and aromatherapy suggests that mental alertness, calmness and relaxation can be achieved (Jensen, 2000, p.66). Berne (2002, p.119) has studied the effects of aromatherapy on brain waves, with results showing that oils such as orange, jasmine, and rose enhance calmness and tranquillity in the brain. Furthermore, some essential oils such as lavender and rosemary have neuro-stimulating properties that help people relax (Sadiq, 2007, p.6). Since children with ADHD do not always understand why they are acting out certain behaviours, Jefferies (2003, p.64) recommends an important lifestyle change such as the use of aromatherapy to help create a calm, positive environment.

Music therapy
Children with an emotional disturbance and/or behaviour disorder benefit from the stress reduction technique of music therapy. Weston (2008, p.1) believes that aromatherapy and soft music should be used in schools to help with behavioural problems. By simply playing low volume music in the background, students find it easier to relax and improve their learning. Appropriate music can help create a positive learning environment that may improve the behaviour of students (Jensen, 2000, p.60). Research by Madewell (2009, p.1) found that by playing classical music, students with ADHD become attentive and relaxed.

Meditation and yoga techniques
Stress, which may have a negative impact upon the health, development and wellbeing of children, is a symptom of many children with ADHD. Thomas (2002, p.2) recommends that relaxation exercises such as Tai Chi can help manage behaviour. According to Myers (2009, p.1), combining simple relaxation techniques such as deep breathing with positive visual imagery helps boys with ADHD improve or learn new skills. Yoga is a mind, body and spirit practice, including physical exercises, breathing techniques, relaxation, meditation and mindfulness. Cheesbrough (2006) believes that regular yoga practice can improve children’s behaviour and schoolwork. “Hyperactive and disruptive children will grow calmer, particularly through the practice of breathing techniques” (Cheesbrough, 2006, p.29).

Boys and technology
In making lessons as ‘real’ as possible, Browne posits that, “Technology is a great vehicle for boys with ADHD in learning at school” (Browne, 2001, p.40). He recommends that teachers should link both communication and technology skills. Boys with behaviour problems, including ADHD, will commonly favour computer related learning as it makes instruction visual, allows them to participate actively and increases academic opportunities. Boys with ADHD will be assisted academically when teachers apply “boy orientation” topics to programs of work, for example, technology and enterprise challenges. This may include tasks such as designing badges (Browne, 2001, p.50).

The current study—Method
This study explored ways teachers can manage symptoms of ADHD by using a number of different strategies which would appeal to boys and specifically address their ADHD symptoms.

A three-phased, qualitative mixed methods, research design was used: an implementation phase; followed by observation of the participants; and an in-depth interview.

The study was conducted in a country town on the Mid North Coast area of New South Wales at the larger of the two public schools which provided for students from Kindergarten to Grade 6. The research proposal was presented at a staff meeting and teachers were invited to take a booklet that outlined the strategies and techniques that would need to be implemented in the classroom over a five-month period. Sufficient detail was provided to enable the teachers to apply the strategy effectively. They were invited to identify themselves on the form and indicate the strategies they would like to
trial. The booklet also included a feedback form which allowed the teachers to make comments after the strategy was trialled. A time of two weeks was suggested for trialling each strategy. The strategies were derived from an extensive literature review of alternatives to the use of medication for ADHD.

Phase 1: Implementation
In this three-phased study, the first phase consisted of the implementation of specific teaching and management strategies over several months by the five teachers who had agreed to participate. The strategies trialled were:
1. Building and constructing
2. Gardening
3. Behaviour management based on Choice Theory
4. Indoor and outdoor body experiences: (a) physical activity, (b) aromatherapy, (c) music therapy, (d) yoga
5. Technology assisted learning

The participating teachers were asked to answer a series of questions and given opportunity to comment critically on the strategies that were implemented to manage boys with ADHD.

Amongst the classes involved there were a number of important variables such as the number of boys who had been diagnosed with ADHD or who had displayed symptoms of ADHD in the participating teachers’ classrooms, the different behaviours that were displayed by the boys and the age of the boys with ADHD.

Phase 2: Observations
The researcher carried out observations over a six-week period.

Phase 3: Semi-structured interviews
The third phase involved an in-depth, semi-structured interview which was used to gather data to describe the degree of understanding the teachers had about boys with ADHD and to determine which management strategies were perceived to be most effective in improving boys’ behaviour and concentration.

The results from the three investigative procedures: booklet feedback, observations and interviews were then collated and analysed.

Results
All five of the teachers (100%) returned their booklets and nominated to be interviewed. Four of the participants (80%) trialled indoor and outdoor body experiences including strategies of music therapy, aromatherapy, yoga and physical activity. Four of the participants (80%) trialled building and constructing activities, three of the participants (60%) trialled the behaviour booklet, one participant (20%) trialled computer generated learning, and two of the five participants (40%) trialled gardening.

Building and constructing strategy
Three out of the five teachers trialled this strategy. All three of the teachers reported successful results in boys’ attention and behaviour during building and constructing lessons. These teachers reported that:
- Boys appeared to be less hyperactive and fewer ADHD symptoms were apparent when they were building. (Lego and building blocks were used in Science and Mathematics lessons.) (Teacher 5)
- “Boys are definitely more engaged when using hands on activities.” (Teacher 2)
- “Boys enjoyed building and construction activities, they learnt by doing.” (Teacher 5)
- ‘Cogs and wheels’ were beneficial building and constructing activities. (Teacher 1)
- “Boys could not wait to continue working on activities.” (Building and constructing activities were used in Mathematics through measurement, number and space; and in Science through toy making and bridge challenges.) (Teacher 2)
- Building and constructing activities developed concentration and calmness in boys with ADHD. (Teacher 5)
- Building and construction methods assist perceptual learners and are a good way to “link student prior knowledge to curriculum”. (Teacher 2)
- “It is possible to build in social skills [when using building and constructing activities].” (Teacher 2)
- “Groups need to be small for the benefits to show and be well supervised.” (Teacher 1)

Gardening strategy
Two teachers out of the five explored the gardening strategy. These two teachers found such pleasing results that they discussed the results with other teachers and suggested they implement their own garden.

The boys with ADHD built a good sense of ownership with the gardens, which could then be used as a reward for stimulating learning and focusing students in the classroom.
As the boys began to enjoy and find satisfaction in gardening, the teacher was able to set them special research and homework tasks. (Teacher 1) "They didn’t even realise they were doing Math." (Gardening was integrated into Math measurement lessons.) (Teacher 2)

**Boys with ADHD need teachers who can implement strategies that cater for their ADHD symptoms, such as hyperactivity and aggression.**

**Behavior management strategy**

Three out of five teachers tested the behaviour booklet over a two-week period. All of the three teachers agreed that Glasser’s Choice Theory is beneficial for boys, especially those with a behaviour problem; however, structure needs to be constant and consistent.

Students were shown their booklet and it was their choice to follow the given outcomes. Teachers held the book at their desks, but students were involved in the discussion of their achievements. If students did not choose the appropriate behaviour, they could not receive the reward that had been made clear to them at the commencement of the activity.

It was found that:

- Boys chose the correct behaviour because they were in control of their behaviour. “Boys with ADHD need to have choice and need to feel in control, the teacher needs to give the child structure in order for this to work successfully, without structure the boy becomes the leader.” (Teacher 5)
- By setting a reward or a privilege for the student that was personalised or seen as desirable the student worked harder at achieving and focusing. (Teachers 1 and 5)
- Boys with ADHD need to be rewarded instantly. (Teacher 2)
- Teacher 3 used a sticker chart that worked towards a reward. It was apparent that the boys were motivated to achieve because they were working towards a goal and responded well to these rewards. However, Teachers 1 and 2 reported more pleasing results when using the behaviour management booklet (Choice Theory). This is probably because they first found out what interested the boys and developed a reward from these interests.

**Indoor and outdoor body experiences strategies**

Teacher 4 used daily physical activity such as walking, running and in-class movement skills to stimulate learning and gain concentration as well as provide breaks in lessons. After using outdoor movement activities it was reported that, “Boys enjoyed the movement and looked forward to moving again, it seemed to calm boys when they came back inside.” (Teacher 2)

Music therapy, aromatherapy and yoga techniques were used to increase concentration and calmness in boys with ADHD. Regarding these strategies, teachers reported that:

- “Music was very settling for students while they were doing work.” (Teacher 2)
- “Daily integration of classical music after a physical activity and during Mathematics or English stimulates concentration and eliminates much disruptive behaviour.” (Teacher 5)
- These techniques (music therapy and movement activities) would work better when they become part of the classroom routine. (Teacher 2)
- After using aromatherapy regularly in the classroom, ‘orange’ was found to be the most successful in calming but still motivating boys with ADHD. “While the oil was burning I noticed a change in the boys’ physical bodies, they seemed to unwind and calm down, and it helped in eliminating many messages and disruptions around them.” (Teacher 5)
- “Yoga allowed boys to use their bodies to expel excessive hyperactivity and at the same time loosen muscles and calm down.” (Yoga was used on a daily basis.) (Teacher 5)

Teacher 5 told the boys they were going to do ‘strength and balance’ activities. This seemed to result in better participation than in classrooms where the term ‘yoga’ was used.

**Technology assisted learning strategies**

Two out of the five teachers chose to write feedback on using computers to motivate learning in boys with ADHD and commented that computer generated learning stimulated learning and interested the boys with ADHD. Teacher 5 also used interactive white boards to stimulate and interest learning. In these lessons boys with challenging behaviour were interested and less disruptive than in ‘normal’ lessons.

**Discussion**

This study has revealed that boys with ADHD need teachers who can implement strategies that cater for their ADHD symptoms, such as hyperactivity and aggression. The research aim was to explore a number of alternative methods that were thought to be beneficial to boys with ADHD, as suggested by various researchers. However, the study found that one strategy alone was barely enough to cater for boys with ADHD. Strategies needed to be used in conjunction with one another, modified and integrated into the timetable in order to give the classroom structure and routine. Gardening
became a reward strategy for the boys with ADHD. By integrating gardening and Choice Theory strategies, boys were given a daily choice to work productively and follow classroom rules in order to be involved in gardening. The boys became immersed in gardening, developing teamwork skills, Mathematics and English skills and a sense of pride and ownership.

Music was found to relax but also stimulate the students. Classical music was found to be the most effective type of music. In the afternoon as the boys became restless, aromatherapy was successfully used. Observation found that aromatherapy settled the boys, but at the same time also stimulated them, giving them creativity in story writing and discussions.

The major finding of this study was that boys with ADHD need to be understood. Teachers need to get to know them, develop a relationship with them, find their interests and understand their symptoms in order to implement a daily plan incorporating appropriate strategies.

Observing the five participants over six weeks, it became apparent the symptoms of ADHD, including hyperactivity, aggression and a lack of concentration were improved and minimised through the use of:

1. Structure and routine
2. Choice in their behaviour (Glasser’s Choice Theory)
3. Desirable, instant rewards that relate to learning
4. Learning activities they perceive to be significant
5. Learning that is broken up through movement
6. Relaxation techniques that have a calming effect

While medication can be of value in settling the child with severe ADHD, this exploratory study found that alternative strategies can benefit boys with this condition. There is now a strong need to repeat this study with larger numbers and in a controlled and measured context to provide more detailed information. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder has been found to have a variety of aetiologies; this study has revealed that a variety of strategies, integrated consistently throughout the timetable and all within a framework of a caring educational relationship with the teacher, is highly effective at meeting the child’s needs. It is the responsibility of the teacher to get to know students and understand the boys’ symptoms of ADHD. Strategies can then be developed that support these boys and the classroom teacher. These steps could make positive, lifelong differences and are worth trialling prior to medication. TEACH

References