2011

An investigation into the relationship between quality teaching and congregational viability

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An Investigation into the Relationship between Quality Teaching and Congregational Viability

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

From

University of Wollongong

By

Theresa Mitchell

Master of Professional Education and Training

Graduate Diploma in Vocational Education and Training

Bachelor of Science

Faculty of Education

2011

CERTIFICATION

I, Theresa Mitchell, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Theresa Mitchell

Dated:

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate a possible relationship between quality teaching used in parish services and parish viability. The New South Wales Quality Teaching Model (NSWQTM) was chosen as the quality framework for comparison, while service attendance patterns were chosen as the indicator of parish viability. Three parishes from the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia took part in the study and represented the three different patterns of parish growth (steady, negative and positive). The study used triangulation between observation, questionnaires and interviews, supplemented by interviews with key individuals associated with rector training.

Due to the cross-sectional nature of the study, the findings may not be applicable to other situations and apparent causal effects need to be considered with this in mind. Nevertheless, the study indicated a positive relationship between the use of quality teaching within services and increased service attendance patterns. It showed in particular, that individuals sought out parishes focused on authentic biblical teaching and where the application of this teaching could be observed in the lives of the rectors and congregants. A desire for experiential learning fostered the requirement for these parishes to also have opportunities for congregants to participate in the design and delivery of parish services or support activities.

The findings also showed that, within viable parishes, the rectors and congregations used different dimensions of the NSWQTM. The rectors of viable parishes aligned and utilised the Intellectual Quality dimension to a deeper and broader extent than that of the congregations, while the congregations focused on and utilised the Quality Learning Environment and Significance dimensions more broadly than the rectors. Moreover, congregations in viable parishes maintained strong social support, inclusivity and, to a lesser extent, connectedness. Most importantly, high levels of substantive communication between the rectors and congregants, and between congregants, were a hallmark of viable parishes.

Rearranging the NSWQTM elements to align with the usage within parishes showed that the elements fell naturally into three groups representing biblical equivalence, faith equivalence and quality teaching elements. The level of usage of these groups with respect to each other reflected the viability of the parishes.

The study identified that each diocese's definition of teacher, with respect to rectors, influenced the type and depth of training received by the rector candidates. As a result, rector training was shown to be deficient in providing rectors with suitable pedagogical training, although theological training was more than adequate. Practical and on-job training was shown to be poorly structured, with insufficient direction and training given to parish supervisors.

Although not directly part of this study, it was found that distributed leadership positively influenced parish learning by increasing congregants' self-direction and self-regulation. Similarly, issues such as rector succession planning, learning assessment and the use of traditional parish practices were identified as possible influences on parish viability, and so remain areas for further study.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the following people and institutions for their assistance during the course of this study.

Firstly, I wish to thank my supervisors, Associate Professor Narottam Bhindi and Dr Julie Kiggins, for their invaluable guidance and insight throughout the study. I wish also to thank my original supervisor Professor Stephen Dinham for his assistance at the beginning of the study.

Secondly, I would like to thank Mr Robert Wicks, the Diocesan Secretary and General Manager (Secretarial) of the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia, for his assistance in obtaining diocesan approval for parishes to participate in this study. I would also like to acknowledge the help of Ms Joanne Burgess, Sydney Anglican Diocese Archives for her assistance in obtaining relevant diocesan documents.

Further, I would also like to acknowledge the kind support, encouragement and assistance provided by Reverend Dr Andrew Cameron, Director for Christian Living, Moore Theological College. His insightful discussions and comments were greatly appreciated.

Finally, I would like to thank the rectors of the participating parishes for being part of this study and allowing access to their services, ministry and congregations. Without their help this study could not have been undertaken.

Glossary

baptism	A ritual by which a person expresses his/her repentance of sin and a desire for God's forgiveness. A preparatory and symbolic act identifying the beginning of a Christian life. Baptism functions as a rite of entry or initiation into the Christian fellowship.
bible	A collection of 66 books of inspired writing, divided into two main sections, which is considered canonical by the Christian faith.
cassock	A long, close-fitting, garment worn by members of the clergy or others participating in church services. Also an ecclesiastical coat or jacket worn under a gown.
church	There are three commonly used definitions of church: 1. The entire Christian body of believers. 2. fAny section of the Christian faith professing the same creed and expressed as a particular denomination. 3. A building where public Christian religious services are conducted. Definition 2 will be used in this study.
clergy	Any group or body of ordained persons associated with a particular religion. In the Anglican church these include deacons, archdeacons, bishops, presbyters and rectors. Also known as ministers.

congregants	A person who is part of a congregation.
congregation	An assembly of persons brought together for common religious worship and teaching.
curate	A member of the clergy employed to assist a rector.
diocese	A self-contained organisational unit that is responsible for the management of a specific geographical area of influence within ta church. A diocese may consist of a number of parishes.
doctrine	Within a religion: the body of revealed teaching from God that is used as a standard of orthodoxy. The teaching of the church on any question of faith.
fruits of the Spirit	In the Christian faith: specific talents or personal characteristics provided to a person by God's Spirit. Also, deeds and actions performed by a person, believed to emanate from God's Spirit residing within the person.
key person	A person with specific expertise in a particular area associated with this study. Areas include theology training, rector training and organisation of dioceses and parishes.
liturgy	Forms and patterns for Christian meetings, playing both an educative and pastoral role and helping maintain fellowship between congregations.
minister	See *clergy*

ministry	In religious settings: Organised religious practices performed by an ordained or non-ordained person. Organised government of religious practices. Functions of a minister of religion.
negative growth	In religious setting: a decline in the size of the congregation of a parish over a set period.
NSWQTM	New South Wales Quality Teaching Model. A framework of pedagogical principles designed to improve quality teaching and school effectiveness.
parish	An ecclesiastical district within a diocese, having its own place of worship and members of the clergy. A local representation of the church.
positive growth	In religious setting: an increase in the size of the congregation of a parish over a set time period.
prayer	a spiritual communion with God, including supplication, thanksgiving, adoration or confession. Also, a religious observance, either public or private, consisting of a formula or sequence of words used to commune with God.
provisional parish	A new ecclesiastical district within a diocese created by the archbishop of that diocese. The provisional parish exists for between three and five years, after which time it either reverts to its previous state or is recognised as a full parish.
rector	A member of the clergy in charge of a parish. Also, the spiritual, educational and administrative leader of a parish.

service	A specific, organised, regular meeting of a parish congregation for the main purpose of religious worship and teaching.
sign of peace	Traditional gesture within the Christian religion. The stating of the phrase ‘Peace be with you’ by congregation members and clergy to each other. Generally associated with the holding or shaking of hands.
spiritual growth	The growing in knowledge and understanding within the Christian faith. Often associated with behavioural or attitudinal changes within the individual.
steady growth	In a religious setting: the negligible change in size of a congregation over a set time period.
surplice	A loose-fitting, broad-sleeved white-linen vestment, reaching to the knees, that is worn over a cassock. Worn by ordained and non-ordained persons during a church service.
synod	An assembly of clergy or other church delegates for the discussion and decision of ecclesiastical affairs.
warden	Elected member of a parish congregation whose duties include dealing with parish property and monetary matters.
worship	In a religious setting: Honour and homage paid to God, either in public or in private.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

For over two millennia Christian churches have influenced the social structure of Western society. From their height of influence at the end of the Dark Ages, through the radical changes brought about by the Reformation, the modern church is now faced with an uncertain future (Forsyth 1994). Declining congregational sizes in the Western parishes, and a waning influence on society, have forced parishes to look seriously at their traditions and practices, and evaluate their effectiveness to teach the Christian message to a postmodern culture.

In 2005 a working group from the Sydney diocese of the Anglican church stated that congregations should strive "to see at least 10% of the population of the region of the Diocese in Bible-based churches in 10 years" (ACA, Diocese of Sydney 2005a, p.1). Simply put, this statement launched the diocese on an ambitious ten-year plan of multiplying Bible-based Christian fellowships, congregations and parishes, and to equip them to nurture new members and expand their influence. In short, to make the parish congregations grow. It was this mission statement that prompted this research study.

The Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there exists a relationship between teaching within parish services and parish viability. The research focused on the degree to which modern quality teaching principles, as identified in the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model (NSWQTM), were used in designing and delivering parish services and the effect these principles had on congregation viability. To assist in understanding the quality of teaching in parishes, the study also looked at the training of rectors for their teaching role and the attitudes of congregation members toward parish teaching and learning.

In order to investigate these issues the following research question was posed:

> Is there a relationship between the quality of teaching used in parish services and the viability of the parish?

This major question was supported by a number of subquestions that aimed to clarify and expand the main thrust of the research:

Subquestion 1
What aspects of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model are evident in the design and delivery of parish services?

Subquestion 2
What effect does the use of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model principles have on the viability of the congregation?

Subquestion 3
To what extent does personal learning influence an individual's decision to join a particular congregation?

Subquestion 4
What form of teacher training, both initial and ongoing, do parish rectors undertake?

It should be noted that this was not a theological study, but instead focused on the three dimensions of the NSWQTM (Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance) and the degree to which the associated elements were used in the design and delivery of the main parish services and support activities.

The Significance of this Study

The majority of previous studies into parish growth and viability have concentrated on such issues as leadership (Brenton & Brenton 2000), parish groups (Hughes 2005b), social and cultural changes (Kaldor *et al*. 1999) and innovations to attract new parish members (Halcrow 2007a). Where previous studies addressed parish education, they generally focused on Sunday school, scripture or Bible study groups (Bryant 2004; Hunter 2007). There is, therefore, a lack of significant studies into teaching within services and its relationship to parish viability, making this study an important addition to the current literature on this topic.

This study may also assist congregations and their ministry teams to plan and conduct parish teaching more effectively by providing insight into quality teaching strategies more appropriate to postmodern society.

Background of the Study

INTRODUCTION

An important function of the traditional parish is the spiritual education of the next generation of believers. Grounded in Jewish, Egyptian, Greek and Roman cultures, teaching has always taken an important place in Christian parish practices. In the current postmodern society, however, these traditional practices are being challenged by new quality teaching theories and methods, which have introduced ideas such as student-centred learning, values education and other pedagogical issues.

In previous centuries, learned individuals delivered instruction to passive students who accepted the condition of education without question. Today, quality-teaching models govern all aspects of learning, including intellectual quality, the learning environment and learning significance, which has empowered learners to take control of their own development. Issues such as engagement, inclusivity and connectedness are deemed of equal importance to traditional considerations such as knowledge and understanding.

STUDY CONTEXT

This study focused on three parishes within the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia (ACA). The church is composed of 23 independent dioceses broken into numerous local parishes. These parishes are defined by the Anglican Church (ACA, Diocese of Melbourne 2007) as the local official Church gatherings, which are self-administering. Although each parish can have several groups of parishioners acting as different congregations, in this study it is assumed that the primary congregation represents the parish as a whole.

Service observations were undertaken at the main Sunday services in each parish, as nominated by the parish rectors. Congregation questionnaires and interviews

were also associated with these services. In all parishes, the nominated service was a general or family-type service, specifically designed for attendees of various ages.

The viability of each parish in the study was determined by its service attendance patterns, as detailed in the Sydney Anglican Diocesan Yearbooks (ACA, Diocese of Sydney 2005b, 2007a, 2008). This data was provided to the diocese by parish rectors, thus reducing the risk of over-estimation as raised in several studies dealing with attendance patterns (Hadaway, Marler & Chaves 1993; Hout & Greeley 1998; Smith 1998).

RELEVANCE OF EXISTING RESEARCH

Much of the research discussed in this study was based on North American (USA) or United Kingdom (UK) literature. As such, it is necessary to point out some distinctions between these sources and the Australian situation.

The Church of England (CoE), from which the Anglican Church of Australia originated, is quite different in several key ways. The CoE is part of the UK state system and undertakes governmental as well as church functions. The appointment of clergy, operations of the synod and other aspects of church activities are all influenced or governed by the state. According to the Anglican Church of Australia (ACA 2007), these differences are most pronounced in the duties of the various forms of clergy. Although the UK and Australian clergy have identical names, there are considerable differences in their duties and responsibilities, which affects their role in the planning and delivery of parish services.

The UK equivalent in the USA is called the Episcopal Church (2007), and is governed by a General Convention composed of two controlling houses. According to its structure (ACA 2007), the laity has little input into the decision-making process, which is contrary to the Australian situation where lay particpation is generally encouraged. Other denominations within the USA operate under a wide variety of structures including Assembly of God, Baptist, Lutheran and thousands of non-denominational churches. Literature is often based on several different denominations.

A considerable number of the studies relating to parish growth have originated from the USA (Bass & Stewart-Sicking 2005; Karnes *et al*. 2007; Woolever 2005), which

has a long history of adult Bible study classes associated with Sunday services. This situation promoted the idea that teaching within parishes occurred in formal classes outside the regular parish services. As a result, a considerable proportion of current literature deals with developing innovative, non-threatening, non-confronting services designed to funnel new members into parish Bible study groups (Arn 2007a; Busenitz 2003; Hong 1999; Redman 2002). In Australia, the history of Sunday gatherings is quite different, with Sunday school focused firmly on children while services were generally the domain of adults. This difference, however, makes much of the current USA literature on parish teaching irrelevant to this study.

Studies focused on Australian churches, such as the comprehensive National Church Life Survey (NCLS Research 2005a), which is conducted every five years, do not intentionally focus on service teaching or how such teaching affects parish viability. The NCLS does, however, provide demographic and attitudinal data relating to parishes, rectors and congregations.

As a consequence of the lack of reliable existing research studies, and since quality teaching is linked to the learning context (Johnstone & Vignaendra 2003), it was necessary, within the literature review for this study, to examine the claims made by a variety of rectors regarding teaching within their parishes. The most readily available sources of such information were the church websites. This approach was validated in that the Sydney Anglican Diocese provides official websites to all parishes within the diocese, although some rectors prefer to create and control their own sites.

TEACHING FRAMEWORK

Due to the commonality between schools and parishes in the areas of teaching and learning, the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model (NSWQTM) was chosen as the theoretical framework on which to compare parish teaching. The NSWQTM is divided into three major dimensions covering intellectual quality, the learning environment, and the significance of learning.

It is important to point out that teaching within a religious setting has a far wider definition and influence than in a school of a comparable size. As religious teaching encompasses knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, actions, morals, relationships and other aspects of human life, the teaching methods encapsulate most parish

activities. Further, unlike schools, both formal and informal teaching is equally important in the parish setting. To reflect the specific nature of learning in the parish setting, the titles of the NSWQTM elements of student direction and student self-regulation have been replaced by the titles self-direction and self-regulation.

Overall, quality teaching and the NSWQTM aim to facilitate the learning of diverse students in a caring, inclusive and cohesive environment that fosters effective and sufficient learning. Students are encouraged to be self-regulated, thoughtful, critical thinkers using metacognitive strategies to enhance their own learning styles. Pedagogical practices provide the scaffolding necessary to support learning communities in the various tasks, skills and resources needed for high-quality education. Therefore, parishes embracing this ethos will be presenting the Christian message in a way that maximises the possibility for learning to occur.

RESEARCH BIAS

It should be acknowledged at the outset that I am a practicing Anglican in the Sydney Anglican Diocese and that this study arose out of my concern for church viability. To reduce any bias that may occur, all parishes with which I have had previous dealings have been excluded from this study.

Due to the nature of the Christian faith, notwithstanding its similarities to the NSWQTM, my initial expectations for this study were that parishes more closely aligned with the teaching of the faith would be more viable. Regardless of this, all steps were taken to ensure a balanced approach to this study.

The voluntary nature of participation in this study implied a bias in favour of those individuals and parish leaders willing to participate. The reasons for participation were not specifically asked during the study, nor were any provided by the participants.Therefore, willingness to participate may be influenced by many factors unknown to this study.

The questionnaires designed for this study included questions relating to various aspects of engagement within services. As the Christian faith sets importance on some aspects of services and less importance on others, congregation members completing these questionnaires may have felt compelled to answer in the expected fashion, rather than from their own experiences.

Methodology Overview

Since qualitative research has the ability to investigate complex and sensitive issues, and to relate rich, descriptive scenarios from the individual's viewpoint, it has been chosen as the preferred investigational method for this research.

One advantage of this technique is its ability to elicit a high degree of detail from participants, which can be expressed in such a way as to retain its personal emphasis. Although qualitative research makes it difficult to identify generalisable themes within the data, it does not restrain investigations from drawing cautious conclusions and allows the research to evolve into areas not originally identified.

A range of qualitative techniques were used to collect data for this research, including interviews, observations and questionnaires. Data collection was undertaken in several stages:

1. Selection of parish congregations

   Three congregations were selected; one from each parish growth type – steady, negative and positive. Congregation data used to select the parishes was gathered from the National Church Life Survey research data and the Sydney diocese of the Anglican church.

2. Development of interview and observational sheets

   Using the NSWQTM individual check sheets, observation sheets and interview sheets were developed to be used throughout the research project (see appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4).

3. Initial rector interview

   Initial rector interviews were used to identify the rectors' goals for their congregations and the place of education in their service planning (see Appendix 1).

4. Service observations

An initial observation of each parish service was undertaken to gather data on the use of quality teaching methods (see Appendix 2). The first observation collected details of the learning environment, as well as the service content. The second observation focused on service content, interactions and other related issues.

5. Congregation Questionnaire

At the end of the first service observations the congregations were ask as a whole to participate in the congregational questionnaire. An explanation of the questionnaire, its purpose and participation, was delivered to the congregations during the services.

6. Individual Interviews

At least two volunteers from each congregation participated in formal interviews which were conducted face to face. These interviews gathered information relating to the congregations and parishes from an individual perspective (see Appendix 3).

7. Key interviews

Interviews with key persons from the Anglican church, Moore College (also known as Moore Theological College, MTC) and other related organisations were undertaken to gather additional information regarding teaching within parishes and rector training.

Throughout the data collection process, data was continuously compiled, tabulated and analysed to assist in understanding and the development of further questions for the rector and key person interviews.

Ethical Considerations

The University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee granted ethical approval for the commencement of this inquiry (HE07/247). Procedures throughout the study have been guided by the protocols of this body.

This study observed all ethical requirements relating to human participation including confidentiality, privacy, anonymity, sensitivity and permissions, where applicable. Furthermore, the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia was contacted regarding permission for the parishes to participate in this study. The diocese gave permission for each individual parish rector to make individual choices about participation.

Permission was obtained from the parish rectors to undertake the service observations, congregation questionnaires and interviews. Prior to the initial observation of each parish, an address was given to the congregation explaining the nature of the study and the data to be collected. Written information sheets were also provided.

Study Limitations

The limitations of this cross-sectional study arise predominantly through the use of case studies. Although case studies can provide a rich source of data, the time restraints in this study did not permit in-depth ethnographic studies, particularly as parish services occurred only once per week. Further, only three parishes elected to participate in this study. As a result, the study findings may not be suitable for generalisations across other parishes or dioceses.

An Outline of the Remainder of this Thesis

The remaining six chapters of this thesis are arranged in the following order.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to the specific nature of this study, it was considered important that the literature review included aspects of the Christian faith that pertained specifically to

teaching, so as to highlight its importance in the modern context. The review also considered various church and parish types and the structures developed to address Christian teaching. Further, the review considered parish attendance patterns, rector and laity training, and leadership issues.

This study presented parishes as closely related to schools, since both are teaching institutions. Therefore, the review also considered current literature on school achievement, growth and leadership.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

This chapter addresses the research design and the methodology employed, including the selection of parishes and participants. It also provides justification for the selection of triangulation using questionnaires, interviews and observations within the case study method. Further, this chapter describes the data analysis procedures used to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 4 – THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study are presented in a series of subchapters (parts A, B, C and D): one section for each participating parish and one for the combined findings. Each subchapter addresses the data findings as well as the themes and issues arising from the data.

CHAPTER 5 – RECTOR TRAINING

The importance of teachers in the learning process necessitated an investigation into the type of training provided to rectors throughout their career. This included initial theological training, practical parish training and ongoing professional development. Chapter 5 provides the findings of this investigation, as well as the themes and issues arising from the data.

CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the study's findings with respect to the research questions, current research and related literature. It is organised according to the research questions.

CHAPTER 7 – CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the conclusions drawn from the study's findings and the implications of these conclusions. It also provides recommendations supported by these conclusions, relating to quality teaching and parish viability. Finally, suggestions for further research are presented.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Chapter Structure

This chapter is presented in two parts, as illustrated by the chapter map below (see Figure 2.1).

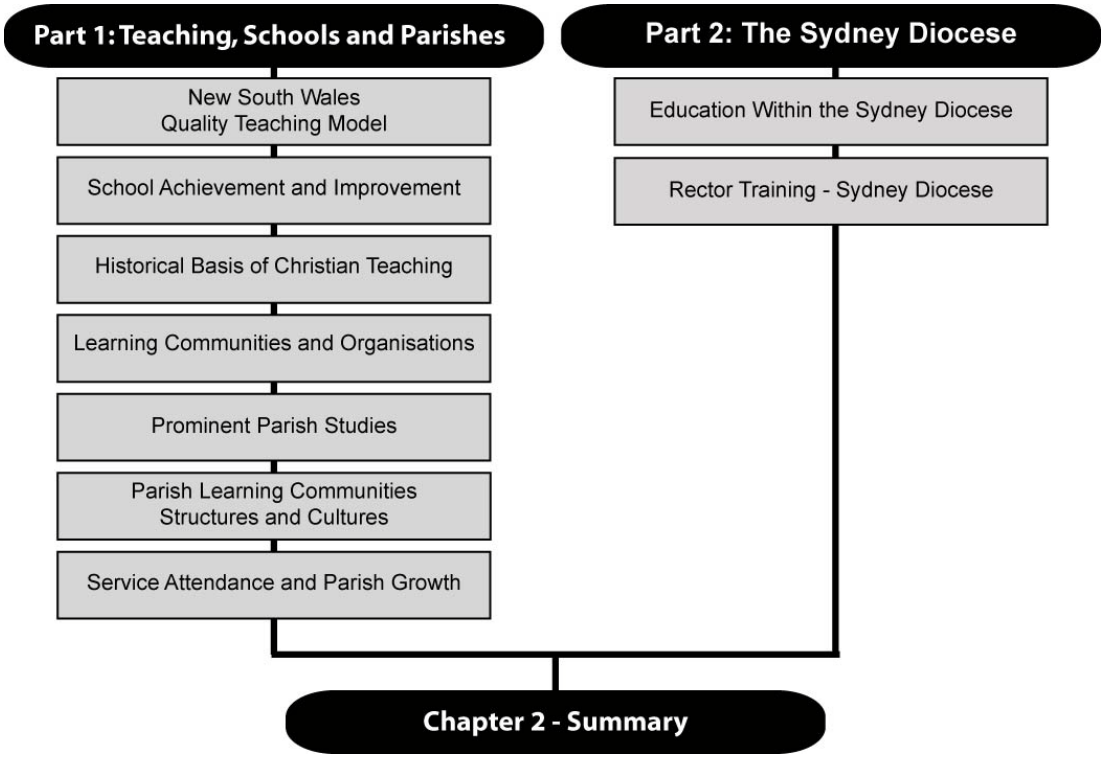

Figure 2.1 – Chapter 2 content map

Part 1 of this chapter, commencing after the chapter introduction, focuses on quality teaching within schools and parishes and the effects of quality teaching on school achievement and improvement. The literature reviewed covers a range of related issues including quality teaching, leadership, learning environments, principal succession planning and the fundamentals of adult learning. The final sections of Part 1 focus on general issues surrounding learning and teaching within parishes, the historical basis of such teaching, and how the perception of teaching and learning shaped parish structures. Part 1 concludes with a discussion of parish service attendance and parish growth.

Part 2 of this chapter reviews literature concerning teaching within the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia, which is the main focus of this study. The issues discussed in this part include diocesan reports, policies and structures relating to the operation of parishes, parish teaching and the training of parish rectors.

The chapter concludes with a summary of all issues raised throughout the chapter and their relevance to this study.

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there is a relationship between quality teaching used within parish services and parish viability. To identify such a relationship, the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model (NSWQTM) (NSW DET 2003) was chosen as the quality framework for teaching comparison, while service attendance patterns were chosen as the indicator of parish viability.

It should be noted at the outset of this chapter that the term ‘parish’, when used in this study, will refer to any distinct group of religious people meeting regularly together for public worship and teaching, led by a rector. For consistency, the term parish will be used in reference to these groups, regardless of the particular term, such as church, used by other writers. Similarly, the term ‘parish service’ will refer to a specific, organised, regular meeting of the parish members for the purpose of worship and teaching. As with the term ‘parish’, the term ‘service’ will be used for consistency throughout this chapter regardless of the terms used by other writers, such as gathering or meeting.

In the area of parish teaching many writers, such as Everist (2002), Caldwell (1997) and Seymour (1997), see the majority of parish teaching occurring outside of parish services; in classrooms or group settings. This, however, is not the focus of this study, which deals exclusively with teaching within parish services and support activities. Therefore, much of the literature on parish teaching is not directly relevant to this study. As a result, the literature reviewed in this chapter will focus on assisting the reader to understand quality teaching and its influences on institutions such as schools and parishes, as well as its role in shaping the teachers and the structures in which they work.

PARISH AS SCHOOL

The notion that parishes are learning institutions comparable to schools underlies the theoretical and practical nature of this study. Therefore, it is important at the outset to establish this link, so that literature regarding schools may also be applied to parishes. At first glance, it may appear that religious parishes are dissimilar to traditional educational institutions such as schools. However, Alexander (2005), reflecting on the hundred years of inquiry into religious education, pointed out that the field of religious education endeavours to maintain and advance the connection between religion and education.

According to Dinham (2008), the primary goal of any school is student learning and achievement. This learning, however, goes further than the acquisition of skills and knowledge, as shown in the Hargreaves *et al.* (2000) study, since it also includes grooming students for life. In the same way, Caldwell (1997) described parishes as places that educate members for faithful living. Schipani (1997) expanded this definition by saying parish education was education for growth that fostered human wholeness and knowledge. Therefore, the goal of both institutions, parishes and schools, is the learning of their members (congregation members and school students) that, in turn, influences their lives.

Since the primary goal of schools is student learning, then one force behind this goal is school leadership, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. For now, it is important to note that Fink (2005) described high-quality leadership as one in which leaders are committed to the successful, deep and lasting learning of all students. Also, these leaders focus on standards that are essential for student success.

As with schools, parishes rely heavily on the quality of their leaders (rectors), as described by the synod of the Sydney Anglican diocese (ACA, Diocese of Sydney 2003b) report, which stated that parishes rarely progress beyond the ability and character of their rectors. Furthermore, the report emphasised the importance of rectors demonstrating understanding of learning and teaching, as well as focusing on the roles and responsibilities of their parish positions.

In schools and parishes, therefore, there are similarities in the areas of leadership and goals, making it acceptable to see both as learning institutions. Because of

these similarities, the literature relating to issues such as school improvement, student achievement, leadership styles, succession planning and other influences on school operations can also be used for the understanding of parishes and parish viability.

Ultimately, the description of a parish is best summed by Stott, who said, “a living church is a learning church” (Stott 2007, p.23).

Chapter 2 Part 1 – Teaching, Schools and Parishes

Part 1 is divided into seven sections, each focusing on one aspect of teaching in schools and parishes. The structure of Part 1 is shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 – Chapter 2 Part 1 content map

New South Wales Quality Teaching Model

The first section of Part 1 is an explanation of the NSWQTM, which forms the standard for quality teaching in this study. The content of this section is shown in the section map (see Figure 2.3).

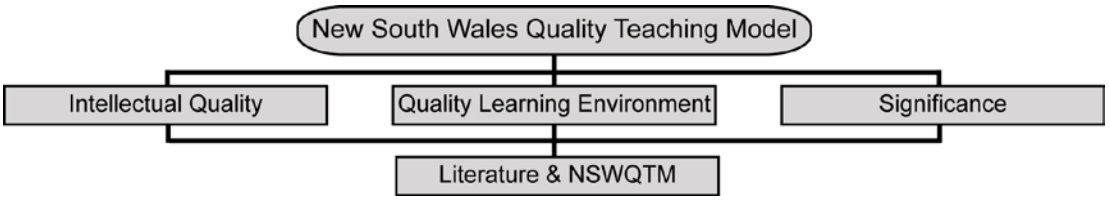

Figure 2.3 – NSWQTM section map

The New South Wales Department of Education and Training developed a quality-teaching model (NSW DET 2003) to improve school practices and to act as an aid to teacher self-reflection. The Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate (NSW DET 2003) explained that this pedagogy model was based on research into the understanding of how teaching and school improvement could improve student learning outcomes. The model caters for a variety of individual differences in students and teachers, as well as a variety of teaching and learning approaches. Despite this, Ladwig and King (2003) pointed out that it was increasingly difficult to determine exactly which types of pedagogy actually promoted improvements in student learning outcomes due to the complexity of the subject.

The NSWQTM is divided into three dimensions: Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance. Each of these dimensions is further subdivided into various numbers of elements (see Table 2.1 below). Together they form a robust description of a quality-teaching framework for both schools and parishes. Each of these dimensions will be reviewed separately, including their relevance to parish teaching.

Table 2.1 – NSWQTM Dimensions and Elements

	DIMENSIONS		
ELEMENTS	**Intellectual Quality**	**Quality Learning Environment**	**Significance**
	Deep knowledge	Explicit quality criteria	Background knowledge
	Deep understanding	Engagement	Cultural knowledge
	Problematic knowledge	High expectations	Knowledge integration
	Higher-order thinking	Social support	Inclusivity
	Metalanguage	Self-regulation	Connectedness
	Substantive communication	Self-direction	Narrative

Adapted from NSW DET (2003)

INTELLECTUAL QUALITY

As shown in Table 2.1, the Intellectual Quality dimension is divided into six interrelated elements. It involves deep understanding of important concepts, skills and knowledge, using problem solving, higher-order thinking and substantive communication including metalanguage. Although this is a major component of the NSWQTM, Ladwig *et al.* (2007), in their review of previous studies, found a relative scarcity of pedagogy focused on high levels of intellectual quality and that such levels of intellectual quality were uncommon in most classrooms.

Deep Knowledge and Understanding

Deep knowledge and understanding, according to Ladwig (2005), focuses on a small number of key concepts and ideas, and the relationship between and among them. Crain (1997), in her discussion of congregational teaching, also focuses on the same issues and points out that Christianity is based on the key concepts found in the four Gospels. Beswick (2007) adds that the deep knowledge required of rectors also includes sensitivity and knowledge of the subjective needs of the individual congregation members.

Problem Solving

Focus Education Australia (2007) in its paper on productive pedagogies, stated that problematic knowledge involved the understanding that knowledge is not fixed but, rather, is continuously evolving by political, social, historical and contemporary influences. Such change, according to Kaldor, Bellamy and Powell (1997), can

assist congregations to discover new directions and purposes, and as a result relate better to the surrounding society. The issue of problem solving as a learning strategy was raised by Schipani (1997), who identified “working in dialogue with learners to address the problems [of] everyday living” (p.29) as an essential element of congregational learning. Similarly, Little (1958) stressed the need for Christian educators to provide resources and insight to enable learners to address such problems. Wiggin (1958) took this concept further by suggesting that problem solving should be the preferred teaching method for adult learners.

Higher-Order Thinking

According to Ladwig (2005), the ability to organise, analyse, synthesise and evaluate information are all critical components of higher-order thinking. The Queensland education curriculum framework, pedagogy guidelines (Department of Education and The Arts, Queensland 2001c) also stressed that authentic and powerful pedagogy “focused on identifying, analysing and resolving immediate challenges in [the] learners’ world” (p.1). Higher-order thinking was also one of Littleton’s (2003) five factors for Christian education, which suggested the presence of a learning culture within a congregation, where members felt challenged to think and encouraged to question, did promote quality learning. Wanak (2000) also stressed that Christian educators needed to nurture students’ critical thinking skills to analyse, synthesise and evaluate issues.

Metalanguage

According to Stanford (2006), lessons that talked about language and text, where learners had the opportunity to focus on particular aspects such as words, images and symbols, were lessons high in metalanguage. She pointed out that metalanguage showed how language and symbols could be used to construct text, knowledge and power. The Innovative Teachers’ Companion (Focus Education Australia 2007) included in ‘metalanguage’ the understanding of the meaning and origin of words, technical vocabularies, text structures and genres, and summarised metalanguage as a conversation about language. The Christian faith, being based on written and oral traditions, utilises such metalanguage extensively in symbolism, parables and translational differences (Carson 2005).

Substantive Communication

Substantive communication is expressed through oral, written and artistic forms and, according to Ladwig and King (2003), is part of interactive instruction where teachers and students engage with issues through sustained conversations and sharing concepts and ideas. In contrast to substantive communication, Brenton and Brenton (2000) explained that the traditional communication style within parish services was the monologue sermon. According to Cameron (in Halcrow 2007b), these sermons were long, abstract and too intent on reproducing knowledge, when they should wrestle with more substantive issues such as work, anger, addiction and parenting.

In this dimension learning is focused on intellectual work that is challenging, centred on significant concepts and ideas, and requires substantial cognitive and academic engagement with deep knowledge. These aspects of the model are also reflected in the parish environment. The table below shows a comparison of the elements of this dimension between school and parish.

Table 2.2 Intellectual Quality Dimension Comparison

Element	What does it look like in a classroom?	What does it look like in a parish?
Deep knowledge	The knowledge being addressed is focused on a small number of key concepts and ideas within topics, subjects or KLAs, and on the relationships between and among concepts.	Knowledge is based on authentic biblical concepts, including both the Old and New Testaments and the relationships between and among them.
Deep understanding	Students demonstrate a profound and meaningful understanding of central ideas and the relationships between and among those central ideas.	The rector and members demonstrate the meaning and application of biblical concepts to various situations and through various methods.
Problematic knowledge	Students are encouraged to address multiple perspectives and/or solutions and to recognise that knowledge has been constructed and therefore is open to question.	Encouragement to question biblical teaching and understand different perspectives and interpretations. Recognition of problems within, and as a consequence of, faith and biblical teaching.
Higher-order thinking	Students are regularly engaged in thinking that requires them to organise, reorganise, apply, analyse, synthesise and evaluate knowledge and information.	Service teaching and parish activities regularly require the congregation to apply biblical teaching through organising, reorganising, applying, analysing, synthesising and evaluating biblical and secular knowledge and information.

Element	What does it look like in a classroom?	What does it look like in a parish?
Metalanguage	Lessons explicitly name and analyse knowledge as a specialist language (metalanguage), and provide frequent commentary on language use and the various contexts of differing language uses.	Service leaders and preachers use, explain and discuss biblical and Christian terms, imagery and other specialist, language-related concepts and the context in which they are used and understood.
Substantive communication	Students are regularly engaged in sustained conversations about the concepts and ideas they are encountering. These conversations can be manifest in oral, written or artistic forms.	Rectors and members use a wide variety of communication methods to engage, encourage and support the spiritual growth of each other and the relationship between the rector and the members. These methods may include oral or musical discourse (e.g. discussions, communal singing, etc.), written text (e.g. newsletters, websites, service outlines, feedback forms, question slips, etc.) or artistic presentations (e.g. multimedia presentations, musical or dramatic presentations).

Adapted from NSW DET (2003)

QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Quality Learning Environment dimension of the NSWQTM is composed of six elements: explicit quality criteria, engagement, high expectations, social support, and self-regulation and self-direction of students.

A quality learning environment is one that provides a strongly positive and supportive framework for learning through engaging the learners and providing high expectations for learning success. The Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate (NSW DET 2003) stated that this environment should extend beyond the immediate classroom and into various other environments in which the learner was involved. Reaching out in this way also reflects the mission and evangelical focus of many parishes.

Explicit Quality Criteria

As explained by Hall (2004), explicit quality criteria should be regularly referenced to assist students develop skills, knowledge and understanding. In a similar way, Littleton (2003) explained that Christian education “flourished within congregations where a vision and clearly stated directions were vigorously pursued” (p.17).

National Church Life Survey (NCLS Research 2005b) also related the use of strong learning criteria with growing congregations.

Engagement

Engagement, another NSWQTM element, exists where learners focus on specific learning and display sustained interest and attention (NSW DET 2003). Lave and Wenger (1991) added that engagement also included meaningful practice. According to Winings (2004), engagement was the key to religious education, where congregation members were encouraged to interpret their own experiences through engagement in activities such as community projects. Endacott (2005), in a discussion on developing new believers, stated that newcomers needed to participate in practices that drew them into deeper levels of engagement until they reached full parish participation. Further, Ellingson (2006), when describing vital congregations, said that they were populated by people who displayed active engagement.

High Expectations

The Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate discussion paper (NSW DET 2003) described quality learning environments as pedagogy that set high and explicit learning expectations, and encouraged conceptual risk taking. The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (Department of Education and The Arts, Queensland 2001b) supported this finding by showing that when students were expected to perform at high levels, their performance actually increased and the gap between high and low achieving students decreased. O'Gorman (1997), in reference to parishes, pointed out that expectations were expressed in service structure and rituals. However, Erkel (2006) warned that when preaching to unbelievers there should be no expectation of such things as mutual exchange or discussion and thus no encouragement to take risks with the new concepts.

Social Support

Social support, as described by NSW DET (2003), has a strong positive support for learning, including mutual respect between teachers and learners. Littleton (2003) echoed similar ideas when he stated that for people to be open to learn about God, the parish must be a place that valued trust, care and respect for each other. Further, Tasker (2007), in his discussion on clergy training, emphasised the idea that training was a fellowship activity and could not be merely an academic pursuit.

Self-Direction and Self-Regulation

The NSWQTM describes the need for individual self-direction and self-regulation. However, Ladwig and King (2003) pointed out that achieving high levels of learner self-regulation is particularly difficult. Despite this, many writers (Merriam 2001, Garrison 1992, Brockett and Hiemsta 1991, Norton 2000) have described the importance of self-direction and self-regulation in life-long learning. For instance, Zimmerman (2002) showed how self-regulation included such issues as goal setting, time management, learning strategies, self-evaluation, and intrinsic motivation; all of which are important in adult learning. Zimmerman also showed that the superior motivation and adaptive learning abilities of self-regulated learners made them more likely to succeed academically.

According to Cohen (1990), self-directed learning allows the learners to make decisions about what they want to know, an important issue to people seeking spiritual growth. This type of independence was shown by Boulmetis (1999) to be an important aspect of adult learners.

In a study of ministry students, Simmons (2007) found, when students were permitted some choice in what they studied they almost invariably brought more passion to their work than if they were simply assigned a task. The generation of such passion, focused towards spiritual learning, can stimulate spiritual growth in the learner which is the intention of parish teaching.

The learning environment is focused on learning and learning support. A caring and safe environment that is supported by all people associated with the learners and the learning environment. The elements describe in this dimension are also relevant to parishes. The table below provides a comparison between schools and parishes.

Table 2.3 - Quality Learning Environment Comparison

Element	What does it look like in a classroom?	What does it look like in a parish?
Explicit quality criteria	Students are provided with explicit criteria for the quality of work they are to produce and those criteria are a regular reference point for the development and assessment of student work.	The biblical criteria on which the Christian faith is based is explicitly stated and regularly referenced. Rectors demonstrate the biblical quality criteria.
Engagement	Most students, most of the time, are seriously engaged in the lesson or assessment activity, rather than going through the motions. Students display sustained interest and attention.	The majority of congregational members actively attend, and participate in, parish services or support activities. Rectors engage with the congregation during the services.
High expectations	High expectations of all students are communicated, and conceptual risk-taking is encouraged and rewarded.	High expectations for spiritual growth are communicated to every congregational member. High expectations regarding applying biblical teaching are expected from the rector.
Social support	There is strong positive support for learning and mutual respect among teachers and students and others assisting students' learning. The classroom is free of negative personal comment or put-downs.	Strong positive support and mutual respect is demonstrated by the rector and members. A welcoming environment for members and visitors.
Self-regulation	Students demonstrate autonomy and initiative so that minimal attention to the disciplining and regulation of student behaviour is required.	Members are involved in leadership or other roles in service or support activities.
Self-direction	Students exercise some direction over the selection of activities related to their learning and the means and manner by which these activities will be done.	Members are involved in the design, development or leadership of services or other parish activities.

SIGNIFICANCE

The last of the NSWQTM dimensions is Significance, which has six elements. Significance, in the setting of quality teaching, refers to pedagogy that assists in making learning personally meaningful and important to the learners (Ladwig & King 2003) and incorporates the elements of background knowledge, cultural knowledge, knowledge integration, inclusivity, connectedness and narrative.

Background and Cultural Knowledge

According to the Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate (NSW DET 2003), the significance of learning is fostered through linking learning content to personal, social and cultural contexts and focusing on the ways in which learning impacts on other areas of life. This was supported by Ladwig and King's (2003) previous research, which showed optimal learning occurred when the learners' prior knowledge was integrated with the new knowledge being introduced. However, as Stott (Briefing, 2002) observed, most learners today are biblically illiterate, which makes integrating new knowledge with previous learning very difficult. Despite this, Knox (2004), in his discussion with the historian and demographer Neil Howe, pointed out that the primary way to engage the current millennial generation in learning is through focusing on its significance to their lives. In other words, connecting learning to other experience and situations.

Knowledge Integration

According to Ladwig and King (2003), traditional learning has been in the form of segregated knowledge, where every subject had clear, specific boundaries. In contrast, knowledge integration dissolves these boundaries, creating links between subjects, curriculums and learning programs.

Two important results of using knowledge integration in schools have been in assisting students to recognise the significance of learning (Ladwig & King 2003) and improving student learning outcomes (Upitis & Smithrim 2003).

Inclusivity

Inclusivity in a learning environment appears as the acceptance and incorporation of all students from various sociocultural groups. It allows equal access to learning and encourages all students to positively engage with learning and learning activities. According to several writers (Lewin, Lippitt & White 1939; Smyth, Hattam & Lawson 1998; Thomas, Walker & Webb 1998) inclusivity is an important aspect of quality teaching and promotes student learning success.

Connectedness

Connectedness in its simplest terms centres on applying what is taught to real-life contexts, problems or situations. It also means providing learners with opportunities to share their learning with a wider audience. Two recent studies have focused on

the need to consider connectivity when dealing with quality learning within religious settings. Webber (2006), in her study of religion, spirituality and life outcomes, showed that it was connectedness with other people, not faith alone, that made parishes strong faith communities. Similarly, Tasker (2007), in his discussion on African clergy and laity training, pointed out that connecting with the surrounding community by sharing the gospel beyond the church environment, was not an optional extra but instead was a major component of Christianity.

Narrative

Narrative, according to Murray (2002), has become increasingly popular in teaching theology as well as in evangelism. For teaching within parishes, narrative may be seen in the form of testimonies, group reflection and the recalling of individual and congregational experiences. In addition, Bader-Sayer (2006), in his discussion on the Emerging Church movement, stated that the average person is more likely to be moved by narratives than by apologetic arguments. This idea was supported by Carson (2005), who pointed out that emerging churches focused strongly on both life-narratives and biblical narratives, and that postmoderns were more comfortable with personal narratives than the metanarrative traditionally presented by the church.

Further, Bass and Stewart-Sicking (2005) pointed out that in many cases parish leaders initiated and motivated their congregations to change through the use of narrative. This was supported by Krass (1979), who pointed out that storytelling, a major teaching strategy in Christian education, allowed the Christian message to be integrated with the personal stories of the hearers. Nouwen (1993), in his discussion of postmodern culture, also saw stories as the most effective way to combine complicated and hard to explain concepts in simple, understandable ways.

The table below provides a comparison between schools and parishes with respect to the significance dimension of the NSWQTM.

Table 2.4 - Significance Dimension Comparison

Element	What does it look like in a classroom?	What does it look like in a parish?
Background knowledge	Lessons regularly and explicitly build from students' background knowledge, in terms of prior school knowledge as well as other aspects of their personal lives.	Rectors understand the biblical knowledge and understanding of the members and build upon this when designing services or parish activities.
Cultural knowledge	Lessons regularly incorporate the cultural knowledge of diverse social groupings (such as economic class, gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, disability, language and religion).	Rectors understand and incorporate cultural knowledge into services and support activities.
Knowledge integration	Lessons regularly demonstrate links between and within subjects and key learning areas.	Rectors and service leaders regularly demonstrate the links between biblical and secular teaching and application, between biblical and Christian teaching and activities, and within biblical texts.
Inclusivity	Lessons include and publicly value the participation of all students across the social and cultural backgrounds represented in the classroom.	Rectors and members are welcoming to members and visitors. Members of all social groupings are represented in the design or delivery of services or support activities.
Connectedness	Lesson activities rely on the application of school knowledge in real-life contexts or problems, and provide opportunities for students to share their work with audiences beyond the classroom and school.	Services and support activities regularly address issues of application in real-life settings. Parish activities extend to, or encourage participation of, people in the surrounding community.
Narrative	Lessons employ narrative accounts as either (or both) a process or content of lessons to enrich student understanding.	Service and support activities regularly use biblical or secular narratives to enhance learning and understanding.

Adapted from NSW DET (2003)

Intellectual quality, a quality learning environment, and the clear focus on the significance of learning, are all necessary for the creation and maintenance of quality teaching, whether within a school or parish. How this quality teaching affects school and parish operations and achievements is discussed next.

FUNDAMENTALS OF LEARNING

The NSWQTM is just one model within the wider field of education and learning and as such, needs to be understood against the backdrop of other education literature. However, space in this study does not permit a comprehensive discussion of learning theories. Therefore, only a brief overview of learning fundamentals will be presented. The field of education begins with understanding how learners learn, both children (McInerney & McInerney 1998; Vander-Zanden & Pace 1980) and adults (Rogers & Horrocks 2010; Tennant 1995), including how the brain processes information (Gagné, Yekovich & Yekovich 1993) that is received continuously. The field broadens to involve learning theories (Travers, Elliott & Kratochwill 1993) and individual learning styles (Tennant 1995), as well as teaching styles and methods (Joyce & Weil 1986; Kemp, Morrison & Ross 1998; Scown 2004).

The very basis of learning, regardless of age, gender or other traits, is information acquisition, processing, storage and retrieval. Simplistically, the theoretical models used to explain these processes fall into two categories: information processing and neural network. Gagné, Yekovich and Yekovich (1993), in their discussion of Marshall's (1990) study of students' ability to distinguish between arithmetic problems, pointed out that neural networks were an arrangement of interconnecting processing units, networked together, that stimulated each other when various forms of information were received.

Where neural networks are non-linear, the information-processing models use linear pathways to process information; either entering the information into long-term memory areas of the brain or ejecting it from memory altogether. The information-processing models have been favoured by many writers (Gagné, Yekovich & Yekovich 1993; Lohman 1989; Siegler 1992) over the neural-network models, particularly in the study of cognitive development and learning.

In more recent times, Clark, Nguyen and Sweller (2006) have used information processing as a basis for Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), which uses a set of learning principles to maximise the efficient use of working memory. CLT works to focus working memory on important issues, rather than on all information that arrives continuously into memory. Rogers and Horrocks' (2010) study, however, recognised that not all learning was continuous and that episodic learning occurred, and may be increased, by altering teaching methods appropriately.

Associated with episodic learning, Rogers and Horrocks (2010) focused on informal learning. In contrast to formal learning where knowledge was learnt, practiced and then performed, the informal learning process of episodic learning started with performance, using personal experiences or experiences of others and by action and reflection learning occured. Although this informal learning process comes naturally from each person, Rogers and Horrocks suggested the process could be improved with the help of formalised learning. Further, they saw the enhancing of informal learning to be the primary purpose of teachers of adults.

School Achievement and Improvement

The use of the NSWQTM as the framework of comparison for this study was justified by pointing out the comparison between schools and parishes as learning institutions. In this section the literature on school viability, growth and leadership will be discussed, along with its relevance to parishes.

Flude (1974) divided the various proposed causes for school achievement into four categories: deficiencies in various areas of the student's life such as I.Q., language or economic status; teachers' expectation of students' abilities; deficiencies in school resources across various areas; and constraints imposed due to economic, political or cultural structures. Over the years these ideas have been tested and debated using the results from various studies, some of which will be presented in this section.

Although some literature (Coleman *et al.* 1966; Jencks 1972) has shown the largest single influence on school achievement was the characteristics of the entering students, other more recent studies have challenged this idea (Darling-Hammond 1997; Dinham 2004; Hattie 2003; Newmann 1996; Rowe 2003). Rowe (2003), based on earlier studies by Edmonds (1979), described the current understanding of school effectiveness as being a combination of educational leadership, high quality professional teachers, and a learning culture that sets high academic standards and encourages teacher involvement in school decision making. However, in relation to this last characteristic, Muijs and Harris's (2003) study showed that in many schools there was little connection between the classroom teachers and the overall management and activities of the schools. Although being autonomous in their classrooms, these teachers felt alienated and powerless within the school system. Scott and Dinham (2002) found that in some schools dissatisfaction could cause

Balkanisation, fragmenting the school into small power clusters that could negatively impact on the effectiveness of the school. In a similar way, O'Gorman (1997) recognised that the fragmented nature of small groups within some parishes could also cause dissatisfaction and recommended empowering these groups to communicate with each other and with the governing bodies of the parish, to create a more unified parish.

The importance of quality teachers in student performance and school achievement was highlighted by Rowe (2003) and supported by Alton-Lee's (2003) multi-level school studies. Further, according to Hattie (2003), teachers accounted for around 30% of academic variance between students, while combined with a quality school, Lovat and Toomey (2009) suggested this value could rise to at least 60%. This makes quality teaching the single most powerful influence on student achievement.

Dinham (2010) also contended that teacher quality was more critical and influential in improving school achievements than structural or working conditions. Further, although accumulated teaching experience was identified as an important aspect of quality teaching, it was recognised that experience alone was not sufficient to guarantee the development of high-quality, effective teachers. However, Leigh and Mead (2005) showed that training in pedagogy, particularly in the teacher's subject area, did improve teacher quality.

Professional development of teachers, in conjunction with an effective learning community, has been shown (Dinham 2008; Fink 2005; Stoll *et al.* 2006) as central to successful teaching and effective schools. These findings were not exclusively attributable to schools, with others literature (Campbell 2000; Everist 2002; Littleton 2003, 2004; Rees 2006) attributing the same process to parish achievements.

Several writers (Besosa 2007; Lapsley 2009; Page 2005) have identified changes in the management of public organisations, including schools, known generally as the New Public Management. One of the fundamental changes has been an emphasis on outputs (Besosa 2007) or results (Lapsley 2009). These changes, according to Fink (2005), have resulted in school management shifting focus from enhancing student learning to high student test results. Despite the quality of teachers, Fielding (2007) warns that pressure placed on teachers to improve the academic performance of their students, as opposed to encouraging students to learn, may undermine the purpose and primary focus of schools.

These changes have also placed new pressures on school leaders, to move away from the traditional student-learning focus and towards a more managerial focus. One consequence of such a shift was the reduction of the primary learning purpose of these schools. Another important consequence of these shifts, according to Fink (2005), was their negative impact on school leadership.

Similarly to schools, Aycock's (2003) study into mega-churches also showed a shift in focus within services from spiritual growth to increasing service attendance by entertainment rather than in-depth teaching.

The positive influence of school leadership on school improvement has been well documented (Dinham 2008; Fink 2005; Heck & Hallinger 2009; National College for School Leadership 2007), although some literature (Lakomski 1998; Miner 1975) questioned the validity of leadership itself. Highly performing school leaders, according to Fink (2005) were committed to successful, deep learning for all students, as well as identifying school direction and motivating other staff members. These learning-centred leaders focused on influencing what occurred within classrooms, as well as improving teacher quality and, hence, student learning (National College for School Leadership 2007). Literature on parish leadership (Adam, Taylor & Treloar 2001; Hughes 2002; Ellingson 2006; Lowery 2004; O'Gorman 1997) also supported the strong influence leaders make to parish service attendance and spiritual growth.

Fink (2005) suggested, however, that rather than considering school leadership to be invested solely in the principal and head teachers, it should be seen as a pervasive force existing and influencing the entire school. Distributed leadership, as it is called, has raised much discussion in the literature (Bolden 2007; Gronn 2000, 2009; Harris 2004; Hartley 2007; Heck & Hallinger 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi 1998) and involves teachers taking on new roles and responsibilities while supporting and collaborating with each other. The expertise gained in this process builds human capacity within the school (Mayrowetz 2008) and promotes multiple sources of guidance and direction (Harris 2004). Further, Silins and Mulford (2003) and Marks and Louis (1996) independently found that improvements to student performance were more likely where the school operated under a distributed leadership system.

Literature on parish growth (Littleton 2003, 2004; Sanchez 2006; Tanis 1999) also showed the positive impact of distributed leadership. In particular, Littleton (2003)

showed that in parishes where clergy and lay members worked in shared ministry, best practice Christian education occurred, in addition to encouragement of discipleship across all members of the church.

Although some literature (Dinham 2008; Harris 2004; Timperley 2005) identifies difficulties in implementing distributed leadership in established schools due to problems of traditional hierarchies (Dinham 2008) and the risk of distributed incompetence (Timperley 2005), the overall support for distributed leadership indicates its value for student learning. Griffin (1995) found some of these values to include positive effects on pedagogy, school culture and educational quality.

One potential problem that may occur from the absence of distributed leadership was pointed out by Dinham (2008), who showed that when leadership was invested solely in an authoritarian leader, a leadership vacuum may result on that leader's departure from the school. A similar problem faces many mega-churches due to their strong reliance on charismatic leaders (Hong 1999).

Similarly, Fink (2005) stated that school viability could be influenced by the degree of leader succession planning implemented in the school, particularly with large numbers of retiring school leaders in many Western countries. According to the National College for School Leadership (2007), quality succession planning assisted in improving talent management, and increased teacher awareness of the different contexts within the school. Without suitable leadership succession planning, Dinham (2008) showed that gains made in schools may be dissipated on the departure of the school leader.

In recent years a new issue, values education (Department of Education Science and Training 2005; Lovat & Toomey 2009; Majmudar 2002), has been raised as another influence on student achievement. Fink (2005) perhaps provided the best overall description of values education when he described it as an invitation. Such an invitation, according to Fink, was a descriptive message presented in a variety of ways (verbal, non-verbal, formal, informal) informing the receivers that they were valuable, responsible and able to be involved in the learning process. The invitation was not limited to students, however, with Fink extending the process to the entire school and, in doing so, transmitting and supporting the shared vision across the school.

In previous times, Quisumbing (2001) reminded us that education was almost exclusively focused on employability and the enforcement of law and order. The introduction of values education changed this focus to the development of the total human being. Lovat (2005) described teachers who practiced values education as credible and authentic models of care and respect. Further, such teaching reflected good pedagogy and was the heart of quality teaching. Lovat (2006) added that the power of the teacher to make a difference to the students' learning lay in fostering interpretive and reflective skills, rather than simply technical skills and knowledge.

This concept of values education is not confined to the school system, but is also prominent in parish teaching, as indicated by writers such as Miller and Seymour (1997), Everist (2002) and Stott (2007). Similarly, values education is not a new phenomena, with discussion of religious values being raised regularly in the literature of the last 100 years (Durkheim 1915; Glock 1962; Glock & Stark 1965; McGuire 2002). Crain (1997), perhaps, presented the best description of parish educators and their relationship to values when she stated:

> *An effective congregational educator is one who looks and listens and seeks to understand the rich, thick tapestry of congregational life within which learning occurs and how it interacts with the life experiences of those who make up the congregation. (pp.99–100)*

Values are a vital aspect of Christian teaching since, as stated by Seymour (1997), "religion is learned by participating in its living vitality" (p.17).

Teachers, leadership and values work together to define teaching in schools and parishes. However, to truly understand the significance of teaching in Christian parishes, it is necessary to understand the connection between teaching and the Christian faith.

Historical Basis of Christian Teaching

Since the central focus of this study is teaching within parishes, an understanding of the relationship between Christianity and teaching is necessary to fully grasp the underlying issues presented in the study. Further, to be able to understand the importance of teaching to the modern Christian church, it is necessary to look back at the original premise on which Christianity was founded and to understand how

teaching and learning have affected the structure and operation of the Christian church throughout the centuries. It must be remembered, however, as stated by Carson (2005), that Christian teaching includes both conduct and doctrine which means learning how to behave and what to believe. Therefore, learning biblical knowledge cannot be separated from its application in the lives of the learners.

In early human cultures, as teaching gradually left the domain of the family, it was transferred to the religious establishments where, according to Bagley (2005), it was valued for providing social and economic stability. One such culture, with an emphasis on learning, was the Jewish culture, which later formed the basis of the Christian faith. Castle (1965) explained that unlike some cultures that believed education was a gift from the gods, the Jewish people saw education as a reaction to God and inseparable from life itself. It was through this strong relationship between education and faith that the Christian church began to acquire its focus on teaching and learning. This focus was reinforced by an event known as the Great Commission, which is traditionally believed (Guthrie & Motyer 1970), to be the instruction given by the risen Jesus to his disciples, to spread the Christian faith to all the nations of the world through teaching about obedience to God. Douglas (1962) pointed out that Christians believe that Jesus's commandment was meant for all believers. However other writers such as Strayer (1976), Goldsmith (2006) and Smith (2002) saw the teaching zeal of Christians as nothing more than an excuse to dominate others with Christian beliefs. Regardless of these disparate opinions, many writers (Fedele 2003; Forbush 2007; MacArthur 2002) recorded that Christians throughout history have made incredible sacrifices, travelled to remote regions of the world, and even laid down their lives to fulfil their commission to teach others about God. Such depth of conviction highlights the importance placed on teaching by individual Christians.

The Christian definition of the term 'teacher' is also intricately bound to the idea of the Great Commission and the Christian faith. Balchin (1979) explained how teaching in the Christian faith included sharing, serving and showing by example what was expressed in the biblical teaching. Even the Bible itself expresses the idea of the servant teacher and how such teaching reaches beyond simple knowledge transfer, incorporating all aspects of human life.

Not only did the Christian church have a focus on teaching, but in many ways it both reflected and created secular education. This was seen strongly in the late 700s AD

when, according to Turner (1908), there was great concern at the widespread level of illiteracy and the growing fear that if the ability to read and write were forgotten then the ability to understand the scriptures would also be lost. To counteract this decline, as Rinder (2005) explained, Christian monasteries took over the duty of preserving church and secular manuscripts and the teaching of reading and writing.

This zeal for biblical teaching continued throughout the medieval period (Edwards 2004; Rinder 2005; Turner 1908) and into the Reformation (Strickland 1993). In the 17th century the secular emphasis on teaching by “rote repetition of routinized processes” (Davis 2004, p.85) was adopted by the writers of the first Anglican liturgy, known as the Book of Common Prayer (BCP). This book set the guidelines for all future teaching in Anglican parishes and ensured biblical knowledge was memorised by the congregation (Bunyan 2007) through weekly repetition of the services (Phillips 2007). These practices reflected the secular teaching methods of the time.

According to Forsyth (2004), there is at present little real commitment within Anglicanism for features such as the liturgy, clerical vestments, church law and the sacraments, which were once considered essential. Corney (2004) suggests current theology has reduced and revised the services to the extent that the heritage of classical Christianity has been lost in an attempt to accommodate contemporary culture. Redman (2002), in support of this shift in emphasis, pointed out that traditional liturgies discouraged service attendance by younger generations. Despite this, the World Council of Churches (2000), in an address to the All Africa Conference of Churches, reiterated its belief that churches were still learning communities, centred on local congregations.

Littleton (2004),supported this concept of learning congregations, where people are in a constant process of creating new ideas about learning the faith. The result is a people-centred parish that focuses on the individual, as well as the congregation as a whole. The parish also focuses its teaching efforts on the wider community. In such a parish each individual has learned, according to Tanis (1999), the church’s purpose and mission, core values and guiding principles, and the shared vision for the future. Such underpinning pedagogy shares many commonalities with the NSWQTM, particularly in the dimension of the Quality Learning Environment.

The above discussion has provided a brief insight into the history of the relationship between teaching and the Christian church, and has shown that, even today, the concept of the parish as a place of learning is still important. This theme will be broadened in the next section, which will focus on various studies relating to parish teaching.

Learning Communities and Organisations

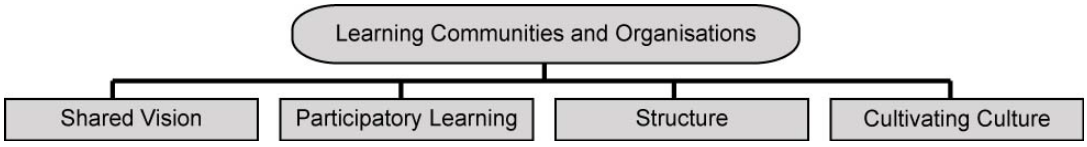

Figure 2.4 – Learning communities and organisations section map

Parishes, like schools, are single bodies composed of many parts, including students, teachers and others. The learning achievements and growth of these bodies is discussed in this section.

Current literature discusses two general entities: a learning organisation (Collie & Taylor 2004) and a learning community (Stoll *et al.* 2005). In essence, these two entities are designed to achieve the same purpose; the creation, collection and translation of knowledge for the improvement of performance either of individuals in the community or organisations as a whole. In this discussion these two terms will be considered synonymous and referred to as community.

As stated previously, schools and parishes are learning institutions and, as such, share several concepts with other learning communities and organisations. Collie and Taylor (2004) described four such core concepts of learning organisations (shared vision, participatory leadership, structure and cultivating culture) that will act as the framework for the discussion below. This list of concepts is neither exhaustive nor exclusive, with other writers (Hardy 2010; Laszlo 2001; Lenox & Coleman 2010; Littleton 2003; Ryman, Richardson & Burrell 2009) preferring to concentrate on different aspects of such communities.

The concept of learning communities has become a popular topic of study in education (Gallavan & LeBlanc 2009; Leblanc & Gallavan 2009; Stoll *et al.* 2005), industry (Lakomski 1998; Senge 1996; Stoll *et al.* 2006) and churches (Everist 2002;

Kemp 2010; Littleton 2003; O'Gorman 1997; Rees 2006), and is seen as a way to encourage joint responsibility for learning (Harris & Jones 2010) and the creation of new knowledge (Ryman, Richardson & Burrell 2009).

Perhaps Campbell (2000) best summed up the general consensus of the literature when he stated that the future of every organisation, including parishes, depended on their ability to learn and work together as a community.

SHARED VISION

The first core concept of learning organisations, as described by Collie and Tayor (2004), is the development of a shared vision for the future. This concept, according to Senge (1992), must be shared at all levels, across the entire community, which results in the harnessing of creative energies among a wide range of diverse people. Further, this genuine involvement has the ability to change the relationship of people toward the organisation, creating personal ownership and common identity. Everist (2002) believed that parishes also, as learning communities, must involve all congregation members. Further, ignoring what congregation members have to contribute to the learning community hinders the community's growth; a concept supported by the National Church Life Survey (NCLS Research 2005b, 2005c, 2005d).

Senge (1992) stressed that the motivation for the shared vision should be intrinsic rather than extrinsic. One way of promoting such intrinsic motivation, according to Ryman, Richardson and Burrell (2009), is to ensure the vision is grounded in authentic learning and contextualised within real-world problems.

In the parish setting, several writers (Everist 2002; Kaldor, Bellamy & Powell 1997; O'Gorman 1997) have spoken about the shared vision being intrinsically connected to the parish itself and the people, time and place of its existence. This is similar to Fink's (2005) idea of community dialogue, where all stakeholders in a specific school undertake shared dialogue to arrive at a shared sense of meaning for the school. Fink further pointed out that without dialogue the vision was not a true joint vision. Ryman, Richardson and Burrell (2009) also stressed the importance of dialogue as an essential component of learning communities.

PARTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP

Collie and Taylor (2004) recognised that the growth and stability of a community was hampered when the leadership was invested solely in a single person, who created and encouraged the community vision. Similarly, Senge's (1996) research showed that little significant change occurred within a learning community when the change was driven solely by the leader. These findings have ramifications for Anglican parishes that are, by church policy (ACA, Diocese of Sydney 2008, s,27.2), led predominately by single rectors.

Participatory leadership, like distributed leadership, is based on sharing the leadership role among members of the community, and encouraging members to discuss issues in an environment of mutual trust (Ryman, Richardson & Burrell 2009). Harris and Jones (2010) described this form of leadership as the infrastructure that held the community together, as it nurtured the collective work of the members at various levels.

Stoll *et al.* (2005), in their study of teacher professional learning communities, pointed out that in such communities every member takes responsibility for promoting and supporting learning. Like shared vision, participatory leadership assists leaders to be closely connected to the members and the networks within their communities (Harris 2004).

STRUCTURES

The task of the learning community, as described by Collier and Taylor (2004) is to create structures to facilitate the effective collection of the created knowledge and to ensure quality communications across the community. The ways various parishes have attempted to create such structures, through network churches, cell churches, mega-churches and other structures, are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The actual structure of a learning community varies widely from virtual communities established through the internet and social media (Custin & Barkacs 2010; Ke & Hoadley 2009; Lenox & Coleman 2010), communities structured to be in a constant state of evolution (Laszlo 2001) or argument (Mahalakshmi & Geetha 2009), to those whose structure reflects the learning and working context of their members (Dinham 2008; Dotson-Blake 2010; Everist 2002; Forbes, While & Dyson 2001). In

relation to this last group, Stoll *et al*. (2006) remind us that time and money are the primary factors affecting the development and structure of a learning community, while initial decisions regarding organisation and resource allocation can also have a profound effect on the resulting learning community.

In regard to parishes, O'Gorman (1997) described how learning community structures involved planning, rituals and other means of expressing the collaboration and reflective effort of the parish, and are themselves filled with meaning and teaching. However, with respect to the Anglican church, Jensen and Payne (1988) showed that the present structures appeared tired and outmoded, with a nineteenth-century look and feel.

CULTIVATING CULTURE

Learning communities with shared visions, participatory leadership and proper structures, need only cultivate a learning culture in the individuals to sustain the community (Stoll *et al*. 2005). Ryman, Richardson and Burrell (2009) supported this need for cultivating a collaborative learning culture and added that when a strong sense of community had been formed between the individual members, transformational learning was enabled to create new knowledge.

Re-culturing, as it is referred to by Fink (2005), defines the cultural aspects of the community and provides support and identity to the members. However, Fink described how cultural norms for communities, particularly schools, were often those rules not explicitly written down, but rather were rules mutually understood by all members. Despite this, Fink described ten cultural norms (shared goals, collegiality, continuous improvement, lifelong learning, risk taking, support, mutual respect, openness, celebration and humour, and responsibility for success) that, when encouraged, had the capacity to assist with change.

Churches and parishes have developed many ways of cultivating a learning culture within their congregations. Several of these, including faith communities, transformation, spiritual growth and religious instruction, will be discussed in further detail in this chapter.

Prominent Parish Studies

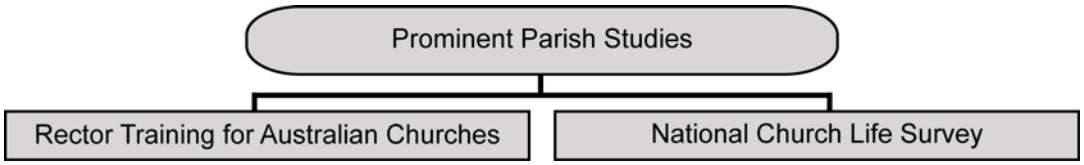

Figure 2.5 – Prominent Parish Studies section map

To this point the literature reviewed focused on underlying issues affecting both secular and church communities. This section, however, begins a process of refinement where the literature shifts its attention toward issues closely concerned with the study context (church and related teaching and learning issues). Therefore, this section looks at two prominent studies. The first, Sherlock's (Sherlock 2009) study of Australian theological institutions, relates to ministry training while the second, the National Church Life Survey (NCLS Research 2004a, 2005d, 2005b, 2005c) relates to churches practices.

RECTOR TRAINING FOR AUSTRALIAN CHURCHES

In southern hemisphere countries such as South America and southern Africa, where evangelical growth is rapid, Alvarez (2004) noted a lack of formal theological training among the leaders of indigenous parishes. This posed problems for the congregations and the denominations that initiated the new parishes. However, the lack of formal teaching qualifications among leaders is not solely confined to Third World countries, with Sherlock (2009) showing that many teachers in Australian institutions did not have formal teaching qualifications to supplement their theological studies.

Sherlock (2009) also revealed inconsistencies surrounding the attributes required for graduating ministry students, including those needed for parish leadership. Further, Sherlock found a significant difference in course nomenclature, length and articulation between institutions, along with reluctance by institutions to link assessment methods to course learning outcomes, or to shape outcomes so that they could be appropriately assessed.

As well as theological expertise, rector training includes the concept of formation, or the forming of people into a body of believers with the same doctrine and beliefs.

This is similar to Fink's (2005) re-culturing concept mentioned earlier in this chapter. According to Sherlock's study, formation is a major element of clergy training as it affects every aspect of service teaching. Unfortunately, as formation involves life-long learning of text, traditions, people and context, it cannot be easily taught in an institutional setting, but must rather be gained gradually through experience and study (Sherlock 2009). This has led to a recent shift by many institutions away from traditional forms of clergy training and toward integrated, holistic or transformative learning, coupled with practical or applied theology.

Sherlock (2009) also described how a small number of theological institutions were engaged in specific, supervised, pastoral ministry field education within parishes. These activities differed from parish work placement in that each study term was specifically focused on significant real-life issues, with supervision focused on candidate learning rather than on the achievement of parish work. However, one major concern with this internship model was locating suitable placements and supervisors, and providing suitable supervisor training.

The intern or apprenticeship model of learning, which incorporates experiential and situated learning is not new, and has been a common topic of discussion among many writers (Johnson 2009; Kemp 2010; Korthagen 2010; Langer 2009; Lave & Wenger 1991; McConaghy 2002; Rogers & Horrocks 2010). Smith (1998), in his discussion of workplace learning, described how such learning could be informal and incidental, or structured. In the situation described by Sherlock, the learning was structured; containing such structures as modelling, coaching, scaffolding and fading. Through these structured approaches, particularly mentoring, Rogers and Horrocks (2010) showed that the learning of attitudes as well as knowledge and skills could be attained. This is particularly important for parishes, since Sherlock (2009) found that there was little evidence to show that academic theological success led to success in practical ministry or to clergy competence.

On the topic of practical versus academic study, Kirk (2005) recognised that the relationship between these two entities was never uniform, with practice being influenced by theoretical commitments and theory "influenced and tempered by practical experience" (Kirk 2005, p.24).

Perhaps Kirkaldy best summed up the situation in Australian theological institutions in the following way: "the development or further development of skills and initial

training [is necessary]. It is this which makes the lack of effective post ordination and in-service training in most of our Dioceses a recipe for disaster" (Kirkaldy 1992, p.98).

NATIONAL CHURCH LIFE SURVEY

The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) is an international, interdenominational Christian research group focusing on connecting churches to their communities through investigations covering congregations and clergy. Unlike Sherlock's (2009) study of theological institutions, the National Church Life Survey – Leadership Survey (NCLS Research 2009) asked clergy (rectors and other ordained parish workers) about the adequacy of their training and how it equipped them to fulfil their parish duties. The findings varied from satisfaction in some areas to dissatisfaction in the majority of areas.

The findings showed that changing policies regarding lay participation in parish activities was not reflected in rector training. Although there had been an increase in the emphasis on equipping lay people for ministry duties, there had not been an equal effort in training rectors for this role, resulting in nearly half of those surveyed being dissatisfied with their training. However, those clergy ordained in the ten years immediately prior to the survey showed lower levels of dissatisfaction with their training than those trained more than ten years prior to the survey, which may indicate a general improvement in clergy training.

In the area of post-ordination training, the survey showed that similar numbers of clergy wanted additional training in people management skills as in biblical studies. Similarly, over a third of clergy saw evangelism, church growth or pastoral care as important topics for further training, with a slightly lesser number nominating parish planning and direction setting. Only 6% of Anglican clergy considered further training in teaching and presentation skills were important.

The two studies mentioned in this section raised several important issues associated with Christian parishes and their leadership. One issue not properly addressed was the structure and culture within parishes which allows teaching and learning to occur. This issue will be discussed in the next section.

Parish Learning Community Structures and Cultures

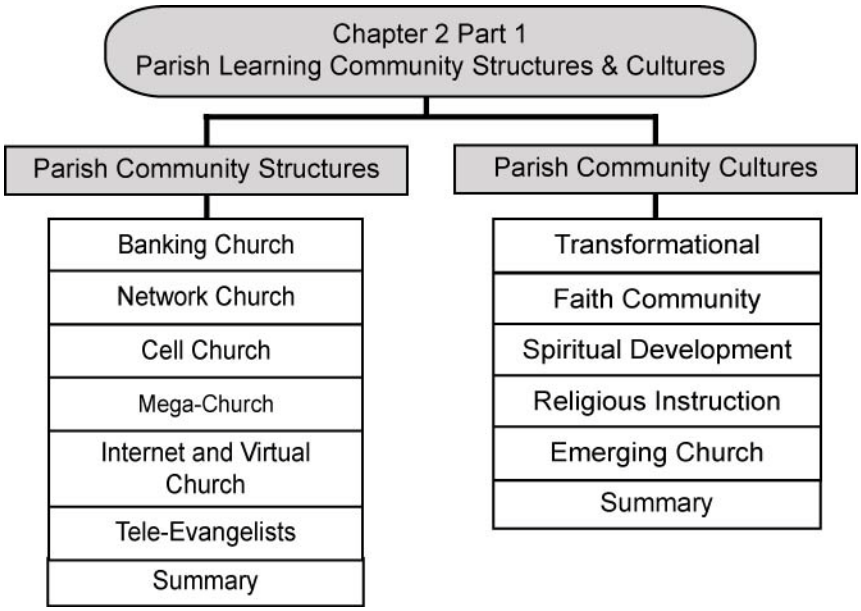

Figure 2.6 – Parish Learning Community Structures and Cultures map

In the discussion of learning communities earlier in this chapter, it was mentioned that learning community structure varied according to the context and purpose of the group. Christian churches and parishes, as learning communities, have also created varied structures to enhance the quality and learning within their communities. This section begins with a review of six of the most prominent church learning community structures.

In addition, it was previously mentioned that a need existed for communities to cultivate specific, relevant cultures. This section, therefore, reviews six common cultural frameworks used in parishes to build their Christian culture.

PARISH COMMUNITY STRUCTURES

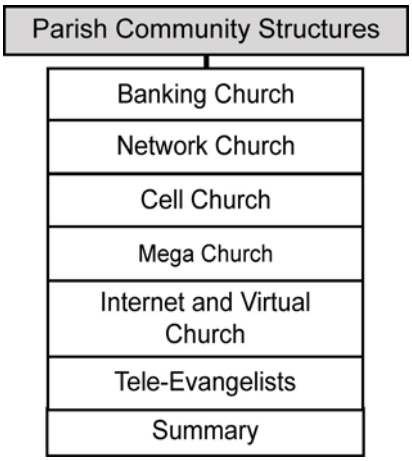

Figure 2.7 – Parish Community Structures section map

The early Christian churches taught using simple teacher-focused presentations (Balchin 1979; Ponraj 1987). Today, Christian churches use a variety of teaching strategies in order to reach wider audiences (Alvarez 2004; Aycock 2003; Comiskey 2007; Kaldor *et al*. 1999). Some of these structures and their effects on parish learning will be discussed in this section. First, however, it is necessary to look at the spiritual and educational expectations of the various generations of people who influence parish community structures.

Although Christian parishes share a common faith, their congregations are composed of a wide variety of people with many generational differences. Even within a particular denomination, such as the Anglican church, which is the basis of this study, Kaldor *et al*. (1999) showed how individuals differed in preferences for music, setting and worship style. Society and technology also influences individuals' expectations of parish learning. Lowe (2007), for example, showed that for the Builder Generation (pre-1946), the majority of their learning came through listening to the spoken word, either in formal classrooms or via the radio. This made the traditional parish lecture-style sermon a familiar learning experience. Muller (2006), however, described how the next generation (Baby Boomers, 1946–1964) faced the economic impact of the technological revolution, changing their styles of learning. Combining technology and the Baby Boomer's strong sense of teamwork, Aycock (2003) described how this generation introduced contemporary parish services where members could have greater control of teaching and worship.

The literature on later generations (Jochim 1997; Rohde 2000; Thielfoldt & Scheef 2004) showed a tendency toward individualism and experiential spirituality that was personal and practical. It also indicated a distinct yearning for community. Further details regarding postmodern culture will be discussed later in this chapter.

Throughout the generations, parishes and churches have developed various structures to address the learning needs of their congregations and the surrounding communities. These structures include banking (Freire 1970), network (Church Army 2009), cell (Bakke 2004), internet (Bainbridge 2000), virtual (Foley 2002) and mega-churches (Hong 1999), as well as more loosely held structures such as tele-evangelism (Schroeder, Heather & Lee 1998). Each type has its own emphasis on teaching and learning based on its leader's understanding of God, spirituality and individual learning. The following is a brief discussion of these structures.

BANKING CHURCH

First identified by Paulo Freire (1970) in relation to oppressed societies, the banking method places all power in the hands of the teacher, who determines both the topics and methods of study, as well as enforcing discipline and the rules governing the learning process. Freire explained that the only role of the learner in this type of education was to receive, file and store information, like deposits into a bank. Such an environment encouraged learners to "accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher's existence" (Soong 2005).

Fackler's (2011) study on communication described how Freire's model, which represented a hierarchical, monologic transmission of knowledge, was favoured throughout the Christian church for many years. He further argued that it created an intellectual class with a monopoly of knowledge that was then offered to novitiates, who were expected to conform to the system that the banking model perpetuated.

The negative aspects of this model with regard to learning are many. A parish built on the banking model requires no meaningful input from the congregation, which acts against the students' self-direction and self-regulation (NSW DET 2003). Further, a banking style church's primary teaching tool is the traditional lecture-style sermon, that many writers (Baeder 2003; Erkel 2006; Kraft 1991; Wanak 2000) have shown to be a poor teaching technique.

NETWORK CHURCH

The literature (Berryman 1999; Byassee 2010; Church Army 2009; Lenox & Coleman 2010; O'Leary 2004) describes two types of network churches. The first involves clusters of individuals linked together through the medium of the internet. This type will be discussed below, followed by the second type, which involves a network of campuses belonging to the same church, linked by communication technology.

Cray (2005) described the first type of network church as a collection of interconnected groups of people (nodes), all connected to a main initiating parish or church and, according to Collins (2005), often populated with those of marginal or no belief. The nodes are described by Faros Christian Fellowship (2005) as autonomous but not isolated, and each with its own particular style and practices. The literature (Gledhill & Charles 2005; Northern Community 2005; UCA 2005) described how these parishes were not bound to specific locations, but rather the individual congregation groups met in convenient sites such as cafes, pubs, parks or wherever the members felt comfortable.

According to Collins (2005), neither the individual nodes nor the networks as a whole had a dedicated trained leadership. Instead, power and authority were distributed across the node or network. Faros Christian Fellowship (2005) pointed out, therefore, that all members were both teacher and learner. Although Cray (2005) believed this structure assisted the teaching and learning of the Christian message, it does not align with the NSWQTM Intellectual Quality dimension, which requires teachers to possess deep knowledge and understanding and higher-order thinking skills to successfully facilitate learning.

The second type of network church, as described by Byassee (2010), consists of a number of campuses of the same church spread across a number of locations. A prime example of such a network is LifeChurch (Byassee 2010), although other churches such as Willow Creek Community Church (2007) and North Point Community Church (2010) share similar attributes. This form of network church is characterised by professional quality music, a dependence on multimedia technologies, and centralised preaching and control. Services are led by lay campus leaders, with the sermon being transmitted from the central church live to all the associated campuses. This arrangement reduces the need for campus leaders to

preach sermons, thus requiring far less teaching abilities from the leaders than in traditional churches. However, Byassee (2010) explained that the distances between campuses represented a barrier to the administration of church sacrament such as baptism.

To retain the benefits of a medium-size campus, as described by Ramsey (2003), network churches divided campuses once the congregation reached a predetermined size. This allowed the campuses to retain a more intimate relational atmosphere, while at the same time receive the resource benefits of a larger church.

Byassee (2010) raises several criticisms of this type of network church, including its inability to create and maintain a feeling of connection between the congregation members and the campuses. Further, the reduced function of the campus service leaders reduces the opportunities for lay leaders to grow and use their full range of abilities. Again, this differs from the NSWQTM (NSW DET 2003) elements of self-direction, self-regulation, engagement and others.

CELL CHURCH

Cell churches, like network churches, are comprised of distinct small groups within a wider church or parish. Although similar in structure, cell churches differ from network churches in that the individual cell members come together in the same location each Sunday for group worship and teaching (Comiskey 2007), thus maintaining the single congregation structure. Because of its success in the areas of parish growth and renewal, Hong (2004) describes how it is becoming very popular among many parish leaders. Further, Hong defines the aims of the cell churches as mobilising the laity for ministry and evangelism, while at the same time multiplying the number of cells.

Discipleship, the main focus of the individual cells, according to Brenton and Brenton (2000), can be fully developed in this structure due to overcoming cultural and personal differences. This is achieved through the formation of deep relationships within the cell that act to address the personal needs of the cell members. This situation reflects the social support, inclusivity and other elements of the NSWQTM (NSW DET 2003).

Bakke (2004) describes how, unlike network nodes, the cell leaders are trained by the main parish rector and act as facilitators within the cells to assist members to realise their own strengths. The importance of such training, according to Comiskey (2007) lies in the holistic nature of the cells, which emphasise evangelism, community, discipleship and multiplication. This nature was also identified by Brenton and Brenton (2000), who proposed that cell churches work because of their holistic nature that allows members to discuss issues of personal concern, and apply their faith to their daily lives. Such a setting, according to Rohde (2000), is ideal for the postmodern spiritual seeker who places strong emphasis on the freedom to express and live their own personal morals and lifestyles. This self-direction and self-regulation promoted by cells, combined with encouragement for knowledge integration, shows cell-style parishes provide many elements of the NSWQTM (NSW DET 2003).

MEGA-CHURCH

One of the most significant religious phenomena over the past two decades is, according to Karnes *et al*. (2007), the growth and development of mega-churches. Karnes *et al*. (2007) define a mega-church as one that has 2000 attendees or more on a typical Sunday across all services and which delivers its services in a permanent facility. Further, as they are not strongly affiliated with traditional denominations, mega-churches have greater independence in the style of worship and teaching they deliver.

Philips (2005) explained that although preaching to large crowds is not new, the techniques used by the mega-churches are vastly different to that of the traditional parish service. Built around popular culture and using techniques borrowed from mass media, Philips describes how the services have become performances for spectators, programmed for consumers, and involving activities that distract from the biblical basis of the parish services. Further, Hong (2004) describes how a lack of community spirit is often associated with mega-churches.

Despite these criticisms, Kellstedt and Green (2003) believe that mega-churches are “well adapted to carry a pre-modern message into a postmodern world” (p.559). Further, Hong (2004) suggests that the mega-church’s strength lies in its ability to grow and attract new members through the creation of new parishes.

INTERNET AND VIRTUAL CHURCHES

The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project (Foltz & Foltz 2003) found 25% of all American internet users have accessed religion on the internet. Similarly, Brasher's (2001) study estimated that there were at least one million religious websites on the internet, many of which were termed 'Online Church'. Several writers (Foltz & Foltz 2003; Ostrowski 2006) have attempted to organise these sites into categories such as information/research, extensions of local community/worship (text, podcast and audio), independent sites and spiritual retreats.

Some scholars (O'Leary 2004; Wertheim 1999) are enthusiastic about the potential of cyberspace for the growth of Christian churches through connecting with the unchurched and lapsed-church members, as well as strengthening the existing congregations. The Foltz and Foltz (2003) study, however, found that although Christians were using the internet extensively, they were not using online communities as a replacement for local physical churches. This reinforced Foltz and Foltz's (2003) idea that the geographical location of a community gathering provided a significant contribution to the experience. Within physical communities members take care of each other and themselves, and partake in the church rituals that assist to bind the community together. In this respect the NSWQTM social support element appears stronger in physical churches than in cyberspace.

Despite its limitations, Reid (1999) believes that the internet churches can "enable communication between people who otherwise might ignore each other" (p.5). This implies an increased level of inclusivity and connectivity (NSW DET 2003) may be possible through the medium of the internet. Reid further found that internet churches can provide an avenue for the dissemination of Christian information which, without such a medium, would not reach those who are seeking answers. Jenson (1995) too sees the internet as a place that can be used to teach theology and provide exposure of the church to the outside world.

TELE-EVANGELISTS

Bader-Sayer (2006), described how the evangelical message has been adapted to many varied mediums, being repackaged to fit new cultural forms. In recent years, according to Schroeder, Heather and Lee (1998), certain fundamental evangelical

Christian churches have used television to spread the gospel message. According to Hinnells (2005), this tele-evangelism signals the growth of conservative Protestantism and is often used as a fundraising mechanism to support fundamentalist colleges and universities.

Tele-evangelism, as described by Hunt (2004), has the ability to reach a large number of people and address them seemingly individually. Like the Billy Graham revivals of the 1950s, tele-evangelism often has high-profile, charismatic leaders relaying their specific messages. Such preachers, according to Roman (1998), can become international celebrities. Further, Ferrarotti (1993) points out that tele-evangelism can succeed in transmitting the Christian message where more traditional forms have failed. This success is due in part to the charismatic nature of the preachers and the secularisation of the message that can overcome audience resistance.

Roman (1998) described the tele-evangelist environment as one of "grandiose theatrical design … employed to thrill and titillate audiences" (p.85). As an example, Roman cited the Crystal Cathedral built for the tele-evangelist Robert Schuller, who had an estimated 1.5 million viewers (Roman 1998).

Keeping with the theatrical nature of tele-evangelism, audiences are passive recipients of the message, inputting nothing to the process, a practice that is strongly discouraged by the literature regarding modern quality teaching (Alton-Lee 2003; Bhindi & Hough 2006; Darling-Hammond 2000; Gore & Ladwig 2006; Ladwig & Gore 2005; NSW DET 2003).

SUMMARY OF PARISH COMMUNITY STRUCTURES

According to Marshall (2003), the quality of any group is determined largely by the quality of its leaders, whether they exist in banking, emerging, internet or any other form of church grouping. Cray (2005) supports this idea and adds that these leaders need to face the problem of how to *be* church, more for where and how people currently are, rather than from the traditional Christian viewpoint.

The individuals and the church organisations as a whole, according to Finkelstein and DeBeck need to become learning entities that view their jobs not as a list of things to be accomplished but, rather, as "purpose driven, intersecting parts of a

larger whole" (Finkelstein & DeBeck 2004, p.3). Hayward (2005a) adds that this whole, the spiritual life of the church, has more effect on the growth of the individual congregation than the quality of its outreach methods or, for that matter, the particular church style adopted.

In the second part of this section, the idea of the parish as a learning community will be further explained using Seymour's (1997) four parish learning styles. The culture produced by these styles will help to explain the diversity and similarities between congregations.

Parish Community Cultures

Figure 2.8 – Parish Community Cultures section map

Seymour's (1997) work on congregational learning identified four distinct congregational learning styles (transformational, faith community, spiritual development and religious instruction). Each style produced a unique parish culture affecting how a parish operated, its aims and the way in which it approached congregational education. In addition to this typology, the emerging church movement will be discussed at the end of this section.

TRANSFORMATIONAL CULTURE

The transformational culture, as outlined by Schipani (1997), aims at producing faithful citizenship and social transformation. The teachers are equal partners with the learners and assist in "sponsoring human emergence" (p.26), which includes encouraging, enabling and guiding. The education process is intertwined with the

lifestyle of the congregation, while the methods themselves include problem posing, dialogue, active engagement and critical reflection (Seymour 1997). As can be seen, these methods reflect many of the NSWQTM elements.

The result of education focused on transformation, according to Schipani (1997), is the increased awareness of learners to the need for communal and social transformation, and an understanding of how they can participate in the change. O'Gorman (1997) points out that, as a result of Freire's (1970) work, community education has become an authentic form of learning along with the narrative and mutual learning. Engagement, as described by Sullivan *et al*. (2009), supports such community education through strong participation in academic, social and extracurricular activities. Further, it also includes emotional (Ke & Hoadley 2009; Lovat 2005; Sullivan *et al*. 2009) and cognitive (Ryman, Richardson & Burrell 2009; Sullivan *et al*. 2009) components.

Ryman, Richardson and Burrell (2009), in a study on sustaining learning communities, described how communities, after they attain a strong sense of community between individuals, experience a deep transformational learning that enables the creation of new knowledge and understanding. Further, deep transformational learning can be encouraged by community leaders motivating learners intrinsically and facilitating true and meaningful dialogue.

FAITH COMMUNITY CULTURE

The second of Seymour's (1997) learning styles is the faith community, which aims to build communities that promote authentic human development. This focus on care combined with learning is, according to Nash (2010), not new to teaching, although the emergence of the scientific approach to pedagogy shifted the focus to more observable and measurable learning traits in recent years. Despite this, and as mentioned earlier, Rohde (2000) found postmodern generations were looking for both spirituality and community, which can be found in faith communities.

Faith communities, as described by Crain (2006), are socially constructed and, therefore, their structure is closely connected to their context. Ultimately, this infers that educational practices developed within the culture of one faith community may not necessarily transfer to another community formed under a different context. This context dependence was supported by Wilhoit (2008) who saw it as a major

influence in personal faith formation. The context dependence therefore makes most faith communities unique, as the individual members are unique.

Wilhoit (2008) also identified two forms of teaching, informational and formational, that work together in a faith community. The first, informational, consists of teaching the facts of Christianity, while the second, formational, relates to teaching that promotes the application of faith in the lives of the community members. For Pazmino (2010), this holistic approach is essential for faith communities and must be guided by ongoing assessment and evaluation of the community processes to ensure the integrity of the teaching.

According to Pazmino (2010), the greatest problem affecting faith communities arises from a lack of proper leadership, which may manifest itself in excesses and misdirection of the community. These leaders show a lack of attention to the dynamics of the community, particularly in communication, which is vital for maintaining community relationships and holding the leadership accountable for its actions. The need for quality leadership is supported by Ryman, Richardson and Burrell (2009), who showed that deep knowledge about dialogue within the community is essential to lead the community through difficult times. Further, effective leadership is able to facilitate social interactions within the community and maintain the community's focus.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT CULTURE

The third of Seymour's (1997) learning styles is spiritual development, which focuses on helping individual community members enhance their inner life and thus respond with outward actions. Unlike the faith community culture, spiritual development is individual centred and focused strongly on silence, listening and service. These teaching methods, according to Harris and Moran (1997), are "critical to spiritual formation and transformation" (p.63). Many writers (Clark, Nguyen & Sweller 2006; Fink 2005; McInerney & McInerney 1998; Shipp & McKenzie 1981; Smith 1998), however, do not agree with the idea of silent, passive learning, as it is seen as a poor teaching technique. Despite this, some writers, such as Majmudar (2002), see silence as a useful tool in areas such as values education.

Although the spiritual development culture is focused on individuals, each community participates in a collective meeting once per week, which is intended to

be a time of strong teaching and study, a well as Christian service. Such service, according to Harris and Moran (1997), “should be at the centre of education [with] the outer activity of prayer and worship” (p.71). Although emphasising teaching and study, this learning style’s emphasis on silent listening may negate the NSWQTM’s ideas of engagement, self-direction and substantive communication.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION CULTURE

The final learning style proposed by Seymour (1997) is religious instruction which, according to Caldwell (1997), is focused on enabling community members to be grounded in the biblical faith and understand the connections between faith and living. Such a focus is in line with the concept of connectivity which, according to the literature (Dewey 1916; Ladwig & King 2003; Newmann 1993; NSW DET 2003), is central to quality teaching. Further, this learning culture seeks a balance between the sacred and the secular, and focuses on new ways to live life meaningfully with respect to the Christian faith.

Despite the learning emphasis of this type of community, Palmer (2004) notes that in many parishes Christian education ends when a person reaches their early teens, and, any learning that is available is often not engaging them in depth. Caldwell (1997) also raises this issue, pointing out that although children’s religious education is carefully planned, adult education is either optional or non-existent, giving an erroneous impression that adults worship while children learn.

THE EMERGING CHURCH

Many writers (Bader-Sayer 2006; Carson 2005; Drane 2006; Edson 2006; Gibbs & Bolger 2005; Guest & Taylor 2006; Harrold 2006; Jamieson 2006; Lings 2006; McGavran 1990) have investigated the changes in the forms of Christian culture and structure, collectively known as the emerging church. There are several definitions of what is meant by the term ‘emerging church’. Although not all agree, in the most part they do complement each other. Perhaps the most suitable definition is that from Gibbs and Bolger (2005), who state that “Emerging churches are communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures” (p.44).

In this definition it is important to point out that the term ‘practice’ should be understood in the same way as when used in relation to medical or law practices.

The members of the practices set standards, grow in competence and apprentice others to grow in knowledge, skills and understanding.

In their study of fifty emerging churches, Gibbs and Bolger (2005) identified nine practices prominent in these churches. Three of these are core practices common to all emerging churches and the remaining six are common to some emerging churches and not to others (see Figure 2.9).

	Emerging Church Practices
Core	(1) Identifying with the life of Jesus (2) Transforming secular space (3) Living in community
Optional	(4) Welcoming strangers (5) Serve with generosity (6) Participate as producers (7) Create as created beings (8) Lead as a body (9) Take part in spiritual activities

Figure 2.9 – Emerging Church Practices

A close look at these emerging church practices reveals characteristics also present in the NSWQTM (NSW DET 2003). Some of these include inclusivity (practice 4), social support (practice 5), engagement, self-direction and self-regulation (practices 6, 7 and 9), and connectivity (practice 2), among others.

As Gibbs and Bolger's definition shows, emerging churches are acting in postmodern culture. Traditionally, churches have functioned within modern culture which primarily, for churches, started at the Reformation and ended in the 1950s (Carson 2005; Gibbs & Bolger 2005; Williams 1998). According to Carson (2005) this era was characterised by a focus on rational certainty, absolutism, linear thought and truth, with its strongest current proponents being the Baby Boomer generation. This modern focus, according to Gibbs and Bolger (2005) produced seeker-services, mega-churches and prosperity gospels.

Further, during this period Gibbs and Bolger (2005) explained how symbols, images and rituals were removed from parish services and replaced by an atmosphere of corporate culture and affluent functionality. Churches also removed the symbolic,

mystical and experiential elements of services, replacing them with logical, linear thinking. Heavily influenced by print media, the churches produced biblical teaching that was primarily verbal and linear, and based on abstract messages appropriate to the modern era.

The postmodern era, commencing in the late 1950s and early 1960s, showed a shift away from many modern ways of thinking. Kimball (2003) described how postmodernism accepts that no system offers a complete explanation of spiritual issues (pluralism), and embraces experiential learning, relativism and the mystical nature of life.

Gibbs and Bolger (2005) concluded that churches seriously underestimated the need for cross-cultural training for their ministry teams and congregations. As a consequence, many churches misread the surrounding culture, undermining the efforts of the churches to reach out and connect to the postmodern culture. Further, Gibbs and Bolger suggested that church leaders needed to be prepared to change the form of services if necessary.

To reach out to the postmodern culture several writers (Bader-Sayer 2006; Carson 2005; Gibbs & Bolger 2005; Kimball 2003) have suggested that churches need to design meaningful activities within services, that involve sound, sight and touch to complement words. This may be accomplished, they suggest, through rituals, stories and other similar types of activities. Indeed, Gibbs and Bolger (2005) showed that new forms of services have restored an atmosphere of mystery and awe, often including the use of candles, incense and prayer rituals.

Gibbs and Bolger showed that the traditional sermon-style service had a diminishing impact on the postmodern culture. Kimball (2003) added that modern sermons emphasised the rector’s role as dispenser of truth and its explanation, while postmodern services presented sermons as only one part of the service experience. Further, postmodern sermons primarily taught the congregations how to apply the biblical wisdom, rather than restating biblical content.

According to Carson (2005) with the sermon occupying only a portion of the parish services, the scriptural message is then further communicated through a mixture of words, visual arts, silence, testimony and narratives.

The revival of rituals in the emerging churches may be a direct result of the preferences of the postmodern culture. The use of images and actions can, according to Wallace (cited in Gibbs & Bolger 2005), reach people in ways that words alone cannot. Further, rituals encourage participation and engagement. However, according to Gibbs and Bolger, an absence of rituals may reduce a congregation to consumerism and passivity.

According to Marshall (2002), rituals generate belief and belonging through activating multiple social–psychological mechanisms. Rituals also reduce individualism and heighten arousal to produce a more intense experience. Howe (2000) adds that ritual itself is a practice to be learned, that has meaning and value in its own right, and that it is the inner meaning of the ritual that is important.

Another aspect of postmodern culture that may have serious effects on churches, relates to the idea of authentic teaching and how it is portrayed within the churches. As Gibbs and Bolger (2005) identified in their study, many churches failed to apply and live out the faith they professed. This discourages postmoderns who place high value on authenticity and community relationships. Of those churches that did attempt to be relevant, many often lost their authenticity because they were trying to be something other than themselves. Therefore, Baker (Leader of Grace Church, London) (cited in Carson 2005), suggested that “It feels more authentic to produce worship that we can relate to and other people will hopefully get, than to say we are making worship to target someone else” (p.182).

Carson (2005) summarised the postmodern need for authenticity when he described the ideal service as providing “a profound sense of reality, of authentic knowledge of God, manifested in goodness and transformed living” (pp.50–51). In particular, he stressed that parish leaders must foster this kind of authenticity, which will then spread to the congregation.

Gibbs and Bolger (2005) warned of the consequences of neglecting true authenticity when they stated, “If you aim at being cutting edge and miss, it is five times worse than saying something authentic but a bit out of date” (p.182). Kimball (2003) expanded this idea when describing emerging churches as less about looking out for what is cutting edge, and more about moving back into a spiritual centre focusing on the life and teachings of Jesus.

The role of the rector and parish leadership has also shifted with the postmodern culture. Mobsby (cited in Gibbs & Bolger 2005), leader of Moot Church, London, considered his role was to help keep the community healthy. He stated, “This form of leadership operates as facilitator, advisor, empowerer, envisioner, and permission giver. This helps others to lead sessions and the group” (p.212)

This type of leadership appears to encourage the NSWQTM elements of self-regulation, self-direction and engagement and reflects a form of distributed leadership described by several writers (Dinham 2008; Gronn 2006; Harris 2004; Heck & Hallinger 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi 1998; Mayrowetz 2008).

Perhaps of all the traits of the postmodern culture, the desire for experiential learning is the one that will have the greatest effect on the design of parish services. Sweet (2000), emphasised this by saying that twenty-first century services should be experiential, participatory, image-driven and connected, which he reduced to the acronym EPIC (see Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.10 – Emerging Church Service Focus

Experiential learning, as described by Kemp (2010), is characterised by active learning experiences and constructivism. The educational structure that supports this type of learning was described by Hedin (2010) as having two main components: (1) engaging the learners directly to phenomena directly related to their course of study; (2) requiring the learners to reflect on the experience, analysing it and learning from it.

Mullen (2010) took experiential learning and applied it to service learning, which he defined as, “A teaching and learning strategy that integrates academic instruction, community service, and guided reflection from a Christ-centred, faith-based perspective in order to enhance student learning, to foster civic responsibility, and develop servant leaders” (p.162).

Further, Howard and McKeachie (1993, cited in Mullen 2010) extended this definition by identifying ten principles of best practice for service-learning pedagogy (see Figure 2.11). Since service is a primary aim of Christianity, service learning may be related closely to parish teaching. It may also be related in the same way to rector-candidate in-parish training, which will be discussed later in Part 2 of this chapter.

1: Academic credits for learning
2: Do not compromise academic rigour
3: Set learning goals for learners
4: Establish criteria for selection of placement
5: Provide educationally sound learning strategies
6: Provide support for learner to learn how to learn
7: Minimise distinctions between classroom and placement
8: Rethink the faculty instructional role
9: Be prepared for uncertainity & variation in outcomes
10: Maximise community responsibility orientation of course

Adapted from Howard and McKeachie (1993, cited in Mullen 2010, p164)

Figure 2.11 – Service-learning principles

A close inspection of Figure 2.11 will show a similarity to the NSWQTM, particularly in its emphasis on academic (knowledge and understanding) quality, establishing learning goals and criteria, and providing learner support.

SUMMARY OF PARISH COMMUNITY CULTURES

Each of the cultures created by the congregational learning styles mentioned above reflects in some way the ideas of the NSWQTM. In particular, these styles rely on narrative, substantive communication, engagement, connectivity, inclusivity and strong leadership, as well as generating community and a sense of combined purpose. The influence of postmodern culture, its desire for experiential learning and authenticity, has been shown to be a major force behind changes in parish teaching practices.

Further, Carson (2005) pointed out that newer generations have little sense of duty or obligation to parishes unless they feel a sense of reality within the parish and feel they are experiencing the authentic knowledge of God. Carson goes on to state that

the hallmark of this authentic teaching lies in its manifested goodness and the transformed living seen within the congregation and ministry.

Now, having a general understanding of Christian teaching and parish culture, it is time to focus attention on parish attendance patterns. In this study the viability of each parish was determined by its service attendance patterns over several years. Growth or decline of attendance is affected by many variables, the most important of which will be discussed in the next section.

Service Attendance and Parish Growth

This section looks at four aspects of congregations and parishes that influence service attendance. The layout of the discussion is shown below (see Figure 2.12).

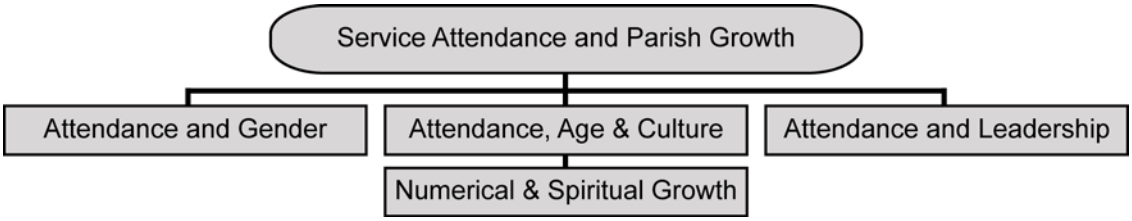

Figure 2.12 – Service Attendance section map

As previously mentioned, this study uses parish service attendance as the indicator of parish viability. However, it is recognised that a myriad variables impact on the viability of a parish and the literature (Arn 2007a, 2007b; Brenton & Brenton 2000; Cann 2006; Cassady 2005; Chang & Smith-Williams 2006; Comiskey 2007; Conn 1976; Krass 1979; McGavran 1990; Van Halsema 1993) concerning parish growth is substantial. Due to the restraints of this study, as outlined in the limitation section, service attendance will be the primary indicator of viability and only a brief review of some of the other variables is provided in this chapter.

Research conducted by Alston and McIntosh (1979), and supported by other writers (Lazerwitz 1961; Robinson & Halcrow 2007; Wingrove & Alston 1974), showed that region and gender affect parish service attendance more than the education, occupation or income levels of the attendees. Further, they showed that religiosity and confidence in the clergy were the most important determinants of parish service attendance. Similarly, the style, language and liturgy of services were identified in

the Schwarz study (cited in Brenton & Brenton 2000) as being less important in attracting people to parish services than the inspiration perceived by the participants.

In the Zaleski and Zech (1995) study, as well as the earlier Lazerwitz (1961) study, it was identified that individuals selected congregations based on several factors including their religious upbringing, stage of life, and evangelisation efforts of the parish. It is understandable then that Miller (2004) found that many people are now travelling long distances to attend specific parishes while ignoring smaller struggling parishes based in their home locality.

The significance of denominational loyalty in the retention of congregation members was explored by Hoge and O'Connor (2004) in a longitudinal study that commenced in 1975. The study found that predictors of loyalty were those affecting the subjects at the age of around 16 years. These included family culture and participation in church youth programs. Later experiences in life were shown to have very little effect on denominational loyalty. Further, loyalty formed early in life was not predictive of a person's rate of service attendance later in life.

ATTENDANCE AND GENDER

Research by Wingrove and Alston (1974) showed that there was a strong association between gender and parish service attendance rates. This was supported by Robinson and Halcrow's (2007) study, which showed that in many modern parishes women outnumber men 2 to 1. Their study showed women looked to the parish to provide both religious education and role models for their children. Men, however, whose self-esteem and purpose is primarily derived from work, do not generally need the parish as a source of identity and community to the same extent as women. Nevertheless, the National Church Life Survey (NCLS Research 2004b) showed Australian women engaged in full-time employment display the same low attendance patterns as men.

David Murrow, author of the book *Why Men Hate Going to Church* (Murrow 2005), suggests that the parish has become incompatible with manhood by providing a predictable environment seen as feminine and anti-male. Similarly, worship services that involve silence, sharing, sitting and singing are difficult for men and only assist in fostering an awkward feeling within them. As women move into the traditionally

male roles within the parish, men's participation is perceived as devalued. For Murrow the way of reversing this situation is not to devalue women but rather create a parish culture that values and welcomes both genders equally.

Robinson and Halcrow (2007) suggest that parish teaching is also failing men since many leave parish services unsure how the Bible connects to their real-life situations. Cameron (in Halcrow 2007b) urged that ways must be found to provide training time for men that address issues such as anger, sex, fatherhood and work.

ATTENDANCE, AGE AND CULTURE

Although Wingrove and Alston (1974) found no consistent pattern when comparing age and attendance, Lazerwitz (1961) found that the family life cycle did appear to influence parish service attendance. While young single Protestants showed low levels of parish service attendance, after marriage regularity in attendance rises. This trend peaks for families with children five years old and over. Once the children mature and leave home, however, regular attendance once more begins to decline. In contrast, those people who exhibited poor attendance patterns did not vary their patterns with variations in life cycle.

Several writers (Hoge, Johnson & Luidens 1994; Spilka *et al*. 2003) have shown that religious practices are generally established by middle adulthood, with much less change after this point. This finding places high importance on ministries focused on children and young adults, which is supported by the National Church Life Survey's (NCLS Research 2005c) findings that showed those denominations that allowed young members to express their faith in culturally relevant ways had generally managed to retain these members into their twenties and thirties. Further, Comiskey (2007) showed, because of the changing nature of the postmodern generation, they are no longer content to be observers but rather want to be active participants in services.

ATTENDANCE AND LEADERSHIP

In general, Brenton and Brenton (2000) found that growing parishes were generally presided over by relationship-orientated rectors who saw people of more value than tasks. Similarly, the National Church Life Survey (NCLS Research 2005b) showed these rectors both listened to and encouraged their congregation members.

Conversely, Lowery (2004) pointed out that stagnant and dying parishes often focused on non-relational aspects of parish life, for example, methods become as sacred as the message and activities become rigid patterns instead of the application of biblical principles.

The National Church Life Survey (NCLS Research 2005b) also showed that the leadership of growing parishes encouraged their congregations to take ownership of the parish's vision and direction and to make it relevant to their situations. They also fostered a willingness to invite outsiders to church activities. The congregations also placed high expectations on the ability of the parish leadership to increase congregation size. Choi (2007) identified a similar situation where the congregation saw parish growth to be the sole responsibility of the leader. This was also supported by Calian's (1977) work with large and mega-churches. The leadership described above, which focused on relational and social support, encouragement, ownership, connectivity and inclusivity, display high levels of quality teaching as described by the NSWQTM (NSW DET 2003).

The literature (Kaldor *et al*. 1999; Oswald 1991; Van Halsema 1993) showed several reasons why individuals chose to join specific parishes, but by far the most discussed way of entry, according to Hayward (2005), was via friendships with parish members or members of a parish group. He also suggested that parish growth depended on the enthusiasm of individual members for recruiting outsiders. As this enthusiasm wanes, however, the parish growth and attendance also declines.

NUMERICAL VERSUS SPIRITUAL

When discussing parish attendance and growth it is necessary to distinguish between numerical and spiritual growth, as either or both may be the intention of a parish. Ponraj (1987) suggests that there can not be spiritual growth without numerical growth as both are necessary for a healthy parish.

Parish growth is substantially numerical in nature, according to several writers (McGavran 1970; Wagner 1978; Warren 2002), and aimed at increasing the numbers of individuals attending parish services regularly. Yet other writers (Costas 1974; MacArthur 1986; Shenk 1973) see a different, more qualitatively spiritual nature to parish growth, that focuses on both the growth in faith of existing

congregation members and the spiritual growth of new converts. Comiskey (2007) sees that in many situations making disciples rather than increasing parish attendance makes for a stronger, longer-lived congregation. This idea is supported by Brenton and Brenton (2000), who pointed out that parishes that focused on raising the quality of congregational life did, in fact, also experience numerical growth.

Part 1 Conclusion

In Part 1 of this chapter we looked at literature dealing with teaching in both schools and parishes. In particular, we saw how the Christian faith was based on teaching in a similar way to that of schools. Similarly, we saw how schools and parishes function as learning communities with various styles, forms and cultures. Finally, we discussed parish service attendance and growth, and how these were influenced by various characteristics of the congregation and leadership.

Understanding the various styles of congregational learning and the cultures they produce, provides a background for Part 2 of this chapter, which considers the literature concerned with the specific Christian group that acts as the focus of this study, the Sydney diocese of the Anglican church. In particular, Part 2 considers the teaching and educational policies that are relevant to, and directly affect, the case study parishes and the pre- and post-training provided to parish rectors.

Chapter 2 Part 2 – The Sydney Diocese

Part 2 of Chapter 2 focuses on the Sydney Anglican diocese from the standpoint of education and training for rectors and congregations. The topics covered in this part are listed in Figure 2.13.

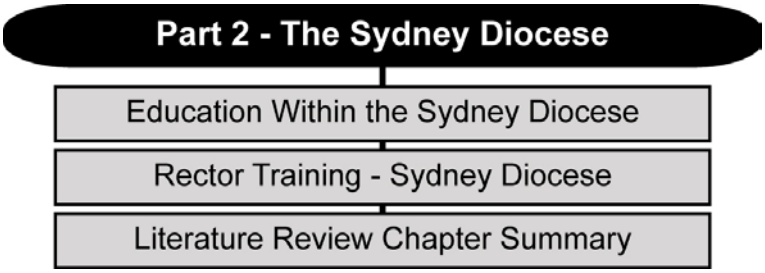

Figure 2.13 – Chapter 2 Part 2 section map

In this study, three parishes participated from the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia. In the Sydney Anglican diocese almost all rector training is conducted within the diocese at Moore Theological College, also known as Moore College. For these reasons, and the fact that rectors are the primary parish teachers, it is necessary for this research to understand the attitudes, policies and practices of the diocese in respect to education and teaching. This focus on the Sydney Anglican diocese is not intended to single out the diocese for any other reason other than to understand the learning environment in which rectors and parishes operate.

Education within the Sydney Anglican Diocese

Literature associated with the operation of the Sydney Anglican diocese in respect to teaching and learning will be discussed in this section (see Figure 2.14).

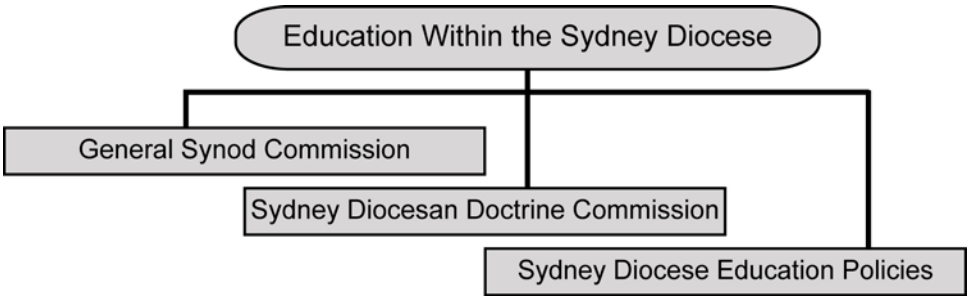

Figure 2.14 – Education in the Sydney Diocese section map

This section will include the results of studies undertaken by the diocese and the resulting diocesan policies and practices. As well, this section will cover rector training through Moore Theological College (MTC).

At this point it may be helpful to consider the structure of the Anglican Church of Australia (ACA). According to the ACA (Anglican Media Sydney 2004) the Anglican church in Australia is divided into several semi-autonomous diocese which, through the individual diocesan synods, control a varying number of regions. Each region is presided over by an Anglican bishop, who has responsibility for the parishes within the region. The individual parishes are run by rectors, answerable to the regional bishop, but generally having full control over the activities of their parishes.

General Synod Commission on Ministry and Training

In 1990, the General Synod of the Anglican Church's Commission on Ministry and Training (Rodges, Kirkaldy & Stone 1990) conducted a survey across Australia that asked clergy about the importance of various parish duties and adequacy of their training. The study found that most rectors spent more time in administration duties than in congregational teaching, even though preaching and teaching were rated by the rectors as the most important duties in parishes. Also, the majority of rectors indicated they were trained to high or expert level in the areas of liturgy, teaching and preaching, while inadequately trained for most other parish duties. The study also showed rectors preferred training in leadership and teaching to occur pre-ordination, with parish duties to be taught as part of on-job training.

Apart from direct rector training, the respondents were also asked about other forms of training they had undertaken as an extension of their ministry or otherwise. The study found that very few rectors had undertaken formal training since taking over leadership of a parish. This finding was in contrast to the 2005 Sydney diocese yearbook (ACA, Diocese of Sydney 2005b), which showed over a third of rectors had undertaken post-ordination training.

Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Commission

In diocesan resolution 35/07 (Woodhouse 2008) the synod asked the Doctrine Commission to prepare a report concerning the nature, practices and purpose of modern parish services, as well as their relationship to parish growth. The report

identified the “hearing of God’s word” (p.31) combined with the active participation of congregation members as key issues in parish growth. It also identified that growth was required in three distinct areas of knowledge, trust and Christian character. However, the report clearly stated that the purpose of services was not conversion of unbelievers but rather building up the congregation who would then “spontaneously” (p.30) reach out to unbelievers.

When considering the actual activities within services, the report stated that the actions or abilities of the service leaders were less important than “what God does” (p.30), and that meaningful learning is achieved through “the Spirit of God” (p.32) transforming the heart. Further, the report described the service participants’ activities as listening, humble repentance, prayer, thanksgiving and joyful faith, while singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs were seen as ways of teaching. The role of the rector, according to the report, was to provide instruction in sound doctrine through preaching, teaching and passing on of the faith.

One report recommendation was to use the entire assembly process (arrival, service, refreshments and departure) as one holistic assembly entity encompassing teaching, worship and fellowship. Within the secular school system such emphases would be in line with the NSWQTM’s Learning Environment dimension (NSW DET 2003).

Finally, the report also described how the services “should not be designed to interest, entertain, attract or intrigue non-Christians” (Woodhouse 2008, p.33) which appears in contrast to the pedagogical ideas of modern educators (Canning 2004; Department of Education and The Arts, Queensland 2001a; Gore & Ladwig 2006; Herrington & Bunker 2002; Ladwig 2004). In particular, with reference to postmodern culture, Tomlin (2002) stated:

> unless there is something about services or Christians or Christian faith that intrigues, provokes or entices, then all the evangelism in the world will fall on deaf ears … Churches need to become provocative, arresting places which make the searcher, the casual visitor, want to come back for more. (pp.10–11)

SYDNEY DIOCESE EDUCATION POLICIES

In 2003 the Standing Committee of the Sydney diocese requested a diocesan policy statement on education to be prepared for consideration (ACA, Diocese of Sydney 2007a). Within this document was a definition of Christian education which stated that education was “any activity which is informed by a biblical theology and worldview, and which promotes teaching and learning” (p.4). With respect to education within parishes the statement identified several key areas including parish-based education programs, training of the laity for leadership roles, high-quality theological and pedagogical education for ministry candidates, ongoing professional development for clergy and laity, gospel presentation through preaching and teaching, and the development of talents within the congregation. Policy amendments in 2006 included a statement indicating lifelong learning to be the responsibility of the learner. These policy statements set the foundation for rector training within the Sydney Anglican diocese.

Rector Training in the Sydney Anglican Diocese

Rector training has several distinct phases, each of which will be discussed in this section (see Figure 2.15).

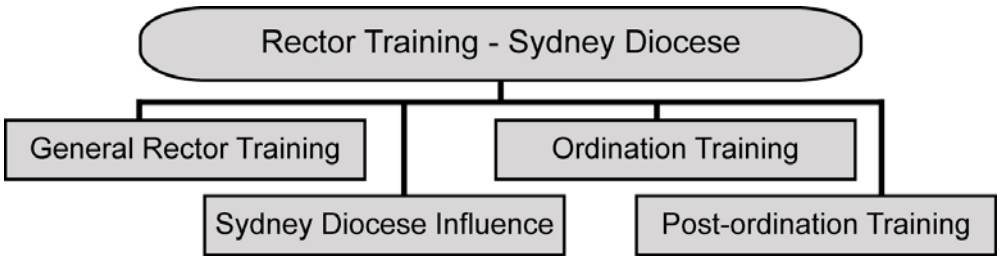

Figure 2.15 – Rector Training section map

GENERAL RECTOR TRAINING

Before focusing on rector training in the Sydney Anglican diocese, a brief background to rector training internationally will be presented. This will assist in understanding the similarities to and differences from the Sydney Anglican diocese.

Stott (Briefing, 2002) recalls that prior to 1977 clergy proclaimed the gospel message in the context of services of hymns and prayers, under the assumption that

all attendees had some form of background knowledge of the gospels. Today that assumption is void as many young people are biblically illiterate, thus compelling clergy to change their level of biblical teaching and preaching. Calian (1977), in his article on clergy, reinforcing the primary work of the rector as pastor-theologian, however, points out that many rectors prefer to be organisational administrators.

The demographics of the rectors themselves have also changed over the past 100 years. Traditionally, as outlined by Kirkaldy (1992), ordination candidates entered theological college either directly after finishing university or at a very young age. Today many people experience a career or profession before entering the ministry, resulting in much older groups of candidates than in previous years. Also, prior to the 1960s the vast majority of candidates were single men, while now the majority are married, often with children.

Wanak's (2000) paper on 21st century theological education pointed to the fact that Western theological education has focused predominantly on doctrines addressing eternal and church matters to the exclusion of issues such as poverty, justice, healing and oppression. This leaves rectors ill-equipped to teach theology that is relevant to the listeners. The Asia-Pacific region, however, according to Wanak (2000) is growing in theological studies far faster than the West. Korea, for example, lays claim to the largest seminary in the world, while the Philippines has over 300 Bible schools and seminaries. This massive growth will, Wanak suggests, eventually influence how Western rectors are taught and many Western students will attend Asian seminaries seeking to learn from the successes of the Asian church.

When asked about their seminary training, nearly 26% of rectors partaking in the USA Effective Christian Education (Benson 1991) research stated that they undertook one or less courses of study in Christian education. Over 3% of respondents stated that they did no seminary training. Miller (1997) similarly found that in non-denominational churches most are led by non-seminary trained or non-seminary graduated leaders. This lack of theological training is in stark contrast to the rector training undertaken in the Sydney Anglican Diocese.

SYDNEY ANGLICAN DIOCESAN INFLUENCE

It is important to state at the outset that only men can be ordained rectors in the Sydney Anglican diocese. Therefore, all references to rectors will be male.

To become a rector in the Sydney Anglican diocese (ACA, Diocese of Sydney 2009) a candidate must undertake four years of study and be ordained a deacon. After further study and experience he is ordained a presbyter, at which time he can obtain a position as a rector of a parish. In this capacity he has considerable freedom over the activities of the parish, including raising finances, staffing and parish governance (ACA, Diocese of Sydney 2009).

The Sydney Anglican diocese (ACA, Diocese of Sydney 2007b) fully supports the provision of “quality reformed Evangelical theological and pedagogical education as a preparation for Christian ministry and service” (p.68). Further, the diocese supports post-ordination training, considering it valuable and a necessity for “ongoing professional development of clergy” (p.68). However, Standing Committee report 26/99 (ACA, Diocese of Sydney 1999) indicated that there was no model for clergy professional development considered suitable for the diocese.

In the Sydney Anglican diocese, all rector training is undertaken at Moore Theological College (MTC) (2004) through the four-year Bachelor of Divinity (BD). Prior to 2006, however, the three-year Bachelor of Theology (BTh) was sufficient for ordination candidates. This distinction is important, since this study focuses on current rectors, and those beginning their studies in or after 2006 will not yet have taken up rector positions and, as such, are not included in this study.

According to the MTC handbook (2007), study at the college focuses on the traditional areas of “knowledge and understanding of God through the rigorous, methodical and reflective study of his written word” (Moore Theological College 2007, p.27). This is in line with the college’s belief that the main tasks of pastoral ministry are “to teach the Scriptures and to pray” (p.27). This definition is far briefer than that raised in the General Synod of the Anglican Church’s Commission on Ministry and Training (Rodges, Kirkaldy & Stone 1990) report mentioned earlier.

The 2005 Sydney Anglican diocese yearbook (ACA, Diocese of Sydney 2005b) indicated the cohort of current rectors held more Bachelor of Theology (BTh) qualifications than the Bachelor of Divinity (BD), while many held only a Diploma of Ministry (Dip Min), which dealt primarily with parish activities and other ministry issues. It was not uncommon for those holding a BD or BTh to also hold a Dip Min since there was very little ministry training delivered in the BD or BTh at that time.

ORDINATION TRAINING

As mentioned earlier, all rector theological training was undertaken at Moore Theological College. Candidates were generally resident at the college, although Kirkaldy (1992) pointed out that, due to a lack of on-campus accommodation, some candidates were forced to find accommodation off campus. The combination of on- and off-campus students posed difficulties with the college's philosophy of being one living community incorporating traditions, Christian family values and academic fellowship (Kirkaldy 1992). Difficulties also arose because the learning process was considered to take place at all times, in and out of the classroom.

Entry into the Bachelor of Divinity for ordination candidates involved an initial interview with the college's principal, followed by another with a panel of college and diocesan representatives. The purpose of these interviews was to assess the candidate's Christian beliefs, aptitude for ministry and academic capacity (Moore College Theological 2007b). The college did not normally recognise non-academic prior learning for advanced standing, except in the case of some mature-age candidates. As well as interviews, candidates were required to work in an assistant position within a Sydney Anglican diocesan parish while studying at MTC.

Although the current BD is divided into three streams (biblical studies, Christian doctrine and Christian ministry), the training undertaken by current rectors was composed almost exclusively of theology. The assessment of this training was primarily through essay writing in conjunction with reflective diaries or reports. Presentation of sermons were also assessed and discussed. Apart from sermon delivery, there was little practical or on-job formal assessment dealing with other areas of teaching.

A review of the set and reference textbooks for the BD showed a major focus on sermon development and delivery, and delivering the gospel message through oral communication. There were no set or reference texts on adult learning, pedagogy or quality teaching in any form.

POST-ORDINATION TRAINING – DEACON

Practical training in parish-specific issues was one focus of the post-college Ministry Development Program (MDP). This program was delivered by the Sydney Anglican

diocesan Department of Ministry Training & Development (ACA, Diocese of Sydney 2009). The MDP program involved candidates attending 21 training days over three years, as well as yearly conferences.

After graduation from MTC, rector candidates were employed in ministry positions in parishes across the Sydney Anglican diocese. The MDP was intended to be complementary to the training offered in-parish by the supervising rectors, and aimed at producing teachers who would teach "what was in accord with sound doctrine, able to encourage and rebuke with all authority" (Noakes 2009, p.1). In support of this teaching method, Marshall (2003) pointed out that practical ministry leadership is "caught not taught" (p.3) and so when a rector trained a rector candidate, this supervising rector could maintain high-quality control of the training and better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate. Such an apprenticeship model, though labour intensive, had, according to Marshall (2003), the potential to produce rectors who had quality knowledge, skills and commitment. In the Sydney Anglican diocese there was no formal supervisor training programs available for existing parish rectors.

By the beginning of the MDP program, candidates were assumed already competent in initiating and maintaining ministry to individuals and small groups, and to be experienced in conducting large group ministry and preaching. Therefore, the program focused on personal issues such as assisting candidates to identify "their ministry strengths and limitations [and] awareness of their self in relation to others" (Noakes 2009, p.1), as well as developing skills and habits for ongoing self-initiated training. Overall, only two of the stated program outcomes dealt specifically with parish duties; these were to demonstrate "theologically principled ministry competence [and being] well prepared for incumbency" (Noakes 2009, p.1). Other topics briefly covered included the role of the rector, preaching, discipling, leadership, parish management and the sacraments.

SUMMARY PART 2

Part 2 of this chapter looked at the policies and programs within the Sydney Anglican diocese that impacted on teaching within the individual parishes of the diocese. It also briefly reviewed the training process for parish rectors.

In the Sydney Anglican diocese rector training was shown to consist predominantly of theological studies, with a small element of practical training through the Ministry Development Program. Teaching for rector duties, other than delivering sermons, was shown to be secondary to sermon delivery and less informal and less structured than theology studies.

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with a review of the literature concerning quality teaching as described by the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model (NSWQTM), which was chosen as the quality standard for this study. The justification for applying this model was the proposal that teaching in church parishes acted in similar ways to that of secular schools. In the dimensions of intellectual quality, quality learning environment and significance, the literature showed high levels of similarity between the two institutions. The literature also showed that in the primary goals and leadership areas, schools and parishes acted congruently, making the use of the NSWQTM justified for this study.

This chapter also looked at literature regarding school and learner achievement and improvement, showing that the quality of teachers and leadership were important factors in success. Further, the establishment of learning communities strengthened the learning environment and positively affected student learning. Various aspects of learning communities were investigated, as well as their relevance to parish teaching.

Two prominent studies, one concerning theological education for rector candidates and the other focusing on parishes and rectors, were included in this chapter. These gave useful background for understanding issues affecting rectors and parishes from several denominations across Australia. These studies were followed by a more detailed review of parish learning environment structures and learning cultures, which showed the diversity and complexity of parish education. There was little evidence within the literature to show that any particular combination of structure and culture was superior over any other, and that every combination had its own strengths and weaknesses.

The standard for parish viability chosen for this study was parish service attendance. A review of the current literature indicated that leadership, and the culture it

produced, was by far the most influential factor affecting service attendance, while personal relationships were the strongest factor influencing people to join a particular parish.

Part 2 of this chapter looked specifically at the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia, its structure, education system and rector training. This was achieved by reviewing studies undertaken by the Sydney Anglican diocese, its policies and practices, and its rector training system centred in Moore Theological College.

The literature showed a strong diocesan administration structure of regions and parishes, and formal, in-depth theological training for rector candidates. Parishes were seen as places of learning where congregation members listened while rectors presented sermons. Furthermore, parish growth was seen as being influenced by biblical teaching and congregational participation.

The chapter ended with a review of the literature relating to rector training within the Sydney Anglican diocese. It showed that although theological studies were in-depth and formal, ministry training was informal and dependent on the abilities of the supervising rectors.

Conclusion

The nature of this study required a broad review of a number of related topics from Christian history to secular school achievement. This review allows the reader sufficient background knowledge to understand the importance of teaching within the Christian faith and its relationship to school teaching.

The next chapter provides details of the methodology used in this study. It explains why various techniques were selected, and how the data was collected and analysed.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether a relationship exists between the quality of teaching used in parish services and the viability of the parish. To investigate this issue the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model (NSWQTM) was chosen as the framework for quality teaching, while service attendance was chosen as the indication of parish viability. Three parishes from the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia participated in this study. Finally, a number of key people associated with parish learning and rector training were also interviewed. It should be noted that this was not a theological study, but rather an investigation into teaching practices within parish services and their effect on parish viability.

This chapter presents the study methodology and the rationale behind the selection of the data collection methods. It also provides details of the data analysis techniques and methods used to address ethical issues.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the chapter structure that commences after this introduction.

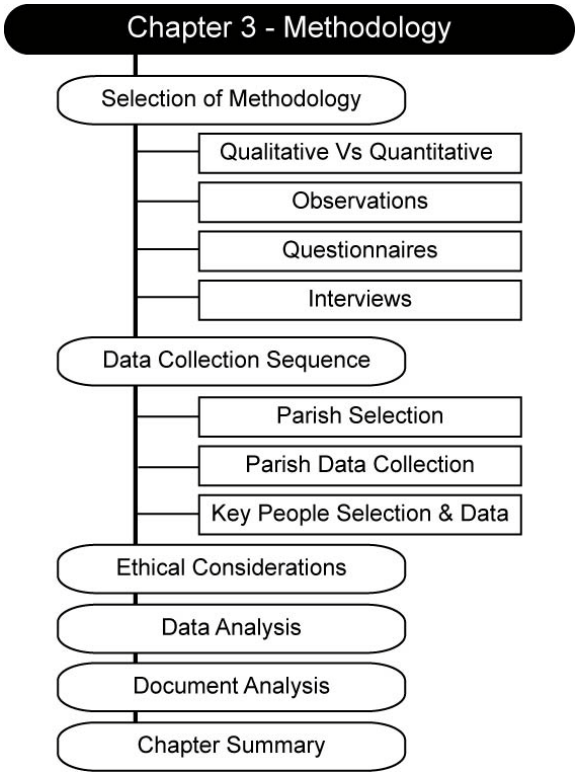

Figure 3.1 – Chapter 3 map

As stated previously, the primary question for this study was:

> Is there a relationship between the quality of teaching used in parish services and the viability of the parish?

In conjunction with this question, four subquestions were also posed.

> **Subquestion 1**
> What aspects of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model are evident in the design and delivery of parish services?
>
> **Subquestion 2**
> What effect does the use of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model principles have on the viability of the congregation?
>
> **Subquestion 3**
> To what extent does personal learning influence an individual's decision to join a particular congregation?
>
> **Subquestion 4**
> What form of teacher training, both initial and ongoing, do parish rectors undertake?

The methodology chosen reflects the nature, focus and depth of these study questions.

Selection of Methodology

QUALITATIVE VERSUS QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Since the 17th century quantitative methods have dominated research practices, with an emphasis on measurement and quantification. Baum (1995) points out that quantitative methods are best suited to research that asks questions such as 'how many?', 'how often?', 'how much?' or 'what change?'. Answers are achieved through predefined variables and experimental methods. The ultimate aim, as explained by Draper (2004), is to test hypotheses and to establish laws of cause and effect.

This current study does not focus primarily on quantitative measurements but, rather, on individual opinions, actions and situations. In addition, since learning environments differ among parishes, it is difficult to predefine variables. These characteristics indicate quantitative methods may not suit this study. Bakeman and Gnisci (2006) also agreed that quantitative methodology is too restrictive for social research and may in fact lose potentially interesting behaviours and sources of information. Such losses may occur when inconsistencies or non-responses are treated as missing data, which, according to Kvale (1965), may in fact reveal important information about the study subject.

Despite the negative issues identified by Kvale (1965) and Bakeman and Gnisci (2006), quantitative methods have been used previously in parish research; such as the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Survey (Larsen 2007), conducted to ascertain the level of internet use among churches. The literature (Carroll 2007; Dalseno 2002; Newlyn 2006; Rabinowitz & Weseen 2001) also shows that using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods can complement each other and enrich the understanding of the study focus.

Qualitative research has been described by Draper (2004) as research that seeks to understand and explain beliefs and behaviours within a particular context. Camic, Rhodes and Yardley (2003) extend this definition by adding that qualitative research is a holistic analysis of complex, dynamic and exceptional phenomena and that, through qualitative exploration, new theories about the subject can be developed.

In the case of parish services, the service phenomena is not rigidly performed across the diocese, but may vary tremendously from congregation to congregation and service to service. Further, the service context is rich in narrative, experiences and personal values, which suits Draper's (2004) description of qualitative research. Similar to quantitative methodology, qualitative methodology has previously been used in the study of parish service attendance (Hall 2006), religious systems (Dornan 2004) and other aspects of religious practices (Barnett 2005; Black 2008).

A review of the literature on quantitative and qualitative methodologies led to the selection of a qualitative methodology for this study. The rationale for this decision and ultimately the selection of the case study methodology is outlined below.

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Under the umbrella of qualitative research (Burns 1990; Creswell 1998; Draper 2004; Gibson *et al*. 2004; Mertens 2005; Patton 2002; Sandelowski 1995; Sanghera 2006; Stewart 1998) are many distinct methods, including phenomenology (Embree 1997), portraiture (Davis 2003), multimethods (Schmitt 2006), grounded theory (Black & Rabins 2007), ethnography (Carter 2008), discourse analysis (Camic, Rhodes & Yardley 2003) and hermeneutics (Hall 2006). Several of these qualitative methodologies were considered for use in this study. A summary of those considered appears in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 – Summary of Qualitative Methods

Name	Advantages	Disadvantages
Phenomenology	Illustrates specific phenomena as perceived by participants.	Relies on the perceptions of participants only. Can not generate deductions from propositions that can be empirically tested.
Portraiture	Creates narratives that authentically portray the stories under focus. Combines all information into a single balanced narrative.	Can not test existing theories or relationships.
Ethnography	In-depth study that can identify relationships between cause and consequence in the context of human behaviour.	Requires intense and continuous observation over an extended time period.
Multimethod (triangulation)	High validity in study outcomes due to triangulation of data.	Time and cost constraints. Problems in interpretation particularly when findings are inconsistent.

Several of the qualitative methodologies, such as phenomenology (Dornan 2004; Hall 2006) and various forms of ethnography (Bainbridge 2000; Kelley 2007; Ostrowski 2006), have previously been used in religious or church studies. Others, such as portraiture (Davis 2003) whose intent is to create coherent narrative, are unsuited to studies designed to test specific theories or ideas, such as this study.

The strength and diversity of ethnographical methods made it an ideal choice for this present study, with case studies being the preferred method. However, the amount of time devoted to each parish case study was limited to once per week due to service schedules and thus were considered too shallow for a proper in-depth ethnographic study. To overcome this limitation a multimethod (triangulation) was chosen which consisted of observations, questionnaires and interviews. This combination increased the validity (Cohen & Manion 1980) of the study outcomes and the confidence (Black & Rabins 2007) in the conclusions drawn from the data. Further, in line with Cohen and Manion's findings, the complex nature of parish teaching make triangulation a most appropriate method, particularly as parishes operate on many different social, spiritual and emotional levels.

The three data collection methods (observation, questionnaire and interview) will now be discussed in more detail.

Observation

According to Brown (2006), observation as a research technique allows the researcher to collect in-depth information about a particular behaviour. However, such a method cannot generally be used to generalise across other similar situations. Brown also raises the problem of the Hawthorne Effect, where those being observed modify their behaviour while under observation.

Observations can be either qualitative or quantitative. In the latter case, as described by Wragg (2002), the observer counts the number of times a particular predefined event occurs during a particular time interval. This approach is useful for gathering such data as how many?, how long? and how often?, but it also limits the observer's ability to react to unexpected events. Despite this limitation, quantitative observation was designed into the first observation sheet (see Appendix 2) due to a need to compare liturgical elements and congregational participation between parishes. Service elements such as the sermon and service durations, type of service and service leaders were recorded on this sheet.

Qualitative observation, like other qualitative methods, allows the researcher the flexibility to discover aspects of complex situations that may be missed by other methods. Some scholars (Halkett *et al*. 2004; Meyers 2006) state that such observations enable the researcher to understand the life experiences of the subjects. However, Sanghera (2006) warns that such observations on their own are

liable to researcher bias and can be restrictive. Nevertheless, the second observation sheet (see Appendix 4) used qualitative techniques to gather data relating to the alignment of the delivered service to the NSWQTM. This was achieved by the use of a matrix that rated various elements of the parish services against the elements of the NSWQTM from 'Not Observed' to 'Competent'.

Throughout the observation periods, the observer-as-participant observation technique (Hughes 2000; Kawulich 2005) was used as the limited time frame and the intimate nature of religious services made it impractical to use participant or participant-observer techniques.

Questionnaire

According to Burns (1990) and others (Bell 1993; Creative Research Systems 2005; Mertens 2005; Woods 2006) there are many advantages of questionnaires over other data collection methods including low cost, elimination of recording errors by observers or interviewers, consistency of questions and the fact that confidential questionnaires often elicit more truthful responses. However, the inability to probe respondents and possible misinterpretation of questions can disadvantage the use of questionnaires.

Questionnaires, either descriptive or explanatory, are composed of combinations of various data collection questions, including closed, open-ended and scale (Burns 1990). These questions elicit different types of data and require different analysis techniques. Closed questions limit the choice of responses to two or more fixed and exhaustive alternatives. These questions allow greater uniformity of measurements and thus greater reliability than other question types, however, they can also force responses that are inappropriate or superficial. When considering the expected congregational responses, as well as the expected activities within services, closed questions were considered inappropriate except for demographic questions where only a limited number of responses were possible (for example, gender or age).

Open-ended questions that allow free expression from the respondent can produce rich and intense responses and allow flexibility to express personal experiences (Burns 1990). This wealth of information, however, makes coding difficult. Despite this drawback it was deemed necessary to allow respondents some opportunity to express ideas and feelings about various topics. This was especially important as spirituality and religiosity have a high emotional content.

Likert-scale questions were the primary question type used in the questionnaire, due to its ability to gather data on the respondent's attitude toward specific issues such as service elements. Burns (1990) points out that the advantage of these scales is that they are based entirely on empirical data regarding the subject's responses. They also are both a valid and reliable data collection method. The disadvantage of Likert scales is, however, that they are ordinal in nature, giving no indication of the degree of agreement. When the associated numerical values are tabulated the individual's total score has no clear meaning. Despite this, the use of such scales allows attitude comparisons across the parishes.

Interview

Various interview types have been used in different studies (Black 2008; Guion 2008; Stokrocki 2004) focusing on history, culture and focus groups with the aim of gathering data on personal perspectives. According to Burns (1990), interviews are particularly useful when data is required on a small number of complex topics. Black and Rabins (2007) state that interviews can also be useful when investigating topics that have received little attention in the past, since they allow the participants to tell their stories and share their experiences from their own perspectives. It can be seen that teaching within parish services fits both Burns' (1990) and Black and Rabins' (2007) descriptions, making interviews a useful tool for this study.

Davis (2003) points out that relationships can develop as a result of the interaction between the participant and the researcher during an interview that assists in the validity and accuracy of the data. However, Camic, Rhodes and Yardley (2003) point out that such a relationship may affect participants such that they modify their responses, behaviours and perceptions based on the interaction.

Of Opdenakker's (2006) four basic interview techniques, face-to-face and email were chosen for this study. The synchronous nature of face-to-face interviews and the fact that the majority of congregational interviews were to be conducted directly after the services assisted in eliciting spontaneous responses regarding teaching within the services. It also allowed voice intonation, body language and gestures to be noted for later interpretation and analysis.

Emails were used for key person interviews due to their asynchronous nature, which was considered less disruptive to these respondents. Although this technique removes the opportunity to observe gestures, body language, voice cues or

intonation, Shachaf (2005) showed this can actually reduce miscommunication caused by cultural diversity. Similarly, Joinson (2001) showed where respondents were visually anonymous it produced significantly more self-disclosure than for face-to-face interviews.

One advantage of interviews over other forms of data gathering techniques is the ability to control the sequencing of questions and the flexibility to alter questions or probe deeper as required. This latter point was particularly relevant for email responses since it provided the respondents more time to consider their responses.

The table below provides a summary of the data gathering techniques in relationship to the study questions.

Table 3.2 - Data Gathering Techniques Relation to Study Questions

Research Question	Data Collection Technique	Purpose	Target Group
What is the relationship between the quality of teaching used in the parish services and the viability of the parish congregation?	Observations, questionnaires, interviews	To compare the engagement, focus and attachment of the congregation to the services, and their satisfaction with various aspects of the parish services.	Congregation, service attendees
What aspects of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model are evident in the design and delivery of parish services?	Interviews	To understand how the ministers develop and design their parish services.	Ministers and ministry teams.
	Observations	To record exactly how parish services are delivered.	Parish services
What effect does the use of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model principles have on the viability of the congregation?	Observations	To compare service attendance patterns for various levels of compliance with the NSWQTM.	Parish service
	Questionnaires, interviews.	To determine the degree of alignment between the NSWQTM and the level of commitment of the service attendees and congregation.	Service attendees, congregation.
To what extent does personal learning influence an individual's decision to join a particular congregation?	Interviews, questionnaires	To determine if a pre-existing focus on education and learning predisposes a person to wanting a service where learning is prominent.	Congregational members and service attendees.
What form of teaching training, both initial and on-going, do parish ministers undertake?	Interviews	To compare minister training in regards to teaching with current secular teacher training.	Ministers, Moore College representatives, Sydney Anglican diocese representatives.

Data Collection Structure

As described previously, this study involved case studies of three Anglican parishes using observation, questionnaires and interviews. The process for data collection was as follows:

For each parish:

- Parish Selection
- Participation requests
- Initial rector interview
- First congregation observation
- Congregational questionnaire
- Participant interviews
- Second congregational observation
- Participant interviews
- Final rector interview

Key people

- Key people selection
- Key people interviews.

It should be noted that data gathering at parishes occurred at times which best suited the individual parishes, as determined by the rectors. Therefore, different parishes were at different stages of the case studies at any one time.

Each of the processes will now be expanded in detail for clearer understanding of the methods utilised in this study.

PARISH SELECTION

Parish selection was based on parish congregation attendance patterns. Attendance data was obtained from the Sydney diocese of the Anglican church yearbooks from 1998 to 2003. This data ceased to be publically available and was not included in

the yearbooks after 2003. Further general area data was obtained from the National Church Life Survey.

In an attempt to minimise the influences of other factors apart from teaching on the parishes, this study focused on stable parishes with similar structures. For this reason provisional parishes and those administered by a curate, rather than a rector, were excluded from the study. Similarly, those parishes focused on specific social subcultures were excluded. Finally, parishes with incomplete attendance data were also excluded.

Probability sampling (CEMCA 2008) and non-probability sampling (Cengage Learning 2005) were considered for parish selection. Since the former assumes a level of uniformity across the parishes that is not supported by the attendance patterns (ACA, Diocese of Sydney 2005), non-probability sampling was chosen. Specifically, a form of purposive sampling (Silverman 2005) was used in which parishes were selected according to their attendance patterns.

All Sydney Anglican diocese parishes were grouped according to whether their attendance patterns showed

- positive growth: attendance increased steadily over the study period
- steady state: attendance variations were small and variable over the study period, or
- negative growth: attendance decreased progressively over the study period.

One parish representing the strongest attendance values from each group was chosen for this study. Unfortunately, some of the initially selected parishes were reluctant to participate in the study. This required the reselection of some parishes, using the second strongest example from the appropriate groups.

PARTICIPATION REQUESTS

A letter was sent to each parish rector, outlining the details of the research (see Appendix 5) and requesting participation through the completion of a consent form

(see Appendix 6). A follow-up email was also sent to the rectors of each selected parish.

INITIAL RECTOR INTERVIEWS

The initial rector interviews were conducted between the interviewer and the individual parish rectors. They consisted of 22 questions focusing on the general overview of the parish ministry and particulars relating to the rector's background and training. The semi-structured interviews were recorded onto an interview sheet (see Appendix 1) and, where applicable, digitally recorded and transcribed.

FIRST OBSERVATION

The purpose of the first observational session was to understand the general structure within the church. One observation sheet (see Appendix 2) recorded the structure of the service, congregational participation and engagement, liturgical elements and duration of specific service sections.

The observation sessions commenced fifteen minutes prior to the commencement of the services to allow time for assessing the parish environment and observing the congregation as it entered the service building. Observations were also made of the congregation leaving the building and interactions after the services. The full length of observation sessions was therefore between one and two hours (approximately) depending on the length of the services.

Documents relating to the services and support activities of each parish, when available, were gathered for later document analysis. Similarly, two of the three parishes provided this study with their National Church Life Survey (NCLS Research 2006) results for comparison.

CONGREGATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaires were used to gather data on the participants' attitudes to various parish teaching and related topics. The questionnaire (see Appendix 7) consisted of 32 questions, divided into four sections. The first section (Church Services General) aimed to gather evidence about parish services in general and covered the respondents' attitudes to the importance of various aspects of parish services and

their reasons for attending parish services. The second section (This Church Service) was aimed gathering information pertaining specifically to the service under observation. This section focused predominantly on the respondents' satisfaction with various elements of the service. The third section was only completed by regular members of the parish congregation and related to reasons why the respondents' continued to attend the parish services. The final section (General Information) gathered evidence relating to the respondents' demographics, including age, education level and Biblical knowledge.

To ensure validity and reliability the questionnaires were piloted by a selection of three individual members from a parish congregation not associated with this study. The respondents were asked to specifically identify the time taken to complete the questionnaire, the clarity of the instructions, the relevance of the questions from a congregation member's perspective and the ease of completion. As a result of the trial, adjustments were made to some questions and to the specific statements regarding navigating through the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were distributed to every adult member of the participating congregation who attended the service and, in some cases, also to those assisting in service support activities. The same questionnaire was provided to regular service attendees and service visitors, although not all sections were required to be completed by visitors. After the completion of the questionnaires the sheets were collected by the researcher prior to the congregation leaving the church building. The completion of the questionnaires took between twenty and thirty minutes. Combined with the introductory explanation the entire process lasted approximately 35 minutes.

CONGREGATIONAL INTERVIEWS

A convenience sampling approach (Patton 1990) was used to select congregation members for the individual interview sessions. This method suited the time and resource restraints of this study. The interviews were designed to expand on the questionnaire data and were divided into three sections. The first section focused on the respondents' attitudes to the overall ministry at the specific parish. The second section focused particularly on the learning environment within the parish and reflected the NSWQTM teaching environment elements. Section three focused on significant and substantive communication within the parish. These structured

interviews were recorded on an interview sheet (see Appendix 3) and were generally 30 to 40 minutes in duration.

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEWS

The second service observation session was designed to gather data on aspects of the NSWQTM used during the services. A structured observation technique was chosen to focus the observations and limit unnecessary data, as well as ensuring a uniformity of observation across all the case studies. For each element of the NSWQTM on the observation sheet (see Appendix 4) a grading scale of 'Not Observed', 'Minimum Use', 'Moderate/Limited Use' and 'Competent Use' was provided, with provisions for observer explanations.

Newsletters, event flyers, study notes, etc. provided to the congregation were collected at each observation session. Any other documents pertaining to parish activities were obtained from the rectors. After the observed service more congregation members were asked to participate in the individual interview sessions.

FINAL RECTOR INTERVIEW

The final rector interview consisted of 27 questions relating to the learning environment during services, learning significance and substantive communication across the parish. This interview also allowed for issues raised during the other data-gathering sessions to be discussed and/or clarified by the rector. The interview was recorded on an interview sheet (see Appendix 1).

KEY PERSON SELECTION

Several key people were also interviewed for this study. These people, not directly related to any of the case study parishes, were individuals who had previous experience with rector training, quality teaching or administration of parishes or dioceses. Each individual provided a unique insight into specific elements of teaching within parishes, both within and outside of the Sydney diocese. Their data provided balance and contrast between the data gathered from the parishes and the diocese.

The key people were initially selected through purposive sampling, on the bases of identified gaps in the study data and their expertise in these areas. Thereafter, a chain or snowball effect (Patton 1990) was used to identify other key people for this study.

KEY PEOPLE INTERVIEWS

The key people interviews were mainly conducted by email due to the distances and time constraints of the interviewees. The interviews spanned several weeks, over which time data was gathered to enhance the case study data. Interview questions were specific to the person being interviewed and related directly to issues raised from the research data. One interview was conducted in person, and lasted approximately two hours.

Ethical Considerations

Pseudonyms were used in this study to maintain confidentiality of all parishes, congregation members, rectors and interview participants. In the case of parishes, the pseudonyms in no way reflected any characteristics of the parishes or their congregations. Physical descriptions of parish buildings and amenities were also kept confidential, even though these may have impacted on the learning environments.

For confidentiality, all groups operating within parishes but outside of service times and focused on persons under the age of sixteen years were termed ‘youth groups’ regardless of the specific name given by the individual parishes. In the same fashion, children’s activities operating within service times were termed ‘Sunday school’ and adult activity groups apart from Bible studies were termed ‘home groups’.

Each rector was provided with information explaining the research (see appendices 5 and 8) and a consent form (see Appendix 6) to sign, indicating a willingness to participate. At each parish an explanation of the research was given during the first service and information sheets were provided (see Appendix 8). Information and consent sheets were also provided to interviewees (see appendices 8 and 9). No consent form was required for those people completing the congregational questionnaire as these were anonymous. All completed questionnaires, interview

transcripts and observation sheets were securely stored at the University of Wollongong.

Data Analysis

According to Draper (2004), qualitative research employs analytical induction which moves from observation and data collection to generalisation, and that the explanations should arise from the research findings. Draper states that the aim is to "look for the themes or concepts that emerge from the data themselves rather than imposing predefined coding categories" (2004, p.644). Thick descriptions are then used to locate individual phenomena within the structure of the situation.

Rabiee (2004) provided a five key-stage analysis process in line with the Framework Analysis described by Ritchie and Spencer (1994), which was composed of: familiarisation, identification of thematic framework, indexing, charting, mapping and interpretation. The advantages of using a framework-type analysis, according to Rabiee, is that it "allows themes to develop both from the research questions and from the narratives of research participants" (2004, p.657).

Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) outlined a five-step process for the analyses of qualitative data:

1. *Understand the data*: consider the quality of the data, its limitations and the level to which it may be analysed.

2. *Focus the analysis*: review the data with respect to the original purpose of the study.

3. *Categorise the information*: identify themes or patterns, and organise into coherent categories that summarise and bring meaning to the information.

4. *Identify patterns and connections within and between categories*: assess the relative importance of different themes, establish relationships and/or highlight subtle variations.

5. *Interpret findings*: attach meaning and significance to the analysis.

The analysis process chosen for this study is similar in structure to that of the five steps outlined above. However, like Burns (1990), who stated that the ultimate analysis goal is analysing the data in relation to the original propositions which underlie the study, this study analysis focused exclusively on the NSWQTM and the four research questions. In this way a systematic organisation of data allowed comparisons, contrasts and insights to be demonstrated. In line with Tesch (1990), however, who stated that the “analysis process is systematic and comprehensive, but not rigid” (p.95), the analysis of the first case study parish generated understanding and insight that was used on following studies.

As outlined above, the data analysis was undertaken in four primary stages beginning with understanding the data. In this study the data were considered with respect to type, quality and limitations. The observational data provided both qualitative and quantitative data relating to actual events that occurred within the church services, while interview data provided background information relating to the parish operation, rectors’ intentions and congregation members’ attitudes. Finally, questionnaire data provided information relating to the congregations’ interpretation and appraisal of teaching within services.

The limitations of these data vary according to the collection technique. The observational data for instance were limited to the observer’s observational proficiency, although this was assisted by using exact and detailed observation sheets. The interviews, again, were limited by the interviewer’s ability but, in the case of congregation members, may also have been limited by the interviewee’s association with the parish and congregation. Although the questionnaire’s layout provided specific options for each question, the responses may have been limited by the respondents’ concept of the expected Christian response rather than their personal response.

Perhaps the greatest limitation, and also the greatest challenge, for this study was soliciting congregants for interviews. Although many were happy to discuss the parish and its services, few were willing to be formally interviewed. This was particularly apparent in the negative growth parish and much less apparent in the positive growth parish. The reason for this reticence was not clearly apparent and may represent an area of further study.

The next analysis stage was to focus and categorise the data. As each data-gathering exercise was completed (interview, observation or questionnaire) the data were tabulated in a database (congregation interviews and extended response questions from questionnaires) or statistical analysis software (SPSS 14.0) format (ranking from questionnaires and initial observations). This process was assisted by using unique coding for each parish so that comparisons could be made between parishes. The combined observational sessions and the interview data were tabulated into matrices identifying alignment with the NSWQTM (see Appendix 10). When all observations were complete the data were transposed to a matrix that compared the parishes to the NSWQTM and to each other. All rector interview data was tabulated into one matrix comparing responses to the NSWQTM, while key person interviews were filed in individual folders (emails or transcripts) with important issues highlighted. Issues raised during the interviews were transcribed onto a MS Word table for comparison.

Pattern identification, the third analysis stage, used the comparisons above to identify patterns within the data, both within and between case study parishes. Further, case study data were compared to individual parish attendance data, to identify the relationship between quality teaching and parish attendance and thus parish viability. In line with Mertens (2005), who stated that “the researcher’s skilled personal judgement” (p.222) be used to decide what results the data represents, the researcher was required to use judgement in determining the alignment of parish teaching to the NSWQTM and parish viability.

Finally, in analysis stage four, the findings were interpreted against current literature regarding quality teaching. Findings were also assessed for importance and relevance to the study of parish growth and quality teaching.

Document Analysis

As mentioned above relevant documents were gathered during observation sessions for later analysis against the NSWQTM. This action is supported by methodological literature (Burns 1990; Davis 2003; Kawulich 2005; Patton 1990) that reaffirms the use of documents as sources of valid data within case studies.

According to Burns (1990) the analysis of documents must be undertaken with the understanding that they may be inaccurate, contain bias and were written with a

specific audience and purpose in mind. Taking this into consideration, Hall (2003) suggests collecting and analysing documents produced by the case study participants by looking specifically at what was written, why it was produced, what was missing from the documents and what they say about teaching. The analysis of documents in this study followed this suggested pattern.

Information relating to teaching identified in the documentation was added to the specific parish observation matrix (NSWQTM alignment) as additional alignment evidence.

Chapter Summary

Multimethod case studies utilising a triangulation of observation, questionnaires and interviews were the basis of this study. The purpose of which was to investigate the relationship between quality teaching, as expressed in the NSWQTM, and parish viability, as indicated by parish attendance patterns. Data were gathered from parish rectors and their congregations, as well as key individuals associated with parish teaching, rector training or parish viability. The three case study parishes each represented a different form of parish growth (negative, steady or positive), while being led by a rector who represented the primary parish teacher.

Results from the case studies and key people interviews are detailed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 – Study Findings

Part 4A – St Ethel

Chapter Introduction

Navigation

For ease of reference, this chapter has been divided into four subchapters (parts A–D). The first three parts present the findings from the case study parishes and the final part presents a summary of the themes and issues derived from the first three parts. Figure 4.1 gives a visual representation of this chapter structure.

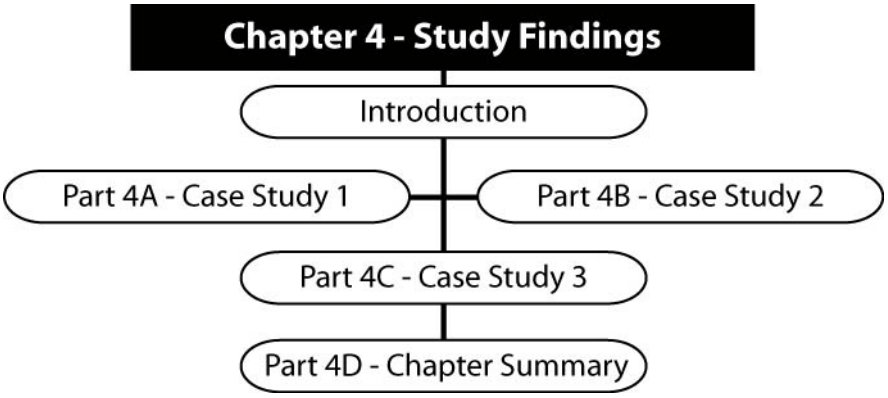

Figure 4.1 – Chapter 4 map of associated parts

In the first three parts (parts 4A–4C) the basic chapter structure is the same (see Figure 4.2). Commencing with a brief review of the parish background, each part then presents the case study findings in relation to the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model (NSWQTM) and related teaching elements. Finally, the parish attendance patterns and associated information are presented. Each subchapter part concludes with a case study summary and conclusion.

The congruency of structure in the first three subchapter parts allows ease of comparison between case studies and with the primary study question.

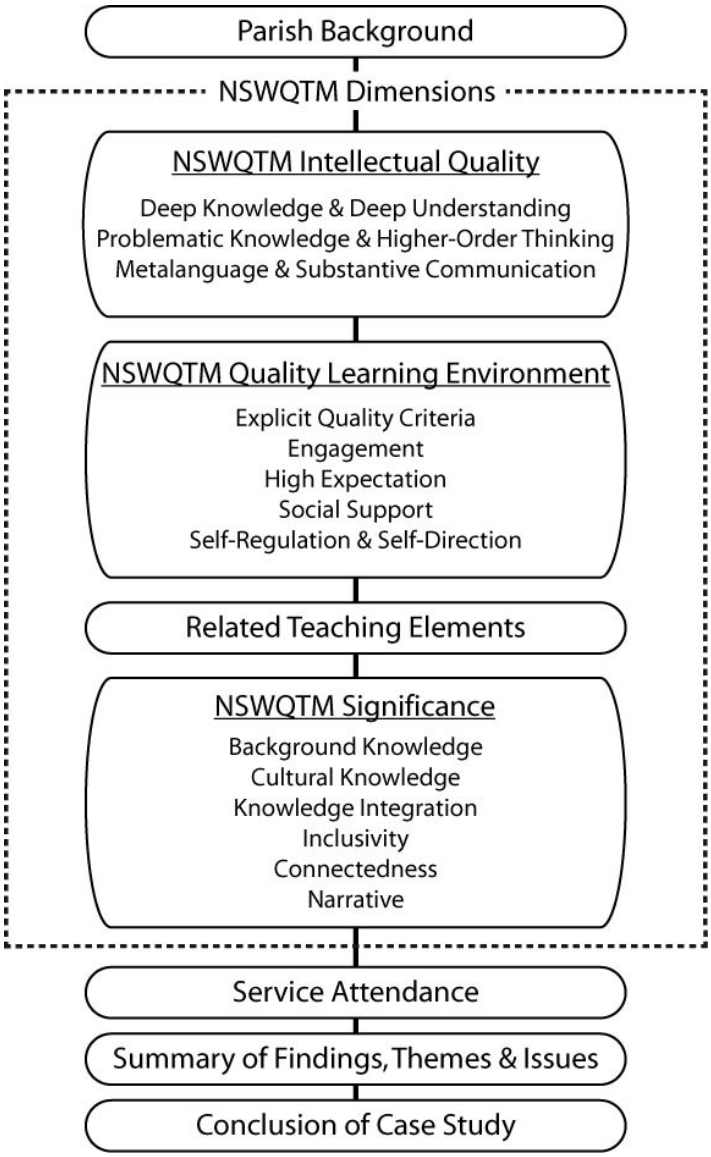

Figure 4.2 – Chapter 4 part map

Study Background

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there is a relationship between quality teaching used in parish services and the viability of the parish. The NSWQTM was chosen as the quality teaching standard, while service attendance was chosen as the indicator of parish viability.

Additional elements were included with the NSWQTM to take into account the predominantly adult nature of parish congregations. These additional elements were derived from the Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling (Alton-Lee 2003) report, developed by the New Zealand Ministry of Education. These elements

included: learning cycles, curriculum goals, feedback and support, individual work (homework), constructive engagement in assessment, and alignment of teaching and school practices.

To understand the relationship between quality teaching and parish viability this study asked four related questions:

Subquestion 1
What aspects of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model are evident in the design and delivery of parish services?

Subquestion 2
What effect does the use of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model principles have on the viability of the congregation?

Subquestion 3
To what extent does personal learning influence an individual's decision to join a particular congregation?

Subquestion 4
What form of teacher training, both initial and ongoing, do parish rectors undertake?

Three parishes from the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia took part in this study. Data from these congregations were gathered through direct service observations, interviews with rectors and congregation members, and congregation-completed questionnaires. The interviews and questionnaire asked respondents to provide information about service content, planning and delivery, as well as the associated parish teaching structures. Congregation respondents were also asked for their reasons for joining, and remaining as part of the specific parishes.

Interviews were also undertaken with key individuals associated with the Anglican Church of Australia or theological education within Australia. The general demographics of the surrounding communities in which the parishes resided was obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Although this is not a theological study, to understand parish teaching it is necessary to consider the relationship between the traditional Christian religion and teaching, where the concept of learning is not limited to the transfer of knowledge and facts alone. In addition, it encompasses all aspects of the believers' lives, including their perceptions and interactions with others. The Christian religion sees learning as a lifelong endeavour termed 'spiritual growth', and places as much emphasis on attitudes and actions as it does on knowledge acquisition (Stott 2007, Gibbs and Bolger 2005). Due to this focus, many aspects of Christian learning, such as social support, are in themselves topics of learning rather than simply supports for learning. These learning experiences are integral to the Christian faith, which underpins the actions and attitudes of its members. This focus on Christianity, however, makes it difficult to compartmentalise learning as structured in the NSWQTM. Therefore, throughout the case studies, learning issues or events may appear in several NSWQTM elements for varying reasons.

The NSWQTM was designed using school terminology such as 'student' and 'teacher'. In this study the terms have been changed to 'congregation' and 'rector' or related terms as appropriate. The term 'viability', as it applies to the case studies, refers to the size and numerical growth of the congregation, as measured by service attendance patterns. For anonymity, pseudonyms have been used for names of parishes and individuals.

In the case studies, individual congregations within the diocese are termed 'parishes', even though they may relate to only one congregation in a parish of several congregations. The Anglican Church of Australia, Sydney diocese, will be termed 'church', with other dioceses or whole church bodies being distinguished where necessary. The term 'service' refers to the main regular Sunday worship gathering and any support structures or activities that add to or promote teaching within the gathering.

It should also be noted that the responses to the congregation questionnaire might have been influenced by the respondents selecting the expected Christian answers. This form of pretest sensitisation (Mertens 2005) may have been reduced if the Likert-scale questions were replaced by asking the respondents to rank the various issues against each other.

Case Study #1 – St Ethel

Background

St Ethel's congregation was very similar to that of the surrounding community in ethnicity, marriage status and occupations. However, while 25% of the surrounding community indicated Anglican church affiliations, St Ethel attracted proportionally far less young adults than in the surrounding community.

In the three years following 1998, St Ethel's parish showed a steady congregation size of around eighty people. However, following this period the parish went through a turbulent time in which the congregation's size dropped considerably. At the beginning of 2007 the parish had a change of rector, which revitalised the parish and steadily increased the congregation to its present 150 members.

According to the rector, Henry, St Ethel had two services delivered each Sunday. The main service started at 10:00 am and was advertised as a family service, which included a Sunday school. The second service, which catered for youth and young adults, commenced at 5:00 pm with a meal followed by worship at 6 pm. The main morning service generally attracted around 110 people while the youth service catered for approximately 40 people.

The parish ministry leadership consisted of the rector, an administrator, wardens, youth minister, children's workers, licensed lay readers and a catechist. The congregation participated in the running of the parish through voluntary duty rosters, parish band, singing group and Sunday school duties.

During the service observations, 72 adults and 26 children, under the age of sixteen, were present. The service itself lasted for 90 minutes, with the sermon lasting 38 minutes (42% of the service). Prayers (5 min), notices (7 min) and a baptism (15 min) were all included in the service.

As explained earlier, the NSWQTM divides quality teaching into three dimensions: intellectual quality, quality learning environment and significance. Each dimension has several subsets known as elements. The strength of the elements within a learning situation indicated the quality of the learning experience.

NSWQTM Dimensions

NSWQTM Intellectual Quality Dimension

Intellectual Quality	
Elements	Deep Knowledge & Understanding Problematic Knowledge Higher-order Thinking Metalanguage Substantive Communication

This first dimension of the NSWQTM involves teaching based on promoting high levels of intellectual quality. This dimension is further divided into: deep knowledge and understanding, problematic knowledge, higher-order thinking, metalanguage and substantive communication.

This dimension, more so than the others, focuses on the personal learning of the rector and congregation, and offers useful insights into the relationship between personal learning and service attendance.

Deep Knowledge and Deep Understanding Elements

Intellectual Quality
Deep Knowledge & Understanding Problematic Knowledge & Higher-order Thinking Metalanguage & Substantive Communication

Henry was ordained prior to the introduction of the Christian ministry topics in the Moore Theological College Bachelor of Divinity course, which included, among other topics, congregational relationships, and educational theories of learning, teaching and communication. Despite this, Henry saw himself as having "*the gift of the gab*" and saw his strengths in the areas of teaching, speaking and presentations. He attributed these abilities to his first assistant ministry position. He explained,

> *My first job in ministry was with a sharp rector who engaged with the people very, very well.*

Henry's teaching experience started prior to entering the ministry when he worked as a trainer and sales representative. From there he undertook formal training in the form of a Diploma of Applied Science and a Bachelor of Theology, and supplemented these with a basic Train-the-Trainer course. The knowledge and understanding gathered through these various courses was recognised by the congregation with the majority (38 of 47) seeing him as an excellent teacher and communicator, with *a* "*passion for the gospel and strong theological knowledge*".

The biblical knowledge and understanding of the congregation was described by one member as 'varied'. The majority of the congregation (21 of 47), however, rated their own knowledge as general (knowing something about the main events), with nearly 30% (14 of 47) rating it as good (knowing something about each book in the Bible). In general the congregation had a wide understanding of the various aspects of the faith as the following statement indicated,

> *I have a reasonable knowledge of Christian history, theology and Bible principles*.

As well as this level of Bible knowledge, six congregation members rated their Bible knowledge as very good (able to quote the important passages from memory), while one rated it as poor (not having read any of the Bible), creating a wide knowledge range within the congregation. Despite this, the congregation agreed (45 of 47) that learning and teaching was a very important or essential part of the parish services. Jay, a congregation member explained,

> *It's of primary importance to learn Bible facts during the services.*

Jack, another member, saw that "*learning Bible facts during the services was why people needed to be at services; it's the whole point*". However, not all learning topics were regarded as of equal value to all congregation members. Cindy, for instance, considered "*learning Christian beliefs to be not that important but history had a place*".

When asked about the main teaching method within services, one congregation member, Katrina, responded,

> *The most important part of the parish services is the sermon. It's a challenge to change and be taught; it's the focal point of God.*

The majority (33 of 47) of the congregation also agreed about the importance of sermons and their role in learning.

The secular educational background of the congregation also varied widely, from primary school only to postgraduate qualifications. The most common single education group was a degree, held by 21% (10 of 47) of respondents.

To ascertain knowledge currency, respondents were asked the approximate time period since their last formal study. The results were dominated by two groups of equal size (13 of 47 each); one indicating studies occurring in the last five years and the other for studies occurring over 20 years ago. Other responses included 6–10 years ago (10 of 47) and 11–20 years ago (5 of 47).

Explaining her educational background, Patricia, a congregation member, stated,

> *I have done university and various courses at parishes over the past 12 years. Also I teach Christian Development at an Anglican High School.*

Education levels were also reflected in the type of current employment in which members of the congregation were engaged. The largest occupational group for those still in the workforce were professionals (9 of 39), while teachers/educators, tradespersons and the self-employed accounted for around one-third (12 of 39) of the respondents.

The positive focus on learning within St Ethel was summed up by one member, who stated,

> *I feel I need to keep on reading, studying and learning by heart from all parts of the Bible.*

When asked whether attendance at parish services had increased their Bible knowledge, almost all (43 of 45) respondents agreed that it had increased. One

member, Abbie, felt that "*being a member of this congregation had encouraged me to learn more and it encourages me to do courses*".

The services which the researcher observed also confirmed the parish had a deliberate knowledge focus and, in the case of the rector, a strong level of understanding. To promote knowledge learning the sermon and service topics were stated during the services and written, along with the Bible references, in the weekly newsletter. There were frequent references to Bible information during the services, with the Bible's Old and New Testament being compared and interrelationships highlighted.

Further, Henry's understanding of the congregation's ideas and expectations were used by him to plan his services and, at the same time, infuse new knowledge and understanding into the congregation. Henry, explained,

> *The aim is to change the congregation's world view and to give them things to do during the week. It's what people want from a service*.

According to the congregation (45 of 47), the combination of learning and Christian growth was an important or essential reason why they continued to attend services at St Ethel. One congregation member extended this idea by including the combination of knowledge and understanding. He explained,

> *I will continue attending because of the content of the teaching information. It must be Bible-based, evangelical, protestant and presented clearly for all people to understand.*

The lack of quality knowledge and understanding was seen by some congregation members as a reason for leaving their previous parishes. Edward, one such member, explained,

> *I didn't believe that the rector was preaching God's word correctly and therefore I couldn't submit or sit under him*.

Another member, Jenny, and her family had a similar experience,

> *The preaching was missing the mark due to a new rector. We had family needs and needed good teaching opportunities*.

It can be seen from the above discussion that deep knowledge and understanding, and its encouragement, were important issues at St Ethel.

Problematic Knowledge and Higher-Order Thinking Elements

Intellectual Quality
Deep Knowledge & Understanding
Problematic Knowledge & Higher-order Thinking
Metalanguage & Substantive Communication

Higher-order thinking is expressed in the way information is analysed and organised, such as in the preparation of parish services and sermons, as well as support structures such as duty rosters. Henry displayed this higher-order thinking in his development of the parish's Bible reading program which was created twelve months in advance, taking into account seasonal events, conferences, special events and staff availability. From this program, four-monthly service duty rosters were developed, which included details of the Bible passages to be read and the assignment of duties for preaching, service leading, welcoming, praying, Bible reading and morning tea helpers. Other duty rosters for crèche, Sunday school, and music were developed separately.

Within the services, Henry displayed further higher-order thinking by his ability to compare the Bible's two major sections (Old and New Testament) and relate these to the sermon topics, and in the process interpreting the text from a biblical and cultural context. The congregation was also drawn into this thinking process by Henry's encouraging statements such as, "*Together, we will search out what the Bible says*".

The combination of this higher-order thinking with deep knowledge and understanding of biblical topics produced services and sermons that were appreciated by the congregation as illustrated by this comment by a parish member,

> *The sermons are good, helpful, bible driven, applicable, gospel focused, personal, engaging and educative*.

Not all congregation members were as impressed by the standard of sermons at St Ethel, with one member commenting that "*the sermon delivery was improving*".

Problematic knowledge centres on posing, discussing and solving of problems, whether they are intellectual, hypothetical or practical. The most obvious form of such problems, associated with parish services, was the asking of problem-based questions by either the service leaders or the congregation members. When asked about the importance of such questions, almost half (21 of 47) the congregation agreed that it was important for them to have an opportunity to ask questions during the services. This attitude was not, however, universally held, with 36% (17 of 47) of the congregation mildly to strongly against the practice of questioning within services. As a result of this latter opinion, hardly any questions were asked by the congregation members during the observed services.

In contrast to the congregation members' attitude to problem-based questioning, Henry stated,

> *We encourage an atmosphere where people feel comfortable enough to ask questions or make comments. I usually let people speak until they're finished unless it's disruptive to the service. We sometimes have a question time after the sermon, but I announce it before the sermon starts*.

In line with these ideas, Henry was observed asking several questions within the sermons and received a few short replies. To complement this type of questioning a Care and Communication card was provided to all service attendees on which questions or comments could be written. Completed cards were placed on the offertory plate during the service.

At St Ethel, ministry problems and parish organisation were ultimately Henry's responsibilities. Although several congregation volunteers organised rosters and music, all material was reviewed by Henry before it was used or distributed. Similarly, decisions regarding service topics were made solely by Henry, although suggestions were accepted for possible inclusion in the following year's service plan.

Sermons are perhaps the major service sections where higher-order thinking and problematic knowledge are evident. At St Ethel, congregation members occasionally delivered these sermons, which were generally appreciated by the congregation. Nevertheless, one such appraisal stated,

> *True things were said; right things were said, but the preacher's aim was not clear. He wasn't able to draw out the main points of the passage. He didn't speak to challenge people's wills. It was disconnected between the main points of the passage and its application*.

In general, higher-order thinking and problematic knowledge were evident in Henry's actions, service plans and ministry organisation. However, apart from a few congregation members who answered Henry's sermon questions, there was little direct evidence of these traits in the congregation.

Metalanguage and Substantive Communication Elements

Intellectual Quality
Deep Knowledge & Understanding
Problematic Knowledge & Higher-order Thinking
Metalanguage & Substantive Communication

The Christian religion uses a large degree of specialist words and phrases such as 'messiah', 'gospel' and 'salvation'. The investigation and use of specialist words in this way is known as metalanguage and is an integral part of biblical, as well as Christian, studies (Peetoom 1989; Throckmorton 1985). Imagery, parables and religious terminology are used throughout Christian services (Church of England 1978) and St Ethel was no exception. During the observed sermons, Henry explained terms such as 'sacrifice', 'submit' and 'priest', as well as introducing other words and explaining their meaning. While performing a baptism, which occurred during one observed service, Henry described and carefully explained each part of the ritual, including its associated meaning to the Christian faith.

In the sermon, Henry carefully chose words from the Bible passages under consideration and explained them, indicating both their Old and New Testament connotations, giving the congregation a clearer understanding of the concepts. This

technique was received well by the congregation, with the majority of the respondents (38 of 47) stating that the words Henry used were easy to understand and that his sermons were clear and comprehensible.

An area closely associated with metalanguage is substantive communication. According to the NSWQTM, substantive communication refers to a wide range of communication types, each providing deep levels of interaction. It also presumes an environment that supports and encourages this type of communication. At St Ethel, a wide range of such communication types were observed, including written text, PowerPoint presentations, and verbal presentation and discourse. The dominant form during the services, apart from verbal, was PowerPoint presentations that displayed all service-related information. Although the services were based heavily on the official Anglican text (Church of England 1978) all congregational responses were projected onto a screen, making a physical prayer book unnecessary. Despite this, a copy of the prayer book was handed out to each service attendee on entering the parish building, thus catering for different learning preferences within the congregation.

One congregation member stated that "*not a lot of audio-visuals were used during the sermons*". This was confirmed by Cindy who believed that "*more preacher movement and audio-visuals would be good during the sermons*". Similarly, George, considered the services could make wider use of the medium,

> *We need to make effective use of multimedia equipment and then it will be good in the future*.

However, some congregation members such as Victor were against its use altogether,

> *I don't really like the PowerPoint presentations and that's similar to the other older people*.

This diversity of views highlighted an important aspect of substantive communication, which was that it must connect to the various audiences, both intellectually and emotionally. The following comment reflects one congregation member's thoughts on the depth and connection of the communication types used at St Ethel:

> *I wish there was more prayers in the service that weren't from the prayer book. I don't like that the Bible passage is projected onto the screen as it discourages our own Bible reading. Also, sermons need to be persuasive and powerful as well as just true and right. Otherwise I love the down to earth feel of the service*.

Although the previous comment did not see Henry's sermons as persuasive, this was not a belief held by the majority of congregation members, as the following comment shows.

> *Our rector has exceptional gifts of being able to massage the congregation to consider other views and persuade them to accept and join in enacting one view they may or may not share*.

Similarly, Abbie (a congregation member) equated Henry's persuasive nature with his leadership style:

> *Our rector is prepared to lead and persuade rather than letting others call the shots. He is more than the guide by the side*.

Almost all the respondents (38 of 47) agreed that Henry guided them through leadership and teaching by his examples. They agreed that he was open and accessible for information or guidance. However, Jack felt that "*communication with our rector is a problem at times"*. This comment was echoed by a small number of respondents (5 of 47) who also rated Henry as difficult to talk to on some subjects. Despite this, the majority of the respondents (35 of 47) viewed Henry as easy to talk to on any subject. Such communication was observed prior to the parish services as Henry mingled with the arriving congregation, greeting and talking to them in a friendly and welcoming manner.

Henry adjusted his communication style to suit various age groups at St Ethel, with particular emphasis on children. On one occasion, just prior to the children leaving the service for Sunday school, a short puppet show was delivered to help the children understand what their lesson would contain and also to inform the parents and other service attendees of the topic so that they could reinforce the message later with the children. At the conclusion of the puppet show Henry encouraged the congregation to talk to the people seated next to them while the children left the

service room. This period of interaction replaced an otherwise disruptive period of the service with a positive experience.

Even though there were disagreements regarding some aspects of the services, as outlined above, the congregation was generally positive with regards to the services as a whole. Some saw the services as "*ordered and relaxed*", others as "*friendly and outwardly focused*", but overall there was general agreement that the services were of a good standard.

Communication at St Ethel was not limited to PowerPoint presentations and speech, as there was a wide range of written handouts provided at the beginning of the service or displayed in the entry hall. One item of importance was a folder designed to welcome visitors and new members. It contained information sheets specifically to inform visitors and new members of the activities and groups within St Ethel. Typical of these sheets was one outlining St Ethel's youth ministry. The sheet gave details of the purpose of the ministry, location and times of meetings, and other details necessary for attendance.

To support the services further, a newsletter was distributed weekly which contained the service topic, sermon outline, parish financial statement, prayer requests, event calendar and contact details of parish workers. The newsletter also contained a regular teaching section under the heading 'Thinking Christianly', where a topical issue was presented and some actions suggested. Similarly, the newsletter contained a regular 'Mission of the Month' section, focusing on the various mission work supported by the parish.

As mentioned earlier, one form of communication within St Ethel was through Care and Communicate cards. These cards had several purposes in that they contained sections for information requests, passing on information to the ministry team, changes to member's contact details, and an area to provide feedback to the rector about the services.

Prayers, the spiritual communication with God, are an important form of communication within the Christian faith. At St Ethel, most prayers used during the services were in the form of PowerPoint projected text from the service book, with only a few exemplary prayers. The prayer sections had durations of around five

minutes and contained few references to the lives of the congregation, which caused one attendee to comment, "*We need more praying for those in need*".

Prayer and preaching, both forms of religious communication, also played a role in the attendance of the congregation at St Ethel. One congregation member explained its connection,

> *As long as the Bible is preached faithfully and prayer plays a significant role I will stay*.

Such communication also extended to inviting non-parish members to attend parish services, which influenced parish attendance and thus viability. This was demonstrated at St Ethel by one congregation member who stated that he would invite people to the services because the parish had "*a focus on sharing the gospel*".

NSWQTM QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION

Quality Learning Environment	
Elements	Explicit Quality Criteria Engagement High Expectations Social Support Self-Regulation Self-Direction

The second dimension of the NSWQTM is Quality Learning Environment. The learning environment includes issues such as engagement, social support, quality criteria, self-regulation and direction, and expectations. It encompasses pre- and post-service activities, as well as the services, and is the most visual aspect of parish learning.

Explicit Quality Criteria Element

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

As mentioned earlier, biblical standards set the quality criteria for Christians as indicated by the following biblical verse (Timothy 3:16),

> All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.

The importance of adherence to these criteria at St Ethel was explained by Henry,

> *It is very important to learn objectively about God and preaching needs to be on, with and through the Bible. Everything is taken seriously*.

One congregation member, Richard, affirmed this attitude as he described why he and his family left their previous parish,

> *Children's ministry was not taken seriously enough as a teaching ministry; it was just baby-sitting.*

To emphasise his desire to maintain teaching in line with the Bible, Henry, on being appointed to the parish, changed all St Ethel's Bibles to a translation he considered closest to the original text in word and meaning. This adherence to authentic biblical standards was clearly displayed during one service where the sermon (How Christians should live according to God's standards) explicitly used biblical standards as its focal point (Ephesians 5:25,28).

Henry insisted that biblical standards should be reinforced in the parish. He explained this attitude,

> *It's essential that a biblical stance is taken on Bible matters. It makes the congregation stronger. This isn't parish at any cost.*

He went on to describe a hypothetical situation where a devout Christian wished to marry a non-Christian. He argued that he would refuse to marry the couple. Similarly, if a congregation member committed adultery and wanted to continue worshipping at St Ethel's parish with his/her new partner, Henry would confront them about their relationship. He explained:

> *You must have a relationship with them for a start. I first would talk with the person, reassuring them of my love for them and God's love. Then explain God's stand on the matter. If they won't listen then I'd have to ask them not to return to parish services. I'd speak personally to the people if they did return to parish service, telling them that they couldn't stay. I'd also explain the decision to other families who might be involved.*

Learning from biblical standards was also the wish of the congregation. Heather described the importance of this type of learning during the services,

> *We stop focusing on ourselves and the world around us once a week to focus on God. We do this because it's part of learning what God expects.*

Apart from the overall quality criteria of the Bible, St Ethel's rector also developed secondary, short-term goals relating to parish activities and outreach. As an example, one specific goal was to provide quality fellowship and worship times for men within the congregation. These actions had increased the number of men active within the parish.

Despite these various secondary goals being in place, some of the surveyed respondents were unsure of the current parish goals. Marcus explained:

> *I think that the parish has a main goal but it's not clearly articulated; it's evolving. Growth is the driving force at the moment.*

Cindy also considered that the "*parish goals were not mentioned a lot in the services*". Despite this, one respondent still saw the activities associated with St Ethel as originating from its goals.

> *The parish's outreach is led from the parish focus.*

The desire to remain focused on the core values of the faith was also a reason why some congregation members left their previous parish, as explained by Robert,

> *We left because the leadership was preoccupied with peripheral issues.*

Visitors to St Ethel also identified adherence to biblical values as a reason to return to the parish. One visitor explained,

> *I would return because it has great core values based on the Bible.*

Engagement Element

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

Engagement in learning, when associated with parish services, relates to the mental and physical involvement of the congregation and the ministry team in the service proceedings and the support structures that underpin the services. In most Anglican services there are set congregation responses that engage the attendees, such as prayers, creeds and liturgical statements. Singing and the sign-of-peace are also activities that engage the congregation.

In respect to the members of St Ethel's congregation, they were attentive throughout the 90-minute service, engaging in singing and service responses. Engagement was also observed during the 38-minute sermon, with the congregation punctuating some of Henry's statements with words, gestures or murmurs. One attendee explained her engagement with sermons in the following way.

> *During the sermon I follow mentally, assessing what is important. Previously I wrote notes during the sermon but found that I missed some of the sermon points while I was writing.*

Engagement in the form of comments, such as those voiced by congregation members during the service, were not appreciated by all members, as this comment shows,

> *I don't like people calling out comments in parish services.*

However, Heather, though recognising the possible disruption, had a different view,

> *It's not a healthy situation for a rector's words not to be challenged. I believe there are people in every parish who challenge.*

As a whole, however, the services were relaxed, as evidenced by the laughter and friendly comments made by the congregation during various parts of the service. The congregation also clapped in several sections including during a baptism and during the singing. Throughout the service only five people were observed not singing and three appeared distracted from the service for an extended period. All other attendees appeared to participate in the service to varying degrees.

Although the service text was projected for the congregation, the service structure was provided in paper form to all those assisting in the service delivery. This assisted in maintaining the overall flow and focus of the service, as explained by one participant,

> *The services flow very well; there's a flow sheet for all service people.*

In addition to service engagement, the congregation was encouraged by the service leaders to engage in activities outside of service times. Encouragement was also provided in the parish newsletter. A congregation member, Jack, elaborated,

> *With activities suggested during services I'm a bit 'yes/no' about them. I need encouragement. I do some of the easier suggestions like inviting a friend to an event but not things like door knocking. It depends on how it applies to me.*

Despite this reticence, another congregation member, Ted, saw engaging in parish suggested activities as important and a sign of commitment. Further, Ted suggested "*the greatest strength of this congregation was commitment*".

This commitment was further demonstrated by the parents of a child baptised during the service. As a sign of commitment to the congregation, they named the entire congregation as the child's godparents. This action made the congregation responsible to assist the parents in the spiritual raising of the child.

According to Heather, a congregation member for five years, sometimes commitment may be undermined by a low level of understanding,

> *The greatest weakness of this congregation is that they have a reluctance to believe that God can do big things here; it's their mindset on how big God can make things at this parish.*

The congregation indicated that Henry was strongly engaged with the congregation and parish services, even though "*he maintained time for his wife and family*". However, Marcus described one aspect of Henry's life that did raise concerns about his engagement:

> *Our rector's greatest weakness is his focus on bicycle racing. He sometimes schedules himself off services if there is a major race near by and encourages congregation members to join him.*

However, Marcus's comment was not representative of the entire congregation, with most (40 of 43) agreeing that Henry was fully engaged in guiding the congregation by leadership and example.

Engagement in parish services was strongly related to the reason why some congregation members attended services. David, a congregation member, explained,

> *I attend because I am a Christian, I wish to worship God and learn and be encouraged in God's word.*

Another member, Alan, described St Ethel as a "*Bible walking parish*". In other words, a parish where the congregation was actively engaged in putting the parish's teaching into practice. Alan thought that this was an essential reason why he attended the services.

A review of the parish duty rosters indicated that, although there were a large number of voluntary duties across the parish, only a few members were actively engaged in these duties. This meant that a small number of people were undertaking multiple duties, while a large number of members were not engaged in parish duties at all.

High Expectation Element

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

In the Christian faith, high expectations are set by the biblical doctrine and reiterated by the rectors. The congregations also set high expectations for themselves and their rectors. Such expectations are evident in biblical writing, such as “Be perfect, therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48), service liturgies (Church of England 1978) and songs, as well as social interactions and outreach programs.

As mentioned earlier, Henry set his standards by the Bible and set equally high standards for the congregation. One example of this was Henry’s expectation that the congregation would serve as witnesses to others, and encouraged the congregation to invite non-Christians to parish events. He related this outreach to the Bible’s standards during one service and concluded by saying, “*You can do this*”.

The same expectation was echoed in the newsletter regarding an upcoming parish event,

> *I’m planning to shout a few mates of mine, just to get them there. Our very purpose as a parish is found in this: to bring as many as possible with us into eternity with Jesus. It’s more important than anything, certainly worth a bit of rejection or being thought of as odd!*

In a similar way, Henry congratulated and encouraged the congregation for attending one service even though the weather was cold and wet. He stressed that this type of attendance was what was expected of people living by God's standards.

The newsletter also contained congratulations to several people for their performances such as Jay,

> A huge thank you goes to Jay who has brilliantly managed the whole project from start to finish.

and the maintenance volunteers,

> A big, big thank you to the large group of men and women who have ripped up and torn down and cleaned up, and those who provided morning tea and lunch. You are all greatly appreciated. The building looks spectacular!

The newsletter also encouraged the congregation to acknowledge the actions of others,

> There is a large card at the back of the parish today to thank John Wyclif for his time and encouragement at our last parish function. Please sign it if you were there.

Expectation, or its lack, was also a reason why one congregation member left his previous parish. He explained that he "*lost faith in the values of that parish*". A similar sentiment was expressed by another member, Edna,

> *The emphasis of the parish changed and not enough focus on God and his word; too much on 'I'.*

In a Christian setting, high expectations relate to the adoption of Christian beliefs into the lives of the believers. At St Ethel, the overwhelming majority (40 of 47) of the congregation stated that they did put into practice the service teaching. In a similar way, the majority of the congregation (39 of 47) stated that Henry provided guidance in applying these Christian beliefs.

Social Support Element

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

The command to provide social support is ingrained in the Christian faith as described by St Luke in the biblical book of the Acts of the Apostles.

> All who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. (Luke 90:2:44)

One member of St Ethel's congregation explained why such social support by members was imperative for the spiritual growth and sustenance of a congregation,

> *I believe a believer needs biblical teaching and fellowship with like-minded believers – iron sharpens iron.*

The social support at St Ethel began with the rector, who was described as loving, caring, friendly, honest and open. Cindy best summed up the feelings of the congregation toward Henry in the following way,

> *Our rector encourages people and really cares about people. He is interested in everybody and knows them all by name.*

Henry stated that he loved his congregation and that he missed them when he went on holidays. The warm welcome by the congregation on his return was an indication of the reciprocation of this sentiment by the congregation.

As mentioned previously, St Ethel's congregation went through various emotional highs and lows prior to Henry's appointment. Patricia, who had attended St Ethel's parish over the entire period explained,

> *Over the years my relationship with the other members of the congregation has changed. In the past the parish had a lot stronger*

> *relationships as it was smaller. It went through a period of turmoil, now it has good relationships and they are growing.*

This growth had changed some relationship dynamics within the congregation, particularly with new members, as explained by Victor,

> *I don't know everyone in the congregation because of the size and new people arriving all the time. The congregation as a whole is outward looking with friendships at various levels.*

Abbie was also positive about the congregation, seeing the members as friendly, welcoming and seeking to serve. These sentiments, however, were not shared by Brian,

> *I basically feel unloved; encouragement is low from the congregation.*

Brian's feelings were at odds with the general sentiment of other members, such as Victor, who saw the congregation as accepting of others. This was especially true in the case of post-service fellowship. In Cindy's opinion, "*fellowship after services and throughout the week I'd rate as essential*". Albert also described a particular form of support and encouragement in which he was engaged outside of the services,

> *I am just about to spend time on Sunday afternoons with a friend who has just become a Christian to talk about the Bible.*

St Ethel's parish had several Bible study groups which were attended by 72% (34 of 47) of the congregation. According to one member, Jack,

> *It helps with the unity of the whole congregation. Also, Henry supports and values the Bible study groups.*

The services at St Ethel were also a source of social support for the congregation. Helena, who led the singing, described the congregation's attitude to the services in this way,

> *The services are ordered, relaxed and friendly. I think the sermons and services are a source of pride for our parish and not a bad kind of pride.*

Social support was not limited to face-to-face contact, however. The regular weekly newsletter detailed several instances where the congregation was asked to pray for particular people or events, complementing the formal teaching. For instance,

> Please continue to pray for those with long-term needs … Pray for Karen as she mourns the loss of her husband … Please pray for Jacky as she gives the children a talk from the Bible at preschool this week … Pray for Jay, Helen, Kalah and Josh for diligence and concentration during their exams.

To reinforce the idea of social support, St Ethel's parish compiled a parish directory which was published each year. The directory contained the contact details of all regular members of the congregation. From the directory the rector created a roll that he marked each week. By using the roll Henry could keep track of who attended the services and followed up those who were absent for several services. Despite the roll, however, Henry was concerned about ministry organisation,

> *We need to develop the organising better. A lot of people are falling through the ministry cracks in care, teaching and gifts. We need more of a cradle to grave focus, building on encouraging community based on God and something for kids the whole way through.*

The above discussion indicates St Ethel placed strong emphasis on social support, and, although not perfect, the practice assisted in the growth of the congregation.

Self-Regulation and Self-Direction Elements

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

Within the Anglican church there are many opportunities for lay persons to participate in services and support roles. Some are voluntary while others are paid

positions. St Ethel had both types of participation, with congregation volunteers performing a wide variety of duties. Teaching duties, including leading services, preaching, reading prayers and Bible reading, were performed by 23% (35 of 110) of the congregation and pastoral duties, including welcoming and morning tea, were performed by 21% (32 of 110) of the congregation. Other volunteers performed duties in the crèche and Sunday school classes, as well as the projection desk and service preparation.

One member, Marcus, described how the services functioned with congregation members performing many of the duties,

> *The services are positive with people doing things, jobs being done. There is lots of communication and often visitors.*

Henry encouraged volunteering from both new and long-term members, often inviting or suggesting possible duties to various people. Tom and his wife explained their situation,

> *We will be doing parish duties since being invited. We are also looking for opportunities to serve in ways that we can perform well.*

The home groups at St Ethel were organised by the congregation members who attended the groups. The group members could choose to study the same Bible passages and topics as those of the services, or choose other topics in which they were interested. Although Henry would like all congregation members to be part of a home group, this was not mandatory.

Music for the services was chosen by the musicians from a global list of songs known to the congregation. Henry described how new songs were introduced to the congregation,

> *The music leader will start singing and invite the congregation to join in. Sometimes the musicians will do demos of a new song the first time it's used.*

As previously mentioned, Henry saw the teaching of children to be a very important investment in the viability of the parish. Also, the collaboration between the

children's ministry team and the congregation was regarded as critical. Henry explained the overall concept of this type of children's ministry.

> *A good children's worker is essential. The worker must be formally trained, be disciplined, and be a good biblical teacher. The Sunday school and the services should have the same topics so that parents can teach their kids at home and explain things.*

Henry explained how the number of youth attending parish services had risen from around two or three when he arrived to the current fifty children and youth across all services.

In previous years, St Ethel's parish had a book stall operating before and after the services each Sunday. Henry saw this as an activity worth restoring,

> *The congregation needs to read more good books, so we need a proper book stall setup. People could buy books and share them with each other. We could also have book reviews once a month as part of the services. There was a book club in the past and I want to get it going again.*

Although focused on the one goal, the above discussion has shown that the opportunity for self-direction and self-regulation of individual members has allowed St Ethel to engage its congregation to learn and support each other in their spiritual growth.

Related Teaching Elements

The intrinsic motivation aspect of adults can be stimulated by challenge, curiosity, control or fantasy and, when utilised, can produce meaningful learning. Such motivation for learning was one issue that Henry saw differently to that of the wider Anglican church. Traditionally, the church has based its understanding of learning on the biblical teaching that the power to change people did not rest in the words of the preacher but in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians:2). This inferred, according to the church, that message delivery was not important.

Henry explained his understanding of teaching in the following way:

> *I do believe that the Holy Spirit is the true motivator for learning and change, but the Sydney diocese and Moore College push 1 Corinthians 2 . They take it literally, producing boring preachers. Most preachers could be more animated and engaged. We need the direct rawness of preaching and preachers need to be more personal. They need to love their congregations.*

Henry's focus on teaching also included constructive feedback. Motivated by his claim to love his congregation, he did not shy away from delivering negative feedback when required. This did not mean, however, that the entire congregation had to agree with Henry on every matter. He explained:

> *Everyone doesn't have to agree on everything. I'll point out theological mistakes but I won't try and force anyone to follow my thinking.*

The total learning environment that existed at St Ethel allowed the rector and congregation members to grow in knowledge and understanding, as well as being able to apply that teaching in various settings.

NSWQTM SIGNIFICANCE DIMENSION

Significance	
Elements	Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness Narrative

Within the Christian religion, the significance of learning is an integral part of the faith where learning is synonymous with spiritual growth. All aspects of life are seen as significant learning opportunities, with various levels of learning success indicating the viability of the congregation.

The Significance dimension of the NSWQTM deals with teaching that develops and makes explicit to learners the significance of learning. This significance lies in the

connections between the learner and the social environment, as well as the type and context in which the learning is relevant. This significance links the learner's previous knowledge, social, demographic and cultural backgrounds to the application of the learning.

Background Knowledge Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

At St Ethel, background knowledge of the Anglican church could be seen as both an advantage and disadvantage when attracting new parish members. Paul, a member of St Ethel for several years, reflected that "*tradition should not be a hindrance particularly for new people, but beliefs can help*". This reference to new people in the parish was particularly important as a large section of the congregation (24 of 42) had joined St Ethel's parish within the last five years. For this reason, Henry felt it important to ensure that church history was carefully presented in the services. He explained his belief in the following way,

> *Christian historic beliefs are very important as they lay out history and help in changing people's world view.*

This was also the reason why Henry considered the Christian story, as presented in the Bible, to be a very necessary element of the teaching in the parish services.

The sermons, a primary teaching method during services, were developed on a sermon-series basis, where the complete knowledge and understanding of a particular section of the Bible could be built up over several sermons. Henry used statements such as, "*We've talked about this before*" to remind the congregation of previously presented learning material. This also indicated a positive reinforcement of the congregation's background knowledge and assisted in linking such knowledge with new information.

Cultural Knowledge Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

Parish congregations are a mixture of religious and secular culture. The difference in knowledge between those people who have experienced parish attendance throughout their lives and those new to the faith can be quite large. Similarly, the ethnic diversity of a congregation can represent its own challenges.

St Ethel's congregation was predominantly (36 of 41) born in Australia. Despite this, Henry was conscious of the importance of cultural knowledge to teaching, as he believed that people were products of their culture. The congregation was also sensitive to the small cultural diversity, as one member, Victor, observed,

> *The services work well; they're relaxed not worried about problems such as different cultures. All people are accepted, but if problems happen they are acknowledged and the service moves ahead or adjusts.*

Even though St Ethel's members showed a welcoming attitude toward people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, this did not apparently attract such people to join the parish.

Knowledge Integration Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

According to the NSWQTM, knowledge integration links individual pieces of learning within and between key learning areas. It shows how different types of knowledge work together to form a greater understanding of the whole. Within the parish setting, knowledge integration highlights the connections between sacraments and

meaning, belief and action, and Old and New Testament teachings. As previously mentioned, many of these connections were observed in the services at St Ethel's parish. The most observable connection in the parish was between beliefs and actions, and was seen in the parish newsletter and in the sermons.

Inclusivity Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

Inclusivity, and its effect on the learning environment, is particularly important in a parish setting, which aims at reaching out to all of the surrounding community. Inclusivity is not restricted to the parish services, but also includes pre- and post-service interactions, as well as Bible and fellowship groups. Such inclusion was particularly noticeable at St Ethel, with one congregation member describing the congregation as "*growing and family focused, with a homogeneous feel*".

Couples and families were encouraged to attend services together, with the importance of such actions being highlighted by one member in the following way,

> *What's important is couples worshipping together where possible, looking for places to serve and doing so responsibly.*

Children were also regarded as an important part of the life at St Ethel. Cindy, a mother of young children, described her observation regarding children,

> *I really like the way children are treated in this parish. They are expected to behave well, but are given specialist children's activities that are relevant for them. The children's leaders and workers are excellent. The children respond with good behaviour and very positive reactions. They all appear to love it. The way children's ministry is run in this parish is a role model for others.*

To foster this inclusivity, children at St Ethel attended the first section of the services and then left for age-specific programs. This system was not favoured by all the congregation members, however, as the following comment reflects,

> *I personally feel it is better to have children stay in services and worship as a family.*

Other members also considered that the children needed more exposure to the general congregation,

> *We need more items from the children, sharing what they have learned or experienced in the children's ministry.*

During the period when the children attended the services, the service structure was adjusted so as not to exclude them from understanding the words and actions. During the baptism, for example, the children were invited to go to the front of the room so as to have a clearer view, and the rector explained, in words easily understood by a child, the entire process as it unfolded.

Adjustment for inclusivity extended beyond the inclusion of children, as St Ethel's ministry team and parish council had put in place a number of different regular activities suitable for a wide range of individuals. Jack explained,

> *Our parish has lots of programs for everyone and it's doing well. There are different ages in various groups.*

Men were deliberately targeted at St Ethel, resulting in the development of such activities as parish barbeques and fellowship groups, which were organised and run by the men. One particular male outreach was the development of the Men's Shed program. This program provided a building and equipment where men met for fellowship and the sharing of skills and ideas; as well as being engaged in communal and individual projects. Jack, one of the men who regularly attended the men's activities, explained his impression of the groups:

> *I enjoy and gain a lot from the men's Bible study and the shed meetings I attend.*

The congregation as a whole was also included in the running of the parish itself, as Marcus explained:

> *The parish has a parish meeting after the service quarterly, I think. It's easy to stick around for.*

The idea of inclusivity was questioned by at least one congregation member who, while describing the need for Bible-based teaching, stated that there should be "*no women preaching*". Although the sentiment was not voiced by other members, it was clear that there were few women in senior leadership roles within St Ethel's parish. Despite this, people from several different ethnic backgrounds took part in the delivery of the parish services in roles such as Bible reading and prayers.

Connectedness Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

The application of learning in real-life situations and the ability to share with others what has been taught, is the essence of connectedness and a basic tenet of Christianity. For Henry and the congregation the Bible teaching presented in the services and Bible study groups was intended to spread to every part of their lives. Heather, who described the parish as "*Bible walking*" explained how she connected the teaching to her life.

> *During the last sermon (it was not the rector but one of the young men in the congregation) a paraphrased portion of Ephesians was handed out which I re-read several times during the week and left posted on my refrigerator. I mentioned some points about it to others during the week.*

This connection to teaching was not limited to the congregation members, as services regularly contained sections in which Christian teaching was related to the wider community. For instance, during an observed service there was a brief discussion regarding Christian persecution throughout the world and at another time

the congregation prayed for those affected by flood, storms, war, and poverty brought on by unemployment. Teaching in this way was intended to make the congregation aware of their connection and responsibilities to the people beyond the parish.

One member, Jay, saw such community outreach as "*very important to our parish*", while Abbie saw the welcoming of new worshipers as "*essential for our parish*". Despite Jay's and Abbie's insistence on the importance of connection some members, such as Jack, believed that the parish was not doing enough:

> *We need more mission information and involvement by the congregation. More congregation meetings to discuss what's going on is needed and a future direction.*

Even in the wider mission field beyond the surrounding community of St Ethel's parish, Victor could see the need for "*more outreach and mission and more visits from missionaries*".

In neither the questionnaires nor congregation interviews did any respondent raise the issue of attendance or parish selection on the grounds of the parish's position on outreach into the community. Henry did mention that he personally visited new members after they had attended services several times, but he did not appear focused on deliberately targeting the surrounding community.

Narrative Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

Narratives are the basis of the Christian faith and are found in the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. Narratives are used in services and sermons as part of the regular teaching from the Bible.

At St Ethel's parish, narratives were used to build closer relationships between Henry and the congregation. This was most evident when Henry described his

recent vacation from the parish. The stories he told the congregation helped them to share the experience and by doing so strengthened the ties with Henry.

During one observed service, narrative was used by the presenter of the children's segment, who told a story through puppetry which focused on the puppeteer's family and showed how families should act towards each other and encourage each other.

Although Henry agreed that stories presented on DVDs or videos were useful, he was "*not overly fussed*" about the media. At present such narratives were used occasionally but Henry agreed that he "*could use more*". According to a quarter (12 of 47) of the congregation, DVDs were used at St Ethel during services monthly, which contradicted Henry's statements.

Testimonies (narratives generally describing a conversion event) have a long history in the Christian church and some are detailed in the Bible (Acts 9:1-19). Although agreeing that they were important, Henry preferred to use testimonies only from the congregation to ensure relevance. Despite this, almost all respondents (43 of 47) at St Ethel stated that they had never presented their testimony in parish. This response contradicted the responses concerning how often testimonies actually occurred in services at St Ethel. Although just over 10% (5 of 47) of respondents said that they never occurred or occurred less than yearly (3 of 47), the remaining respondents stated that they occurred monthly, 3 or 6 monthly, or yearly. A similar response was obtained when asked how often testimonies from people outside the parish were presented in services.

The above discussion presented the findings from St Ethel in relationship to the NSWQTM dimensions of Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance. This information focused specifically on the first of the four related study questions.

The next section will present the findings from St Ethel in relation to the parish attendance patterns and the factors that influence such attendance. This information will provide insight into the second and third study questions.

Service Attendance

The extent to which personal learning influences an individual's decision to join a particular congregation can be understood by considering the congregation's attendance patterns and the issues affecting these patterns. Service attendance itself can be viewed from several different perspectives including purpose, style, selection and continuity.

Alice, a regular member of St Ethel stated, "*I attend because it's important*". Another member considered attendance was not determined by the individual but rather, "*God sent the congregation members to attend the parish*". Both opinions reflected the importance placed on service attendance at St Ethel.

The style of the services did not appear to influence attendance patterns of the congregation at St Ethel, as one member stated,

> *I attend out of obedience to God. The type of service is irrelevant.*

Several members also complained about the level of traditional liturgical words in the services. One member stated,

> *I'm dissatisfied with the repetitive prayer book readings.*

Two other members stated that they would prefer a non-liturgical service. Despite these negative comments, these members remained within the congregation and continued to attend services.

The actual reasons for continuing to attend services were varied, though teaching was regarded as an important element. Comments such as, "*I stay because they read and preach the Bible here*", and "*it's a strong Bible teaching parish*" were common among the congregation members. The expectation of such teaching was that it would be authentic, faithful and Bible-based, as described by Marcus,

> *It's biblical-based teaching that strives to honour the word of the Lord completely; it's a progressive parish but not in theology.*

As well as teaching, the attitude of the existing congregation toward new members also encouraged people to attend services. Cindy said that she attended because of "*the love and warmth of the people*", a sentiment echoed by Robert:

> *I continue to attend services here because these are people who I can serve.*

An important source of service attendees at St Ethel was the constant stream of visitors and new members. There were several visitors attending the services at the time of the observations and were asked if the services had met their expectations. Janis replied,

> *Yes, the service had good worship and teaching.*

When asked about the elements of the service that they most enjoyed, this comment by Peter summed up the general consensus:

> *The teaching, the sermon, singing, and fellowship.*

The majority (38 of 47) of the congregation at St Ethel had previously been members of other parishes and they provided an insight into why individuals changed parishes. For many members (16 of 47), moving to a new area meant changing parishes, although some members did continue commuting to their previous parish for a short time. As mentioned previously, problems with the preaching and teaching by the rector and others was another reason why people stopped attending parish services and sought more Bible-based parishes.

Further, the attitude of the rector, particularly in the area of changes to service elements, was also motivation for people to change parishes. Martha, an older congregation member explained:

> *The parish rector changed how things were done. He ceased to wear robes, children were sent out to crèche, overhead used instead of books etc.*

Interestingly, at St Ethel there were also no robes worn and books were replaced with digital projections. Despite this, Martha joined St Ethel's parish due to its emphasis on teaching.

Similarly, and as mentioned earlier, rectors who were too concerned with non-essential issues were also seen as a reason for leaving a particular congregation. One member explained,

> *I felt that the leadership was too preoccupied with peripheral things.*

The availability and content of children's ministry was another common reason for change, as described earlier, in the inclusivity section.

In a similar way, the lack of children's ministry indicated either a lack of commitment or a lack of children. Either way, Jenny, a mother of several children of varying ages, saw this as an important issue,

> *The lack of children and same-age youths as well as similar family groups was the catalyst for change. Also, I had a young child at the time and needed a crying room so I could still hear the sermon when baby cried.*

Spiritual issues also influenced people to change parishes. Brian chose to leave his previous parish because he felt compelled by God:

> *God didn't want us to stay because the Bible teaching was not so good.*

Emily had "*difficulties with the previous congregation*" while Edna simply felt unwelcome. Jay summed up the younger generation's most common complaint relating to services, "*It was boring*".

Not all people left their previous parish willingly, and Olive's circumstances represented one such situation,

> *We left reluctantly. Our adult children had families and requested we come here. We sought God's advice and he led us here.*

Such family bonds were not limited to genetic families but also to the sense of family among the congregation as explained by Wendy,

> *We needed more of a parish family; a sense of belonging.*

In contrast to why the congregation at St Ethel attended services, the members were asked their opinion on why they thought other people attended services. Most of the responses had a negative slant, such as:

> *They attend at Christmas and Easter because tradition is very strong in Anglican parishes.*

> *I would suggest the motivation of the person is wrong but I don't know.*

> *They're coerced by family or the community.*

Other reasons included self-help, baptisms, seeking acceptance, encouragement, to learn about God and to be part of the community.

Finally, when Henry was asked why he thought the congregation continued to grow and attend services, he replied,

> *It's the preaching on, with, and through the Bible.*

Summary of Findings, Themes and Issues at St Ethel

This chapter recorded the data obtained through observations, interviews and questionnaires, regarding teaching and parish service attendance at St Ethel's parish. The data showed that at St Ethel, the concepts of teaching and learning were indistinguishable from the idea of spiritual growth, and that learning and worship merged seamlessly within the parish services.

The serious, sustained and focused teaching provided at St Ethel reflected the essence of the NSWQTM, particularly with respect to their commitment to deep biblical knowledge and understanding, and the transfer of the significance of this learning to the lives of the congregation. The learning environment as expressed in

engagement, expectations and social support, mirrored closely to that depicted within the NSWQTM.

The Intellectual Quality dimension of the NSWQTM was reflected in the congregation's insistence on authentic Bible knowledge and spiritual guidance from the parish rector, to assist them to become mature, practising Christians. In this quest, the rector's stewardship and dedication was pivotal, as demonstrated by his authoritative and engaging teaching style and wholehearted support of Bible study groups. This was also demonstrated in his sincerity in forging an inclusive, connected and caring community. The vibrancy of the parish was therefore advanced by the warm partnership between the rector and the congregation.

The communication of ideas, facts, organisational and pastoral information was of primary importance at St Ethel. Such communication was achieved through written text, meetings and discussions between the rector, congregation and ministry team. This communication fostered a strong sense of inclusivity and reinforced the parish's goal of spiritual growth for its members. Despite this, some members were unsure of the parish goals, but were confident that the rector was steering the congregation in the right direction. Similarly, higher-order thinking and problematic knowledge were demonstrated by the rector, but there was little evidence of similar traits in the congregation.

At St Ethel, the interactions between the rector, ministry team and congregation members clearly influenced the design and delivery of the parish services. Although Henry encouraged all members to be engaged in parish duties, including the design and delivery of service elements and support activities, he exercised ultimate authority over every aspect of parish activities. Despite this encouragement, only a small number of congregation members were actively engaged in parish duties. This resulted in a small number of members undertaking multiple duty roles.

The Quality Learning Environment dimension of the NSWQTM, with its focus on self-direction and self-regulation, was adapted to varying degrees within St Ethel. Due to Henry's dogmatic adherence to the traditional interpretation of the Bible, there seemed more importance placed on the spiritual growth of the congregation as a whole, rather than on the individual parish members. This was dramatically illustrated by Henry's scenarios relating to enforcing the biblical stance on issues

such as marriage, divorce and infidelity. This focus may, to some extent, restrict the self-regulation and self-direction of the individual congregation members.

Levels of social support were also an issue at St Ethel. Attendance growth, although welcomed, created concerns for Henry and the congregation due to the weakening of intra-congregational relationships. This was exacerbated by the fact that a large percentage of the congregation had attended the parish services for less than five years. Henry feared that such breakdowns could potentially affect the social support and welcoming atmosphere of St Ethel, and thus reduce the connectivity to the surrounding community.

The final dimension of the NSWQTM, Significance, was evident in many aspects of St Ethel's activities. Background and cultural knowledge were generally well understood by Henry and utilised in the design and delivery of sermons and services. Connectivity, as evidenced by the interactions between the congregation and the surrounding community, was achieved on a congregation-wide basis, with outreach, though minimum, being supported by the majority of the congregation members. Planning for outreach was supported across the congregation, with members taking on various functions and Henry overseeing all activities.

The final issue investigated in this chapter was the current attendance patterns of the parish congregation, including the members' reasons for joining the St Ethel congregation. The overwhelming majority of members identified the strong biblical teaching and the genuine social support as reasons for selecting and remaining at St Ethel. Conversely, the lack of quality teaching and poor application of Christian beliefs, particularly by clergy, were seen as major reasons why individuals chose to leave previous parishes.

In conclusion, Henry's strong leadership, coupled with his ability to encourage and motivate the congregation, demonstrated the reliance of St Ethel's congregation on Henry. This dependence on Henry was reflected in the sometimes-blind belief that he was in control and knew precisely the decisions and actions necessary for parish growth.

Conclusion – Case Study #1: St Ethel

The strong alignment to the Intellectual Quality dimension of the NSWQTM, and to a lesser degree to the Significance dimension, contrasted with the lower level of alignment to the Quality Learning Environment dimension. In this latter dimension, although explicit quality criteria, high expectations and social support were high, there appeared some limitations in the elements of engagement, self-regulation and self-direction.

This case study revealed a parish where the rector and congregation worked together to ensure positive spiritual growth of the parish members. This partnership, though genuine and well-meaning, was underpinned by strong rector leadership and control.

The active engagement of the congregation was balanced against their reliance on the rector for guidance and organisation. This often resulted in the members abdicating their own autonomy to that of the rector.

The next case is St Helga.

Chapter 4 Study Findings

Part 4B – St Helga

Introduction

As explained in Part A of Chapter 4, all case study subchapters (parts A, B and C) share the same structure. This allows for ease of comparison and understanding. The layout for this chapter is illustrated in the figure below.

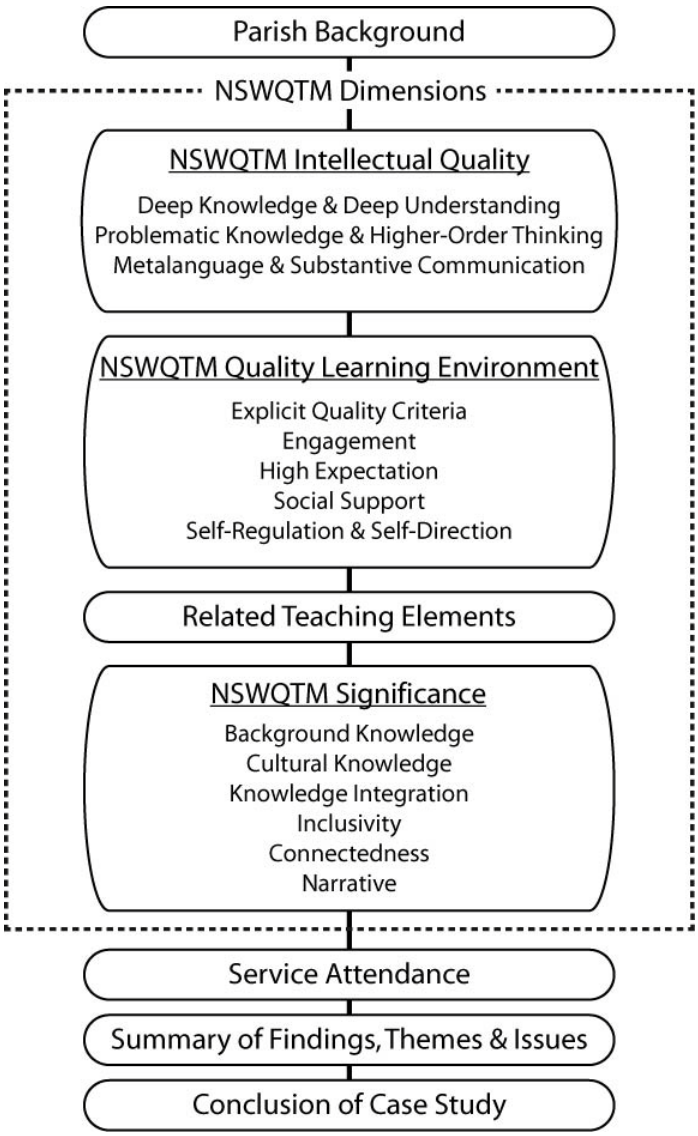

Figure 4.3 – Chapter 4 Part B layout

Case Study #2 – St Helga

Background

St Helga's parish was located in a predominantly non-indigenous, Australian-born community, where over half the population was aged between 15 and 55 years. In comparison, the majority of the congregation members at St Helga were aged over 41 years, with a third over 60 years old. Half the respondents were married with their partners regularly attending parish services. Apart from a baptismal couple and their baby, there were no children of any age present in the St Helga's congregation on the day of the observation, even though half the surrounding community consisted of families with children under the age of 14 years. The congregation of St Helga contained almost triple the proportion of widowed individuals than in the surrounding community, and contained no single parents or people who had never married.

The congregation attendance of St Helga had dropped from 88 in 1998 to 22 in 2008. On the day of the observation the congregation numbered 15 individuals. The entire service lasted 60 minutes and included a sermon lasting 22 minutes (37% of the service), prayers (4 min), and notices (2 min). Only six of the fifteen people attending the service chose to complete the survey.

Due to the low attendance and the resulting financial limitations under which the parish operated, the current rector was forced to resign his position and move to another parish shortly after the observation session, which left the future of this parish in doubt. Interviews with this rector were undertaken both during his time at St Helga and at his new parish.

As explained earlier, the NSWQTM divides quality teaching into three dimensions: Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance. Each dimension has several subsets known as elements. The strength of the elements within a learning situation indicates the quality of the learning experience.

NSWQTM Dimensions

NSWQTM Intellectual Quality Dimension

Intellectual Quality	
Elements	Deep Knowledge & Understanding Problematic Knowledge Higher-order Thinking Metalanguage Substantive Communication

As previously explained, the NSWQTM Intellectual Quality dimension is composed of six elements: deep knowledge, deep understanding, problematic knowledge, higher-order thinking, metalanguage and substantive communication. Each of these is addressed below with respect to St Helga.

Deep Knowledge and Deep Understanding Elements

Intellectual Quality
Deep Knowledge & Understanding Problematic Knowledge & Higher-order Thinking Metalanguage & Substantive Communication

At St Helga the rector, Cyrus, considered teaching to be one of his major strengths. This was reflected in his formal studies, which included a Diploma of Teaching and a Bachelor of Theology. Cyrus was currently studying for a Master of Theology. Explaining his focus on teaching Cyrus remarked:

> *I've seen so many crap rectors as teachers I decided to get a teaching degree. I wanted to learn to teach so I'd become a good rector. So I learned to be a teacher first then studied to be a rector.*

The majority of the congregation of St Helga's parish confirmed that Cyrus was a good teacher (5 of 6) and had a great depth of knowledge and understanding. All respondents agreed that Cyrus' sermons were clear, understandable and focused

on real-life issues. Also, he was easy to talk to, and provided guidance in applying Christian beliefs. One congregation member, Mildred, stated:

> *He is multi-skilled and uses technology very well. He's friendly and welcoming to strangers and newcomers.*

Completing his ministry studies at Moore Theological College prior to 2006 meant that Cyrus did not study the Christian Ministry unit, which was introduced in that year and included, among other topics, congregation relationships, and educational theories of learning, teaching and communication. His initial qualification (Diploma of Teaching – infants/primary), although providing some teacher training, did not cover topics specifically related to adult learning.

When asked about the knowledge and understanding of the congregation, Cyrus felt that the congregation's Bible knowledge was varied, but as a whole:

> *They know the facts but they don't apply it right, in context. Facts are useless without the context.*

By comparison, some members of the congregation considered their own Bible knowledge to be good (4 of 6), knowing something about every book in the Bible, or general (2 of 6), knowing something about all the main events. On this topic Hector, a congregation member, stated:

> *I have been leading Bible Study groups for approximately 10 years and have covered a range of topics.*

Another member, Phyllis, said:

> *I did the Alpha course, which is an introduction to basic Christianity, and many other training courses over the 50 years of being a Christian.*

Three members of the congregation had attended theological college, another held the Preliminary Theological Certificate, while four had undertaken local programs such as Christianity Explained. Despite this background, Cyrus believed that the congregation was lacking in significant expertise to deliver any form of teaching,

even through music, visual displays or dramatic methods during the services. In respect to these teaching forms Cyrus stated:

> *I don't use them because there's no one to do them well. I don't use musical items because people don't practice enough to produce good quality performances.*

Musical items and drama presented by children were also disliked by Cyrus who believed children were not "*performing animals for their parents*".

However, the congregation saw Cyrus's attitude as reluctance to acknowledge their gifts and talents, which were evident in the levels of postgraduate studies (4 of 6) and professional careers (3 of 6) of the congregation's members. Also, many members (3 of 6) continued studying, with over half of the respondents having undertaken formal studies within the past five years.

Despite the deep knowledge and understanding shown by Cyrus and the congregation, Cyrus did not see parish services as places for information transfer. Rather, the aim of services was to stimulate the congregation to respond to God and take an active role in their own Christian learning. In Cyrus's words:

> *The main aim of services is to show the congregation how the Bible holds together, what God expects from them, and how to respond to God's expectations.*

Basic Christian teaching, according to Cyrus, occurred during the services and in-depth biblical study occurred in home groups.

> *Services are not aimed at the congregation leaving knowing a set number of facts. Bible study groups are the main facts transfer sites. Services are focused on the response of the congregation to the Bible and to each other. The people should be leaving with an attitude or action they have come up with. This is the outcome. I'm pushing for people to develop practical outcomes during the services.*

Despite this emphasis away from strong biblical teaching during services, 83% (5 of 6) of the respondents continued to attend St Helga's parish because it had an

emphasis on learning, with 50% (3 of 6) stating that learning was a very important or essential reason why they attended services. At the same time however, a third (2 of 6) stated that being a member of the congregation had not increased their Bible knowledge.

Problematic Knowledge and Higher-Order Thinking Elements

Intellectual Quality
Deep Knowledge & Understanding
Problematic Knowledge & Higher-order Thinking
Metalanguage & Substantive Communication

Higher-order thinking focuses on an individual's ability to organise and analyse information, and recognise barriers to learning. At St Helga, this was demonstrated by Cyrus in his design of four service types (communion, confession, thanksgiving and 'crazy') to be regularly delivered over one-month periods during the year. He explained the service program in the following way:

> *There's four weeks in the month. The first service is the Lord's Supper and we use the corporate creed. The second is a confessional service in which we use the Apostles creed. The third week is a thanksgiving service that focuses on how great it is to be a Christian in the world. The fourth Sunday is a crazy service; a hymn sandwich.*

Traditional Anglican liturgical elements and historical components were taken into consideration during the service design, which basically consisted of Bible readings followed by an explanation and prayers. Cyrus aimed to deliver educative services, preaching through the set text logically, breaking it down into understandable topics.

Cyrus explained,

> *There's a movement in the service that is very, very important to get across. Take the service type and use it to direct the service. It's a logical flow.*

Observations showed Cyrus used higher-order thinking in the way he interlinked the various components of the services.

Another element, similar to higher-order thinking, is problematic knowledge which relates to posing, considering and solving problems and the techniques used in the process. Cyrus stated that he tried to include time for asking questions during the services and encouraged the congregation members to both ask questions and state their opinions. Cyrus explained:

> *I see services as flexible, to engage with people, but not a free for all. People are encouraged to have opinions and even disagree with me.*

During the observations, however, the researcher noted that, although Cyrus did ask several questions during the sermon, there were no responses from the congregation. This reticence to answer may have come from the fact that some of the congregation considered questions during services to be unimportant (1 of 6) or only mildly important (3 of 6).

Metalanguage and Substantive Communication Elements

Intellectual Quality
Deep Knowledge & Understanding
Problematic Knowledge & Higher-order Thinking
Metalanguage & Substantive Communication

Metalanguage, the use and discussion of specialist language, was not explicitly discussed by Cyrus during the interviews. However, it was clear from his use and explanations of various words, such as ‘sin’, during the services that metalanguage was an important part of the teaching within the services. Combining the congregation’s opinion that Cyrus was easy to understand and the large degree of imagery and specialist words used within the Christian faith indicated that Cyrus spent some time describing and explaining the language of Christianity.

Substantive communication involves the use of a wide range of methods to transfer information and understanding within and outside of the learning environment. Cyrus held strong views concerning modern communication as he explained,

> *All the service is on the projector as we're not a book culture in this country any more. I don't want new converts hunting through books during the service.*

Cyrus attempted to use methods of communication that he perceived people were familiar with, such as email and text messages. When asked about older members of the congregation who might find reading from a projection screen difficult Cyrus replied:

> *If they can't read it they ask.*

Cyrus did make allowances for older members who were not familiar with modern forms of personal communication, by using written letters as his primary communication tool. He did admit, however, that he did not use the telephone as a means of communication with the congregation as he preferred written text, to allow people time to consider their answers before responding. Cyrus reserved face-to-face discussions for formal meetings. This was reflected during the observation session where conversations that did occur between Cyrus and the congregation were short and superficial.

One congregation member, Elizabeth, summed up the attitude of the congregation with respect to communication with their rector:

> *It would be good to have quality time together to get to know one another and talk about services and sermons with the rector, as well as group planning and outreach.*

Cyrus organised the dissemination of information through two main media. A weekly newsletter was handed out prior to each Sunday service by volunteers from the congregation. Within the newsletter Cyrus printed the sermon outline and the Bible references. However, the questionnaires showed that only one-third of the respondents actually knew that the sermon outline was a regular part of the newsletter.

The newsletter handed out during the observation period also contained a prayer information list, event reminder, a request for assistance, parish financial statistics and contact details. There was no information for visitors or new members regarding

parish activities, or groups within the parish, nor was there any form of encouragement or feedback for existing members.

The second form of communication used was the parish website. After each service, Cyrus uploaded the recorded sermon onto the website so that it could be used by the congregation or the wider community. None of the congregation's members mentioned ever viewing the parish website. Further, over two-thirds of the congregation indicated that they were unaware of any discussions relating to the service topics having occurred in any form after the services.

As mentioned previously, communication through service elements such as drama, dance, visual displays or musical items was not used due to the rector's perception of a lack of expertise within the congregation.

Overall, there was little rector-to-congregation interaction during the main section of the service. However, there was a relaxed form of communication during refreshments post-service.

Testimonies and interviews, while not used often, were always parish focused, as explained by Cyrus:

> *Testimonies are done as interviews. Not just their conversion but things that happen in their lives. Only from the congregation, no outsiders, 'cause they're not relevant to the people here.*

One observation session did include a testimony by a past member of the congregation. The testimony described how the person had spent many years in community outreach through a prison visitation program.

NSWQTM QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION

Quality Learning Environment	
Elements	Explicit Quality Criteria Engagement High Expectations Social Support Self-Regulation Self-Direction

The NSWQTM Quality Learning Environment dimension consists of six elements: explicit quality criteria, engagement, high expectations, social support, self-regulation and self-direction. The focus of a quality learning environment is one in which the learners and teachers work productively under a clear learning focus. As well as promoting high expectations, this form of caring, supportive environment builds positive relationships between both parties.

At St Helga this type of supportive environment was important to Phyllis, a member of the congregation, who stated:

> *Having a clean and safe social and worship environment and facilities for all sections of the congregation including ageing, children and babies is what is important.*

The structure of such a learning environment at St Helga was seen by Cyrus as one where autonomous home groups were the centre for all growth, in-depth teaching, motivation, support and care. They were also the primary structures used to attract new parish members and integrate them into the parish. Cyrus explained,

> *The potential for growth is about a home group model with celebration on Sunday. Sunday is a training day and teaching event, not the centre of weekly worship.*

Overall, Cyrus had a clear vision of his desired learning environment.

Explicit Quality Criteria Element

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

Both the rector and congregation agreed that God, through the Bible, was the ultimate criteria by which the parish functioned. In support of this, Cyrus developed a six-year service plan detailing how the Bible would be studied within the services over that period. Cyrus saw this as an educative approach where he preached through the set text, logically breaking it down into understandable topics. The

current six-year service plan was developed prior to commencing as rector at St Helga and was continued into Cyrus's new parish, indicating that the specifics of the congregation were irrelevant to the set plan.

Cyrus considered that home groups were the primary avenue for the dissemination of quality criteria and other teaching issues in the parish. According to him,

> *Home groups are the power plant of the parish. They're led by co-pastors. What they study is up to the co-pastors. They could meet at home or at McDonalds it doesn't matter.*

Although the majority of the congregation also saw home groups as important, a third (2 of 6) stated that they did not attend any form of Bible study or fellowship group. This was despite the fact that Cyrus's parish structure required every member of the congregation, including him, to belong to a home group, whether or not they attended parish services regularly.

For Cyrus, it was through these home groups that goals and criteria were developed, encouraged and attained. Despite this, the congregation generally believed that goal setting was a whole-parish matter and occurred either annually or not at all.

There was a slight inconsistency in Cyrus's goal-setting plan, however. Cyrus stated that he wanted to see a parish goal that was owned by the congregation and one which permeated through all parish activities. At the same time he was encouraging each home group to develop their own independent learning goals and focuses.

Cyrus encouraged individuals to undertake formal training such as the Preliminary Theological Certificate. However, he did not organise any whole-parish events as he believed that, if individuals chose courses for themselves, it encouraged stronger ownership of the process and they were more likely to succeed in their endeavours.

Engagement Element

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) indicated that across Australia 63% of Anglicans were engaged in some form of leadership or teaching role in parish services. In the case of St Helga, although over 83% (5 of 6) of respondents performed some form of parish duty, few performed teaching or leadership roles, even though over a third had undertaken formal leadership training. This situation indicated a low level of engagement by the congregation in leadership or teaching within the parish.

By definition, engagement within services is indicated by the members displaying sustained interest and attention throughout the services, and being seriously engaged for the majority of the time. To achieve this, Cyrus intended all services to be interactive, with the congregation asking and answering questions and being fully engaged in all aspects of the service. In his opinion,

> *If people sit in the service dumb then that's what their brain is doing too and a passive parish can't get on with anything.*

The service observations, however, revealed a quite different congregation; one that sat passively during the sermons, with their only animation being scratching, coughing, looking at Bibles and the occasional nod in response to some statement from Cyrus. Despite this, members of the congregation did perform all the traditional congregation service activities, including the routine verbal liturgical responses, the singing of hymns and receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion. All these activities they performed with reverence and precision. There were no obvious facial expressions or body signals to indicate emotional involvement with the service, nor was there any evidence that the congregation was unhappy with the proceedings or that they were disinterested in what was occurring.

Cyrus said that the congregation saw him as the centre of knowledge, authority, decision making and action, and that they would prefer him to provide all the service elements and information required for their Christian life. For Cyrus:

> *I organise everything, the captain of the ship; I set the direction.*

In contrast, members of the congregation saw themselves as contributing to the services in many ways. For instance, all except one respondent stated that they performed some type of duty related to the parish services. For example, Mildred commented,

> *I clean the parish building and contribute weekly to the morning tea and washing up. I pick up a frail aged person for the services and visit the nursing home twice per year.*

Another congregation member, Elizabeth, said:

> *I do morning tea and catering for parish functions.*

Similarly, although there were officially three wardens elected to assist in the management of St Helga, the execution of their duties, according to Cyrus, tended to be erratic and dysfunctional. A similar sentiment was expressed toward the rostered volunteers. Cyrus stated,

> *People don't pay attention to the rosters even though half the parish people are on rosters.*

Cyrus verbally encouraged the volunteers to take ownership of their duties, however, he refused to do the duties himself unless their neglect adversely affected the running of the services. Despite this, survey responses showed that the congregation was interested in engaging in parish duties. For example, Fred confided:

> *We need a team of people to work on the maintenance of the parish and the grounds, and a group dealing with practical tasks and planning outreach because these indirectly affect worship quality.*

To encourage engagement, Cyrus claimed he planned services in such a manner that time was set aside for engagement through open prayers. Although this was the intention, the congregation either was not aware of this service element or chose not to take advantage of the opportunity. This was evident in a comment by Mary, who seemed oblivious to Cyrus's plans:

> *Prayer needs should be listed and sick members prayed for if they want it. People should be able to request individual prayer at the services or before and after the services.*

There were also some inconsistencies between what the congregation members said about engagement during the services and what was actually observed. When asked about active responses to singing and music such as clapping and/or actions, over 60% (4 of 6) stated that they did indeed perform some form of response. However, no such actions were observed. Similarly, over 60% of respondents stated that specific activities were provided for children during the service and one respondent stated that young people organised or were otherwise involved in the services. These statements were made even though there were no people under the age of eighteen years in the congregation, nor was there any form of Sunday school provided.

High Expectations Element

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

The NSWQTM describes the High Expectations element to be one where expectations of learning success are communicated to the learners and conceptual risk taking is encouraged and rewarded. At St Helga, Cyrus had high expectations for those people holding any parish position. As a result, he felt that if a person was not performing to a high enough quality standard, he would suggest that the person vacate the position. Justifying this stance, Cyrus argued:

> *If someone doesn't catch on then let them go. It's unfair to expect someone to be something they're not.*

Further, as with many aspects of the running of the parish, Cyrus saw the setting and encouragement of high expectations to come through the home groups. To ensure the success of these home groups, Cyrus personally selected individuals that he perceived capable of managing such groups. He explained,

> *I watch people and pick those who have the right stuff. I ask them and then train them by watching me.*

Ideally, Cyrus would like to see a group of enthusiastic and competent people working as a ministry team to design the services. He would also prefer to personally choose the members for the parish council.

The conveying of high expectations can be achieved in many ways, particularly visually. The parish building, however, was devoid of any slogans, pictures, documents or posters that might reinforce the parish goals and expectations. Similarly, there was no mention of the learning and behaviour expectations associated with sermon teaching.

Social Support Element

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

Social support equates to strong positive support for learning and mutual respect among all participants. With respect to the management at St Helga, the social support was intended to be provided by the home groups rather than by the parish as a whole. As mentioned previously, Cyrus believed that it was the responsibility of the home group leader, not the rector, to develop and deliver this support in whatever forms the group leader devised. Contrary to this, the congregation saw social support as coming from the entire congregation and that the services should be the place that generated a sense of belonging, respect and support.

This service-centred structure was intended, according to the congregation, to cater predominately for the current congregation members as well as being welcoming and supportive to visitors. Although home groups existed, the congregation saw

them as less important to that of the regular parish service. One respondent, Phyllis, summed up the sentiment for most of the congregation regarding the services by saying:

> *I attend the services to encourage and uplift those who are brothers and sisters in the Lord.*

Not all members of the congregation had positive sentiments relating to social support. One member stated that he did not feel respected by Cyrus and two others mentioned that they did not feel encouraged to use their gifts and talents within the services.

During the morning tea the social support was most obvious with all service attendees remaining to talk, partake of refreshments and generally socialise in a relaxed atmosphere. When asked about important sections of the service one respondent, Hector, commented:

> *The morning tea is an important aspect of the parish service. It is always well done, hygienically prepared and attractively served.*

With respect to social support outside of service times, nearly 70% (4 of 6) of survey respondents indicated that either the rector did not visit congregation members in their homes or that they were unsure about his actions.

Self-Regulation and Self-Direction Elements

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

In the NSWQTM emphasis is placed on the power of the learner over the learning process. To align to the NSWQTM the congregation, as learners, needed to be able to demonstrate autonomy and initiative and to exercise some direction over the learning activities. In Cyrus's opinion, however:

> *The congregation wants to do nothing, but if I keep doing things, keep filling the holes, people will keep sitting on their hands. So I just let things happen, then when people get upset with the situation and come to me, I tell them the reason is that people aren't doing their job and tell them to sort out the problem.*

He also added,

> *The congregation is going through a Renaissance, a cultural revival, of responsibility. You've got to have a lot of patience. I don't take a lot of things seriously.*

Cyrus was asked to comment on the congregation's involvement with the services and how much ownership there was of the activities at St Helga. Cyrus commented:

> *The problem with the parish is that most people become children when they go to services, instead of taking responsibility for their own Christianity. Most males abrogate their responsibilities naturally. It's our culture that forces us to do this. Men are scared little rabbits; men are hen pecked by society today as well as by their wives. They're scared to say anything. So my biggest job is helping the congregation become adults.*

When asked if he had tried to help the congregation to understand what was occurring during the services and how they could take an active role, Cyrus replied,

> *It's not necessary for the congregation to know totally what's going on in the services. I know and that's enough.*

Self-regulation and self-direction were, at least according to Cyrus' parish structure, encouraged at St Helga. This was mostly invested in the home group leaders, who were intended to act as co-pastors. The running of the home groups, where they met and what they studied was managed by their co-pastor. Although Cyrus fostered the idea that the home group leaders were the main teachers, the congregation still placed Cyrus in the primary teaching role, overseeing all parish activities.

Cyrus stated that he tried to motivate the congregation to work out their own Christianity and outreach for themselves. He said he would, however, spend time teaching leaders who would then help those in their own home groups.

Descriptions given by the members of the congregation regarding their activities seemed contradictory to Cyrus's statements regarding low self-regulation and self-direction. For example, Fred stated:

> *I have done two years at theological college including three units of Clinical Pastoral Education; currently I am assisting with scripture in an adjoining parish.*

While Elizabeth commented:

> *I lead Bible study here and in the other congregation in the parish.*

Similarly, Mildred added:

> *I am committed to serving God in my community and reaching the community with Christ.*

Cyrus also mentioned that one congregation member taught Sunday school for the other congregation in the parish as there were no children in St Helga's congregation.

One area of self-direction and responsibility within an Anglican parish structure is that of the lay readers; individuals from the congregation who have undertaken some biblical study to perform the duties of leading services, preaching sermons and assisting with sacraments. Cyrus described the lay readers at St Helga in the following way:

> *There's supposed to be four service leaders. One rarely turns ups, one often withdraws mid-week for various reasons and expects me to fill in, and another does Sunday school in the other parish congregation and asks me to lead the service. It's a lottery who turns up. I mean, none of them look up the others on the roster to swap, instead they come straight to me.*

The ability of congregation members to teach within the services was apparent when respondents were asked about the previous sermon presented in the parish, which was delivered by a lay reader from the congregation. The following comment by Mary summed up the general attitude of the respondents:

> *I found it very interesting as the preacher provided an outline and it was about the characteristics of a real Christian from the biblical perspective.*

As the purpose of quality teaching was to change the learners by growth in knowledge and attitudes, Cyrus was asked how he was going to achieve changes in the congregation. He replied:

> *To change people's hearts won't happen by hitting them with a big stick; it puts walls around the people not change them. That's what has happened in this parish for so long. I mean there were many years where the rector told the congregation what to do and now the congregation can't take responsibility for itself.*

One aspect of quality teaching involves encouraging suggestions and feedback from learners. When the congregation was asked if Cyrus accepted suggestions for services or sermon topics nearly 70% (4 of 6) of survey respondents either did not know or inferred that they were not accepted. Similarly, when asked if Cyrus encouraged feedback on the services there were no definitive responses.

Related Teaching

The Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling (Alton-Lee 2003) report identified several learning issues as important to adult learning, which included learning cycles, curriculum goals, feedback and support, individual work (homework), constructive engagement in assessment, and alignment of teaching and school practices.

At St Helga, Cyrus's planned home groups represented the co-operative learning groupings and structured peer interactions associated with learning cycles. However, planned independent study or application (homework) were not something that Cyrus had considered, nor something he had ever included in service plans.

Similarly, he had never considered deliberately creating situations where the congregation could put their learning into practice.

Another learning issue, curriculum goals, optimises learning by ensuring that topics, resources and activities are aligned across the entire learning environment. The autonomy of individual home groups, however, inferred that each home group could be studying different material and topics to that of the services. This situation could undermine the positive aspects of curriculum goals by fragmenting the overall parish learning focus.

Further, the only feedback observed during the observation sessions were polite thanks given by Cyrus to those congregation members performing the Bible readings and delivering the testimony.

When asked about his methods of assessing the quality of learning in the congregation Cyrus stated:

> *I don't know how anyone can assess learning. Head nodding, conversations later or at the door. I just never thought to assess information transfer.*

Cyrus explained that his main feedback from the congregation was at the door of the building as the congregation left after services. As no assessment was conducted, it would be difficult for later services to be adjusted to take into account the progressive learning of the congregation.

NSWQTM SIGNIFICANCE DIMENSION

Significance	
Elements	Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness Narrative

Quality learning is one that develops and makes explicit the significance of the learning process. It makes the learning meaningful and important for the congregation members and draws clear connections with the members' prior knowledge and identities, as well as with the surrounding cultures and society. In the NSWQTM there are several elements in the Significance dimension: background knowledge, cultural knowledge, knowledge integration, inclusivity, connectedness and narrative.

Background Knowledge Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

Prior to Cyrus becoming the rector, St Helga's parish was led by one rector for thirty years. According to Cyrus, he led the parish in a traditional style where the rector provided all the teaching and direction. After him the parish obtained a quite different rector. Cyrus explained,

> *The rector refused to baptise children from non-Christian homes and insisted that the congregation and surrounding community call him Reverend rather than calling him by his name. Under him the parish had a negative image from the community because of his abruptness.*

Cyrus believed that the dependence of the congregation on him stemmed from this period in the parish's history. In fact, Cyrus believed that he understood the congregation very well in many areas. As mentioned previously, however, there were many differences between how Cyrus perceived the congregation and how the congregation members perceived themselves. Nevertheless, the small size of the congregation made it easy for Cyrus to include personal issues from the congregation into the services.

During one observation session, a baptism was performed and this enabled Cyrus an opportunity to recall other baptisms delivered at the parish, which emphasised

his teaching theme. Similarly, Cyrus related his sermon to previous sermon topics on related subjects. Apart from these instances, no individual background knowledge was displayed during the service except for Cyrus addressing congregation members by name. Further, there was no evidence that the congregation members' biblical or Christian knowledge was taken into account during service planning or delivery.

Cultural Knowledge Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

The culture in which learning takes place has a significant effect on learning outcomes. Such knowledge may include economic class, gender, ethnicity, disability, language or race.

When asked to describe the cultural backgrounds of St Helga's congregation, Cyrus stated that it was "*Skippy land*"; inferring that the entire congregation was composed of Anglo-Saxon Australians and that because of this there was no need to take culture into consideration when planning the parish services. In reality, Cyrus used at least two separate forms of cultural knowledge during the observed service. Firstly, he described Anglican culture where service attendees all sat at the back of the room. Secondly, he mentioned how members of some congregations show favouritism by talking, after the services, only to those people who attended the parish services regularly.

Further, despite the congregation being composed almost exclusively of Builder and Baby Boomer generations, there was no obvious intention to plan services to take into consideration the characteristics of these generations. In fact, as mentioned previously, Cyrus deliberately planned the service focus not for the congregation but for visitors.

Knowledge Integration Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

According to the NSWQTM, knowledge integration is the aim of most learning, with links between and within topics and key learning areas being demonstrated. In a parish setting, this implies linking service teaching to other Bible teachings and Christian beliefs. Cyrus demonstrated this linkage process by using his deep knowledge and understanding of the Bible and inter-relating it to the Christian faith. This was borne out by Mildred's observation:

> *Our rector has an excellent ability to relate his sermons to the Bible.*

Cyrus linked his sermons in series to provide wider understanding of the underlying topics. However, he did not plan any activities outside of service times to reinforce this knowledge integration.

Inclusivity Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

The idea of inclusivity focuses on the inclusion and value of all people from across all cultural backgrounds. It particularly values the participation of these people in the learning process. In a parish setting, inclusivity infers that people from diverse backgrounds feel welcomed and services are designed to take into account these differences. It also means special consideration is given to particular groups of people, including mothers with small children, the elderly and those with physical or

mental disabilities. This idea also extends to the inclusion of various people in service delivery.

When asked if the rector included people in the services regardless of age, gender or ethnic background, almost all of the survey respondents stated that he did. All respondents felt comfortable with the other service attendees and felt that the atmosphere during the services was welcoming. Most congregation members felt that there was a supportive relationship between congregation members and between the congregation and Cyrus. However, when asked if the services had given them a sense of belonging, half the respondents (3 of 6) either disagreed or only mildly agreed.

Cyrus was also asked about the level of inclusion of the congregation in the service delivery at St Helga. He explained:

> *The service leader reads the first Bible reading. I don't think every different bit of the service should be done by different people. It makes the leader redundant.*

Cyrus explained that the core of service design was to have visitor-focused services where visitors could understand the service content and feel relaxed in the process. Similarly, the sermon was a balance between the knowledge of visitors and that of the congregation. Those members of St Helga who required learning extension could obtain this through the home groups or rector's Bible study. Cyrus also stated that:

> *Ideally visitors should be followed up with a card thanking them for attending the service. Once they become new members they are integrated into the congregation primarily through the home groups.*

St Helga's parish had no rectory, forcing Cyrus to live outside the parish. His next parish, however, included a rectory and yet he preferred to settle away from the parish buildings but still within the parish boundaries.

When asked about this behaviour, Cyrus explained:

> *I'm not resident so I'm not there at a minutes notice. Therefore the congregation must take some of the responsibilities on themselves for their own Christian growth.*

In contrast, Cyrus said that he spent regular periods walking around the surrounding town and introducing himself to the local community.

Connectedness Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

In the learning context, connectedness relates to sharing learning with audiences beyond the primary learning environment. In the parish setting, this means relating service teaching and learning to both the attendees' lives and to the surrounding community.

Cyrus believed the relationship between St Helga and the surrounding community was initially poor and he had made a great effort to reverse the situation. He explained:

> *The parish made a negative impact on the surrounding community that referred to it as 'that weird parish'. Its got history; a long memory. People hold bad feelings for years. So I spend a lot of time just walking the streets and ask to be called by my first name, not reverend or likewise.*

According to Cyrus, the refusal of baptism to non-Christian families described previously could be regarded as jeopardising connectedness with the surrounding community. Cyrus explained,

> *Baptisms fill the parish building at St Helga. There are lots of baptisms because of the parish building. Everyone loves the building.*

> *The parish has this type of colonial history. Besides, many rectors are not baptising non-Christians or outsiders.*

When asked his reason for going against this trend he added:

> *The purpose of baptism is to preach the word of God. Refusing baptism to anyone is the same as judging them unworthy to be part of God's family or part of the parish.*

Another aspect of connectedness could be seen in the St Helga's weekly newsletter prayer section, which asked the congregation to pray for three specific elements of the surrounding community:

> Pray for the declaration of the Gospel among the students in the local high schools. Also pray for the dedication of Christian staff so that they may show the excellence that comes with following Christ.
>
> Pray for opportunities to serve your neighbours in word and deed, and have boldness to invite them to services.
>
> Pray for the lost, for opportunities to share the gospel with them.

Despite these sentiments there was little evidence of similar prayers or discussions during the services to highlight these issues. Further, the newsletter contained an announcement relating to one of the Bible study groups that had seniors who were not able to attend due to transportation problems. Despite the obvious difficulty this situation presented, it was not mentioned at any of the observed services.

Traditionally outreach was the main avenue for Anglican parishes to connect with the surrounding communities. Cyrus did not, however, believe that parish-wide outreach designed by the rector was effective and he preferred that the home groups designed their own outreach programs. Conversely, the congregation saw outreach as something that the rector and the congregation should do together. This disagreement resulted in no outreach programs being attempted throughout the parish, and therefore no opportunities for the congregation as a whole to put their learning into practice. The congregation members, however, stated that they personally made opportunities to put service and sermon teaching into practice and they applied the teaching to the rest of their lives.

To foster connectedness and spread the gospel teaching, Cyrus attempted to build strong connections with local businesses, the council and other local parishes through dinners, meetings and functions. He hoped these would lead to preaching opportunities.

Narrative Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

Story telling, or narrative, has been an integral part of learning and teaching associated with religions throughout history. This is particularly evident in the Christian faith where the central beliefs revolve around the biblical narratives.

Most Bible teaching presented in services has a narrative component and St Helga's services were no exception. During one sermon Cyrus retold a personal story of teaching his own children the parish creed and how simply attending the services had already helped the children learn the words of the creed with only the understanding to be explained. There was also a testimony from a past member of the congregation who had spent most of the latter part of her life visiting prisoners in the state's jails. She was 81 years old and she clearly described many events that had occurred while she was performing this outreach. These two examples of narrative engaged the congregation and the latter was a source of conversation during the post-service refreshments.

The above discussion presented the findings from St Helga in relationship to the NSWQTM dimensions of Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance. This information focused specifically on the first of the four related study questions.

The next section presents the parish attendance patterns and the factors that influenced the attendance. This information will provide insight into the second and third study questions.

Service Attendance

As mentioned earlier, congregation viability was measured by service attendance numbers in this study. The data illustrates the congregation's attendance patterns and their reasons for joining or separating from parish congregations.

According to a 2001 Church Survey (NCLS Research 2004b) the average size of an Anglican congregation in Australia is between sixty and seventy individuals. St Helga's service attendance during the observation sessions was only 25% of this national average (15), and was composed of approximately equal numbers of men and women. The national average gender ratio according to the survey was 61% women and 39% men.

All respondents stated that they attended parish services weekly, and those married always attended with their spouses. The majority of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they attended parish services because of their beliefs and morals, the people, a feeling that the services were helpful and that they gained something from attending. One respondent stated that the Bible and the Lord required it and thus attended out of duty.

When congregation members were asked why they continued to attend the services at St Helga, issues such as attending with family or friends, correct denomination, social activities, congregation size and location were shown to be far less important than service style and rector quality. The style of the services was rated as important by 83% (5 of 6) of the respondents, and the same number thought the quality of the rector was important or very important. The only parish component that was rated as very important or essential by a majority of respondents was the parish having a focus on learning and growing as Christians.

Over 66% (4 of 6) of the congregation had previously been members of other parish congregations. The vast majority (75%) of these stated that moving house was the main reason for changing parishes.

At St Helga's, Cyrus had been the rector for less than a year at the commencement of this study. In that time the parish congregation had grown in number by around seven people. The number of baptisms from families outside the local parish had also increased by around 50%.

When Cyrus was asked about the strengths and weaknesses of St Helga's congregation that could impact on future attendance, he replied:

> *They still live in the past when it was a big parish, but they do have endurance. This is a positive and negative because they'll put up with anything.*

This endurance was observed during the services where the congregation appeared to endure the service experience quietly, while during the post-service morning tea the congregation transformed into interactive, concerned and sociable individuals. The service, of which they had very limited control or ownership, was endured, while during the refreshments, which they had made and organised, they seemed responsive and engaged.

The congregation's apparent acceptance of how the parish services were delivered and their apparent disinterest in changing to Cyrus's model raised this response from Cyrus:

> *If what we're doing is so good, where is everyone?*

When asked how he would implement his system in light of the congregation's disinterest, Cyrus said:

> *The parish is a system. The best way to fix it is to let the thing die and start again. I used this method with St Helga. It's a dysfunctional system in this parish. A lot of conflict.*

Service timing was another issue raised with the congregation. When they were asked whether the service timings were convenient, the responses were polarised between a third (2 of 6) strongly against and a third strongly in favour of the timing. Cyrus also was asked about service timings:

> *Parish services are longer in bigger, growing parishes, 2–3 hours, with sermons up to 1 hour in duration. It's because all that needs to be said can't be successfully conveyed in a traditional 1-hour service.*

The congregation was also asked why they had previously changed parishes to become part of St Helga. In response, one member mentioned a lack of social support in her previous parish. She explained:

> *The relationship with a new curate caused much angst. After several years I just had no respect left for him, as he continued to witness to a very ungodly life and attitudes.*

When the congregation was asked why they thought that other people attended parish services, there were a wide range of survey responses, which included social benefits, marriage, baptisms and for their children to attend Sunday school. Social support was also raised. One respondent, Elizabeth, stated:

> *Some people go because of the social needs they have.*

Another, Mary, commented:

> *They go if they are to be married or have their child christened or if they want their children to attend Sunday school.*

Once again, the teaching within the parish was an important reason why the members of St Helga attended services. The service style and quality of the rector's knowledge and biblical understanding were also important issues within the congregation.

Summary of Findings, Themes and Issues at St Helga

St Helga was a parish caught between two dissimilar forces without the ability to meld them into a cohesive unity. On one side, Cyrus defined his role in terms of empowering the congregation to take ownership of their own spiritual growth, while at the same time allowing him opportunities to reach out to the surrounding community. Conversely, the congregation saw Cyrus's role as collaborating with them in learning and serving within the parish. In Cyrus's view the congregation was unmotivated and unwilling to take responsibility for either their own spiritual growth or their duties within the parish. Observations and discussions with the congregation members, however, showed a congregation regularly committed to Bible studies and undertaking their parish duties, such as providing morning refreshments.

Cyrus's intentions for interactive services, combined with the congregation's reverent attitude to services, created another source of tension within St Helga. The engagement envisaged by Cyrus was not conveyed to the congregation and as a result Cyrus interpreted the lack of response as disinterest and unwillingness by the congregation to fully participate in their own spiritual growth.

The dissimilarities at St Helga were not limited to the comparisons between Cyrus and the congregation, but were also observed in Cyrus's ideas and actions with respect to the services. Cyrus explained how he deliberately designed parish services to suit visitors, particularly non-Christians, by relegating deep Bible teaching to the home groups and removing any perceived hindrances such as service books. Observations, however, revealed there were no attempts to welcome or assist visitors who may attend the St Helga services. There was no visitor-specific literature available prior to or after the services, nor was any mention made of reaching out to visitors during the services.

Some elements of the NSWQTM were present in the services at St Helga. However, these were interpreted differently by Cyrus and the congregation. From Cyrus's vantage point his role was one of instigating connectivity with the surrounding community and presenting an atmosphere of inclusivity in services, while the congregation dealt with their own spiritual growth in knowledge and understanding. Further, Cyrus saw the congregation's sense of inclusivity and substantive communication being gained through the social support of the home groups. Cyrus focused on encouraging the congregation's self-regulation and self-direction through services designed to promote individual thought, and by withdrawing his physical presence from the congregation by setting up his residence at a distance from the parish. However, Cyrus's actions were interpreted by the congregation as a lack of inclusivity and connectivity with the existing parish members, as well as reluctance by Cyrus to acknowledge their abilities.

The lack of confidence in the congregation's abilities shown by Cyrus resulted in the absence of a ministry team and the lack of congregational input into the development of services. The congregation's only influence over the activities within the services was through duties such as Bible reading, welcoming and morning refreshments. There was little opportunity for the congregation to display self-regulation or self-direction.

With respect to the NSWQTM Intellectual Quality dimension, the deep knowledge and deep understanding elements were seen in both Cyrus and the congregation. In the case of Cyrus, these elements were combined with higher-order thinking and used to create the parish's six-year teaching plan. However, this plan did not take into consideration the pre-existing knowledge and understanding of the existing congregation, or specific issues that may have been applicable to St Helga's stage of existence. There was also no consultation with the congregation in regard to service design or parish focus.

The data indicated the congregation was strongly motivated toward learning and spiritual growth. However, many of the congregation's members were involved in learning activities outside of the parish services, such as Bible studies. This practice may indicate that attendance at services was from duty or to support others, rather than primarily for learning and spiritual growth.

Substantive communication between Cyrus and the congregation was perhaps one NSWQTM element most clearly lacking at St Helga. This lack of communication was observed during the services and in the weekly newsletter, with Cyrus's preference for modern communication styles and technology only adding to the difficulties.

The NSWQTM Quality Learning Environment dimension's social support element was also difficult to observe at St Helga. Social support originating from Cyrus was lacking due to his belief that social support was a home group issue and not part of his specific duties. There was evidence, however, that the congregation members supported each other on various personal levels. Overall, with respect to the ideas of the NSWQTM dimension of Quality Learning Environment, very little or no evidence was found for the incorporation of these elements into the services.

Further, in the Significance dimension, although the narrative element was present in the services, most of the other elements were either marginally displayed or absent.

The low level of application of the NSWQTM, coupled with the significant differences in attitudes and expectations between Cyrus and the congregation, made teaching and spiritual growth very difficult at St Helga. It also hampered the numerical growth of the congregation by failing to attract significant numbers of new members, thus influencing parish viability.

Conclusion – Case Study #2: St Helga

This case study suggested the inability of the rector and the congregation to communicate substantively on issues relating to parish structure, the roles of various parties, and the service style and inclusions, may have contributed to the low levels of interaction within services and the high levels of dissatisfaction felt by all parties. The lack of communication may also have limited the rector's understanding of the congregation's strengths and abilities, and therefore influenced the rector's use of NSWQTM elements such as self-direction and self-regulation.

The next, and final, case study is St Doris.

Chapter 4 Study Findings

Part 4C – St Doris

Introduction

As explained in Part A of Chapter 4, each case study subchapter (parts A, B and C) shares the same layout. This allows for ease of comparison and understanding. The layout for this chapter is illustrated in Figure 4.4.

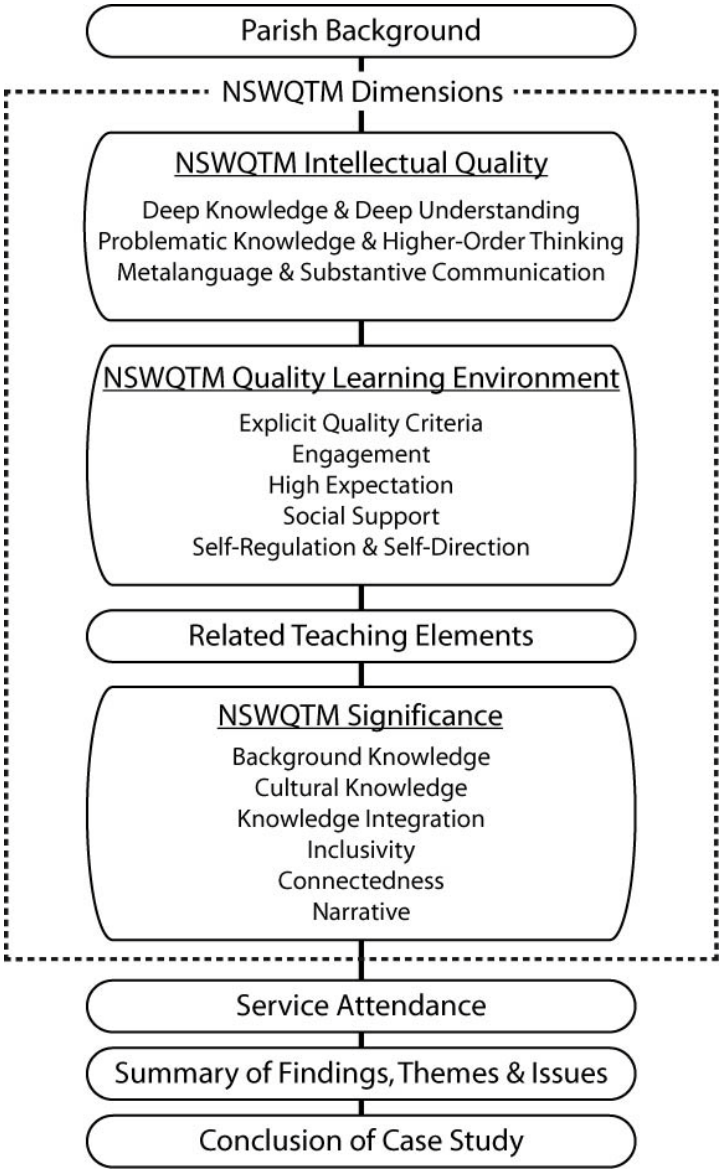

Figure 4.4 – Chapter 4 Part C layout

Case Study #3 – St Doris

Background

St Doris's parish was located in a predominantly Australian-born community where over 21% (2,892) of people had an affiliation with the Anglican church. Although the highest age group concentration in the surrounding community was between 25 and 54 years, the congregation at St Doris was predominantly (54%) in the over 60-year age group. There was also a difference in the gender ratios between St Doris, with 35% males (13 of 34) and 56.8% females (21 of 34), and the surrounding community, with 49.8% males and 50.2% females. Although three respondents did not indicate their gender, which may alter these values. Various professional occupations, however, were well represented in both St Doris (21.6%) and the surrounding community (15%).

The attendance at St Doris had risen steadily from 59 in 1998 to 220 in 2008. In 2006, the National Church Life Survey (NCLS Research, 2006) showed that the congregation was composed primarily of people who either had switched from other parishes (45%) or people joining a parish for the first time (22%). It also showed, however, that there was poor retention of young adults (3%). This latter trait was also seen in this current study, with only 8% (3 of 37) of respondents being between 21 and 40 years of age and no one between 18 and 21 years old.

The NCLS (NCLS Research 2006) also indicated that the majority (68%) of service attendees had attended St Doris for five years or less. Similar results were obtained in this current study of St Doris, which showed that those attending for five or less years were the largest group with 32.4% (12 of 37) of the congregation, although those attending for over ten years were also of a reasonable size of 24.3% (9 of 37).

Faith, vision and inclusion were among some of the strengths recognised by the NCLS (NCLS Research 2006). Further, the congregation was acknowledged as being strongly committed to the parish goals, while the parish leaders were regarded as inspiring examples of how to live the Christian life. On the other hand, service to others, faith-sharing and innovation were seen as the weakest areas within St Doris and indicated that more attention was needed in children's ministry, encouragement of talents and the inclusion of new members into the congregation. These issues will be discussed later in this case study.

At the time of the observations there were three regular Sunday services and a fourth was at the planning stage. The rector, Darius, explained that the parish's ultimate aim was to have four regular Sunday services, each catering for around 200 attendees.

During the initial service observation, which lasted for eighty minutes, the researcher noted that prayers and notices (5 min each) and a baptism were significant sections of the service apart from the sermon (32 min). There were 72 service attendees with twelve children under the age of 14 years. There was no Sunday school due to the state school holidays coinciding with the service. The assistant minister led the service and prayers, with the rector delivering the sermon. A small group of singers led the corporate singing.

NSWQTM Dimensions

NSWQTM INTELLECTUAL QUALITY DIMENSION

Intellectual Quality	
Elements	Deep knowledge & Understanding Problematic Knowledge Higher-order Thinking Metalanguage Substantive Communication

The quality of learning according to the NSWQTM is positively related to the intellectual quality of the teachers and the quality of the teaching material being used. Within the parish setting this equated to the quality of the ministry team, in particular the rector, the quality of service teaching material and, finally, the quality of engagement generated in the congregation.

The NSWQTM dimension of Intellectual Quality, as stated earlier, consists of deep knowledge and understanding, problematic knowledge and higher-order thinking, metalanguage and substantive communication.

Deep Knowledge and Deep Understanding Elements

Intellectual Quality
Deep knowledge & Understanding Problematic Knowledge & Higher-order Thinking Metalanguage & Substantive Communication

Darius did not start his career intending to be a rector, and was not actually converted to Christianity until he was in his early twenties. Although he did not obtain graduate qualifications prior to entering Moore Theological College as an independent student, he graduated and was ordained an Anglican rector in the late 1980s. Darius had not undertaken further study because, "*College was boring and I learnt more by watching other preachers*".

Although the majority (29 of 37) of the congregation at St Doris saw Darius as possessing a high level of biblical knowledge and understanding, not everyone appreciated Darius's teaching style. Kristy, for example, had this to say,

> *The junior rector's sermons appeal more to me and my husband – perhaps it's a personality thing. The senior rector seems to interpret the facts and stories in the Bible rather than simply present them and give you the opportunity to think about them yourself and form your own opinion.*

Angus, another member, agreed with Kristy,

> *Sermons are too long and always a Bible study. They seem to be focused on the new Christians. Not always a lot of depth.*

Other members also felt the sermons were "*sometimes dumbed down*" although they "*never felt talked down to*". Owen, who described himself as shy, also saw a sermon slant toward new members,

> *There is a lot of focus on visitors because we're growing as per our vision statement. Our Bible study groups are the ones that focus on the congregation.*

Gerry, another member of the congregation, thought that Darius's preaching was not all that was needed at St Doris,

> *It would be good to have really good guest speakers about every three months. It's good to hear other rector's preach.*

When Darius was asked about the strengths of the congregation at St Doris, his reply was twofold. He commented that the older members of the congregation were well versed in the Bible. However, this was not the case with the younger section of the congregation. He felt this had something to do with the young people using computers rather than books.

Despite Darius's concerns, the congregation had a strong interest in the Bible and Christian teaching. Winston was typical of those focused on greater learning,

> *As much as I know is how much more I have to learn. I have done in-depth studies on several Bible books. I'm reading through the Bible chapter at a time, but not every day, and also attending a Bible study.*

Kyle was another congregation member who saw Bible study as a long-term commitment,

> *I've done non-formal Bible study fellowship for 12 years, been a discussion leader for 8 years, with weekly leadership training during these 8 years. I know the New Testament quite well and have a deep interest in the parables of Jesus.*

However, not all the congregation was as confident in their Bible knowledge as Winston and Kyle. Others, such as Emily, focused a bit more on their limitations,

> *My Bible knowledge is increasing with Bible study and good sermons. My Bible knowledge may be slightly disjointed and some historical facts are lacking.*

Within these two extremes of opinion there were many members who had a "*desire to know more*" about the Bible and were "*continually upgrading*" their knowledge and understanding. Anna summed up this middle ground and argued that learning about the Bible "*took practice and dedication*".

As a whole, the overwhelming majority (35 of 37) of the congregation at St Doris stated that they attended the parish services because of the learning taking place and a slightly lesser number (26 of 37) stated that their personal Bible knowledge had strengthened since they became members. Similarly, 92% (34 of 37) of members saw regular Bible study groups as important. When asked to rate their actual Bible knowledge the majority (32 of 37) stated that is was general (knowing something about each of the main biblical events) or good (knowing something about each book in the Bible).

The types of biblical study courses undertaken by the congregation's members included formal college training such as certificates in theology, diocese training such as the Scripture Teachers Accreditation, and in-parish training such as Alpha (an introductory course on basic Christianity that focuses on the validity and relevance of the Christian faith) and Christianity Explained. Darius described one training group at St Doris that was studying the Preliminary Theological Certificate (PTC). He stated,

> *We have an informal PTC course running with around 12 people. We tried a formal course last year but it didn't last. Now the informal group is studying with people they like.*

Secularly, the education levels of the congregation members were diverse, ranging from higher diplomas and legal studies, to public service training and music teaching. Only five respondents possessed postgraduate qualifications and 27% (10 of 37) stated that their highest educational level was the school certificate. Although the last date of formal study varied, there was a significant (17 of 37) number of the congregation who had not undertaken formal study for over twenty years.

It was apparent that within the congregation the depth of knowledge and understanding varied and depended on the individual's previous education and training, as well as personal ongoing interest in Bible studies.

Problematic Knowledge and Higher-Order Thinking Elements

Intellectual Quality
Deep knowledge & Understanding
Problematic Knowledge & Higher-order Thinking
Metalanguage & Substantive Communication

Higher-order thinking can be expressed in many different ways within a parish setting. One such example is the overall vision developed and promoted within the parish. Darius described his parish's vision in the following way,

> *To equip God's people to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the whole of the surrounding community and the world.*

This vision statement was about "*knowing, growing and showing God's love*", and to emphasise this focus these words appeared on most of the parish leaflets and displays. A ministry plan was also in place at St Doris, which read in part,

> *The short term plan is to increase Bible study groups, develop leadership training initiatives in key ministry areas, and identify, train and support fellow workers in our key ministry areas.*

Darius saw his strengths as entrepreneurial, shepherding and gathering people together. He saw his weaknesses as administration and processes, and because of this he surrounded himself with capable people to deal with such matters, leaving him free to deal with people.

These strengths and weaknesses were reflected in Darius's higher-order thinking, particularly in the planning and delivering of his sermons. According to one congregation member, Warren,

> *The sermons, well most are quite good. Their delivery style could be made more interesting with varied teaching modes, for example discussions, multimedia, handouts, or interactive participation.*

Anna also thought that the "*service could be varied in its structure and order of facets*", while Andrew noticed that "*there were a few faux pas in the organisation*".

Despite these comments, Kristy found a different perspective to Darius's sermons,

> *I'm always thankful of the continual impart of knowledge that enables continual growth for me. We have a yearly parish agenda and program. Each service and sermon extends from the previous topic until it's complete.*

Kate added,

> *Sermons are focused on a specific book. There is follow through over several weeks to build a progression of thought.*

The higher-order thinking of other members of the ministry team also warranted mention by the congregation. Sharon, in particular, made this remark about the assistant minister,

> *He gave the sermon and it was incisive and related to the Bible readings and drew analogies from that to the present time.*

Despite these various points of view, Harvey, suggested that the organisation of services should be carefully considered,

> *The services flow and it's important that it looks professional. Disorganisation looks bad to the people who just walk in.*

Darius described how he and the ministry team jointly planned the year's service and sermon topics in the preceding October. Each year there was at least one topic from each of the Bible's Old Testament, the gospels and epistles. There were also teachings on doctrine, stewardship, family and issues on which the team considered the congregation needed to concentrate. Throughout this planning process Darius and the ministry team used problematic knowledge and higher-order thinking to ensure that the teaching delivered to the congregation was appropriate for their needs and level, and in line with the Christian faith.

All parish leaders were presented with the yearly preaching plan to keep them informed of the service topics, as well as obtaining feedback on the proposed topics. Changes or additions to the plan were considered and adopted where suitable.

The strongest indication of parish-wide higher-order thinking at St Doris was seen in the exceptional way in which the large numbers of individuals and activities were seamlessly interwoven each Sunday morning. What appeared at first to be a sea of people randomly jostling in the foyer, was in fact the well-orchestrated movement of members attending a wide range of activities including crèche, Sunday school, youth group and the worship service. Many members were engaged purposefully in preparation activities and ushering people to their desired locations. There was no confusion or frustration witnessed during any observation period.

Metalanguage and Substantive Communication Element

Intellectual Quality
Deep knowledge & Understanding Problematic Knowledge & Higher-order Thinking **Metalanguage & Substantive Communication**

Metalanguage, or the language of language, has always been an integral aspect of the Christian faith. The difficulties of expressing spiritual issues in a corporeal context has produced unique words, phrases, parables and imagery that must be clearly defined and passed on to new members of the faith.

The use of metalanguage was evident at St Doris in several different forms and media. Metalanguage could be seen in some of the information sheets provided for use by the congregation. In one particular sheet the follow description was provided,

> A teaspoon prayer (tsp – t = thank you, s = sorry, p = please) …

In another, the values of the parish were described by using the word ‘glorify’ with the following explanation,

> G.L.O.R.I.F.Y. – **G**rowth **L**eadership **O**utreach **R**enewal **I**mpact **F**ellowship **Y**ield

The use and explanation of such mnemonics are clear examples of the use of metalanguage.

The services, too, contained evidence of metalanguage. For instance, Darius deliberately pointed out special words and phrases used within the Bible with such statements as,

> *You will see that there are three definitions of the church in the passage …*

At another time Darius described the word ‘pastor’, explaining that it meant ‘shepherd’ and then explained its use in the biblical context.

Christian and Bible-specific words were used commonly in the information sheets, the services and the sermons at St Doris. There was no attempt to alter the language to provide a more secular or simpler version but, rather, the words and phrases were defined, classified and discussed indicating usage of a high degree of metalanguage. This strategy enabled the congregation to have a better appreciation of the sermons and assisted their learning of the matters and issues raised.

Substantive communication encompasses all forms of written, spoken, performed or presented exchanges of knowledge and understanding. Such an array was evident during the services at St Doris, particularly during the baptism section. Although song words, notices and other items were projected on a screen, the baptismal information was also presented on an A4 folded service sheet, which included prayers, responses and service directions. At the start of the baptism Darius introduced the family and projected a picture of the baby along with his name onto the wall. All prayers for the baby and his family were personalised with the names of those concerned.

This use of digitally projected service material was not accepted wholeheartedly by all congregation members. Nancy, for example, lamented the loss of service books,

> *I loved the prayer book because I loved learning the Bible verses in it, but appropriate things for appropriate times.*

However, Harvey was not so philosophical about the use of the prayer book.

> *I like to use the old prayer book. We don’t robe here because they say it turns people away. The same with the prayer book. I used to lead an early service but I don’t lead now because the prayer book isn’t used.*

For Abbie, the use of projections raised certain practical issues,

> *I'm use to things being projected in recent times, but a lot of elderly people can't see it at the back of the room. So people should be able to choose. Besides, it's hard to pray to a board.*

Written communication at St Doris was extensively used, and included newsletters, information leaflets, a welcome pack and inspirational displays, as well as forward-planning notices and duty rosters.

The St Doris weekly newsletter performed four distinct functions. First, it provided contact information relating to the ministry team and the parish office. Second, it disseminated parish-specific information, including event notices, prayer requests and encouragement. The third function was that of providing an avenue for congregational feedback and questions, and fourth it provided a sermon outline.

To enhance clarity of the written information each sheet was colour coded: orange for prayer and pastoral-care requests, light pink for children's activities, blue for Bible reading, and so on. This colour coding was used in various ways to distinguish the sheets, such as in one weekly newsletter, which read,

> *Please find an Orange Prayer and Pastoral Care Request Form at the Welcome Desk, fill it in and place it in the box provided.*

A welcome pack containing an array of information was provided from a dedicated welcome desk in the parish foyer. Within this pack were two items of learning significance. The first was a small, multi-paged booklet entitled *Two ways to live – the choice we all face*. This booklet systematically delivered the Christian message using both text and illustrations, and was designed to teach non-believers about the gospel. The second item was a tri-folded sheet outlining the vision, values and plans that formed the basis of worship and activities at St Doris. Both of these items demonstrated the importance placed on communication and teaching at the parish.

Darius's personal communication style was evident prior to the observed services, as he mingled with the arriving congregation. He had no service preparation to attend to and thus was free to welcome people entering the parish building.

To the congregation, such relationships and communication with the rector were important, as explained by Gerry, a congregation member,

> *What's important in a service is the rector's rapport with the congregation and leading by example. These are important in order to obtain their respect and attention.*

Despite the many different forms of communication, some congregation members desired an expanded range. One such member, Kate, explained,

> *What is needed are more visual and multimedia sermon delivery styles; more uplifting music, guest speakers, and testimonies from the congregation members.*

Graham also thought that the music should be more "*upbeat, lively and modern*". This sentiment was echoed by Emily,

> *Today was good but sometimes the singing and music is a bit weak.*

Although Kate wanted to expand communication in the parish, this did not mean that it was lacking. Winston described one instance of post-service communication.

> *Last week's sermon was on the book of Daniel. Great sermon, we were able to discuss it at length at morning tea.*

Anna did not generally discuss sermon topics after the services but preferred a written method of conveying her thoughts,

> *No discussion, but the feedback form was filled in.*

Approximately half the congregation's members discussed the sermon topics after the services (19 of 37), with several others agreeing that it was a good idea to have such discussions.

NSWQTM QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION

Quality Learning Environment	
Elements	Explicit Quality Criteria Engagement High Expectations Social Support Self-Regulation Self-Direction

While learning strategies are critical, the environment in which learning is presented and fostered can have a significant effect on the quality of learning. Engagement, expectations and social support are just three aspects of the environment under consideration in the Quality Learning Environment dimension of the NSWQTM.

Explicit Quality Criteria Element

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

As St Doris was a Bible-based Christian parish, its main quality criteria came from the Bible and, to a lesser extent, from church history and beliefs. The ministry team ensured that all congregation members, visitors and new members were aware of the vision, values and plans underlying the teaching and activities at the parish by producing the tri-fold information sheet mentioned earlier. The sheet's purpose was described in this way,

> *This pamphlet is intended to help us explain our vision and ministry strategy at St Doris. We all have a part to play in our community. God calls us to play our part as partners in the body of Christ. This pamphlet is designed to inform you of the basic goals of Christian service in our parish and to serve as a support for promoting informed prayer to that end.*

The pamphlet also described the congregation's involvement in the parish's vision in the following way,

> *Attending Sunday services to learn about God, to pray to him and to encourage one another. Attend Bible study groups to glorify God and to support one another.*

On almost all other written material the parish's vision, as expressed in the shortened version mentioned previously, was clearly stated as well as appropriate quotes from the Bible. In these ways the quality criteria of the Christian faith, and St Doris's in particular, were explicitly presented to the congregation and visitors alike.

Engagement Element

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

Engagement with the parish as a whole and with the services in particular was strongly evident at St Doris. There were over 162 rostered volunteer-duty positions, representing 74% of the entire congregation, although only 76 people actually performed these duties. Although some members performed multiple duties, the majority of volunteers held only one duty position. Some of these positions included administration, welcoming, morning tea, crèche, bookstall and, as described by one member, "*odd jobs guy*".

The most obvious indication of engagement at St Doris was the number of different people taking part in the delivery of the services. During the observed services, up to six people were concurrently engaged in service delivery, with duties such as singing, prayers, directions and assisting in delivering sacraments. Several other people supported the stage activities with lighting, sound and projection. Welcomers and ushers were also active prior to and during the services.

Playgroups, mother's groups and prayer meetings were all available at St Doris and these impressed Emily when she became a new member of the congregation. She explained,

> *The people I've met in the short time I've been attending are keen to grow in Christ and serve each other.*

At the time of observation there were fifteen Bible or home groups operating at St Doris. Although attendance was not mandatory, 73% (27 of 37) of the congregation attended these groups either weekly or fortnightly. Darius stated that two to three new groups were created each year. In describing the purpose of these groups Darius stressed,

> *The groups are for building up the congregation not for evangelism.*

The types of engagement by the congregation within the services varied from minimal noticeable engagement to note taking and clapping. The congregation held strong opinions on the suitability of the various types of engagement. For example, equal numbers (11 of 37 each) of the congregation either did or did not take notes during the services. Similarly 27% (10 of 37) did not agree with clapping during communal singing while 35% (13 of 37) agreed or strongly agreed with the inclusion of clapping. Despite these differences, no signs of tension were obvious during the services.

During one observed service the length of the sermon appeared to cause the congregation to lose concentration and became restive and less attentive and responsive. This was especially noticeable during periods of long Bible readings within the sermon. Further, engagement was also adversely affected when incorrect information was displayed on the projection screen, which took several minutes to rectify. In spite of these difficulties, Darius infused engagement by using humour during these times. The following was a typical example of Darius's humour.

> *Parish leaders must not be lovers of money, but that doesn't mean that pastors are better if they are starving.*

During the sermons Darius guided the congregation through the relevant biblical text with statements such as, "*The next heading talks about* …". In this way he helped the congregation remain engaged in the sermon and receptive to learning.

He also provided Bible references and page numbers so that the congregation could follow the sermon discussion in the pew Bibles. He used hypothetical situations and

questions to clarify and elaborate on issues raised in the sermons, as well as to sustain the congregation's attention and interest. One such hypothetical situation was described in the following way,

> *We need young Christians out in the world … What would you think if your child chose to be a parish leader, would you think it a second class choice to that of a doctor, lawyer etc …*

When asked if it was important to have an opportunity to ask questions during parish services, 54% (20 of 37) of the congregation's members disagreed, with an additional 16% (6 of 37) only mildly agreeing. Only 11% (4 of 37) of the members considered asking questions as truly important. When Darius was asked a similar question he responded,

> *There's no one asking questions in the 9 am service, but it's OK in the other services. The group is too big because of the size of the congregation and I don't know the people that well to know what questions they might ask.*

Singing is a traditional form of congregational engagement, and at St Doris it was led by a single female singer accompanied by several musicians. The singer provided no directions or encouragement to the congregation to participate in communal singing and, as a result, many people did not sing and those that did sang very softly. This low level of singing was further interrupted by instrumentals imbedded within several of the songs, requiring the congregation to stand in silence waiting for the next verse of the song to begin.

Congregational engagement with learning was not limited to activities conducted solely at St Doris. Some (5 of 37) of the congregation's members stated that they joined with other Christians in combined learning activities. Kate described one such activity,

> *I do 'Know Your Bible' (KYB) study group weekly, which is interdenominational.*

Other members also attended Bible studies or home groups with people outside of St Doris. Although most of this study was informal, Warren described his more formal learning activities,

> *I attend conferences when there is something I am interested in. I've studied the Preliminary Theological Certificate (PTC) and sat the exams. I've got two modules completed.*

In all, the issue of engagement was recognised by the ministry team as important to the vitality of St Doris and was an issue with high priority in their planning and implementation of services, sermons and support activities.

High Expectations Element

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

The element of high expectation includes the conveying of success and the public recognition of actions. These issues were displayed during one service observation when a family, who had been supported by the congregation through a difficult time, was interviewed by the service leader and described the types of support with which they were provided. Those who had prayed for the members of the family and those who had provided meals were publicly thanked. The leader also spoke about how the actions of the congregation were related to Christian teaching and faith.

Within the weekly newsletter there were sections that specifically presented the expectations of learning within the congregation. One such section stated, "*Equip yourself to know Christ, to grow in him and to show his love*" and then recommended particular study material which could be used by the congregation to assist in achieving these aims.

During the sermons, Darius provided direct statements about what was expected of Christians. One such statement contrasted secular and Christian standards insisting,

> *We allow inconsistencies in our society, but it shouldn't be in the parish.*

As an indication of the acceptance and internalisation of these expectations by the congregation's members, all interviewees from the congregation could easily state the expected standard of action and thoughts as reflected in the parish's vision of "*know, grow and show God's love*".

Social Support Element

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

Social support is not only an important behaviour within the Christian community, but is a direct result of the Christian faith and an issue deliberately taught within the parishes. Social support aims to increase individual spiritual growth and assist in solidifying Christian interpersonal relationships. When Darius was asked about his personal relationship with the congregation at St Doris he stated,

> *Our relation is familiar. I'm not a kiss/hug type of person, though I do give guarded hugs. My wife and I will often have members over for a barbecue, especially newcomers.*

This attitude was described by one congregation member as "*pleasant but shy*" and by another as "*insecurity*".

The weekly newsletter provided instances of social support both to the congregation in general and to individuals. One section also encouraged members to take positive actions to increase social support among members. This section stated,

> Do you know anyone who is sick, has a special need, who would appreciate prayer and/or a call from a member of the Ministry Team?

The article described the steps to be taken to obtain prayer and support, while in another section of the newsletter the congregation was asked to pray

> for those who are sick, recently bereaved or have asked for special prayer and pray also that we might be renewed in our faith, in our love for one another and in our love for those who do not yet know Jesus.

Despite this written message of encouragement, one congregation member, Graham, suggested more concrete action,

> *More contact is needed when people are sick. For example, I was restricted due to a medical condition and unable to attend services. More contact out of parish service times is needed.*

Visiting congregation members in their homes was also an issue that produced a divided response. Although 41% (15 of 37) of members agreed that the rector did indeed visit congregation members, 24% (9 of 37) either disagreed or only mildly agreed.

For Kate, one source of social support originated from the numerous home groups functioning at St Doris. She explained,

> *What's important is small groups, Bible based and caring'.*

Angus also saw support from a group perspective,

> *I continue to attend this service because my Bible study members attend and I want to nurture and encourage them.*

Overall, Darius summed up the relationships between congregation members and the related social support in this way,

> *The older members have a sense of care and concern. The younger members don't have the same sense of knowing each other even after 2 years of attending the parish.*

It was clear that social support at St Doris did not happen spontaneously, but as a consequence of immersion in the services and parish values, which were regularly reiterated in the services and sermons and practised individually and collectively. The rector, for example, was described as "*humble and Godly*", while the

congregation was depicted as "*welcoming and warm*". With this in mind one congregation member, Ruth, made this comment,

> *I continue to attend because of the meet-and-greet and the evangelical content.*

The social support also continued after the services, as explained by Shannon,

> *After service the tea and fellowship is a critical part of the whole morning.*

The support and concern was not directed only toward the St Doris congregation, but also to the wider community, as explained by Rodger,

> *Baptism services are important reminders to all of us about our faith, and an opportunity to share our faith with visitors.*

Social interactions within and between the congregation and the ministry team was an important reason why 49% (18 of 37) of the members continued to attend services at St Doris. Further, 73% (27 of 37) of members stated that it was because their friends attended. A sense of belonging also rated highly (25 of 37) among the congregation, as did activities for children (28 of 37). Almost all (32 of 37) members cited the personal qualities of the rector as a strong reason to remain at St Doris.

Self-Regulation and Self-Direction Elements

Quality Learning Environment
Explicit Quality Criteria
Engagement
High Expectations
Social Support
Self-Regulation & Self-Direction

The ministry team at St Doris encouraged congregation members to take an active role in the parish as indicated in this statement from the weekly parish newsletter,

> The planning for the next roster cycle is currently underway. If you wish to serve on any of the rosters please contact the office so that you can be included.

In a similar way, volunteering at St Doris was openly valued, as indicated by comments in the weekly newsletter such as, “Thank you for serving in this way”.

Nancy, a congregation member, explained the opportunities for involvement at St Doris,

> *There’s plenty of opportunity for ministry. People can get into ministry easily here and they do.*

When asked how people joined parish rosters Darius replied,

> *We usually ask people before they get a chance to volunteer, but anybody can join a roster. We need to invent more things that people can join.*

Darius was asked if people who were ill-suited to a particular role were asked to leave the position. He replied,

> *I don’t want to be seen as giving someone the heave-ho, but sometimes it’s necessary. When we have to, we always have a thanksgiving for them and applaud what they have done, and for their efforts during the time they were there.*

Home groups were an important extension of St Doris’s ministry and were places where individuals could express their own self-direction and self-regulation. At the time of observation there were fifteen home groups operating, which were led by 23 congregation members. When discussing home and Bible groups, Darius described how each group had the opportunity to study the same Bible text and consider the same issues as those delivered in the services. However, some groups did not know this avenue for further reflection was available. Darius felt that the parish needed a Home-Bible group coordinator, to ensure that the teaching and organisation was overseen by a trained person. In Darius’s opinion, this position should be a paid position because the person needed to have strong theological knowledge obtained through formal study.

Leadership roles at St Doris were not limited to the home groups. There were 25 individual coordinator duty positions across the parish, including bookstall and

meals-in-crisis coordinators, and men's, women's and children's ministry leaders, all being held voluntarily by congregation members. Eight other individuals assisted the three wardens and the rector on the parish council, while another eighty in-service and support positions, such as ushers, sound desk and projectionists, were performed by congregation volunteers. This level of volunteering represented over 50% of the total congregation of St Doris across all services. Although many volunteers performed several duties, there were enough duty positions across the entire parish for 92% of the total congregation. One congregation member, Max, summed up this situation by stating that "*there are lots of opportunities to be involved*"*.* Despite this comment, Darius mentioned that he needed to create parish duties in order to satisfy the congregation's desire to serve others.

To be successful, self-direction and self-regulation needed to be encouraged by others. At St Doris, over 60% (22 of 37) of the congregation stated that the skills and knowledge of the congregation's members were acknowledged by the rector. However, a further 24% (9 of 37) of members considered that such talents were either not acknowledged or only mildly acknowledged. Similarly, 30% (11 of 37) of the congregation stated that, in their opinion, suggestions for service or sermon topics were accepted by the rector, although 32% (12 of 37) either disagreed or only mildly agreed.

Many of the vision and value statements associated with St Doris were centred on the growth of the individual rather than the congregation as a whole. This was indicated in the following planning statement outlining the priorities at St Doris,

> *Discovering our God-given gifts, living as a Christian, handling God's word, and effective prayers.*

Such statements fostered the members' self-direction and self-regulation.

St Doris had a large Sunday school catering for children up to the age of fourteen or fifteen years. After this age the children were expected to attend one of the regular parish services and begin exploring their own self-direction and self-regulation. However, Darius was concerned that the parish did not have a specific program to integrate the children into the services, which contributed to many stopping to attend services in their mid-teens. Darius described this situation as follows,

> *At the age of 14 or 15 we take them out of the service for a chat during the sermon. We also need to get them involved in the running of the evening services. They have to have some say in what's going on. We get the girls involved in teaching in the Sunday school. We believe in teaching and mentoring, but we don't really know how to integrate them into the regular services because they're too conservative for the young people.*

Related Teaching Elements

As mentioned previously, additional teaching elements were included with the NSWQTM to take into account the predominantly adult nature of parish congregations. These elements included: learning cycles, curriculum goals, feedback, constructive engagement in assessment and alignment of teaching, learning and parish practices.

At St Doris 84% (31 of 37) of the members stated that the rector encouraged feedback from the congregation on various issues. However, some members considered that the parish needed to do more, especially with regard to the services. Darius and the ministry team used such feedback when determining the learning needs of the congregation and planning service and sermon topics.

With respect to teaching qualities, 62% (23 of 37) of the members described Darius as an excellent teacher who helped the congregation find their own solutions to problems rather than simply providing set answers. One visitor, however, did not fully appreciate Darius' teaching style.

> *The service mostly met my expectations. The sermon was accurate but a little uninteresting in the way it was delivered.*

Another congregation member occasionally found Darius's sermons difficult to follow.

Observations identified instances of difficulties, omissions or distracting features within the services. During one sermon, Darius told the congregation to stop reading their horoscope or astrology forecasts but did not explain why, making it difficult to understand the statement's connection to the rest of the sermon. Similarly, Darius

often made short unrelated comments during the sermon that appeared to have no connection to the topic and simply resulted in the sermon focus being lost.

For those congregation members with good to deep Bible knowledge, there was very little challenging information or ideas in the sermons. Darius supported his form of teaching in the following way,

> *I aim the sermons at the level of an intelligent 16 year old. That's how I was taught, but I always have two or three minutes of stretch for those who need it. In the 10:30 service I aim it at visitors that know nothing, but at the 9 am service I aim it a little higher.*

Despite this, the teaching delivered in the services was important to many people in the congregation as the following comment indicated,

> *This is a strong Bible based teaching parish and the truth of the Bible is taught here. I find this parish to be very welcoming and supportive and the teaching is very good.*

Teaching can be refined and improved by relevant assessment. Recall is one assessment tool that can indicate the level of learning being undertaken in a teaching environment. The study questionnaires asked the members of the congregation to describe the previous Sunday's service and sermon in an attempt to assess the level of learning across the congregation. Most of the members seemed to have no difficulty recalling the Bible reference, as indicated by this response:

> *It was very thought provoking. It made me want to read more of the book of Daniel.*

The purpose of the sermon was also easily recalled by several members, as this statement indicated,

> *It was about encouraging. It looked at how committed I am and how would I stand up under trials etc. It made us realise that we all face various crises in our lives not only to turn to God during times of trouble.*

Assessment of the congregation's learning needs involved understanding the members' personal backgrounds and their biblical understanding. This was achieved, according to Darius, by engaging in personal conversations and socialising through meals and events.

NSWQTM SIGNIFICANCE DIMENSION

Significance	
Elements	Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness Narrative

According to the NSWQTM, learning is greatly enhanced when the significance of the teaching and learning is clearly conveyed to the learner. The last dimension of the NSWQTM, therefore, provides elements that focus directly on the idea of significance. This is achieved through various elements: background knowledge, cultural knowledge, knowledge integration, inclusivity, connectedness and narrative.

Background Knowledge Element

Significance
Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness Narrative

Background knowledge, in the parish setting, includes all relevant knowledge and experiences pertaining to the learning situation and may include biblical knowledge, formal qualifications, and social and personal relevant learning experiences. Such background knowledge can impact positively or negatively on the individual learner. In the positive case, building upon students' existing biblical knowledge can assist with the understanding and organisation of new knowledge. However, if the existing knowledge is incorrect or distorted, it may make learning difficult and hamper future spiritual growth.

As mentioned earlier, Darius used the congregation's personal backgrounds as a method of determining the congregation's learning needs. This was particularly

important at St Doris due to the substantial number of people switching from other Protestant denominations and from the Roman Catholic faith to St Doris, and thus holding diverse knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs.

According to Darius, the Christian faith depended on historical facts and understanding. However, he pointed out that the literal acceptance of the Bible had been questioned in recent years, making it difficult to adequately use its historical information as a teaching tool. Darius explained how he had been at other parishes where the Bible was not taken seriously as history and how this shaped his teaching,

> *I struggle with emphasising the Bible as a historical document too much, particularly in this era where its historical nature is criticised. I must let the Bible speak for itself.*

Since a large number of St Doris's congregation had attended for less than five years, the issue of background knowledge was important, particularly when planning and delivering service teaching.

Cultural Knowledge Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

Cultural knowledge, as the name implies, is associated with the cultural background of learners and how this may be integrated into the learning experience. Cultural knowledge includes demographics such as the learners' gender, economic situation, ethnicity, language and other issues originating from the specific cultures.

As mentioned earlier, St Doris had a limited number of different ethnic groups. Although this simplified the need to include each ethnic group in the services, it also increased the need to know and understand the current Australian culture, with its generational, gender and economic differences.

When asked about the cultural backgrounds of the congregation, Darius replied,

> *I have to acknowledge that the surrounding area is typical of growing suburbs in that they tend to be populated by those who have been resident for the longer period in this society and in the main have more money. I also say in terms of Sydney's ethnicity that we're not necessarily typical of the multi-racial context of the suburbs and most people know that anyway because if they go to work in another suburb or the city they're well aware of it.*

Darius described how cultural background knowledge was used in the services at St Doris.

> *I talk about us being different mainly in financial terms not so much in terms of ethnicity, because everyone around here is concerned about their mortgage. I make sure that we remember that it's relative and that we are much better off than those living in other areas.*

Darius also used background knowledge in sermons when he employed examples from within the surrounding community. To illustrate the idea of foundations Darius used a familiar metaphor drawn from the many house construction sites throughout the parish,

> *On the corner there's a new house being built. It's only sticks now but a short while ago it was vacant land. In fact it was once a dam that's been filled in. I asked myself would I buy that house knowing that it's built over a filled-in dam.*

Cultural knowledge was employed in other various ways within the services. During one service observation a couple, who had Asian ancestry, provided a review of a secular book focused on the author's ideas regarding growth and lifestyles in society. The couple described how this was opposite to what the Bible taught. Another service segment dealt with current political events in Africa.

In one service Darius focused on the aspects of Australian culture that produced many lonely people. He stated,

> *I know some of you are lonely … nothing makes me so unhappy as when someone comes to the service looking for love and finds no love.*

The processes used at St Doris also reflected specific cultural issues. For instance, during the offertory the traditional collection plate was replaced by a collection bag so that donations would remain private. This process reflected the personal privacy laws prominent in Australian society. Similarly, the Australian tradition of socialising over a cup of tea or coffee was deliberately utilised at St Doris to stimulate fellowship and discussion of the services and sermons. The area set aside for these refreshments was well equipped and reflected a welcoming and friendly atmosphere.

When asked about issues currently affecting the parish, Darius identified one particular cultural issue. He explained,

> *The biggest challenge to the parish is changing consumers into congregation contributors.*

This idea of people being consumers of Christian beliefs and how teaching needed to appeal to basic consumerism was mentioned several times during the interviews with Darius, particularly in terms of service inclusions.

As mentioned earlier, neither the surplice nor the rector-collar was worn during services. This was because Darius felt the current Australian culture made them confronting to visitors, particularly for those who were non-believers.

Knowledge Integration Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

The process of knowledge integration requires the congregation's members to take knowledge gained from one source and integrate it with knowledge from another source. Thus, knowledge gained through Bible study could be deliberately

integrated with knowledge from the services, to produce a greater understanding of the Christian faith.

Darius was observed using knowledge integration during the services. On one occasion, he linked serving others according to the Bible with husbands and wives serving each other in a marriage situation. On other occasions, the Bible readers described how the readings related to the theme or topic of the service or the parish's mission statement.

Darius explained how, in particular, the mission statement was integrated into other aspects of the services in the following way,

> *I try to say it once per week at the beginning of the services. I'll state the mission statement and use it to explain the notices and other things.*

Within sermons, Darius attempted to emphasise how the various Christian teachings interrelated to each other by using statements such as,

> *It's part of the reason we are teaching this idea …*
>
> and
>
> *The purpose of the letter is the matter of the parish …*

Similarly, prior to the singing, the song leader provided a brief description of how the songs related to the Bible readings or the sermon. Also, most songs contained similar words to that of the Bible reading or sermon, providing mutual reinforcement.

During one baptism, Darius related the actions of the sacrament with the teaching of Jesus in the following way,

> *We are here to bring Toby into God's kingdom according to what Jesus said …*

At St Doris, a small team of people was used to lead the services. Each leader attempted to maintain the knowledge integration across the service by making

reference to the words and actions of the previous leaders. Darius himself integrated knowledge from a broad range of sources within his sermons. On one occasion, he suggested that the congregation read an article in the Anglican periodical *The Southern Cross* to assist them in further understanding the sermon theme.

Overall, knowledge integration was recognised and practised as a vital aspect of parish teaching at St Doris.

Inclusivity Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

Inclusivity was one issue at St Doris that was specifically addressed during the services. This was evident in the personalised name badges available as the congregation members entered the service room and the personalising of prayers during the baptism.

As stated previously, over half the congregation at St Doris were over sixty years old, this posed some seating problems within the service room. To address this matter, and demonstrate inclusivity of older members, special seats equipped with armrests were installed at the back of the service room for those who found it difficult to use ordinary armless chairs.

St Doris not only focused on the regular congregation but openly attended to the needs of visitors and new members. One example of this inclusion was written in the weekly newsletter,

> *Welcome to the service today especially if you are visiting; it is great to have you here. A cuppa is served at the end of each service, please join us … we'd love to make contact with you to talk about the different ways we can serve you. Also you may like to visit the Welcome Desk in the foyer and pick up one of our Welcome Packs.*

Inclusivity with respect to children was also demonstrated through one of the fortnightly information sheets. One such sheet contained the following statement to encourage interaction between children and the older members of the congregation.

> *The children in Sunday school have been looking at God's big plan to rescue his people. Have a look through their scrapbooks together and ask them to tell you the big picture of God's plan.*

Although one service observation occurred during school holidays, the children were still catered for during the service. On entry, each older child was handed a folder containing activity sheets and pencils, with younger children being removed from the service during the sermon to view a video.

Family groups were also actively included and encouraged by newsletter statements such as,

> *Think of ways in which, as a family, you might share the good news of Jesus with others.*

Despite these examples of inclusivity of all age groups, one congregation member considered that more could still be achieved,

> *More interactions from the congregation are needed, e.g. special skills and gifts displayed. Children need to be involved more and allowed to join in for a longer part of the service so that there can be family teachings too.*

Another member, Kate, stressed the need for families to be included as one unit worshipping together,

> *We need more family services on a regular basis.*

Men within the congregation were also identified by some congregation members as needing more inclusion.

> *The parish services are OK but more men's activities would be good. We need more men's activities.*

Despite this, other members saw the ministry to men as an integral part of St Doris and as having increased since Darius became the rector.

Throughout the observed services there was a deliberate intention to keep the congregation included and engaged in the activities. To achieve this, Darius and the other service leaders provided clear directions to the congregation throughout the services, such as,

> *It's our habit to stand and state the Lord's creed …*

Further, Darius also prefaced the various sections of the sermon with a brief statement to indicate the intended level of the information so as to include people with various degrees of biblical knowledge. For those with minimum biblical understanding Darius preferenced his presentation with, "*You might be a new christian …*". Later in the sermon, for those with more advanced biblical knowledge and understanding, he began with the words, "*and for those of us that have been a Christian for a while* …".

As a reflection of Darius's desire for inclusivity, the majority (27 of 37) of the congregation considered he included everyone in the services regardless of age or gender. This was regarded by the congregation as critical for the cohesion of the congregation and to sustain their interest and retention as members.

Connectedness Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

Connectedness links learning with the surrounding community, and social and cultural aspects of the wider world. In a parish setting, this involves reaching out and taking the Christian message, through word and action, into the surrounding community. It also involves inviting the community to bring their ideas and understanding into the parish.

At St Doris the ministry team, led by Darius, was focused on connecting the congregation to the surrounding community. To achieve this Darius tried to include teaching in his sermons that suited a wide range of people. Darius described a typical presentation he might have with the congregation to express this focus,

> *I would say to them, we're concerned about your growth so we're looking at this passage this morning … we work hard at our sermons to try and bring the word of God to you in appropriate ways.*

Darius also explained how the parish as a whole reached out to the community by providing activities to suit the community's specific needs,

> *We're having a marriage course mid-week at the moment and we ran a parenting course last year and we've even had a finance seminar … We've started up a group for redundant people on Monday mornings now. One young chap has been redundant for 6 months and its really starting to knock him around. So we set up this program to support him and others.*

The basic philosophy behind these activities of connectedness was explained by Darius in this way,

> *We work hard on the application of the Bible. I think if you don't apply a text then you've basically failed.*

Darius explained how the parish used formal study material and programs such as the Navigator's children's program JAM (Jesus and Me) (Urban Ministries 2011) to assist new members and new Christians understand the Christian faith. He also used personal communication and encouragement. However, Darius admitted that "*we're not getting traction in the community*".

The emphasis on connecting teaching to the rest of life's activities was not lost on the congregation, as explained by this congregation member,

> *The rector or assistant applies the Bible teaching (facts) of both Old and New testaments to the current day and it works. The sermons are very practical – helpful for growing my faith and living it.*

In fact, all the respondents agreed that they put into practice the things learned during the services and 68% (25 of 37) said that sermons were designed to apply to life matters in practical ways. This connection between Christian teaching and daily activities was demonstrated by Anna, who volunteered as a scripture teacher in the local public school to bring the message of God to the wider community.

Issues arising in the secular media were also used in services as a form of teaching. During one observation the rector used a recent football sex scandal to illustrate his sermon, in which he stated, "*We are preoccupied with wealth, jobs, and social position* …". He then continued by contrasting biblical teaching to society's accepted standards.

In summary, connecting to the congregation and the surrounding community was a basic goal of St Doris's ministry team and was reflected in all the parish activities.

Narrative Element

Significance
Background Knowledge
Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge Integration
Inclusivity
Connectedness
Narrative

Most Bible readings used in parish services are narratives or relate to a particular Bible narrative. In this sense, parish tradition has always focused strongly on presenting narratives.

Darius was asked to explain his understanding and use of narrative in the services and why this was important for learning. He stated,

> *When short stories or illustrations are used that's when people cog in, particularly when it's got someone else's experience or a funny anecdote. Well I think narrative is one of the key ways to learn. I think the point by point by point teaching is OK for people who really want to learn, but for people who aren't really interested they're far more likely to hook into stories and a story is far more likely to make a particular theological point more memorable.*

> *I know here when I tell a story from the farm people lock straight into it; although I have to remember, as it were, to make it a little more contemporary; and be mindful for how I say it to the younger congregation.*

Darius used narratives as a way of explaining complex life and spiritual issues during his services. In one instance he spoke about his own wedding anniversary to explain that God does not forget important matters. On another occasion he compared the events of his returning to Australia after living overseas for some time with the Israelites exile and return from Babylon.

Therefore, it is clear that narrative was an important teaching and learning tool at St Doris. Similarly, the overall teaching at St Doris reflected the principles of quality teaching as described in the NSWQTM.

The above discussion presented the findings from St Doris in relationship to the NSWQTM dimensions of Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance. This information focused specifically on the first of the four related study questions.

The next section will present the findings from St Doris in relation to the parish attendance patterns and the factors that influence such attendance. This information will provide insight into the second and third related study questions.

Service Attendance

Darius described the St Doris parish as growing, although the morning congregation was at a standstill with respect to attendance growth. New members to the parish were generally those switching from other denominations rather than people converting to Christianity for the first time. One member, Ebony, describes the growth in the following way,

> *People are bringing their neighbours and friends. People don't come here just to be built up but to help people.*

The congregation at St Doris overwhelmingly (34 of 37) stated that they attended parish services every week and 73% (27 of 37) attended Bible study groups at least

fortnightly. This desire to attend services and Bible study groups was seen by several members as a direct result of Darius's leadership. Reflecting on the growth since Darius arrived, one member stated,

> *Before Darius came there were only 100 people and no small groups. Now we have lots of people and lots of Bible studies. It all changed because of Darius.*

Another member, although recognising Darius's contribution, explained the parish's growth on one outreach program. He explained,

> *Our rector has a strength to grow the parish, but before that is men's ministry. This is why the parish has grown so much.*

The question of why the members attended services at St Doris drew a wide range of responses. The most common responses dealt with personal spiritual growth. The following statement was typical of such responses.

> *I attend services to know Christ, to grow in him and to show love; to refresh my spirit and review. A continual reminder of all things God means to me. To pray and help me survive another week and live it as a child of God.*

Several members highlighted specific aspects of spiritual growth to explain their service attendance patterns. One such aspect was that of self-discipline, which was seen as a tool to keep the members "*on track with Bible teaching*". Such discipline was maintained by at least one member even when he was absent from St Doris. He explained,

> *I keep discipline in attending parish services even when I'm away interstate. When away I go to other parishes.*

Understanding what God required of a believer and then acting upon it was also seen as contributing to spiritual growth. These responsibilities were forefront in the thoughts of several members when it came to attendance, as Robert explained,

> *As Christians we are called to meet together – to build up the body of Christ, to worship, etc. So many of the other reasons don't apply – ie it's my responsibility to be there.*

Similarly, specific biblical passages were cited as directives to attend services. Helen explained,

> *The Bible tells me 'do not fail to meet together', so I attend for mutual encouragement and support in the Christian walk.*

Spiritual growth and faith are inseparable in the Christian religion and so it is not surprising that faith was identified as one impetus to attendance. One member explained the relationship in the following way,

> *The commitment the congregation has to increasing God's faith in this parish is why I attend.*

The ultimate goal of Christian faith is the worship of God and, as such, represented another reason why members attended services. This was simply described by one member in the following way,

> *I attend to worship my lord and saviour, worship and praise God.*

In contrast to those attending services due to faith, duty, growth or a desire to worship, at least one congregation member attended to discover the truth about Christianity. She explained,

> *I do not know if I believe so I'm trying to find out.*

Apart from spiritual growth and its associated ideas, another common reason for attending services was personal relationships within the congregation and the attitude of the existing members to visitors and new members. The following was a typical response.

> *I attend because this parish made me feel welcomed as an individual and the special care and interest shown in me as an individual.*

Not all responses to the question of service attendance were shared among the congregation members. Harry and his family, for example, attended from a strong conviction that God personally indicated that they should attend this particular parish. Harry explained,

> *God wanted us to come to this parish so we bought a house in the area.*

The congregation at St Doris was also asked to consider why other people attended parish services. Half (6 of 12) of those who responded stated that attendance occurred because of a need for fellowship or to reduce loneliness. Another respondent suggested that attendance might be a reaction to life's problems. He explained,

> *People attend because they are looking for solace in times of trouble and need.*

As Christianity has a long history, some respondents saw tradition as influencing decisions on attendance. One such respondent stated,

> *They attend because of tradition. They feel it is the right thing to do or perhaps some might just want to be seen doing the right thing.*

As with the notion of attendance for spiritual growth mentioned earlier, some respondents indicated that in their opinion some people attended services to learn about God and Christianity. Ralph, a congregation member explained this idea,

> *People attend to hear the word of God and to further understand. They attend to keep their faith strong and stimulated, to learn and to be encouraged.'*

Worship, guidance, prayer and communication were also reasons that the congregation's members considered could be the stimulus for others to attend parish services.

One visitor to St Doris also answered the question relating to why she attended the parish service. She responded,

> *I attended because it is a progressive parish.*

A large number of the St Doris congregation (22 of 37) had previously been members of other parish congregations. The reasons for leaving their previous parishes were varied, although over 40% (15 of 37) stated moving to a new area as the primary reason for change. In general, the reasons for leaving a parish congregation could be divided in two broad categories; what the parish offered and what the individual could achieve. In the first category were issues such as service type and parish management. For example, one respondent raised the issue of music and the related style of the services. He explained,

> *The music and singing and stamping feet; was too noisy for my wife who had undergone an operation.*

In the same category were issues related to actual parish regulations and how they were implemented by the parish. One respondent described how particular parish laws made it impossible for her to continue to attend her previous parish,

> *I attended a Catholic church but once divorced I was not able to participate in communion, which is very important to me. So I left and moved to St Doris.*

Congregational relationships and a sense of belonging were also part of this first category. Parishes that conveyed a poor or declining sense of belonging were often abandoned by congregation members, as this statement demonstrates,

> *The parish was very large; and I started to feel not part of the congregation. This was my reason for leaving.*

In the second category of reasons for leaving previous parishes, the individuals looked to their own sense of spiritual growth or capacity to put their Christian faith into practice. Leaving a particular parish in search of another that provided stronger opportunities for personal growth was a common response among the respondents. The following statement provides such an example,

> *I felt I wasn't growing as I should be. Also, there was unforgiveness between the parish members there and it has been very long standing. This really bothered me.*

Similarly, opportunities to practise the Christian faith were an important issue for individuals when considering to which parish they wished to belong. Even though a parish may actually suit the individual in all other aspects, an inability to apply their learning may cause the individual to seek another parish. The statement below, provided by one respondent, describes just such a situation,

> *We had attended the other parish for 27 years and believed in retirement we should move to an area that was growing and needed more helpers.*

Overall, the decisions to leave previous parishes, except in the case of residential changes, were related in many cases to the level of spiritual growth of the individuals and how that level compared to the opportunities provided by the individual parishes.

Summary of Findings, Themes and Issues at St Doris

St Doris portrayed a parish with dynamic processes and procedures undergirding the spiritual growth of the rector and the congregation. An atmosphere of professionalism pervaded the operations of the parish, particularly in the development and delivery of the services. Such professionalism did not, however, preclude the participation of the congregation in leadership roles, or deter sustained involvement of any member of the congregation in the parish activities.

To facilitate the professionalism, St Doris instigated a structured communication system for the dissemination of information and teaching. This flow of communication radiated in many directions, including between congregation members, between the rector and the congregation, between the ministry team and the rector, and between the ministry team and the congregation. Textual, digital, graphical, auditory and personal discourses were among the many techniques used to target various sections of the congregation and surrounding community.

This wealth of communication was multidirectional with all interested stakeholders within the parish assisting in the growth and direction of the parish activities, particularly in the design and delivery of services.

Congregation members as well as the ministry team were equally encouraged to participate in the teaching that was delivered at St Doris, whether during the services or in the service support activities such as Sunday school, crèche and youth groups. This structure enhanced the engagement of the congregation by providing opportunities for useful and meaningful participation, and created the impression of a deeply committed and active parish.

Darius's democratic leadership style, combined with his humble personality, endeared him to the congregation, who saw him as an effective leader. Although his teaching style was not particularly charismatic, the congregation attributed the ongoing growth of the parish to the processes that he instigated and the welcoming atmosphere that he demonstrated and encouraged.

The collaborative nature of St Doris was reinforced by a strong mission statement that was central to all activities and which appeared in almost all written or display material. The statement, focused on spiritual growth, was referenced during the services as a basis of spiritual teaching and commanded strong ownership by the congregation.

The perceived consumer nature of the congregation and surrounding community had shaped the services at St Doris into a commodity attractive to members and visitors. Although not simply a presentation, the services recognised that passive learning was no longer a feature of the current consumer society and that, to retain members and grow numerically, services needed to actively involve all attendees. Consumerism was one reason for the parish's emphasis on professionalism, which included the employment of only fully trained ministry team members.

Outreach at St Doris was not conducted as a separate function outside of the normal operations of the parish. Instead, outreach was an integral part of the regular activities with visitors and non-Christians being drawn into the congregation to interact with the members, services and other activities. This did not mean, however, that specific outreach programs were not delivered at St Doris, but that

these programs were for the benefit of the congregation members and the wider community.

The NSWQTM Intellectual Quality dimension was clearly present in the deep knowledge and understanding displayed by Darius, the ministry team and the congregation. The interconnecting infrastructure of teaching and learning, developed by Darius, displayed high levels of problematic knowledge and higher-order thinking. The strong communication structure, which included the use of metalanguage, fostered high levels of spiritual growth.

The NSWQTM dimension of Quality Learning Environment was also present at St Doris. Using the biblical criteria as the basis of congregational engagement and providing positive high expectations of learning success, St Doris developed a parish rich in social support. Although rigid deliberate learning structures were in place, this did not discourage a high level of member self-regulation and self-direction, even in the area of leadership.

Through the integration of background and cultural knowledge, St Doris demonstrated the NSWQTM dimension of Significance. Also, with a strong focus on inclusivity and connectedness, the parish provided learning activities for the congregation and the wider community, based on the biblical narratives and beliefs.

Overall, St Doris represented a strong viable parish that had a foundation of biblical teaching and learning for all members, visitors and the wider community.

Conclusion – Case Study #3: St Doris

The elements of the NSWQTM were clearly apparent in the services and support structures at St Doris. The continual growth in attendance indicated a parish that was active, focused and growing, as well as aware of the issues that must be addressed to ensure parish viability into the future.

The three case study parishes had many similarities, while at the same time displaying high levels of contrast. In the next part of Chapter 4 we diverge from the parishes and look more closely at the rectors, and specifically at their training.

Chapter 4 Study Findings

Part 4D – Chapter Summary

Introduction

This section of Chapter 4 provides a summary of the study case study findings. The figure below provides a graphical representation of the various topics covered in this subchapter.

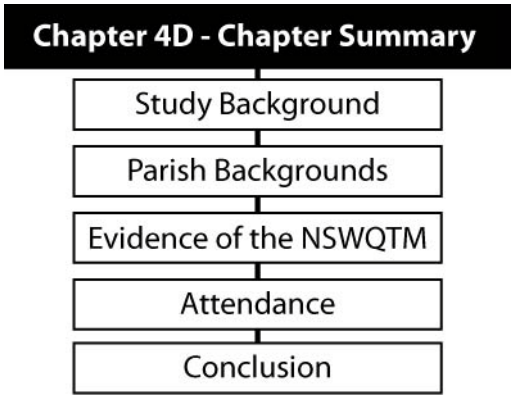

Figure 4.5 – Chapter 4 Part 4D layout

Study Background

As stated previously, the focus of this study was the investigation of the relationship between quality teaching, as defined by the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model (NSWQTM), and parish viability, as expressed in congregation size and growth. A triangulation of case studies, questionnaires and interviews were used to gather data from three parishes in the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia. The case study parishes (St Helga, St Ethel and St Doris) were selected according to their attendance patterns over the period 1998–2003 and represented three levels of attendance growth (steady, negative and positive).

It is necessary to clarify, once again, that this was not a theological study, but instead focused on the three dimensions of the NSWQTM (Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance) and the degree to which the associated elements were present in the design and delivery of the main parish services and support activities.

Within the Christian faith the concept of learning is not limited to the basic transfer of knowledge and facts, but rather encompasses all aspects of the believers' lives, including their interactions with others. Situations deemed to be learning experiences in the Christian faith are much broader than those in the NSWQTM, with learning occurring within Christian parishes directly and indirectly both during and outside parish service times. Similarly, the choices, such as attendance patterns, made by individuals within the case studies cannot be separated from their personal Christian faith and their expectations of others within that faith.

Parish Backgrounds

All three case study parishes were presided over by an ordained Anglican rector, supported by varying numbers of wardens and parish committee volunteers. The influence of the wardens varied from minimal at St Helga, where the rector (Cyrus) considered them dysfunctional, to significant at St Doris, where the rector (Darius) sought warden confirmation for all major ministry decisions.

Except for St Helga, which had only one Sunday service, the parishes delivered several Sunday services catering for different congregation profiles. The primary parish services, as identified by the respective rectors, were chosen for this study and generally represented a family style service. The duration of these services lasted between sixty and ninety minutes, with sermon durations between 22 and 38 minutes. Therefore, on average sermons consumed 36% of service time.

St Helga's congregation was generally much older than those of the other two parishes, with no children under the age of fourteen represented, except for the rector's family. In contrast, St Ethel's and St Doris's congregations were composed of people of various ages, including a significant number of children. Each of the latter parishes provided both Sunday school and youth group activities.

Home groups, both fellowship and Bible study, existed at all parishes, however, their purpose was uniquely defined in each parish. At St Helga such groups were intended to be the primary learning and support structure for the congregation, with the rector expecting every congregation member to attend at least one group. At St Ethel's parish, membership was also strongly encouraged, although group purpose was strictly Bible study. St Doris's home groups were optional and, like St Helga, provided Bible study and fellowship, although there was less emphasis on their

importance. Despite this, the number of groups at St Doris was continually growing, in contrast to those of the other two parishes where the number of groups was generally static.

Perhaps the most striking difference between the three case study parishes was the influence of the rector and his relationship to the congregation. At St Helga, the rector exercised total control over the operation of the parish while at the same time physically distancing himself from general parish activities. He considered the congregation unable to function at a suitable standard due to their reliance on him and their inability to take responsibility for themselves and their parish duties.

In a similar way, the rector at St Ethel was also the central figure in leadership and teaching, setting the basis for all activities. In attitude and action he represented a father figure where emotion and authority were intertwined. Although he encouraged the congregation to participate in various leadership aspects of the parish and its services, he retained the ultimate veto over all these activities.

In contrast, the rector at St Doris had a quite different teaching and leadership style. Although he fulfilled his rector duty as primary biblical teacher, he worked collaboratively with the wardens, committees and group coordinators on all other parish matters. Although friendly, he did not present a charismatic leadership style, but rather one that supported others in their endeavours.

The various ways these rectors incorporated the elements of the NSWQTM will be discussed next.

Evidence of the NSWQTM

The NSWQTM, as described previously, is composed of three dimensions and various subgroups, known as elements. Figure 4.6 provides an overview of this structure.

New South Wales Quality Teaching Model	
Intellectual Quality	Deep Knowledge & Understanding Problematic Knowledge Higher-order Thinking Metalanguage Substantive Communication
Quality Learning Environment	Explicit Quality Criteria Engagement High Expectations Social Support Self-regulation and Self-direction
Significance	Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness Narrative

Figure 4.6 – New South Wales Quality Teaching Model

The eighteen elements of the NSWQTM were identified to varying degrees in all three case studies. Each NSWQTM dimension will be discussed separately in this summary, reflecting the structure of parts A, B and C of this chapter.

NSWQTM INTELLECTUAL QUALITY DIMENSION

Intellectual Quality	
Elements	Deep Knowledge & Understanding Problematic Knowledge Higher-order Thinking Metalanguage Substantive Communication

Deep Knowledge and Understanding

The deep knowledge and deep understanding elements were the most recognisable features of all three parishes, being demonstrated by the rectors and the members of the congregations. For Cyrus and Henry this knowledge emanated from several academic qualifications in addition to their theology degrees. In contrast, theology was Darius's only academic qualification, supplemented by informal learning and coaching. All rectors, however, stated that they learnt more about ministry from watching other rectors than they did during their time at theological college.

The congregations in general had a desire for biblical knowledge, spiritual growth and authentic Christian teaching. However, their level of biblical knowledge, as rated by the congregation members, varied across the parishes, with St Ethel's parish showing the largest range of biblical knowledge, followed by St Doris.

Problematic Knowledge

Problematic knowledge, which expresses itself in questioning, knowledge investigation and forming comparisons, was perhaps the least identified NSWQTM element in all parishes. The attitude toward questioning during services, either originating from the rector or the congregation, was mixed within all congregations, although questioning was more tolerated at St Ethel. Rhetorical rather than direct or overhead questions were favoured by all the rectors with responses being unexpected or, as in the case of Darius, unpredictable and thus unwanted.

Higher-Order Thinking

Higher-order thinking, the recognition, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of knowledge, was evident in the development of long-term service schedules and the rectors' abilities to interrelate Bible teaching, Christian beliefs and secular knowledge into the services and sermons. Similarly, the use of metalanguage in the form of Christian, biblical and spiritual terminology and explanations was observed at all three parish services.

Substantive Communication

The element of substantive communication was an area of significant difference between the parishes. At St Helga, the rector's preferred communication methods (email or written text) did not match with the congregation's desires for face-to-face discussions. This resulted in limited real communication and left the congregation feeling disconnected from the rector and believing their talents were unappreciated. In contrast, at St Doris written text, verbal presentation, artistic display, discussion and multimedia were all forms of communication used to target various segments of the congregation and visitors.

Cyrus, the rector at St Helga, was adamant that he focused parish services toward visitors. However, no written, graphical or verbal communication addressed specifically to visitors was observed during or after the services. In contrast, both St Ethel and St Doris provided welcome packs for visitors, containing various

information sheets relating to the activities of the parishes. Only St Doris, however, included a booklet on basic Christian faith and beliefs.

Between the two extremes of St Helga and St Doris, communication at St Ethel incorporated written, multimedia and verbal presentations, however, most were inclined toward the existing congregation. Although the rector stated that communication was strong at St Ethel, several members found him difficult to talk to on certain subjects.

NSWQTM QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION

Quality Learning Environment	
Elements	Explicit Quality Criteria Engagement High Expectations Social Support Self-Regulation Self-Direction

Explicit Quality Criteria

The explicit quality criteria element of the NSWQTM deals with providing the congregation with explicit criteria for the expected attitudes and actions that are an expression of Christian faith. According to the NSWQTM such criteria should be regularly referenced and provide the basis for Christian growth. All three parishes used biblical statements as their primary quality criteria, however, only St Doris refined these into a simplified, easy to learn, criteria statement. Many sections of the services (music, sermon, prayers and sacraments such as baptism) at St Doris included reference to this statement, as well as actual biblical standards. These references were also incorporated in written material, including visitor welcome packs. The St Doris congregation was the only congregation in the study to be able to state from memory the parish's quality criteria.

In contrast to St Doris, biblical criteria statements were used at St Helga's solely during the sermon, while at St Ethel's they were used during the entire service and the weekly newsletter.

It should be noted that the interpretation of biblical statements differed between the parishes. Although the congregations at St Helga and St Ethel relied on the rectors for an authentic biblical interpretation, the St Doris congregation preferred to

develop their own interpretation of Bible statements. This interpretation difference may, in turn, have affected the quality criteria expressed in the parish.

Engagement

The element of engagement exists where the congregation shows sustained interest and attention in the service or parish activity for the majority of the time during the event. At St Helga, Cyrus's ideal engagement style equated to an interactive service with the congregation asking and responding to questions. However, for the congregation, engagement was participating in each service section in quiet reverence. This conflict of ideas made true engagement in the services difficult for Cyrus and the congregation. In contrast, no such mismatch existed at St Doris, where the congregation demonstrated strong interest and attentiveness in the service sections, although engagement in corporate singing was generally low.

At St Doris, the congregation appeared to disagree regarding the expressions of engagement such as clapping, hand waving and note taking during the services. In contrast, St Ethel's congregation spontaneously engaged in clapping and other forms of physical and verbal expressions of engagement throughout the services. Further, engagement at St Ethel and St Doris was not limited to service attendance, but was also demonstrated in the high number of volunteers assisting with the services, as well as pre- and post-service support activities. Although both parishes used volunteers to deliver specific sections of the services, only St Doris used a large number of lay volunteers in leadership roles.

High Expectations

The NSWQTM high expectation element included the communication of the expectations of success, as well as encouragement and rewards for actions. At St Helga, as explained previously, Cyrus expected little from the parish congregation and, as a result, there was little encouragement to attain high spiritual growth or increase participation in parish activities. At the other extreme, expectations for personal growth and parish participation at St Doris were evident in most written material and stated frequently during the services. A similar, but less intense, situation was observed at St Ethel.

Social Support

Social support is not only an element of the NSWQTM but also a major component of the Christian faith and, as such, was evident at all three case study parishes. Although social support was only evident during the morning tea period at St Helga, it was strongly observed at St Ethel and St Doris during services and pre- and post-service activities.

At St Doris, social support was deliberately planned with members rostered for various duties including welcomers, service ushers, prayer support and pastoral care. Social support at St Ethel was less structured and dependent primarily on individuals and home groups.

Self-Regulation and Self-Direction

The desire to serve others was strongly evident at St Doris and to a slightly lesser extent at St Ethel. The foundation of such desire is the need for self-regulation and self-direction, which, according to the NSWQTM, gives the volunteers autonomy over their work and the opportunities to demonstrate initiative. Further, the volunteer is able to exercise control over the selection and direction of activities.

There was very limited evidence of self-regulation and self-direction at St Helga where congregational engagement was low. However, at St Ethel, even though the rectors oversaw all parish activities, there were still opportunities for limited self-regulation and self-direction.

The study also showed that the level of self-regulation and self-direction depended on the leadership style of the rector and the engagement of the congregation.

NSWQTM Significance Dimension

Significance	
Elements	Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness Narrative

Background Knowledge

In line with the NSWQTM, services, sermons and other teaching activities should build from the congregation's background knowledge. However, only at St Doris did the ministry team actively attempt to assess the congregation's background knowledge in the process of service development and adjust sermons to accommodate various knowledge levels of the congregation and visitors. The use of background knowledge was also evident at St Ethel, where Christian history was included in the services to address an apparent shortfall in the congregation's knowledge, due to the large number of new parish members. In addition to these specific uses of background knowledge, all rectors used sermon series to build up a body of knowledge and understanding within the congregation over a series of weeks.

Cultural Knowledge

Integrating cultural knowledge into the learning experience is another element of the NSWQTM and one that varied across the parishes. Cyrus, who described St Helga's predominantly Anglo-Saxon congregation as "*Skippy Land*", considered it unnecessary to include or reference cultural issues during the services, although he did mention Anglican culture on one occasion. In contrast, Henry and Darius used culturally based examples and references during their sermons. Culture also influenced the way in which Henry and Darius viewed their congregations. For Henry, the members of his congregation were products of their culture and thus inseparable from the surrounding society. To Darius, his congregation members began as consumers in a consumer society and needed to be encouraged to become congregation contributors.

Knowledge Integration

The NSWQTM element of knowledge integration, by definition, is strongest where services, sermons and parish activities regularly and simultaneously demonstrate the links between and within the Bible and other key learning areas such as outreach, personal growth and the sacraments. At St Helga, Cyrus clearly showed the integrated nature of the Bible's various sections, however, the connections to other learning areas were limited. Integration was more evident at St Ethel where Henry clearly showed the connection between the Bible, its place within the sacrament of baptism and its application. A similar degree of integration was seen at St Doris, with the added reinforcement of the parish mission statement, which provided a constant thread throughout the services, sermons and other activities.

Inclusivity

A basic tenant of Christianity is inclusivity and, as such, was generally seen in all parishes with regard to the congregation. However, St Helga and St Ethel showed far less inclusivity with respect to leadership duties than St Doris. These trends saw services being presented by many different people at St Doris while at St Helga the rector was the sole presenter.

The inclusion and encouragement of visitors, although stated by Cyrus as a major parish focus, was unobserved at St Helga. The opposite was true at St Doris where welcome packs, literature and ushers created a very inclusive atmosphere for visitors. St Ethel also demonstrated visitor inclusivity, but to a less extent than that at St Doris.

Connectedness

Biblical application in the real-world context was equivalent to the NSWQTM's element of connectedness and represented a point of divergence between the three parishes. At St Helga, Cyrus preferred to live at a distance from the parish so as to reduce the level of connection and reliance between himself and the congregation. Similarly, no planned outreach or mission events were in place at St Helga, resulting in limited connectivity with the surrounding community.

Although St Ethel was focused on increasing congregation numbers, there were few formal outreach programs that were not designed also for existing members. One exception being the visitor-focused welcome pack. St Doris, however, targeted

specific groups in the surrounding community, such as the unemployed, and developed suitable outreach programs to connect to these groups. The welcome pack, ushers and welcomers also resulted from a desire to connect to those outside of the parish.

Narrative

The final NSWQTM element, narrative, is also a basic component of Christianity, since this religion derives its teaching from the biblical narratives. All rectors displayed skills in narrative presentation using biblical, social and private scenarios. Although all rectors believed in the use of personal testimonies, both Cyrus and Henry stated that such testimonies would only be delivered by congregation members to ensure relevance. Despite this, members of these parishes stated that they had never presented their testimony during services.

Attendance

In addition to the NSWQTM elements, the members of the congregations were asked to explain their attendance patterns and why they chose to attend their selected parish. Although some members stated that the Christian faith demanded service attendance, many others across all parishes saw worshipping God as the fundamental reason for attendance. This type of worship included learning about God and how to follow him correctly.

At St Doris the reasons for attendance were generally individually centred, such as personal spiritual growth, self-discipline and spiritual refreshment, while at St Ethel the reasons were more corporate, such as fellowship. Service to others was also a strong motivator to attend services at St Ethel and St Doris.

Well over half the current members of the parishes had previously belonged to other parishes, with moving to a new area being the major reason for change of parish. At St Ethel, reasons for change also included problems with the preaching and teaching in the previous parishes, as well as the attitudes and actions of the previous parish rectors. Problems with previous congregation members, impersonal atmosphere and limited opportunities to help others were some reasons given by the members of St Doris’s congregation.

At St Ethel, the overwhelming reason for members continuing to attend services was authentic Bible-based teaching that was not theologically progressive. Another major reason was the love and warmth of the congregation. Although St Doris's members also stated that the congregation was warm and welcoming they stopped short of describing the members as loving. Similarly, St Doris's members remained because the parish services were progressive in many aspects as well as evangelical.

The congregations were also asked to suggest reasons why other people might attend parish services. Although marriage and baptism rated highly, there was also a negative perception of motives, which was particularly strong at St Ethel. This perception included coercion, self-help and social outings as reasons why other people might attend services. Similarly, being seen by others and to alleviate loneliness were suggestions from St Doris's congregation.

Conclusion

Although all three parishes operated under the same regulations and administrative structures (Anglican Church of Australia, Sydney Diocese), they each displayed different levels of viability. The influence of the rectors and their relationships with their congregations appeared to influence many aspects of congregational engagement and satisfaction.

Many different aspects of parish teaching and learning have been raised in this study. Some issues reinforced the viability of the parishes while others stifled their growth. The usage or absence of elements of the NSWQTM appeared to reflect the level of parish viability, while the level of desire for teaching within the congregations appeared to remain high.

The next chapter focuses on the training of parish rectors and its influence on parish teaching.

Chapter 5 – Study Findings: Rector Training

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the training of rectors in the Sydney Anglican diocese. As mentioned previously, the quality of student learning and the achievements of learning institutions depend to a great extent on the quality of their teachers and leaders. Because the work of clergy also entails teaching and preaching, it is reasonable to mount a case that their training should not only include theology but also teaching skills. While it is acknowledged that Moore Theological College provides pre-service training for potential clergy in theology, the researcher argues that the rectors being the primary teachers and leaders in parishes, would benefit from skills in quality teaching and learning also., The researcher also acknowledges that Moore College does not, at this stage; purport to train the clergy to be quality teachers. Because of the college's strong influence on rector training the researcher chose to include it in this study. No attempt, however, was made to compare the teaching practices at MTC with other rector training institutions, nor was its inclusion intended to infer any form of judgment on its structures or practices.

This chapter is divided into several relevant sections as shown in Figure 5.1, below.

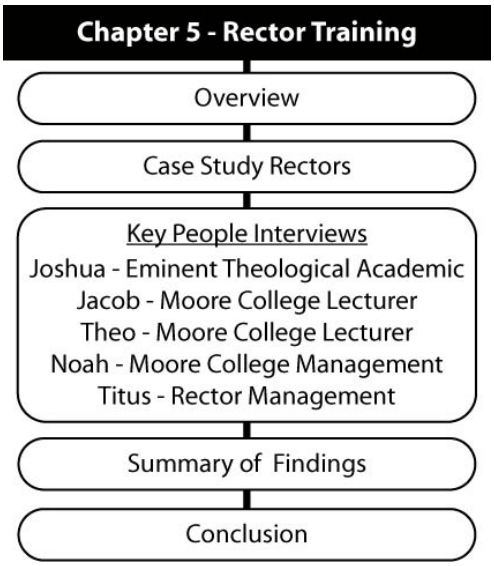

Figure 5.1 – Chapter 5 outline

Further, this chapter addresses research question four ('What form of teacher training, both initial and ongoing, do parish rectors undertake?') and will present data from the case study rectors and key people in the area of rector training from MTC and other relevant sources.

It should be noted, as mentioned previously, that only men may be ordained as rectors in the Sydney Anglican diocese. Therefore, all references to rectors will be in the male gender.

Overview

The primary focus of this research was to investigate whether a relationship existed between the quality of teaching used in parish services and the viability of the parish. Case studies of three parishes from the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia were undertaken, which involved interviews, observations and congregational questionnaires. Although this approach provided rich data regarding service planning, delivery and preaching, it provided very little data on the formal training undertaken by Anglican rectors to prepare them for their role as teachers of a congregation. Since diocesan records show that rectors remain in parishes for an average of eight years, they represent the primary teachers within parishes and, therefore, have more opportunities to influence parish learning within services than any other parish worker.

As mentioned above, research question four asked, 'What form of teacher training, both initial and ongoing, do parish rectors undertake?'. To answer this question data was gathered through interviews with the three case study rectors and five key persons associated with rector training in the Sydney Anglican diocese and across Australia. The key persons were chosen for their knowledge and experience in the area of rector training or theological training within Australia.

It should be stated at the outset that the training of rectors in the Sydney Anglican diocese changed in content in 2006. In that year the Bachelor of Divinity (BD) was made the minimum study requirement for ordination, and included ministry topics previously only associated with the Diploma of Ministry (Dip Min). Rectors trained using the new curriculum would not graduate until 2010, and so would have no influence on this study. Although all rector training for the Sydney Anglican diocese is conducted at Moore Theological College (MTC), the college is not exclusively a

training college for Anglican rectors but, rather, caters for all people wishing to undertake theological studies.

Case Study Rectors

As previously mentioned in the individual case studies, Cyrus, Henry and Darius had quite different academic and experiential backgrounds. Although all attained a Bachelor of Theology (BTh), only Cyrus and Henry held a Diploma of Ministry (Dip Min) qualification, while Darius held a Diploma of Arts in Theology (DATh). Similarly, both Cyrus and Henry held formal teaching qualifications (Diploma in Teaching (infant/primary) and Train-The-Trainer respectively).

During Darius's time at MTC the DATh was the only course available to extend the rector candidate beyond the BTh. He explained,

> *The DATh was what Moore College was awarding in my time there. It is based on the subjects extra to the Bachelor of Theology subjects that the college taught concurrently over the four-year course. The BTh being the bulk of the work in the first three years and awarded by the Australian College of Theology.*

By the time Cyrus and Henry undertook their training at MTC, they were able to study ministry directly in the form of the Dip Min.

Cyrus's Diploma in Teaching was his first formal qualification prior to entering Moore Theological College (MTC), from which he graduated in the late 1990s. After ordination he acted as an assistant rector for five years before becoming the rector of St Helga's parish. Cyrus continued his academic studies in the form of a Master of Theology (MTh), which was designed to equip graduates for theological teaching ministries. To ensure his training remained current Cyrus continually read, attended conferences and discussed parish and theological issues with his mentors.

Henry also undertook formal qualifications (Diploma in Applied Science) prior to his studies at MTC. Unlike Cyrus, however, Henry worked in a teaching-related position, gaining valuable presentation and teaching experience before becoming a rector. Ordained in the early 2000s, he spent three years in an assistant chaplaincy position where he gained valuable experience in engaging others, which he described as "*a*

great learning experience". Henry did not work in the position of a parish assistant rector, but instead moved directly from chaplaincy to rector at St Ethel's parish. Henry's only post-ordination training was his formal teacher qualification. Despite this, he highlighted teaching, as well as speaking and presentation, as his greatest strengths.

Darius did not possess any formal academic qualifications apart from theology, graduating from MTC in the late 1980s. After ordination, he spent one year as a curate before taking a rector's position. After four years of rector experience Darius became rector at St Doris parish.

A summary of the three rectors' academic qualifications and teaching experience appears in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 – Rector Qualifications and Experience Summary

Rector	Academic Qualifications	Teacher Qualifications	Pedagogical/Work Experience
Cyrus	Bachelor of Theology (BTh) Diploma of Ministry (Dip Min) Master in Theology (current)	Diploma in Teaching (infants/primary)	Stipendiary lay worker, Assistant Rector, Chaplain, Rector
Henry	Bachelor of Theology (BTh) Diploma of Ministry (Dip Min) Diploma in Applied Science (Aviation).	Train-the-Trainer	Industry product representative and teacher Assistant Chaplain, Rector
Darius	Bachelor of Theology (BTh) Diploma of Arts in Theology (DATh)	Nil	Curate, Rector

During discussions with the rectors, it was clear that Cyrus had a depth and preference for academic studies. However, he appeared to display very few interpersonal skills or empathy toward his congregation. His analysis of the parish was from an academic viewpoint and not in tune with the activities and relationships of the parish and congregation. In contrast, Henry displayed greater interpersonal skills and an ability to adapt his academic learning to the parish situation. The differences in teaching and leadership styles were not necessarily related to their

formal training as both attended MTC over a similar period and obtained similar qualifications.

Darius's lack of strong academic learning made him feel inadequate in some roles. He particularly considered that his service and sermon deliveries were adversely affected by his lack of formal teacher skills and knowledge. Observations of the services at St Doris did indicate that Darius was less skilled in teaching than either Cyrus or Henry. However, Darius did display a strong sense of reflection on his own teaching and ministry that he used to improve his teaching.

Cyrus and Darius both stated that they were struggling with parish administration and that the training they received in this area was inadequate. They also mentioned other teaching-related shortfalls they felt affected their work, such as instruction in pastoral care, tolerance, and dealing with relationships and emotional matters.

All three rectors stated that they were not aware of any formal rector in-service or refresher training provided by the diocese. Despite this, Henry stated that he would like to improve his organisational abilities through training, while Darius was already undertaking private coaching sessions to increase his proficiency in general administration.

Overall, even though all rectors studied basically the same curriculum at Moore Theological College, their approach to parish teaching varied considerably.

Key People Interviews

JOSHUA – EMINENT THEOLOGICAL ACADEMIC

Joshua was interviewed to discuss ministry training within the Anglican Church of Australia. He began by stressing the strong relationship between the Sydney Anglican diocese's opinions on service content and style, and its corresponding methods of rector training. Joshua stated,

> *You probably realise this, but the Anglican Diocese of Sydney generally has a unique view on what congregations are to do when they gather. A major purpose is teaching, which is understood to be the main task of the ordained rector. Of course, every Christian*

> *tradition sees education in faith as a crucial part of any congregation's life, but Sydney diocese's emphasis is distinctive.*

Joshua explained that throughout the history of the Anglican Church of Australia the Sydney diocese had consistently focused on the traditional forms of services and the role of the rector as primary teacher. He stated that, although other dioceses had moved away from the "*radio ethos of chanted psalms and listening to the rector*" toward a more participatory service form, the Sydney Anglican diocese still saw the traditional sermon, with a passive listening congregation, to be the standard service across the diocese. Since MTC was operated by the Sydney diocese, these concepts had a strong influence on rector training.

Joshua also explained how the focus of teaching at MTC changed under the guidance of David Broughton Knox, principal of the college from 1956 to 1981, shortly before Darius commenced study at the college. Under Knox's guidance the college adopted a Reformist focus, where the 1552 Book of Common Prayer was the liturgical standard. It moved away from symbolism and sacramentalism and toward a verbal-focused ministry, including an emphasis on evangelism.

These changes impacted on the types of services delivered in the Sydney Anglican diocese and, hence, on the type of training required by rectors. Joshua explained,

> *The outcome is an exclusive congregationalism, in which any level of church beyond the congregation is seen as merely administrative.*

Joshua described how services were regarded as meetings for fellowship (teaching and encouragement) and how this led to a widespread abandonment of prayer books, lectionary, robes and other traditional service elements. Bible teaching, instruction in the content of the scriptures, particularly characterised this position.

This emphasis on teaching was not, however, generally reflected in the training delivered at MTC. Joshua explained,

> *Given the emphasis on teaching as the main role of ordained rectors, one would expect this to be given a lot of attention, but my understanding is that this is not the case, though some training is done.*

When asked to further explain the rector teaching delivered at MTC, Joshua stated,

> *Some of Moore's distinctives include the requirement for full-time study (usually four years, with a 'junior' degree awarded if someone leaves after three) at least two years of which are residential. Further, there are no electives in the first three years, so that a student has the strong sense that an 'overall package' is being received.*

When asked about rector training in the areas of service delivery and other basic ministry activities, Joshua stated,

> *Yes, after 35 years of student pressure some units on Congregation Ministry were introduced.*

When asked about post-ordination and in-service training for rectors, Joshua replied that, although many Christian churches provided such training, he felt the Sydney Anglican diocese did not provide "*much in the area of teacher training*". There were, however, some short courses available in the area of scripture readings and topics such as conflict resolution, leadership or hospital visiting.

When asked to elaborate on the leadership training for rectors, Joshua was concerned about the current focus that such training was currently taking. He explained,

> *This generalisation fails to account for the variety of styles, methods and relationships involved in enabling a group to move forward to (hopefully agreed) objectives. On the other hand, the training, formation and equipping of leaders is a vital task for any human activity, especially ministry, but that implies equipping particular people for particular contexts.*

He continued by saying the shift toward verbal-focused teaching and leadership in services, as found in the scriptures, meant a decline in the perceived importance of other parish ministry skills.

> *In terms of the use of the scriptures in this area, it is very easy to generalise to form goals based on character development rather than skills acquisition and contextual sensitivity.*

Joshua concluded by suggesting that, in his opinion, overall the varied influences on rector training made it difficult to narrow down specific issues responsible for success or failure as a rector.

JACOB – MTC LECTURER

Jacob, a lecturer at MTC, commenced the interview by stressing that Anglican practices differ radically across dioceses, and "*even within the Sydney diocese*" itself. With this in mind, Jacob described how the diocese had moved away from traditional service books and replaced them with service sheets for the purpose of "*simplicity and accessibility*". He was not, however, convinced that this would produce a better learning experience for the congregations as, "*these new forms of service risked becoming shallow reflections of the leader's whims or that of the surrounding culture*".

When asked about the actual training of rectors, Jacob explained how all candidates were required to be trained through MTC, although some exceptions may have been possible. After college all candidates spend some time as an assistant rector.

Jacob continued by stating that the MTC courses were very heavily orientated toward academic biblical and theological studies, with very few practical components. This represented "*the core of what is needed by a Christian rector over a lifetime*".

When asked about training for the practical skills needed to fulfil the rector's role successfully, Jacob suggested,

> *If they need further skills developed, I would agree with others around the college that this is actually not the best place to do it.*

Elaborating on this point, Jacob stated that skills training should be delivered as on-job learning, as only then does its relevancy become apparent and the rectors

"*engage with the learning*". The small amount of skills taught at MTC was, according to Jacob, not fully successful. He explained,

> *We do find that attempts to teach ministry skills while at college fall on deaf ears, because while here, students tend to be more interested in answering biblical, theological and philosophical questions.*

This sentiment was similar to those of Darius, who described MTC as boring and that he learnt more skills by watching other parish rectors than during his time at the college.

THEO – MTC LECTURER

Another MTC lecturer, Theo, was asked to comment on the type and proportion of teacher training undertaken by rector candidates. He described how only a small amount of formal pedagogy was taught to the students, which amounted to one day of intensive training in adult education theory. Despite this, Theo stressed that every aspect of the MTC course contributed informally to an understanding of learning. Such learning he described as spending "*a lot of time on the pastor (communicator), individual (listener) and message*". Further, he described how the course focused strongly on the contextualisation of information which was covered in each year, and how some subjects, such as Bible exposition, contained varying amounts of pedagogy.

This description of teacher training was not consistent with Henry's description of his experiences at MTC. In particular, Henry described how the college focused on the idea that motivation for learning was the duty of God and that it "*produced boring preachers who didn't think they needed to motivate learners and expected God to do the teaching and motivating*".

NOAH – MTC MANAGEMENT

The policies and underlying structure of pedagogical teaching at MTC was discussed with Noah, a MTC representative. He was asked why there did not appear to be any significant amount of formal teacher training in the ministry curriculum, although the diocese stressed teaching as a main duty of rectors. Noah's reply described how the college course was designed primarily to enable

students to "*handle accurately the word of truth*" and to enable rectors to teach the Bible content in a variety of contexts. He also explained the college's concept of teaching in the following way,

> *The focus is more on the content of the teaching than the process of teaching, although the courses on preaching, etc. do deal with process issues.*

When asked further about the practical considerations of teaching in a parish setting, he described how all MTC BD students were required to work within a diocesan parish while studying at the college and how this experience was "*a vital aspect of their overall education*". Although the participating parish rectors were not required to provide formal feedback to the college regarding the progress of general students, in the case of rector candidates, the college did request annual reports from the participating parishes.

Noah pointed out that the exact activities of the student rectors were left up to the participating parish rectors and that "*the college does not lay down a set of formal activities that must be carried out*". However, Noah highlighted one exception,

> *There are some assignments in the Ministry & Mission courses that ask students to reflect and comment upon their experiences in their parishes. Sometimes this will involve keeping a personal journal.*

Due to the in-parish experience of students being so heavily influenced by the parish rectors, Noah was asked if these rectors undertook any formal teaching or supervision training prior to receiving rector candidates. Although Noah stated that the rectors were expected to undertake some form of training for supervision, the process was not monitored or enforced in any way by the college or diocese. As a result, he stated,

> *Some rectors are excellent trainers; others don't see this as being very important, so don't do much.*

Finally, Noah stated that the college recognised it could not cover every aspect of ministry in its courses, and considered the practical aspects of rector training better delivered in the parish environment rather than the college. Also, the students

gained greater benefit from the feedback provided by the supervising rectors within the parish setting.

TITUS – RECTOR MANAGEMENT

The key people interviewed up to this point have been associated with initial rector training. However, Titus, the final interviewee, worked in the area of post-college training for rector candidates. Titus provided a unique insight into the expectations and assumptions surrounding candidates and their training.

Titus was first asked about candidate selection. He explained that individuals needed to have studied at least two years of the BD prior to being considered for candidate selection. This time period allowed college and diocese staff to observe both the academic and personal qualities of the proposed candidate, and "*get to know them personally*". These qualities included knowledge and understanding of God, conviction and conscious embracing of the central truths of Christianity, character displayed in personal faithfulness and godly living, and the competencies necessary to undertake and exercise the specific roles and tasks of a rector.

As the primary use of such qualities was in teaching the gospel, Titus was asked to explain the term 'teacher' with respect to rectors. He described how rectors taught by what they said, did, modelled and showed by example but, above all, rectors needed to be effective at explaining God's word. Further, teaching in this form utilised discussions, counselling and small-group training, all of which were predominantly verbal. Titus also stated that,

> *The mark of a good teacher is asking the right questions, which is not what am I saying, but rather what are they hearing.*

When it was suggested that several people associated with rector training defined teaching merely as presenting the Bible, Titus stated that many in the teaching area of the diocese had been working at ensuring this "*old idea and way of thinking*" was considered inadequate, but they unfortunately had "*limited success*" and the "*mindset still remained out there*". Titus said that some people had stated, "*my job is to be faithful; effectiveness is out of my hands*". However, Titus used this analogy to counteract that claim,

> *If we preach the gospel in English, beautifully, faithfully and truthfully to a group of people who only speak Swahili, have we really been faithful?*

Regardless of its definition, Titus was asked how the duties of teaching were taught to the candidates. He explained how graduates, having been observed for the required time, were ordained as deacons and commence a three-year, part-time (minimum seven days per year) Ministry Development Program (MDP). During this time each rector candidate was appointed a mentor (chaplain) who, in collaboration with the supervising parish rector, worked to further the skills and abilities of the candidate. The aim of this period of training was to build "*specific competencies to teach, lead and relate*", with a strong emphasis on character and personal development of the candidates.

Assessment of these competencies and the overall progress of a candidate were undertaken primarily through annual reports from within the participating parish. At the commencement of the MDP the candidate chose three congregation members from the participating parish in which he worked. These lay people observed the candidate as he performed his duties, as well as regularly providing feedback and encouragement to him through discussions. At the end of each year each of these observers provided the diocese with a report outlining the candidate's progress, strengths and weaknesses. The supervising rector was expected to also provide a similar report.

Titus was asked about supervision training for the participating parish rectors, and replied that there was no formal training, only their own experiences as deacons. The quality of supervision was therefore widely variable with some rectors providing "*really helpful*" reports and having helpful and instructive discussions with their candidates while others saw rector candidates simply as extra hands in the parish. Titus stressed the "*reality on the ground was that some do it brilliantly and some of them don't*".

Titus stated that in the last ten years the diocese had consciously tried to change this mindset by discussions with participating parish rectors and through interactions between the rectors and the candidates' mentors. Despite this, Titus admitted there were some rectors in the diocese who were not recommended as supervisors.

With respect to the actual activities delivered by these supervisors, Titus explained how there were no set guidelines for what a rector candidate should achieve, learn or experience during the supervision period. He supported this standpoint by stating,

> *It's not too rigid as we want to allow for specialisation, differences in personalities, and individual talents. We want to encourage diversity.*

In contrast to the unstructured nature of parish supervision, the MDP delivered throughout the same period focused on specific non-theological issues of ministry such as rector candidate self-improvement and understanding, parish leadership, finance and discipling. Candidates were required not only to attend the training sessions but to undertake pre-session readings and activities focused on the particular issues presented in the individual sessions.

After several years as a deacon, experiencing several parishes or other ministry positions, the rector candidate was ordained as a presbyter and eventually became the rector of a specific parish. Titus was asked about continuing training at this stage of the new rector's career. He replied there was no formal mandatory diocesan training once an individual became a rector. Although annual ministry conferences were provided by the diocese, on various topics, they were not compulsory. However, some bishops provided training for first-time rectors in their regions, although there was no set curriculum for such training and the quality and content depended solely on the abilities and priorities of the bishops.

Since teaching methods and society are continually changing, Titus was asked if the diocese provided rectors with any upgrading of their skills or knowledge. He explained the diocesan policy was to encourage rectors to take control of their own continuing studies and improvement. He stated many rectors furthered their theological studies at MTC through the Master of Arts (Theology) which could be undertaken as a part-time external course. The annual ministry conferences were also a venue for learning that some rectors attended.

As previously mentioned, all rector candidates were expected to work in a variety of ministry positions to obtain a breadth of skills and knowledge. A similar notion also applied to rectors. Taking this situation into account, Titus was asked if rectors undertook training in succession planning. He replied that rectors were encouraged to groom and encourage congregation members to enter the ministry, but such

individuals were discouraged from returning to their home parish once they completed their college studies. Apart from such actions, there was no formal training in parish succession, and rectors generally sought advice from other rectors or their regional bishop.

Finally, Titus was asked what part of the rector training process he considered could be improved. He said that, in his opinion, rectors needed more training in team leadership, as well as teaching them to involve the entire parish in the tasks of mission.

Summary of Themes and Issues in Rector Training

General Rector Training

Rector training was shown to involve a combination of theory and practical training, delivered by various methods and in various locations. Figure 5.2 presents a summary of this training and helps to illustrate the relationship between the different components of rector training. The diagram shows the type of training (theory or practical), the training structure (formal, informal or optional) and the delivery mode (full-time or part-time) for each component of rector training.

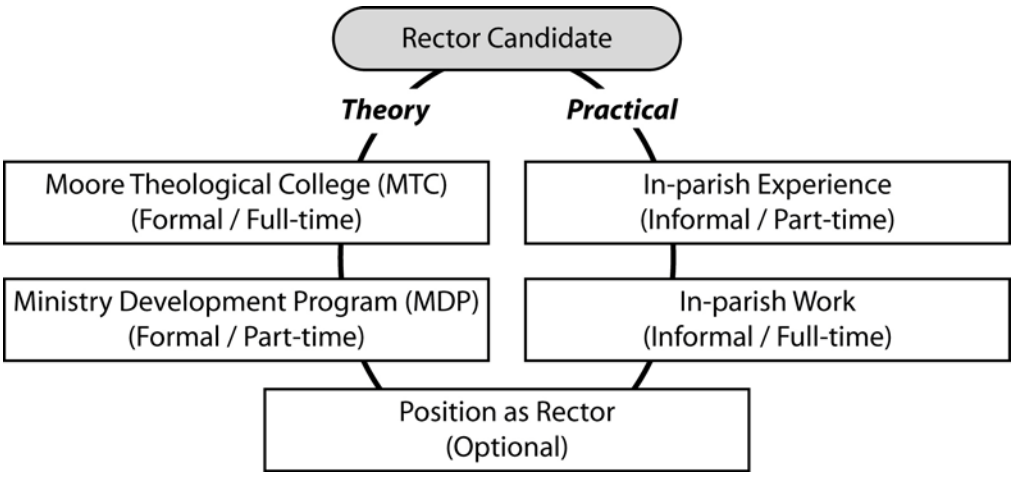

Figure 5.2 – Rector Training pathway

As can be seen (Figure 5.2), rector training has two primary components, theory and practical, which were undertaken concurrently. While theory (theological) training started as full-time and practical rector training as part-time, the roles gradually

reverse. In the end, the rector was practicing full-time with ongoing training being optional and rector instigated.

The figure also shows that theory training is predominantly formal, with set curriculum and definite learning outcomes. Conversely, practical training is predominantly informal, without standardised criteria or learning outcomes.

Joshua and Jacob described how the activities within parish services, and the way in which rectors were taught, were interrelated to the overall concepts held by the Sydney diocese regarding the role of rectors. The concept of exclusive congregationalism, for example, resulted in rectors being solely responsible for the activities within their parishes, not only for their congregations but also for rector candidates under their supervision. This was reinforced by the diocesan policy of encouraging individual talents, personalities and specialisations of its rector candidates by reducing the structure and formality of in-parish teaching. Although this policy allowed personal growth, Jacob noted that such relaxing of uniformity could result in parish services becoming reflections of the rector's whims, while Noah and Titus similarly highlighted the lack of uniform quality of supervising rectors.

Although all interviewees agreed the major role of a rector was teaching, the actual definition of such teaching varied. For Theo, teaching was clearly divided into communicator, listener and message, while Noah focused almost exclusively on the content of the message rather than the teaching process itself. Only Titus viewed teaching as a combination of words and actions, where modelling the biblical message was as important as its presentation.

This difference of opinion on the definition of teaching was not new to the diocese, which had been promoting the modern idea of teaching for some time. Despite this, the old notion that rectors presented the Bible message and God did the teaching was still clearly evident within MTC.

It was learnt that the training of rectors was divided into two distinct forms at two distinct periods. The initial rector training was focused almost exclusively on theology with only a minor portion being devoted to practical ministry training. Although some in-parish experience was undertaken during this time, it was valued far less by both the MTC instructors and the candidates. This was clearly

demonstrated by the different levels of formal planning for each type of training. While the theology component was supported by detailed teaching structure, no such structure was provided for the practical training. Not until candidates began their post-college training did the importance of practical training and experience become apparent.

Noah, Joshua and Jacob, although acknowledging the importance of practical training, agreed that MTC was not the ideal venue for such training. Students, they believed, were more focused during this period on theological issues and far less interested in the practical aspects of ministry. This was also reaffirmed by the fact that MTC courses were open to all people wishing to study theology and not just those intending to be ordained.

The second period of rector training began at deacon ordination when the candidates commenced the Ministry Development Program (MDP). At this point, practical ministry issues began to take on more significance for both candidates and the diocese. However, as with the first period, a lack of structured activities and specific learning outcomes within the parish contrasted greatly with the structured approach found in the formal MDP training itself. Further, the in-parish training was placed in the hands of supervisors untrained for these specific duties, which included designing and actioning relevant, rewarding and significant training activities as well as providing meaningful feedback and guidance to the candidates.

Despite the emphasis and duration of the varied forms of training and experience undertaken by rector candidates, once ordained and in charge of a parish there appeared to be a severe lack of diocesan interest in ongoing rector training and development. Preferring to leave further studies as the responsibility of the individual rectors, may have resulted in the dissatisfaction of some rectors with their level of current skills and knowledge. This was particularly evident in the case study rectors. Similarly, the diocesan assumption that all rectors were intrinsically motivated lifelong learners was not reflected in the case study rectors, except perhaps for Cyrus, who regularly attended the diocesan annual conferences.

Joshua alone raised concerns regarding the emphasis placed on parish leadership and how focusing on the character building for the candidates meant a decline in other, more practical, skills. The level of such character building was indicated by

Titus in his description of the MDP, which focused strongly on the personal development of the deacons.

CASE STUDY RECTOR TRAINING

All case study rectors displayed high levels of theological knowledge and understanding that they attributed to their study at Moore Theological College (MTC). However, all rectors commented that the practical aspects of parish ministry, particularly administration, were insufficiently addressed in their rector training. Further, all rectors commented about the lack of continuing training provided by the Sydney Anglican diocese.

The lack of formal structure and learning outcomes for practical training was intended to allow the candidates the freedom to grow their individual talents and specialities, and assist the candidates to take ownership of their own learning. However, in two of the case study rectors this freedom resulted in a feeling of inadequacy in practical ministry.

Conclusion

This chapter presented an insight into rector training and how it may influence parish teaching. The next chapter will discuss these findings, as well as those of the case studies, and relate the findings to the study question and subquestions.

Chapter 6 – Discussion of Findings

Introduction

This chapter is divided into six sections as illustrated by Figure 6.1.

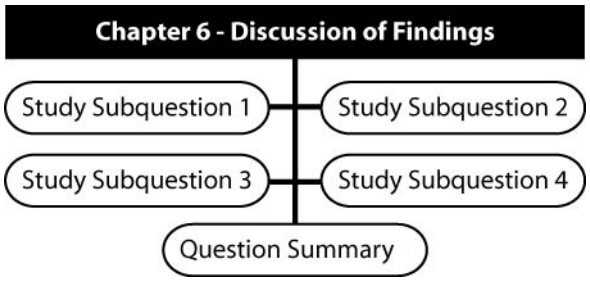

Figure 6.1 – Chapter 6 content map

This chapter will present the study findings and show how these relate to the current quality teaching and parish viability literature. To reflect the nature of this study, the chapter is presented in order of the four study subquestions.

Subquestion 1
What aspects of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model are evident in the design and delivery of parish services?

Subquestion 2
What effect does the use of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model principles have on the viability of the congregation?

Subquestion 3
To what extent does personal learning influence an individual's decision to join a particular congregation?

Subquestion 4
What form of teacher training, both initial and ongoing, do parish rectors undertake?

Combined, these subquestions will attempt to answer the primary study question,

> Is there a relationship between the quality of teaching used in parish services and the viability of the parish?

This chapter will argue that the answer lies not only in direct teaching within parish services, but also in the actions and attitudes of the congregations, rectors and diocese.

It is important to reiterate that this was not a theological study but, rather, an investigation into the teaching practices of individual church parishes, their rectors and congregations. It is necessary to appreciate that teaching within a religious setting has a far wider definition and influence than in a school of a comparable size. As religious teaching encompasses knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, actions, morals, relationships and other aspects of human life, the teaching methods used encapsulate most areas of parish activities.

In the pursuance of this study, the NSWQTM was identified as a robust, comprehensive quality-teaching framework suitable for comparison with parish data in order to draw meaningful conclusions. The NSWQTM, as outlined by the NSW DET (2003), emphasises pedagogy that is fundamentally based on promoting high levels of intellectual quality, as well as establishing quality learning environments and developing and making explicit the significance of students' endeavours. This model is defined by eighteen elements, each focused on a particular aspect of quality teaching and learning. The NSWQTM dimensions and elements are illustrated in Figure 6.2.

New South Wales Quality Teaching Model	
Intellectual Quality	Deep Knowledge & Understanding Problematic Knowledge Higher-order Thinking Metalanguage Substantive Communication
Quality Learning Environment	Explicit Quality Criteria Engagement High Expectations Social Support Self-regulation and Self-direction
Significance	Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness Narrative

Figure 6.2 – New South Wales Quality Teaching Model

Although originally developed for school principals, teachers and executives to address pedagogical issues in schools, the NSWQTM was also shown to be relevant to parishes, since the ultimate goal of both is to improve learning outcomes. In the same way, other issues originally intended to relate to quality teaching within schools, such as the importance of teachers to student learning (Dinham 2008), school leadership (Bolden 2007; Gronn 2000; Harris 2004) and principal succession planning (Crowther 2010; Fink 2005), may also be relevant to parishes.

Three parishes from the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia took part in this study, and represented different levels of alignment to the NSWQTM.

Within schools, the use of strong pedagogical principles has been shown in studies like those of Darling-Hammond (1997, 2000) and Newmann (1996) to make a significant improvement to student potential and outcomes. In the same way, the case study parishes that aligned most closely to the NSWQTM showed stronger congregational engagement and greater proportional attendance growth, indicating a greater long-term viability, than those poorly aligned to the model. Table 6.1 provides a summary of these findings.

Table 6.1 – Parish Alignment Summary

NSWQTM	St Helga	St Ethel	St Doris
Alignment General	Low	Variable	High
Lowest Alignment Elements	Self-direction Substantive Communication Knowledge Integration Engagement	Social Support Self-regulation Self-direction	Problematic Knowledge
Highest Alignment Elements	Deep Knowledge	Deep Knowledge Deep Understanding	Engagement Social Support
Other High Alignment Elements	Narrative	Explicit Quality Criteria	Explicit Quality Criteria Self-direction Self-regulation
Attendance Growth	Negative	Steady	Positive
Viability	Weakest	Variable–Strong	Strongest

As can be seen in Table 6.1, St Helga, with the lowest alignment, struggled with issues of self-direction, substantive communication, knowledge integration and engagement. At the same time the service attendance numbers had dropped to a level that challenged parish viability.

St Ethel, although initially showing strong alignment, was later shown to diverge in the areas of social support, self-regulation and self-direction in some sections of the parish. This uneven alignment could pose problems for the long-term viability of the parish.

St Doris, demonstrating the highest alignment, was a vibrant, inclusive and socially supportive parish with deliberate processes in place to ensure the workings of the parish continued into the future. Although not strongly aligned to every element of the NSWQTM, there was a conscious decision by the parish leaders to improve parish viability through inclusive policies and procedures.

Subquestion 1

What aspects of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model are evident in the design and delivery of parish services?

The design and delivery of parish services was shown to involve more than the liturgy and sermon, but also incorporated the support structures and activities that enabled the services to function efficiently. Such structures have been shown in this study to provide opportunities to implement NSWQTM elements, including substantive communication, explicit learning criteria and methods of expressing the expectations of learning success. Further, the design of services resulted in the creation of learning environments that could extend beyond the service rooms and foster congregational self-direction and engagement.

Each of the dimensions of the NSWQTM will now be discussed with respect to the three participating parishes.

NSWQTM INTELLECTUAL QUALITY DIMENSION

Intellectual Quality	
Elements	Deep Knowledge & Understanding Problematic Knowledge Higher-order Thinking Metalanguage Substantive Communication

The study showed that deep knowledge and deep understanding of theology were strongly identified in all parishes. This situation reflected Moore Theological College's primary focus of producing rectors with strong biblical knowledge and understanding, able to present the Christian faith in context. Higher-order thinking and metalanguage were also identified in the design and delivery of the services, although the amount of usage varied between the parishes.

Although problematic knowledge was not displayed very strongly in the design or delivery of services, it was identified in the support activities in combination with higher-order thinking. This time, however, it was the volunteers from the congregations, particularly at St Doris, that used problematic knowledge to develop

and sustain the support activities. The leadership and support provided by the parish rectors for the support activities varied greatly, from St Helga, where almost no support was provided, to St Doris, where the support activities were considered vital to the success of the services and their teaching.

The final element of the Intellectual Quality dimension, substantive communication, showed the most variation across the participating parishes, particularly in communication between the congregations and the rectors. The strength or weakness of this communication, particularly its misinterpretation, had significant impact on the engagement of the congregations and the actions and attitudes of the rectors. A similar situation was observed by Swick (1993) in his study of early childhood schooling, where beliefs about the communication process, and the roles of others in that process, provided the foundation for the parent–teacher relationships.

At St Helga, this connection between communication and attitude could be seen in the rector's belief that the congregation was uninterested, unreliable and dependent. This attitude was predominantly derived from the lack of substantive communication with the congregation. As a result, this attitude shaped the way the rector planned the services and interacted with the congregation. In turn, the congregation's belief that the rector failed to appreciate their talents, which also arose from poor communication, made engagement in learning and spiritual growth difficult in the parish.

The low level of substantive communication may arise from some Sydney Anglican diocesan training, which assumes rectors talk and congregations listen (Theo, MTC lecturer interview 2009). As explained by Erkel (2006), learners do not learn effectively within this type of one-way communication. Instead, learners need to have opportunities to ask questions and engage in dialogue, in safe non-threatening environments.

Henry, the rector at St Ethel, attempted to create such an environment by scheduling question times within each service. Although not utilised by many congregation members, the existence of the communication period itself appeared to create a more relaxed and friendly environment within the services.

Communication also pertains to role modelling behaviour; a practice emphasised during rector training. Its value has also been identified in several studies (Black 2008; Dinham 2008; National College for School Leadership 2007; West & Armstrong 1980), that showed effective teachers exhibited the values, qualities, attitudes, behaviours and lifelong learning they wished to instil in learners. Such role modelling is also part of the Christian faith and seen by congregation members as an indication of authentic teaching. When verbal communication does not fit the actions of the rectors, difficulties can arise. Such a situation arose at St Helga where Cyrus's attempts to foster congregation independence by distancing himself from the congregation, did not match his statements regarding creating a friendly, welcoming parish. As a result, there was dissatisfaction and confusion among the congregation, once again lowering their level of engagement.

Overall, in the Intellectual Quality dimension rectors showed high levels of alignment with the NSWQTM, except in the substantive communication element which acted to differentiate between the parishes.

NSWQTM QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION

Quality Learning Environment	
Elements	Explicit Quality Criteria Engagement High Expectations Social Support Self-Regulation Self-Direction

As with the Intellectual Quality dimension, elements associated with theological issues, such as explicit quality criteria originating from the Bible, were clearly displayed in the parishes, although the level of presentation varied. However, the other elements related more strongly to the application of Christian teaching and the community relationships it produced. This idea is in alignment with NSW DET (2003), which described how the NSWQTM used pedagogy to create productive learning environments, focused clearly on learning and building positive relationships between teachers and students. It was in the elements of engagement, social support, high expectations, self-regulation and self-direction, that the greatest contrasts were observed between the parishes.

The essence of the rector–congregation relationship originated from the teaching provided by the Sydney Anglican diocese in the form of Moore Theological College (MTC). The college clearly stated there was a distinct relationship between rectors and their congregations. One in which the rector communicated and the congregation listened. This form of relationship could severely limit the creation of the form of learning environment described by the NSWQTM.

Indeed, at St Helga, where the rector presented the services and sermons to a silently reverent congregation, there were low levels of self-regulation, self-direction and engagement. In contrast, at St Doris, Darius created a learning environment that reinforced the explicit quality criteria on which the parish learning was based and clearly expressed, in various ways, high expectation of learning success by the congregation. This use of high expectation, according to several writers (Ladwig & King 2003; Regnerus 2000; Rowe 2003), was an indication of high levels of teacher quality.

In many ways engagement in parish learning was influenced by social support, self-regulation and self-direction. This is supported by Kroth and Boverie's (2000) study, which indicated there was a positive relationship between learners' levels of self-direction and their motivation for learning. Similarly, Johnstone's (2009) study showed the importance of congregation ownership of the parish services to the success of the parish.

Designing service and service-support activities to engage congregation members, particularly in activities that allowed self-regulation and self-direction, appeared to increase their engagement in Christian learning. It also appeared, particularly at St Doris, to increase social support for members, visitors and the surrounding community. This observation is supported by Caldwell's (1997) study, which showed that learners needed to be actively involved in and committed to knowing, interpreting and participating in the activities of the faith.

The number of different activities in which congregation members could be engaged appeared in this study to be less important than the number of members actually engaged. Although St Ethel provided a wide range of duties in which members could become engaged, the study showed these duties were performed by only a small number of members, each undertaking multiple duties. This was in contrast to St Doris where, although there were a larger number and types of duties, each

individual member generally undertook only one duty. The level of engagement, therefore, was greatest at St Doris since a larger proportion of the congregation was actively engaged.

Social support is a fundamental element of the Christian faith, as well as the NSWQTM. It is also a reflection of the application of learning by the congregations and the rectors. McGavran (1990), in his study of church growth, also noted that social support, which he termed “faithfulness in folding and feeding” (p6), was essential to lasting parish growth. Similarly, Carson (2005), when discussing postmodern culture, described how there was a tendency toward relationships and community. St Doris and, to a lesser extent, St Ethel, displayed the inclusion of social support elements in their services. However, there was little evidence of such inclusions at St Helga.

The Quality Learning Environment dimension showed the contrasts between the case study parishes in service design and delivery. Unlike the Intellectual Quality dimension, which focused mainly on the rectors’ qualities, the quality of the learning environments relied on the rectors and the congregations. As mentioned previously, the congregation members represented teachers and learners and, as such, influenced social support, engagement and the other elements of this dimension. The atmosphere of the services at St Helga, for instance, where the level of congregation support for the learning environment was low, did not support learning. This was evidenced by the low level of implementation of the Quality Learning Environment dimension elements.

NSWQTM Significance Dimension

Significance	
Elements	Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness Narrative

Significance of learning is the last of the NSWQTM dimensions and focuses on assisting learners to realise that their learning has significance in their lives. In the case study parishes, the level of significance designed into parish services varied from very little at St Helga to wide ranging at St Doris. Within St Doris and St Ethel,

this sense of significance was reflected in the congregation members' desire for authentic Bible teaching combined with the application of this teaching to lives of the congregation members. Similar findings were described by both Gibbs and Bolger (2005) and Carson (2005), who pointed out the importance of authenticity to postmodern society.

At St Ethel and St Doris guidance and practical examples were provided to the congregations as to the application of authentic Bible teaching. Carson (2005) explained how this combination of conduct and doctrine was very important to the New Testament church and remains the same today. The strong sense of inclusivity among the congregations, and connectivity to the surrounding community and the lives of the congregation members, was an indication of the application of the parish teaching. The combination of connectivity and inclusivity designed within the services and support activities was a prominent feature of St Doris and, to a lesser extent, St Ethel. Very little, however, of these elements were observed as part of the services at St Helga.

The significance of the teaching, particularly at St Doris, appeared to motivate congregation members to become actively engaged within the parishes and specifically within the services and support activities. The stronger the message of learning significance, such as displayed at St Doris, the larger the number of people involved in leadership, services and support activities. Perhaps this was because engaging in these activities allowed these people to put into practice the teaching presented in the parish. Carson (2005) raised a similar idea when discussing the current culture, which he described as preferring relationships, community and a place to serve others.

Cultural and background knowledge was difficult to fully understand within the case study parishes, as little emphasis was placed on culture by the parishes. This attitude was also identified by Gibbs and Bolger (2005), who found that Western churches often ignored culture due to the mistaken belief that they already understood the various cultures in which they were situated. This misreading of culture by the rector was particularly noticeable at St Helga and, as Gibbs and Bolger's study supports, undermined the rector's overall vision of the parish.

The cultural backgrounds were very similar among the case study parishes, with the majority of members being from Anglo-Saxon or similar heritage. The background

knowledge across the congregations was also similar, although the members of St Doris had a wider range of biblical knowledge, including those who were biblically illiterate. The only difference between the congregations was not the level of background knowledge, but rather the desire for biblical knowledge. This will be discussed in subquestion 3 later in this chapter.

Carson (2005) suggests parishes generally strive to be full of teaching and careful to apply scripture teaching to all aspects of life. This latter suggestion incorporates the NSWQTM element of Knowledge Integration. This means that service-taught knowledge is not compartmentalised and disconnected from other knowledge or activities. Rather, service teaching is applied to every aspect of life. Darius, in the design of the parish newsletter and the services, attempted to integrate knowledge learned in services or in support activities, across all ages. He also encouraged application and discussion of teaching outside of service times. In comparison, Cyrus presented teaching without significant directions for integrating it into the lives of the congregation members.

As mentioned previously, Christianity is based on narratives, or what Carson (2005) would call the metanarrative. Therefore, it is no surprise that all case study parish teaching contained some form of narrative. At St Doris, however, Darius explained that he intentionally included personal narratives for their ability to engage the congregation. Such narratives did not replace the biblical narratives, but represented them in ways more attractive to the listeners. This deliberate use of narratives distinguished Darius from the other rectors.

The Significance element differentiated between the case study parishes, particularly in the elements of inclusivity, connectedness and narrative. The application of authentic teaching was of prime importance to St Doris and slightly less so at St Ethel. Such application was not evident at St Helga.

SUMMARY

From the above discussion, it can be seen that the use of the NSWQTM elements in the design and delivery of services and support activities varied between the parishes. Although the majority of the Intellectual Quality dimension was strongly used in all parishes, the substantive communication element varied enormously.

The use of the Quality Learning Environment dimension elements showed strong contrasts between parishes, particularly the self-direction, self-regulation, engagement and social support elements. At St Doris, services and support activities were designed to encourage congregational engagement and self-direction, while at the same time reinforce the quality criteria and learning expectations on which the parish learning was based. The delivery of these services was undertaken by a combination of the rector and congregation members, each performing significant roles within the services. At St Helga, where engagement was low, the learning environment suffered from a lack of congregation participation. Although the same biblical quality criteria were used, the learning environment was pervaded by a low expectation of learning.

The desire for authentic biblical teaching among the congregation supported the NSWQTM dimension of Significance. The deliberate inclusion of the elements of significance into the services varied across the parishes in a similar way to that of the Quality Learning Environment dimension. This time however, the Significance dimension was addressing an important aspect of the postmodern culture: authenticity.

Subquestion 2

What effect does the use of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model principles have on the viability of the congregation?

In subquestion one, it was shown that the case study rectors utilised the elements of the NSWQTM in the design and delivery of parish services and support activities in different ways and to different degrees. As stated above, subquestion two uses the data and findings of subquestion one to investigate the viability of each congregation.

As mentioned previously, the teaching at St Helga was poorly aligned to the NSWQTM, particularly in the Quality Learning Environment and Significance dimensions and the substantive communication element. The attendance patterns at St Helga, although rising slightly on the arrival of the new rector, generally showed a negative growth pattern. It could be suggested, therefore, that the viability of St Helga was very low.

At St Ethel, the use of the NSWQTM elements was inconsistent. Although the use of the Intellectual Quality dimension was strong, some elements of the Quality Learning Environment were only minimally incorporated into the services. The same could be said of the Significance dimension. Although engagement appeared high, closer inspection showed that a small, highly active group of members were engaged in most of the parish duties. This resulted in a significant portion of the congregation with low engagement in the services and support activities.

Attendance patterns at St Ethel, although initially showing a steady size of the congregation, increased rapidly with the arrival of the new rector. After this time, St Ethel has shown a steady, but slower, rise in attendance numbers, although this was partly due to the increase in attendance of men already associated with the parish. These trends may suggest that St Ethel shows a reasonable level of viability.

Finally, the use of the NSWQTM elements was most notable at St Doris. Although not all elements were strongly displayed, the design of the services and support activities incorporated the majority of the elements. Substantive communication, engagement, self-direction and self-regulation elements were most notable and generated a high level of congregation engagement. This engagement was reflected in the number of congregation members undertaking significant duties related to the services and support activities. Further, the deliberate design of activities to boost connectivity with the surrounding community, coupled with the strong social support, displayed strong teaching significance.

The attendance pattern of St Doris showed strong positive growth. This growth resulted in a requirement to instigate additional services, groups and duties. This growth pattern suggests that St Doris is a highly viable parish.

Using the NSWQTM as the framework for this study allowed a closer comparison to be made between parishes and schools, particularly in the areas of viability and teaching success. Comparing each parish in this study to Fink's (2005) classification of effective schools gives an indication of the probable viability of each parish. In this classification, St Doris would be described as a moving parish, showing signs of being effective, vibrant and growing. At this level, Fink suggests the greatest challenge to the school leadership is maintaining the current momentum. This situation, therefore, may also apply to St Doris.

In comparison, St Ethel appears to represent a cruising parish. Outwardly, and according to attendance patterns, the parish appears to be effective. However, its strong reliance on its current charismatic rector may limit its capacity for change. Furthermore, its ability to sustain its growth after a change of rector is questionable. Without the recognition of these internal problems, Fink suggests cruising schools have limited capacity for growth and development. This outcome may also apply to St Ethel.

Finally, the lack of congregational engagement and substantive communication indicated St Helga to be a sinking parish. Under this category, the leadership and congregation expect decline and lack the confidence to begin making significant improvements.

Fink (2005) uses the typology described above to illustrate that different contexts require different leadership strategies. For instance, he advises new leaders of sinking schools to act quickly, using a succession of small successes to reverse the downward spiral. Unfortunately, as described previously, Cyrus chose not to instigate such activities, but rather allowed the parish to continue its descent into an inevitable, unviable state. This action disregarded the NSWQTM dimensions of Quality Learning Environment and Significance, making it difficult to provide high-quality teaching to the congregation. It could be argued that under different leadership the long-term viability of St Helga may have been different. A similar idea was proposed by Snapka's (2009) study of Catholic school boards, which showed that when school leadership is focused on specific goals, devoted to excellence in education and is competent, real changes can be made to the long-term viability of the school. Under such leadership the school community readily engages in leadership and other school activities.

Fink (2005) describes how modern trends in school management have focused on school results rather than on inputs and processes, pressuring school leaders into managerial, rather than educational, leadership. In the same way, the Sydney Anglican diocese currently places a strong emphasis on increasing parish service attendance and less on the spiritual growth of the existing congregations. As this study points out, however, it is the existing congregations who both attract and teach new members and who support and maintain the parish learning environment. Moving the emphasis and resources away from the maintenance and development

of existing congregations may have detrimental effects on parish sizes and viabilities.

In a similar way, McLellan's (2000) study of Catholic elementary schools showed that each level of management within schools had an effect on the schools' viability. It also showed how a lack of leadership and unwillingness to make critical changes in governance and administration, resulted in the decline of schools across the archdiocese under study. This highlights the need for the Sydney Anglican diocese to ensure its structures, practices and policies support and encourage quality teaching within parishes through appropriate rector and congregational training. This emphasis on training, particularly for congregation members, was stressed by Hughes (2005a), who saw the future church needing to be more intentional about Christian education due to the limited Christian background and biblical knowledge of the laity and the ambiguous nature of society.

When Fink's (2005) classifications are compared to the service attendance levels of the three parishes, it can be seen that the ability to attract and retain members is greatest at St Doris and then progressively declines from St Ethel to St Helga. The parish alignment to the NSWTQM also follows the same pattern. Combined, this evidence may suggest a link between quality teaching expressed in the Christian context and parish viability.

SUMMARY

In summary, this study suggests that the case study rectors who integrated more of the NSWQTM elements into the design and delivery of parish services and support activities, created stronger, more vibrant and viable parishes than those who delivered more traditional rector-focused services. In line with the NSWQTM, this study suggests the close collaboration between the rectors and the congregations assists in greater teaching quality and, hence, a high likelihood of parish viability.

Subquestion 3

To what extent does personal learning influence an individual's decision to join a particular congregation?

To understand why people attend parish services it is important to understand the significance of teaching and learning in the Christian faith. Many writers (Douglas 1962; Fedele 2003; Forbush 2007; Guthrie & Motyer 1970; MacArthur 2002) have shown that throughout history the teaching and learning of the Christian faith has been a significant aspect of believers' lives. It is against this background that the question regarding parish selection must be considered.

The first part of subquestion three asked about the personal learning of the members of the different congregations. It would appear that the three parishes represented three different overall learning preferences. At St Helga, the congregation was primarily composed of the Builder generation that, according to Lowe (2007), derived the majority of their learning through listening to the spoken word. This type of learning extended to service attendance, which was undertaken in reverent silence apart from the required congregational responses. This situation was observed at St Helga and was in contrast to the interactive form of service desired by the rector, Cyrus. An investigation into the previous rectors at St Helga revealed the type of service delivered was a traditional Anglican service where silent listening was the primary response of the congregation.

Although St Ethel and St Doris had mixed-age congregations they, too, differed in preferred learning styles. St Ethel, with a strong dependence on the rector, preferred their rector to present and interpret the biblical teaching. This was also reflected in the amount of control the rector exercised in planning services and support activities. In contrast, the St Doris congregation preferred their rector to present the biblical teaching but allow them to make the interpretations. Again, this was reflected in the leadership of the rector, who encouraged self-direction and self-regulation.

This subtle difference in styles was not unique to St Doris and St Ethel. Tanis (1999) described the role of rectors as providers of authentic spiritual direction, which is in line with St Ethel's rector. Cooling (2005) however, showed the need for congregation members to be independent learners having the ability to think for themselves, which easily described St Doris.

In the case study parishes, except for St Helga, the congregations' preferred learning style was supported by the rectors' teaching and leadership styles. The parish processes, services and support activities also reflected these styles. It can also be seen that the learning environment at St Ethel may not appeal to a

congregation member from St Doris, even though both apply the NSWQTM principles. This highlights the need for rectors to truly know the learning needs and styles of their congregation members, as implied in the NSWQTM.

The personal learning of the congregations' members was expressed also in their application of the parish teaching. In the Christian faith, learning is intricately associated with application, while application is described as the teaching and supporting of others. In essence, therefore, each member of a parish congregation is both a learner and teacher.

Studies by Rowe (2003) and Williams (1993) showed teachers were the single largest factor in student achievement. This was supported by the Lovat and Toomey (2009) study, which showed that quality teachers in a quality school resulted in increased student achievement. Therefore, it could be argued that parish viability should be promoted where the learners are also actively engaged in teaching. Indeed, the study showed that parishes like St Doris and St Ethel, where participation in services and support activities was encouraged, the attendance rate was rising. Overall, the study suggests that the greater the proportion of the congregation participating in services and support activities, the higher the attendance patterns.

The matter of congregational influence on parish viability was also raised by O'Gorman (1997), when he described faith communities as both the goal and strategy of parish education. The role of rectors, according to O'Gorman, was to assist people to develop and enact this community, primarily through assisting members to understand and enact service to one another. At St Doris and St Ethel the idea of providing opportunities for service was a vital factor in the individual members' choice of parish. The lack of service opportunities was also the reason stated by several members for becoming dissatisfied and eventually leaving their previous parishes.

With respect to learning, Seymour (1997) showed individuals' convictions about education affected the way they structured their congregational life. Further, if the parish was seen simply as a place for presenting a message, there would be very little impetus for lifestyle change. If, however, it was seen by the congregation as a place of social support, inclusivity and service, the parish had the potential for spiritual and numerical growth. Similarly, several writers (Andrus 2004; Bass &

Stewart-Sicking 2005; Tanis 1999) have shown that individuals are not simply looking for spiritual knowledge within a parish, but rather authentic biblical teaching and worship experiences that focus on real-life issues. Such yearning for authentic learning was raised by several congregation members at St Doris and St Ethel.

Carson (2005) and Gibbs and Bolger (2005) present a picture of postmodern culture as one seeking authenticity and meaningful activities that converge sound, sight and touch. They are also seeking the mystical and experiential. Gibbs and Bolger, however, point out that many parishes fail to live out the faith they profess. This latter point was also raised by several congregation members who left previous parishes because the actions of either the rectors or other congregation members did not match the Christian teaching of the parishes.

The second part of subquestion three asked the extent to which the individual learning mentioned above has on the individual's decision to join a particular parish. As mentioned above, the congregations' members were primarily seeking authentic Bible teaching and places where they could apply that teaching in meaningful ways. Viewing this from the standpoint of the NSWQTM, it suggests the case study congregations' members were attracted primarily to the NSWQTM Intellectual Quality elements of deep knowledge and deep understanding, followed by the NSWQTM Quality Learning Environment elements of self-regulation and self-direction.

The desire for authentic Bible teaching is also a desire for relevance and significance of teaching to the lives of the individuals. This suggests the NSWQTM Significance dimension may also act as an attractant to prospective parish members. It is in this dimension, and more specifically in the elements of inclusivity and connectivity, that a division was seen between the genders, indicating that gender-specific learning issues may affect the individual's selection of a parish. In a similar way, members across all parishes cited the strong social support and welcome they received as reasons for selecting their particular parish. In the NSWQTM, social support is an element of the Quality Learning Environment dimension.

Women have traditionally sought out the benefits from strong social support networks, including parishes. Studies (Kaufmann 2002; Murrow 2005; NCLS Research 2004b; Robinson & Halcrow 2007) have supported this by showing that in

most parishes women considerably outnumber men. The National Church Life Survey (NCLS Research 2004b) suggested the reason for this difference lay in the concept of self-esteem. Men generally find their self-esteem, purpose, community and identity within their work, while women see parish services as opportunities for religious education and role modelling for their children.

Cameron (in Halcrow 2007b), however, suggested the problem was caused by men needing teaching on relevant real-life issues such as anger, sex, fatherhood and work, which is lacking in most parishes. Further, the style of parish teaching (silence, sharing, sitting and singing) is incompatible with male forms of learning. As mentioned earlier, the rector at St Ethel identified this problem and, as a consequence, instigated the 'Men's Shed', which catered for male-based activities and male-focused teaching. Many of the congregation members identified the strong focus on men as the reason for the recent rapid growth of the parish. St Doris also focused on men, but in a more holistic family-orientated setting.

The issue of connectivity and inclusivity (elements of the NSWQTM Significance dimension) was not only identified as a parish selection problem within genders, but also within the younger age groups. The study showed that the parishes all appeared to find it difficult attracting and keeping late teens and young adults. According to Hoge, Johnson and Luidens (1993) the cause lies in their cognitive broadening and cultural learning which raises religious scepticism. Mason, Webber and Singleton (2005) support this idea and add that the re-examination of personal beliefs by teens and young adults was not related to secular educational background. However, parish-attending parents, peer support and mentors within the parish were shown by Mason, Webber and Singleton (2005) to increase the likelihood of retaining late teens and young adults. This view is also reflected by several writers (Bader-Sayer 2006; Carson 2005; Comiskey 2007; Gibbs & Bolger 2005), who point out that postmodern culture, which includes late teens and young adults, are not interested in the rational modern approach to parish teaching, but rather are focused on personal reflection, spirituality, community and relationships.

The feeling of disconnection and exclusion felt by the postmodern culture in traditional services, if reversed, can act as an attractant. This suggests that the NSWQTM Significance dimension elements may also act as attractants to those individuals selecting to join parishes.

Overall, the data from the three case study parishes indicated that members of the congregations selected parishes that aligned to their desire for authentic, quality biblical teaching, strong social support, relevance and significance, and that offered them the opportunities to apply their learning within the parish setting. All of these desires are represented within the NSWQTM dimensions.

With the primary criteria met, the members of the congregations finally used personal learning style to select their parishes. The subtle differences in the teaching delivery, such as whether or not the Bible passages were fully explained or left to the congregation members' interpretation, was a matter of personal preference and style, for both congregation and rector.

SUMMARY

Subquestion three asked, "To what extent does personal learning influence an individual's decision to join a particular congregation?". The data showed that for the members of the three case study parishes there was a strong desire for quality, authentic biblical teaching that allowed application and engagement with the teaching. Overall, their criteria for parish selection appeared to reflect the elements of the NSWQTM dimensions.

Subquestion 4

> What form of teacher training, both initial and on-going, do parish rectors undertake?

Subquestion four deals with the training of rectors, initially and as an ongoing process. To answer this question, it is first necessary to define what is meant by the term 'teacher' within the Christian faith. As explained earlier in Chapter Two, a Christian teacher performs duties that go beyond the simple transfer of skills and knowledge generally associated with school teachers. Such teaching reaches into every aspect of the learners' lives, whether religious or secular. Therefore, the teaching role undertaken by rectors includes not only the organisation and delivery of parish services and support activities, but also the presenting of a personal example for the parish members to imitate.

In the Sydney Anglican diocese all rector training is delivered at Moore Theological College (MTC). As mentioned previously in Chapter Two, the curriculum studied by rector candidates changed in 2006 to incorporate some subjects focused on practical ministry. However, since the first cohort of rector candidates undertaking this course did not graduate until 2010, they have little relevance to this study. Hence, the discussion on rector candidates pertains only to current rectors who graduated from MTC prior to 2006.

The training of rectors was shown to consist of several linear stages with generally few optional pathways. Rectors began their training at MTC in a Bachelor of Theology (BTh), and may have also elected to study a Diploma of Ministry (Dip Min). This second qualification was important, as the BTh did not contain any ministry components. During this time the rector candidates underwent a series of interviews by Sydney Anglican diocese and MTC representatives to ascertain their suitability for ordination.

After graduating, rector candidates enrolled in the Ministry Development Program (MDP), designed to develop the rectors' character and build confidence and skills in teaching, leadership and relating to other people. During this time candidates were expected to work within Sydney Anglican diocese parishes, assisting the parish rectors. This period lasted several years, after which the candidate was ordained as a parish rector.

Although this training appeared comprehensive, there were several subtle issues that may affect the quality of teaching provided to, and obtained from, these rectors. The first of these arises from the definition of the terms 'teacher' and 'teaching'.

The Sydney Anglican diocese, and MTC, described teaching as the major role of parish rectors. However, there was disagreement on the actual definition and focus of teacher training and its importance. From the MTC perspective, the college was more interested in teaching rector candidates the content of teaching rather than the process, since the rector's job was only to present the biblical message.

The danger of this description lies in what Flude (1974) called 'labelling theory', where teachers' expectations of students, in this case rector candidates, influence the students' self-conceptions and in turn their learning. Labelling rectors as passive

teachers may limit their potential as quality teachers and, in turn, may influence how they perceive their congregations.

Further, focusing on content to the detriment of teaching theory was raised by Johnstone and Vignaendra (2003) who, although supporting the need for teachers to possess deep understanding of subject matter, showed teachers also needed the ability and knowledge to motivate students to learn. Rogers and Horrocks (2010) add a need for harnessing and enhancing the students' natural learning abilities.

Perhaps as a result of its focus on subject matter, MTC placed a strong emphasis on training in the traditional lecture-style sermon, even though it equated to only 36% of the average service time. However, Kraft (1991) showed lecture-style sermons, although able to impart knowledge, do little to change the hearer's lifestyle, while other writers (Baeder 2003; Erkel 2006) showed lectures produced poor-quality teaching. Although scholars such as Palmer (2004) believed teaching could not be reduced to technique, Wanak (2000) argued that quality teaching does require the understanding and application of pedagogical principles. In effect, MTC may not be providing rectors with effective teaching methods and techniques, if the emphasis of its teaching remains the traditional, passive, lecture-style sermon.

A quite different definition of 'teacher' was provided by the MDP, which saw the rector as a facilitator of parish learning. However, there was still little pedagogical material in this part of rector training. According to Lovat (2005) such deficiencies limit a teacher's power to assist students to change and grow. Further, Lovat showed a similar limitation was observed when teachers failed to use their full capacity, which can also result from inadequate training.

Studies (Rowe 2003; Rowe 2004; Willms 2000) have shown teacher quality to be the single greatest factor in student achievement. This indicates the importance of correctly defining the teaching duties, skill sets and knowledge needed to train and sustain parish rectors. With the Sydney Anglican diocese defining rector-style teaching as presenting information while the congregation listens, the hope of creating quality teachers through the diocesan system seems slim. Further, the non-uniform nature of the definition of 'teacher' when applied to rectors, and the resulting limited form of teacher training, may limit the rectors in reaching a high level of quality teaching.

Although rector candidates are required to work within Sydney Anglican diocesan parishes during their time at MTC and during the MDP, the actual activities and experiences were not regulated, nor were specific learning outcomes specified. Sherlock's (2009) study of Australian theological institutions found a similar situation, in which there was a need to clarify and develop national standards for theological graduate attributes.

Similar to the issue of in-parish learning outcomes, was the quality of the in-parish workplace supervision. The study showed that parish rectors were the primary teachers and supervisors of rector candidates during their in-parish experiences. However, these supervisors held no formal supervision qualifications. Study interviewees expressed their concern over the non-uniform quality of in-parish teaching being provided by these supervisors across the diocese. The importance of the quality of teachers has been highlighted by many writers (Alton-Lee 2003; Darling-Hammond 2000; Gore & Ladwig 2006; Hattie 2003; Ladwig & Gore 2005) as a major factor in the achievements of their students. Further, research (National College for School Leadership 2007) has shown that instead of leaving learners to learn by experience alone, the role of the primary teacher is to create a process that enables learners to see new possibilities, experience different situations, develop and practice new skills, and build confidence based on real-life performance and success.

In defence of the Sydney Anglican diocesan system, one manager of rector training explained the diocese did not want to use a rigid training program, as it was feared it would inhibit the natural abilities, talents and personalities of the rector candidates. However, recent studies (Chu, Hsieh & Chang 2007; Eccles & Wigfield 2002; Hopstock 2008; Kaufman 2003) have shown adults are not necessarily all independent, intrinsically motivated learners capable of developing and sustaining their own learning. Further, Dinham (2008), in his study of senior secondary teachers, also showed accumulated experience was important to the success of a teacher, but on its own it was insufficient to guarantee effectiveness. For the diocese this means that, although rector candidates experience three or four parishes before becoming rectors, this may be insufficient for producing effective rectors displaying quality-teaching attributes.

The mindset that instigated the limited in-parish training of rector candidates, continued when the candidates became rectors. Although, in theory, the diocese

supported rectors furthering their academic credentials, in reality it provided no monetary or other incentive for their ongoing professional development (PD). While Buczynski and Hansen (2010) showed PD had varying success among different cohorts of teachers, the overwhelming evidence (Dinham 2008; Gore & Ladwig 2006; Scott & Dinham 2002; Stoll et al. 2006) indicates PD is vital for the positive development of teacher capacity and their impact on students. Further, Dinham's study (2008) also showed rich experience coupled with ongoing professional learning and peer support was necessary for the development of effective quality teachers.

The unqualified in-parish supervisors, coupled with the limited encouragement for professional development in the area of teaching, illustrated a possible deficiency in the training of rectors. If this is combined with the difficulty in obtaining a uniform definition of 'teacher', then it may expose a more serious underlying problem in rector training in the Sydney Anglican diocese.

As mentioned previously, in the parish setting congregation members are both learners and teachers. Therefore, to increase the level of quality teaching across the entire parish the congregation members may also need pedagogical training. This concept is similar to Dinham's (2008) description of the principals of successful schools who placed high value on teacher professional development across the entire school.

SUMMARY

This study found that the teaching effectiveness of Sydney Anglican parish rectors could be constrained by the narrow diocesan concept of the rector's teaching role. Also, this study found that rectors may be receiving inadequate training for their predominantly teaching role, due to the strong emphasis on subject matter and personal rector experience rather than pedagogy and quality teaching. Further, once ordained, the diocese has demonstrated a reluctance to initiate or encourage ongoing professional development in the area of teaching for either rectors or their congregations.

Question Summary

This study set out to investigate the relationship between quality teaching used in parish services and parish viability. It found, for the participating parishes, that parish long-term viability may be related to the quality of parish teaching, when the definition of teaching is used to its fullest extent. The study also found that some elements of the NSWQTM, such as substantive communication, self-direction and self-regulation, had a greater influence on parish viability than other elements. Similarly, the study found that some elements of the NSWQTM, such as deep knowledge and deep understanding, were evident in all participating parishes, while others were seen only in particular parishes or absent altogether.

Using the NSWQTM as the comparative framework allowed this study to view parishes and schools as similar entities, both with the goal of student growth and success. In line with this comparison, the study found that, like schools, leadership was a vital component in parish success.

This study also asked whether the importance placed on learning by individuals affected their choice of parish. Within the participating parishes, it was shown that people were attracted to parishes that reflect their desired level of authentic biblical teaching. This included the importance placed on teaching by the parish leadership and the other congregation members. The application of parish teaching by the congregations and rectors was also an important factor in the selection of parishes.

Finally, this study looked at rector training within the Sydney Anglican diocese. It found that, although an emphasis was placed on describing rectors as teachers, the actual training system fell short of providing high-quality pedagogical training. To some extent, this may be caused by the various definitions of ‘teacher’ used across the rector-training program. Further, the unstructured in-parish training, supervised by unqualified supervisors, did not provide consistent quality practical training across the participating parishes. Although the theological training was more than sufficient, the problems associated with the practical training may have failed to develop fully the rectors’ teaching qualities and skills.

The study findings point to several issues relating to parish teaching and viability. The conclusions and implications of these findings are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions and implications of this study, and provides recommendations for further study and changes that may improve parish viability. The information presented in this chapter is arranged under the individual study subquestions, as illustrated in Figure 7.1.

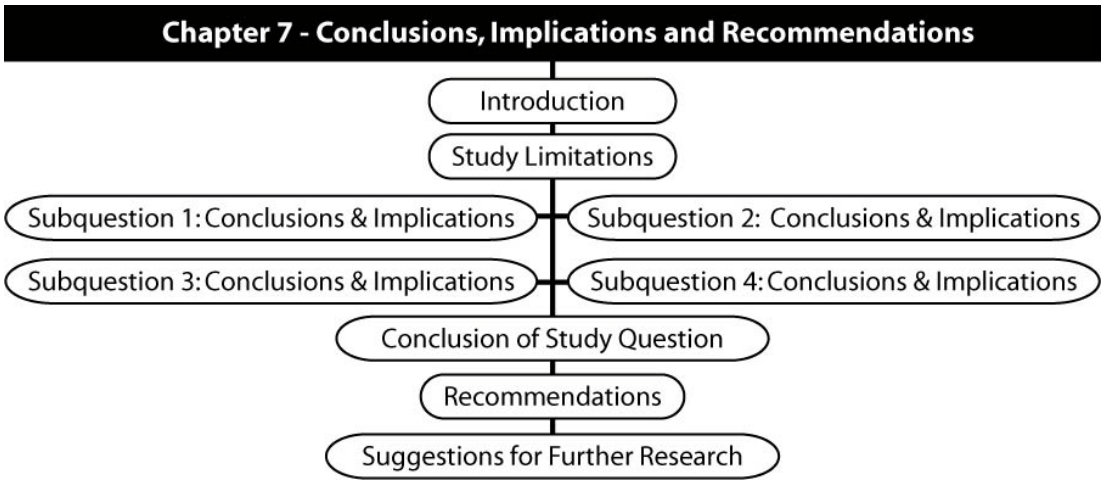

Figure 7.1 – Chapter 7 layout

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between quality teaching used in parish services and the viability of the parish. In the process, the definition of teaching provided by the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model (NSWQTM), the framework by which quality teaching was compared in this study, was broadened. Since Christian teaching affects all aspects of a Christian's life (Matthew 22:37-40; 1 John 2:4-6), the broadening of the definition of teaching allowed the inclusion of all parish teaching activities, both formal and informal. Furthermore, although the primary teacher in each parish was the parish rector, all congregation members could be considered as both teacher and learner in the Christian setting. In this way the elements of the NSWQTM were relevant to the actions of the rectors and congregation members in the parishes.

Study Limitations

It should be noted that this study was based on case studies of only three Sydney Anglican diocese parishes and their congregations. Therefore, the implications identified and recommendations made in this study are tentative and may not be applicable generally across other parishes or in other dioceses.

Further, this cross-sectional study provided insufficient evidence to take fully into account other influences affecting parish viability. As such, readers are advised to exercise caution in drawing a definitive causal connection between quality teaching and parish viability.

Subquestion 1: Conclusions and Implications

What aspects of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model are evident in the design and delivery of parish services?

The NSWQTM dimensions of Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance were evident in the case study parishes to varying degrees. The highest usage was observed at St Doris and the lowest usage observed at St Helga.

Service teaching was not confined to the actual service rooms but extended into the various support activities, which allowed the services to function effectively. The importance of this observation lies in the level of engagement, inclusivity and connectedness these activities generated in the participants. Further, these activities provide opportunities for experiential learning, which is preferred by postmoderns. Neglecting the support activities as teaching environments may limit the understanding of parish learning. As seen in the parishes, when minimal encouragement was provided by the parish leadership for these support activities, such as at St Helga, the study found that the congregation's engagement in learning decreased.

The conclusions drawn from the various NSWQTM elements are presented below, grouped according to their associated NSWQTM dimensions.

SUBQUESTION 1: NSWQTM INTELLECTUAL QUALITY DIMENSION

Intellectual Quality	
Elements	Deep Knowledge & Understanding Problematic Knowledge Higher-order Thinking Metalanguage Substantive Communication

Within the participating parishes the Intellectual Quality dimension resided primarily in the rectors, with the use of deep knowledge, deep understanding and metalanguage being most noticeable in the rectors' design and delivery of parish sermons. Far less of these elements were noticeable in service support activities.

Although problematic knowledge and higher-order thinking were used by the rectors in the design and delivery of the parish services, they were also evident in the support activities designed and delivered to a large extent by the congregation volunteers. This was particularly noticeable at St Doris, where services and support activities were connected by a common parish vision.

Within the Intellectual Quality dimension the most noticeable difference between the parishes was in the substantive communication element. The use of this element varied from very low at St Helga to very high at St Doris. When compared to the other elements, substantive communication appears to act as the glue that bonded rectors and congregations to each other and to the parish focus. Further, the diversity of communication methods, when properly aligned to the needs of the congregation, appeared to reinforce the parish teaching.

Implications

The deep knowledge, deep understanding and higher-order thinking elements were most often used by the rectors when designing sermons and, to a lesser extent, the services. When these elements were focused primarily on sermons, they represented on average only 36% of the average participating parish service durations. This may mean that a narrow focus on sermons may be preventing the deep knowledge, deep understanding and higher-order thinking elements from effectively benefiting the entire service and support activities.

Substantive communication is perhaps one of the most influential NSWQTM elements for parish teaching. However, some rectors possessed a limited understanding of the potential benefits of increasing and maintaining substantive communication. Increasing understanding and awareness of its importance may help rectors increase their usage level and, perhaps, the level of the other elements of the Intellectual Quality dimension.

SUBQUESTION 1: QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION

Quality Learning Environment	
Elements	Explicit Quality Criteria Engagement High Expectations Social Support Self-Regulation Self-Direction

The case study data showed that the elements of the NSWQTM Quality Learning Environment dimension appear to gravitate into three distinct usage groups:

- Explicit quality criteria
- High expectations and social support
- Self-regulation, self-direction and engagement.

The first, explicit quality criteria, was fundamental to all participating parishes as the criteria emanated from the biblical foundation of the Christian faith. Generally the same biblical criteria were emphasised in each parish. The depth and quality of the criteria, however, varied across the parishes, from low at St Helga to high at St Doris. At St Doris, the use of a parish mission statement in collaboration with the biblical criteria appeared to enhance the effects of the explicit quality criteria.

The high expectations and social support elements appeared to be used together in the design and delivery of the services and the support activities. They also appeared to be used formally and informally by the rectors and congregation members. In parishes where social support was an integral part of the services and support activities, high expectation of learning success was also present. Conversely, the absence of one of these two elements appeared to signal the absence of the other.

The third element group comprised of self-regulation, self-direction and engagement. Once again, an increase in one of these elements appeared to signal an increase in the other two. In the parishes where congregation members experienced high levels of self-direction and self-regulation the engagement in parish activities was high. In contrast, when members were limited in their self-direction or self-regulation their engagement with the services and support activities was low.

The elements of the Quality Learning Environment dimension, like those of the Intellectual Quality dimension, were used by both the rectors and the congregation members. Although the overall leadership and direction was provided by the rectors, the greater portion of the social support and engagement was provided by the members. Rectors who expressed positive expectations of learning success, and encouraged self-direction and self-regulation, also appeared to promote social support and engagement of the congregation.

Implications

The conclusions above suggest the creation of a quality learning environment involves the collaboration of rectors and congregants in the design and delivery of services and support activities. This collaboration would result in congregants undertaking meaningful duties, within services and support activities where they could exercise their self-regulation and self-direction. Further, the rector–congregant collaboration could be further strengthened by the creation of a rector–congregant shared vision for their parish that could support the quality biblical criteria already present.

The findings also suggest that rectors may improve parish engagement by increasing the opportunities for social support. This may mean providing suitable space and resources to allow members to interact socially with each other and provide support and encouragement.

SUBQUESTION 1: SIGNIFICANCE DIMENSION

Significance	
Elements	Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness Narrative

Of the three dimensions of the NSWQTM the use of the Significance dimension showed the most variation between parishes. The only element of the Significance dimension which remained constant across all parishes was that of narrative. This is not surprising, as the Christian faith is based on the biblical narratives.

As Christian teaching involves the entire life of the individuals, the background knowledge and cultural knowledge elements appeared to merge together in parish teaching. These elements were generally underutilised in all the parishes and appeared to be areas where the rectors considered little attention was required. The only mention of cultural differences occurred in the discussion of youth culture and the retention of youth in the parishes.

In a similar way to that of cultural and background knowledge, knowledge integration can be considered a basic tenet of Christianity, since parish teaching is intended to affect the individuals' lives, actions and attitudes. As such, it would be expected to be easily observable in the parish services. However, knowledge integration varied considerably across the parishes, from low use at St Ethel to high use at St Doris.

At St Doris, knowledge integration could be seen in the existence of a single statement that encapsulated the focus of the parish teaching. This statement was integrated into almost all parish activities, literature and services. In contrast, each service at St Ethel appeared as an isolated unit, except for the delivery of series sermons. There was no obvious parish focus that integrated into other activities of the parish.

The deliberate planning for inclusivity and connectedness into the parish services and support activities varied across the parishes. Here, however, there was a distinction between what the parish rectors stated about these two elements and the actual observations of parish services. Since inclusivity and connectedness are

basic Christian tenets, the rectors all stated that their focus was to reach out to the surrounding community and take steps to create warm welcoming services. Observations of the services and associated documents and activities showed that only St Ethel and St Doris had actually taken steps to use these elements within the services and support activities. Although the rector at St Helga was insistent that he was designing services for visitors and new members, there was no evidence of this in the study.

Implications

The conclusions of the Significance dimension suggest that rectors may need to analyse and understand the cultures surrounding their parishes. This would provide resources to address cultural and background knowledge elements. This understanding may also provide a basis for integrating connectivity and inclusivity elements into the parish services and support activities.

The creation of a parish vision or statement, as mentioned previously, could be used to integrate all aspects of parish teaching. This connecting thread may increase the significance of learning within the parish.

CONCLUSION

The usage of the NSWQTM elements appeared in this study to fall into three groups; those that equated strongly with biblical Christian teaching, those that equated to Christian faith and those that represented modern quality teaching components (see Figure 7.2). This does not mean that the elements of groups 1 and 2 are devoid of quality teaching, but that Group 3 elements are not primarily aspects of Christian teaching.

Group 1 Biblical Equivalent	Group 2 Faith Equivalent	Group 3 Quality Teaching
Deep knowledge Deep Understanding Metalanguage Explicit Quality Criteria Narrative	Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness Social Support Engagement	Problematic Knowledge Higher-order Thinking Substantive Communication High Expectations Self Regulation Self Direction Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge

Figure 7.2 – NSWQTM parish usage groupings

Group 1 represents those NSWQTM elements that appeared to be equivalent to basic biblical Christian teaching. These were used in all participating parishes and formed the basis of the parish services. The rectors were strongly related to this grouping.

Group 2 represents those NSWQTM elements that appeared to be equivalent to Christian faith. These represent the application of the Christian teaching from Group 1. The use of these elements in the design and delivery of parish services varied across the parishes. The strength of these elements relied not only on the rectors' leadership, but also the application of the elements by the congregations.

Group 3 represents the NSWQTM elements that do not appear to be directly associated with biblical Christian teaching or Christian faith but, rather, are primarily elements of quality teaching. The usage of these elements in the design and delivery of parish services ranged from low usage at St Helga to high usage at St Doris.

Subquestion 2: Conclusions and Implications

What effect does the use of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model principles have on the viability of the congregation?

Subquestion two asked about the relationship, if any, between the NSWQTM and parish viability. As mentioned earlier, parish viability in this study was measured by the attendance patterns of the congregations. Although subquestion two relates to congregation attendance patterns, conclusions regarding these patterns will be addressed more fully in subquestion three.

Once again, this question will be answered by considering each dimension of the NSWQTM separately.

SUBQUESTION 2: INTELLECTUAL QUALITY

Intellectual Quality	
Elements	Deep Knowledge & Understanding Problematic Knowledge Higher-order Thinking Metalanguage Substantive Communication

As mentioned previously in this study, the majority of the congregation members of all parishes expressed their desire for authentic Bible teaching, which included obvious application of the teaching. They also commended their respective rector for having deep knowledge, deep understanding and an ability to explain the Bible and the Christian faith. From these comments it is clear that these individuals sought out parishes with a focus on deep knowledge and deep understanding, coupled with rectors showing skills in higher-order thinking and metalanguage.

It should be noted that, although authentic teaching was important, not all individuals joined Bible study groups. This meant that the parish services were the primary biblical learning environment.

The majority of the members also indicated that they wanted to help others within their chosen parishes. Helping others in this setting means addressing problems identified in the parish services or related to other members of the congregations. In this way, the members are exhibiting the use of problematic knowledge. Although there was only limited observation of the use of problematic knowledge in the services, there was considerable use by members in the support activities. This situation suggests that parishes that offered the opportunities for the use of problematic knowledge (St Doris and St Ethel) would be more attractive to people, especially those of the postmodern culture who are actively seeking experiential learning. Comparing the parish attendance patterns to the use of problematic knowledge opportunities showed that the attendance was highest at St Doris where there were a large number of service support activities, and lowest at St Helga were there were few support activities.

Substantive communication varied greatly among parishes, particularly between the rectors and the congregation members. At St Ethel there were few modes of communication that produced substantive and meaningful interactions between the

rector and the congregation. Although this caused misunderstandings between the two parties, it did not appear to affect people outside of the congregation. However, although the rector talked of planning services to reach out to visitors and attract new members, observations showed almost no such communication.

At St Doris multiple modes of communication, including verbal, textual, digital and visual, created strong substantive interactions between the rector and the congregation members. There were also multiple modes of communication used to interact with visitors and the surrounding community.

Communication was not limited to rector–congregants interaction. By far the strongest observed substantive communication was between congregation members. This can partially be explained by the desire of postmoderns to form meaningful and loving relationships (Carson 2005). From this viewpoint, St Helga may appear unattractive due to its low levels of substantive communication, while St Doris may be highly attractive due to its multilevel substantive communication.

Overall, the use of the elements of the NSWQTM dimension of Intellectual Quality may act to attract people to parishes. The level of attraction may also be related to the level of authentic use of the elements.

Implications

The use of the NSWQTM Intellectual Quality dimension for teaching and application implies rectors must not only have deep biblical and Christian knowledge and understanding, but must also provide an example to the congregation of its application. In a similar way, rectors may need to ensure congregants also have opportunities to apply parish learning, particularly through authentic substantive communication.

Further, rectors may need to provide various forms of authentic biblical teaching within services to address the different learning styles and needs of the members. It may, therefore, be necessary to develop quality teaching focused more on the existing congregation and less on non-members. This would increase the knowledge, understanding and apparent application of teaching within the congregation, making the parish more attractive to non-members.

SUBQUESTION 2: QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Quality Learning Environment	
Elements	Explicit Quality Criteria Engagement High Expectations Social Support Self-Regulation Self-Direction

The NSWQTM Intellectual Quality dimension was generally used more by the parish rectors than the congregations, except in the element of substantive communication. In the Quality Learning Environment dimension, however, the use of elements was divided between the rectors and the congregants, except for the explicit quality criteria element, which was used predominantly by the rectors. The level of this sharing appeared to reflect the service attendance patterns within the parishes.

At St Doris the rector used the explicit quality criteria, high expectations and social support elements within the services and support activities and encouraged the congregation to use and develop the elements of engagement, self-regulation and self-direction. In turn, the congregation used self-direction and self-regulation to increase their own levels of engagement. Perhaps as a result of this usage of NSWQTM elements, the service attendance at St Doris was rapidly increasing.

In contrast to St Doris, St Helga's rector did not contribute to or encourage most of the elements of the Quality Learning Environment. The low level of self-direction, self-regulation and social support appeared to reduce the engagement of the congregation. At the same time the attendance pattern showed a general decline, with congregation members seeking other parishes in which to express their self-direction and self-regulation.

The use of the Quality Learning Environment elements at St Ethel appeared to represent a middle ground between the high usage at St Doris and the low usage at St Helga. Similarly, the attendance patterns at St Ethel showed a steady but increasing attendance rate.

In addition to the overall use of the NSWQTM Quality Learning Environment dimension, several elements appeared to be especially influential to parish viability. The first of these was social support, which involved the rectors and congregants. In

the parishes where the rectors encouraged and demonstrated social support from a Christian perspective, the parish attendance rate was high. Conversely, in parishes where social support was not encouraged or was not demonstrated by the rector and congregants, the parish attendance was low.

The second influential element was in fact a group of three interconnected elements: engagement, self-direction and self-regulation. In parishes where self-regulation and self-direction were high, engagement was also high. When the level of congregant engagement was high, it appeared that the parish attendance was also high.

Engagement may be influenced not only by increasing the usage of some elements, but also the removal of other elements. In all parishes there were a small number of members who lamented the removal of rituals and items such as the Anglican prayer book. Some held strong opinions on the issue and reduced their engagement in service activities as a result. Similarly, the postmodern culture is seeking the use of ritual, tradition, relationships and learning environments that reach all their senses, such as with the use of candles, incense and mood lighting. The reduced use of some traditional service elements, therefore, may correspondingly reduce some congregation engagement, especially for those congregants of postmodern culture.

Implications

The conclusions above suggest rectors may need to actively involve congregants in all aspects of parish activities, including the design and delivery of services and support activities. This involvement should allow members to exercise their self-regulation and self-direction. Increasing engagement in this way may increase parish viability.

Further, accommodating and engaging the growing numbers of postmodern parish congregants may require parish rectors to reconsider service content and environment, particular with respect to issues such as rituals and atmosphere.

Rectors may also need to deliberately create within their parishes times, areas and resources designed to promote social support. Such support, provided by rectors and congregants, should strive to be authentic, relational and relevant to the congregants and, possibly, the surrounding communities.

SUBQUESTION 2: SIGNIFICANCE

Significance	
Elements	Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness Narrative

The NSWQTM Significance dimension easily differentiated the parishes according to usage, except for the narrative element, which was used extensively by all rectors. The elements of inclusivity and connectedness relate directly to the postmodern desire for relationship, while knowledge integration reflects their need for authenticity and relevancy. Within the various parishes, however, were several different generational groups including Builders (pre-1946) and Baby Boomers (1946–1964), each with their own needs and desires. The use of the NSWQTM elements, therefore, needed to be adapted to suit the culture and learning needs of all the congregants.

It has been shown that at St Helga the Significance elements were adapted and used in a way that did not reflect the needs of the congregation members. Misunderstanding and disengagement reduced the levels of connectivity and inclusivity. This low engagement was also reflected in the declining attendance pattern at St Helga.

At St Doris, where there were a variety of generations represented, the Significance elements were adapted to reflect the needs of the congregation. There were various service and support activities that focused on inclusivity and connectedness. In particular, St Doris specifically encouraged knowledge integration through the use of a vision statement that was integrated into all parish activities. The high use of the Significance elements at St Doris was mirrored by the high attendance pattern of its congregants.

Once again, St Ethel closely resembled St Doris in its general focus on Significance, although the level of usage of the Significance elements was generally lower. Similarly, the attendance pattern at St Ethel was steady with signs of growth.

Implications

The conclusions above suggest that focusing on the significance of parish teaching, including its application, may influence the parish attendance patterns and, therefore, parish viability.

The experience at St Helga suggests that not only do rectors need to use the NSWQTM Significance elements, but they must ensure that their adaptation and contextualisation is in line with the needs and desires of the existing congregation. This may mean that the question of service focus, for the existing congregations or to attract new members to the congregations, should seriously be addressed.

CONCLUSION

The three dimensions of the NSWQTM, Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance, appeared in this study to follow a distinctive pattern of usage. At the same time the attendance patterns of the parishes followed a similar pattern.

Since this is a cross-sectional study, this apparent usage pattern may not be applicable to other parishes. However, when taken together, the usage pattern appeared to equate in the case study parishes to the parish attendance patterns. Therefore, St Helga, where the usage and attendance patterns were low, appeared to have low long-term viability. St Ethel, where the usage and attendance patterns were higher, appeared to have a medium level of long-term viability. Finally, at St Doris, where the usage of the NSWQTM and the attendance patterns were high, the parish long-term viability also appeared high.

In subquestion one, the NSWQTM elements were rearranged into three groups (see Figure 7.3) representing usage across the parishes. This same grouping may also be used to consider the viability of the parishes. Considering the usage at St Helga of Group 1 elements through to Group 3 elements showed a steady decline. In the case of St Doris, although there was still a usage decline, the difference in usage between Group 1 elements and Group 3 was far less than at St Helga.

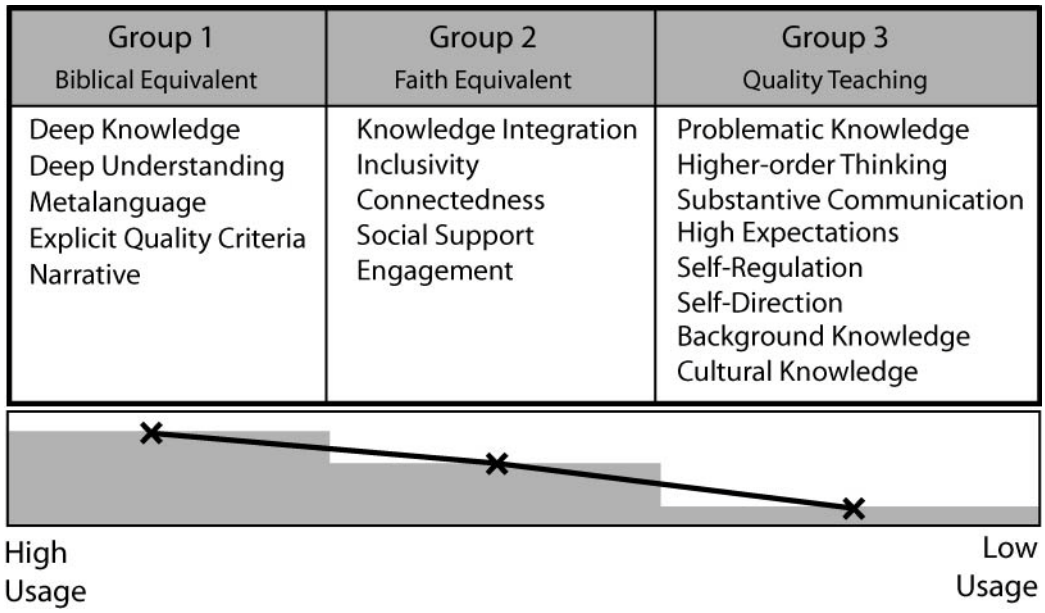

Figure 7.3 – NSWQTM parish usage groupings and general trend

The difference in usage between the groups appears to be the inverse of the parish attendance patterns. This means, when the difference between usage is high (using predominately one group and ignoring the others) there is a low attendance pattern and when the difference is low (incorporation of all groups equally) the attendance pattern is high. At St Helga for example, where the difference in usage between Group 1 and Group 3 was high, the attendance pattern was low. At St Doris, where the difference in usage between Group 1 and Group 3 was low, the attendance pattern was high.

The pattern produced by comparing the differences in usage between the NSWQTM element groups may therefore give an indication of parish viability.

The apparent connection between the NSWQTM elements and the parish attendance patterns suggests that equal attention to each group may influence attendance and, hence, parish viability. In particular, increasing the usage of Group 3 elements in a parish may increase the overall parish viability.

As mentioned earlier, Group 3 elements focus strongly on quality teaching that is used by rectors and congregation members. Concentrating on building this relationship and assisting congregation members to exercise self-regulation and self-direction, through increased substantive communication may, in turn, increase

their engagement and knowledge integration. Thus, making more use of Group 3 elements may also increase the usage of Group 2 elements.

Subquestion 3: Conclusions and Implications

> To what extent does personal learning influence an individual's decision to join a particular congregation?

This study suggests that learning-focused parishes attracted learning-focused congregations. Further, this attraction was not deterred to any significance by the parish buildings or physical environment. It was, however, affected by the perceived authenticity of the teaching and its application.

Across all the participating parishes the desire for authentic Bible teaching was a primary focus of the congregation members. As mentioned previously, the elements from the NSWQTM that appeared to directly associate with authentic Bible teaching are those identified in Group 1 of Figure 7.4.

Group 1 Biblical Equivalent	Group 2 Faith Equivalent	Group 3 Quality Teaching
Deep Knowledge Deep Understanding Metalanguage Explicit Quality Criteria Narrative	Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness Social Support Engagement	Problematic Knowledge Higher-order Thinking Substantive Communication High Expectations Self-Regulation Self-Direction Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge

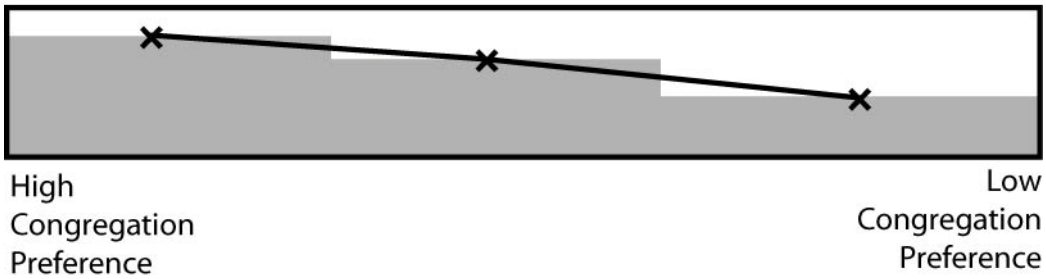

Figure 7.4 – NSWQTM element groups with congregation preferences

As mentioned earlier, the application of biblical learning is in itself a learning process. As such, the ability to apply the authentic Bible teaching in meaningful ways was also an influential factor when selecting a parish. The opportunity to engage in supporting others in an inclusive Christian environment while at the same time being connected to real-life issues was desired by many of the congregation members. With respect to the NSWQTM elements, it can be seen from Figure 7.4 that the elements that appear to relate most closely to the application of biblical teaching (faith) are located in Group 2.

Authentic teaching and meaningful application were the primary desires of congregation members across all parishes. It was clear, however, that there were many differences in teaching between the three parishes. At St Doris, there was a strong emphasis on self-regulation and self-direction, while at St Ethel these elements were overseen by the controlling hand of the rector. Similarly, the cultural knowledge relating to men was a potent force at St Ethel, while substantive communication was a driving force at St Doris.

As can be seen from Figure 7.4, it is Group 3 that contains the elements of self-direction, self-regulation, cultural knowledge and substantive communication. The emphasis on one or more of the Group 3 elements represents the final level of learning that appears to influence a person's selection of a parish. Each of these elements may represent personal taste; issues of importance after authentic Bible teaching and the application of teaching have been addressed.

Although the desire for authentic teaching and its application appeared to be the primary issues associated with people selecting a parish, the level of ongoing learning and application may be the factors that assist in retaining congregation members.

For teaching to be authentic it must be relevant to the learner. Understanding the issues relevant to the congregation members is therefore an important aspect of providing authentic teaching within the parishes. However, assessment of learning and learning needs were absent from all participating parishes. Without such information it may be difficult to deliver authentic, relevant Bible teaching.

Implications

It appears from this study that individuals may be influenced by personal learning style when selecting a parish. This selection is not, however, unfocused, with specific groups of requirements needing to be met before an individual selects a particular parish. By focusing on all three NSWQTM groups, a parish may be able to successfully attract people to join their congregation. Conversely, by ignoring or dismissing one or more groups, a parish may find it difficult attracting and keeping people.

Further, if the opportunity to learn coupled with the opportunity to apply that learning are important issues to congregations, then ensuring adequate opportunities for meaningful engagement is an important aspect of the design and delivery of parish services and support activities.

Authentic and relevant teaching may only be possible within a parish if some form of dedicated and appropriate assessment of learning and learning needs is undertaken by the parish. This may require a broadening of the definition of parish learning and the role of the rector as teacher.

Subquestion 4: Conclusions and Implications

What form of teacher training, both initial and on-going, do parish rectors undertake?

This study looked at initial theological and practical rector training and ongoing professional development for rectors currently working in parishes. It should be noted that in 2006 the initial rector-training program was modified and broadened. However, these graduates are not as yet in rector positions and so this study does not reflect these changes to the curriculum.

The study suggests that initial theological training equipped rectors well for the intellectual quality required of their position. However, it also found practical parish training appeared insufficient in several critical areas, while formal professional development, particularly in the area of teaching and pedagogical understanding, appeared lacking.

If, as with the previous three subquestions, the NSWQTM is compared to rector training, the high level of intellectual quality is represented in Group 1 of Figure 7.5.

Group 1 Biblical Equivalent	Group 2 Faith Equivalent	Group 3 Quality Teaching
Deep Knowledge Deep Understanding Metalanguage Explicit Quality Criteria Narrative	Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness Social Support Engagement	Problematic Knowledge Higher-order Thinking Substantive Communication High Expectations Self-Regulation Self-Direction Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge

High Training Focus — Low Training Focus

Figure 7.5 – NSWQTM and rector training focus

In initial rector training, Moore Theological College (MTC) placed primary emphasis on biblical theology and its delivery through traditional sermons. This meant that NSWQTM elements associated with sermon delivery, such as higher-order thinking, problematic knowledge and substantive communication were also covered. This suggests that these elements should appear in Group 1. However, apart from sermon delivery, there was little evidence of these elements being taught or used in other areas of rector training. Hence these elements remained in Group 3.

During the Ministry Development Program (MDP), immediately following graduation from MTC, the training focus changed to include development of the rectors' personal qualities, leadership and relating to others. The elements of Group 2 appear to reflect the MDP teaching. However, the study suggests that the depth of teaching in these elements may be insufficient, particularly with respect to engagement and social support, due to the strong focus on the rectors' personal development.

The elements in Group 3 of Figure 7.5, except for those already mentioned, appeared absent from rector training, particularly elements focused closely on congregation members, such as members' self-direction and self-regulation.

Once again, this study suggests that quality rector training is strongly focused on Group 1 elements and then decreases from Group 2 to Group 3. This apparent trend takes into account training for all forms of parish teaching and is not restricted to sermon delivery only.

In addition to the relationship of rector training to the NSWQTM, this study also identified several issues that may adversely influence rector training. Although the diocese preferred to allow rector candidates to explore and enhance their own natural abilities unhindered by formal training in parish activities and leadership, this situation may have led to inconsistencies across the parishes with regard to the quality of teaching and leadership. This may have been further compounded by the diocese's use of untrained parish supervisors. Similarly, the diocese's insistence that professional development was the responsibility of the rectors may have resulted in a low level of formal professional development among rectors, pointing to a further difference in teaching quality and leadership across the diocese.

IMPLICATIONS

The Christian teaching delivered by rectors includes both theological presentation and practical application. This implies that rector training may benefit if both aspects were equally present in their training. The emphasis placed on the NSWQTM elements relating to biblical theology, if equally applied to Group 2 and Group 3 elements, may increase the quality of rector training.

To provide high-quality rector training requires quality teachers. Therefore, this study suggests that the Sydney Anglican diocese might consider providing dedicated training for parish supervisors. Such accredited training may benefit the supervising rectors and the rector candidates.

To complement the supervisor training, it is suggested that a clear set of learning outcomes and competencies be developed for rector candidates for use while undertaking in-parish training. This may assist supervising rectors to focus parish

activities to provide the rector candidates with a deeper level of experiences. It may also assist in providing consistency of training across the diocese.

Further, the Sydney Anglican diocese might consider adapting their in-parish learning periods to reflect Howard and McKeachie's (1993, cited in Mullen 2010) ten principles of best practice for service learning.

Conclusion of Study Question

This study asked primarily the following question:

> Is there a relationship between the quality of teaching used in parish services and the viability of the parish?

To answer this question, four subquestions were posed:

> **Subquestion 1**
> What aspects of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model are evident in the design and delivery of parish services?
>
> **Subquestion 2**
> What effect does the use of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model principles have on the viability of the congregation?
>
> **Subquestion 3**
> To what extent does personal learning influence an individual's decision to join a particular congregation?
>
> **Subquestion 4**
> What form of teacher training, both initial and ongoing, do parish rectors undertake?

The findings of this study suggest that St Helga, with a negative growth pattern, showed the lowest alignment to the NSWQTM elements in its design and delivery of services. In contrast, St Doris with a positive growth pattern, showed the highest alignment to the NSWQTM elements. Although this does not prove a direct link, these findings suggest that some form of relationship may exist between the use of quality teaching and parish viability.

This study also suggests that rector training, congregant personal learning and the use of quality teaching in service design and delivery, are all interrelated factors in parish viability. It is suggested that if one of these factors is overlooked or neglected the level of parish viability may suffer.

Further, the study suggests that quality teaching in the parish setting is divided into three groups (see Figure 7.6) that may act as guidelines for developing rector training and parish services and support activities. They may also indicate personal preferences of individuals when selecting a parish.

	Group 1 Biblical Equivalent	Group 2 Faith Equivalent	Group 3 Quality Teaching
Intellectual Quality	Deep knowledge Deep Understanding Metalanguage		Problematic Knowledge Higher-order Thinking Substantive Communication
Quality learning Environment	Explicit Quality Criteria	Engagement Social Support	High Expectations Self Regulation Self Direction
Significance	Narrative	Knowledge Integration Inclusivity Connectedness	Background Knowledge Cultural Knowledge

Figure 7.6 – Quality teaching groupings

Rectors, whether in charge of negative, steady or positive growth parishes, may benefit from determining their parish's level of alignment with the NSWQTM and taking steps to increase the alignment where differences are identified. Similarly, assessing the actual learning needs of the congregation members may assist in providing higher-quality, authentic biblical teaching.

Finally, this study suggests issues affecting quality teaching in secular schools, such as distributed leadership and succession planning, may also affect parish learning environments. Succession planning, an increasing problem in schools, was not present in any parish in this study. However, the disruption caused by its absence was particularly noticeable at St Helga.

Recommendations

The study was conducted using only three parishes and, therefore, generalisations to other parishes or dioceses may not be possible. Nevertheless, three main recommendations are worthy of consideration. These recommendations are as follows:

1. The desire for authentic biblical teaching and opportunities for application was shown to be attractive to people looking to join parishes. It is recommended that rectors, in collaboration with their congregations, determine their alignment with the NSWQTM and the learning needs and desires of the current congregations. Then, using this information, adjust the design and delivery of services and support activities to reflect authentic biblical teaching and opportunities for its application and implementation.

2. The in-parish training for rector candidates was identified in this study as being negatively influenced by the quality of parish supervision. It is recommended that the Sydney Anglican diocese consider developing appropriate formal training and accreditation processes for parish supervisors.

3. The in-parish training for rector candidates was shown to suffer from a lack of uniformity and consistency across the diocese. It is recommended that the Sydney Anglican diocese considers formalising the learning outcomes of the in-parish training and provide specific learning and training goals for this period of rector training.

Suggestions for Further Research

The relationship between teaching and parish viability is an area which calls for further investigation. This study has raised several issues relating to parish teaching and its impact on parish viability which may be enlightened by larger, more comprehensive investigations.

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Appendix 1 – Rector Interview Sheet

RECTOR'S STRUCTURED INTERVIEW (WORKSHEET)

Church Code: ..... Start Time:.....

Date: .....End Time: .....

Worksheet #: .....

Section 1 - Overall Ministry Focus

Section 2 - Quality Learning Environment (QTF)

Section 3 - Significance and Substantive Communication (QTF)

Section 4 - Demographics

INTERVIEW CONTENTS

Interview 1 – Sections 1, Section 2 (General Service), Section 4 [Number of questions - 22]

Interview 2 – Section 2 (remainder), Section 3 [Number of Questions – 27]

SECTION 1 - OVERALL MINISTRY FOCUS

Question	Prompts
1. How would you describe the overall atmosphere you aim to create during church services?	Worship; growth / learning; welcoming
2. How full would you say the church building is during a typical church service? [1]	
3. How is the ministry as a whole organized in this church?	Parish; people; programs; groups
4. Describe the ethnic background and cultural diversity in the congregation.	
5. In your opinion how important is learning Bible facts within the service?	Central, secondary
6. In your opinion how important is learning Christian beliefs within the service?	Central, secondary
7. What part of the church service do you believe is the most important and why?	

SECTION 2 - QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (QTF)

Question	Prompts
General Services	
8. What types of services are carried out on a regular basis in this church?	Services for: different learning styles; different ages; at various times; culturally focused;
9. Who participates in the planning of church services?	Minister only; team; input from congregation;
10. How are the various elements of the service related to each other?	Common theme; stand alone; Elements: music, sermon, prayers
11. Describe who participates in the delivery of various elements of the services?	Bible reading; ushers; prayers; sermon; music; singing
12. To what extent are the congregational members' personal lives taken into account when designing services / sermons, for example children, elderly, disabled, language difficulties etc?	Parents with young children; distance traveled; school holidays; mobility issues; sight/hearing difficulties. Catering for individuals, eg delivering sermon tapes.
13. To what extent do services involve cultural elements of congregational members?	Verbal language; written material; practices; taboos
14. Describe your use of the following activities during a typical service: 14.1 Testimonies, 14.2 Interviews, 14.3 Stories (verbal or video), 14.4 Drama, Dance or mime 14.5 Visual displays, 14.6 Musical items,	
Sermons	
15. Who participates in the selection of sermon topics?	Congregation; committee; speaker; minister; tradition

Appendix 1 cont. – Rector Interview Sheet, page 3

MINISTER'S STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Question	Prompts
16. How far in advance are service / sermon topic chosen?	
17. Is there a structured relationship between sermon topics?	Traditional; sermon series; church focus / goal
Related Bodies	
18. Describe the other groups that operate during service times.	Sunday School; Crèche; kids club; prayer groups
19. How are the groups identified above related to the activities in the service?	Same focus;
20. With respects to young people attending Sunday School or equivalent, is their a formal program / process of transferring them from Sunday School to church services?	rite-of-passage
21. Does this church maintain rosters for such thing as lawn mowing, cleaning, flowers etc? Please specify. 21.1 How does someone join a roster? 21.2 When / how are the rosters updated?	
Congregational Goal	
22. Does this congregation currently have a formal goal or focus?	Diocese mission statement; MAG; outreach
22.1 Describe the current church/ congregational goal/focus?	
22.2 How was the church goal / focus developed?	People; process;
22.3 Describe how the congregation has been given directions and encouragement on how to achieve this goal / focus?	Newsletters; verbal; meetings
Inter- relationships	
23. How does the congregation or ministry team praise or acknowledge the service of individuals or groups within the congregation?	Prayer list; annual award; as needed
23.1 How often does this happen?	As needed; special occasions; regularly

Appendix 1 cont. – Rector Interview Sheet, page 4

MINISTER'S STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Question	Prompts
24. What is your attitude towards people asking questions during the service?	
24.1 Are there set times in a service when this can occur?	After sermon; end of service; beginning of service;
25. How would you describe the overall attitude of the congregation during services?	Open; friendly; eager to learn;
26. Do any events or activities make a difference to the congregation's attitude?	Special event; particular speaker;
27. Describe the practices in place to welcome visitors to the congregation.	Information sheet; help from sides-persons;
28. Describe your relationship with the congregation.	How many do you know by name / sight
29. How are new members identified and integrated into the congregation?	Member info card; formal welcome during service;
Small Groups	
30. Describe the types of small groups associated with this congregation?	Bible study; youth; prayer; MOPS; fellowship; social;
31. What processes are in place to encourage individuals to join the small groups?	Announcement in service; newsletter; personal approach;
32. How are the activities of the various groups discussed or reported during services?	Annual report; term report; newsletter;
Teaching Instruments	
33. Describe what types of equipment are used during a typical service?	Video/DVD, OHT, PowerPoints, drawing easel; musical instruments;
34. What types of documents are distributed to enhance the service?	Sermon outlines; service sheets; songbooks; activity sheets
35. Are activities suggested to the congregation and then followed up in later services? If so describe them.	'Homework'
36. Is there a formal process for distributing information to the families of congregational members or fringe members?	Newsletters drop; email/web site; central site;

	Question	Prompts
37.	What processes are in place to determine if the message of the service has been successfully transferred to the congregation?	Determining success; achieving service purpose;
38.	Describe any formal training that is provided for the congregational members,	Christianity Explained, Alpha, PTC; child protection;
39.	If there is formal training provided, how are the courses and students selected?	Volunteers; selection by committee; individual initiated;
40.	Does refresher training occur for the ministry team or other church members?	

SECTION 3 - SIGNIFICANCE AND SUBSTANTIVE COMMUNICATION (QTF)

	Question	Question Focus
41.	Describe the general Bible knowledge of the congregation.	Poor; average; broad; deep;
42.	To what extent do the services / sermons build upon the congregation's Bible knowledge?	Is it taken into account?
43.	Describe the opportunities provided to congregational members to put into practice what is taught in the services.	Scripture teaching, mission, organized events; kids club; outreach; pastoral care;
44.	What formal or informal opportunities are available to congregational members to discuss service/sermon topics and related issues with the ministry team or other members?	Direct discussions; newsletter; web; bulletin board; scheduled / unscheduled meetings;

MINISTER'S STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

SECTION 4 – DEMOGRAPHICS[2]

Question	Prompts
45. What academic studies have you undertaken (completed or the majority completed)?	
46. What teacher training have you undertaken?	Dip. Ed.; Cert IV; military/civil industry instructor; scripture teacher accreditation;
47. How long ago did you finish your last formal course of study?	
48. How long have you been the minister for this congregation?	
49. Describe what you consider to be your strengths as a minister.	
50. Describe what you consider to be your weaknesses as a minister.	
51. Describe what you consider to be the strengths of this congregation.	
52. Describe what you consider to be the weaknesses or stumbling blocks to this congregation.	

[1] Obtain congregation size from service records if available.

[2] Obtain general data from Dioceses yearbook.

Appendix 2 – Initial Parish Observation Sheet

Church Code: ……. *Start Time: ……..* *Worksheet #: ……..*

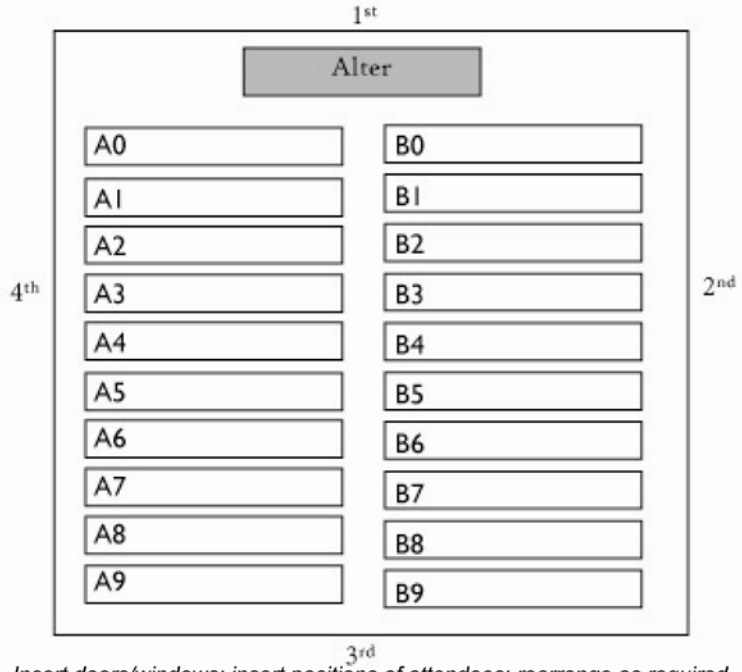
Date:…….. *End Time: ……*

INITIAL CHURCH OBSERVATION SESSION

1. Congregation Statistics

Total number attending service		Service Reader	M LR AM O	Duration of Sermon		# extemporary prayers	
Number of children (<14)		Sermon by	M LR AM O	Duration of Prayers		# songs	
Type of service	MP HC F Y O	Prayer Reader	M LR AM O	Duration of Notices		Duration – Other Item:	
# taking communion		Song leader	M LR AM O	Duration of Questions			

2. Seating Arrangements



Insert doors/windows; insert positions of attendees; rearrange as required

3. Congregation Activity / Attentiveness

# Clapping music/songs		# distracted	
# actions to prayers		# not singing	
# note taking			
# questions			

4. Interactions

Pre-service interactions M/C
Pre-service interactions C/C
In-service interactions M/C
In-service interactions C/C

SERVICE DETAILS

1. Resources (specify where appropriate)

Service Book	APB PPP O			OHP / OHT:		Wall hangings:
Service sheet	PC AS CS					
Sermon outline	F NP O			PowerPoint:		Sermon Aids:
Song text	B S P O					
Newsletter - period	W M O			Video / DVD:		Displays:
Other:						
				Audio – pre-recorded:		Musical instruments

CODES AND DESCRIPTIONS

1. Type of Service: MP – Morning Prayer; HC – Holy Communion; F – Family; Y – Youth; O - Other
2. Service / sermon readers: M – Minister; LR – Lay Reader; AM – Assistant Minister; O – Other
3. All durations are in minutes.
4. The term 'distracted' means not being focused on service activities – looking around, reading (other than service), talking to family/friend; handling objects (fiddling)
5. When counting numbers (#) use the actual number whenever possible otherwise estimate the percentage of the congregation engaged in the persuit.
6. Service books used: APB – Australian Prayer Book; PPP – Praise Prayer and Proclamation ; O – Other
7. Service Sheet: PC – Photocopy of standard/approved service book; AS – Agenda Style; CS – Custom made Service
8. Sermon Outline: F – full text summary; NP – Note Points with areas to fill in the details; O - Other
9. Song text are provided by: B – Book; S – song sheets; P – Projected; O - Other
10. Newsletter period: W – Weekly; M – Monthly; O – Other

Appendix 3 – Congregation Interview

CONGREGATION STRUCTURED INTERVIEW (WORKSHEET)

Participant Code: ..... **Start Time:** .....

Date: ..... **End Time:** .....

Worksheet #: .....

Section 1 - Overall Ministry Focus

Section 2 - Quality Learning Environment (QTF)

Section 3 - Significance and Substantive Communication (QTF)

Total = 27 questions

SECTION 1 - OVERALL MINISTRY FOCUS

Question	Prompts
1. How would you describe this congregation as a whole?	
2. How would you describe the overall atmosphere create during church services?	Worship; growth / learning; welcoming
3. In your opinion how important is learning Bible facts within the service?	Central; secondary
4. In your opinion how important is learning Christian beliefs within the service?	Central; secondary
5. What part of the church service do you believe is the most important and why?	
6. Would you invite a friend or relative to attend the services at this church? Why?	Why?

SECTION 2 - QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (QTF)

Question	Prompts
General Services	
7. Describe the church's level of success in catering for various types of people within the services?	Parents with young children; mobility issues; sight/hearing difficulties; youth; elderly;

CONGREGATION STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Question	Prompts
8. Describe how well the church service handles the various cultures represented in the congregation.	Verbal language; written material; practices; taboos
9. Describe how the various elements of a typical service are related to each other?	Common theme; stand alone; Elements: music, sermon, prayers
Sermons	
10. How would you describe the sermons delivered at this church?	Relevant; boring; fascinating; useful;
11. Describe your activities during a sermon.	Take notes, listen; follow in Bible;
12. How would you change the ways sermons are handled in this church?	Shorter/longer; different topics; different speakers;
Small Groups	
13. If you are a member of a small group associated with this congregation, describe the importance of that group to you and your life.	Supportive; stimulating; social;
14. Do you feel that this group is valued and supported by the minister and the rest of the congregation?	
Congregational Goal	
15. Describe the main focus of this congregation.	Diocese mission statement; MAG; outreach
16. Describe the activities associated with this main focus.	Fund raising; training days; outreach activity;
Inter- relationships	
17. Describe your relationship with other members of the congregation.	
18. Describe your relationship with the minister and/or ministry team.	
Teaching Instruments	

CONGREGATION STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Question	Prompts
19. Describe your attitude towards the use of multi-media equipment during services.	Video/DVD, OHT, PowerPoints, drawing easel; musical instruments;
20. Describe your responses to activities suggested during services?	'Homework'
21. What effect has attending services in this church had on your Bible knowledge and understanding?	Increased; broadened; clarified;

SECTION 3 - SIGNIFICANCE AND SUBSTANTIVE COMMUNICATION (QTF)

Question	Question Focus
22. Describe the general level of Bible knowledge in the congregation.	Poor; average; broad; deep;
23. To what extent do the services / sermons build upon the congregation's Bible knowledge?	Is it taken into account?
24. Describe what you consider to be your minister's strengths.	
25. Describe what you consider to be your minister's weaknesses.	
26. Describe what you consider to be the strengths of this congregation.	
27. Describe what you consider to be the weaknesses or stumbling blocks to this congregation.	

Thank you for participating

Appendix 4 – Service Observation Sheet

Church Code: .....

Date: .....

Start Time: .....End Time: .....

Worksheet #: .....

NEW SOUTH WALES QUALITY TEACHING FRAMEWORK PERFORMANCE CONTINUUM (NSWQTFPC)

The continuum is constructed that each level of use infers the inclusion of the previous level.

Code	Element	Not Observed	Minimum Use	Moderate / Limited Use	Competent Use
Intellectual Quality					
A1	Deep knowledge		Service/sermon topic stated/written	Key concepts/ideas identified/stated; learning outcomes stated/written	Key Christian learning areas identified; relationship between concepts identified; demonstration of knowledge of topic; offers answers to questions
A2	Deep understanding		Provides minimum responses to questioning;	Relates current topic to prior knowledge; service/sermon adjusted to specific congregation;	Uses new information/questions to provide new/other interpretations; integrates subject knowledge with life experiences/local or world events;
A3	Problematic knowledge		Opportunity available to ask/answer questions	Different perspective accepted	Flexible in service/sermon structure/teaching; seeks/uses feedback; errors welcomed;
A4	Higher-order thinking		Demonstrates organizing of ideas/information.	Recognizes possible barriers to learning; suggests way to apply knowledge/ideas	Shows evidence of analyses/evaluation of knowledge/ideas.
A5	Metalanguage		Use of specialist/Christian language	Simple explanations of use/context of specialist/Christian language	Expands on Christian language/imagery; uses/explains original/early text/words;
A6	Substantive communication		Uses some oral, written and/or artistic/music elements to communicate ideas.	Discusses service/sermon topic with individuals or group; provides/encourages discussions in written text;	Extends discussions outside service times; encourages varied forms of expression (mime, dance, posters etc) with in services; uses varied forms of written discussion material (web, email, newsletters, sermon briefs etc);
Quality Learning Environment					

Appendix 4 cont. – Service Observation Sheet, page 2

Code	Element	Not Observed	Minimum Use	Moderate / Limited Use	Competent Use
B1	Explicit quality criteria		Christian/church standards clearly stated	Church/Christian standards regularly referenced in service/sermon	Actions required by congregation clearly stated and encouraged;
B2	Engagement		Congregation participate in service requirements;	Congregation follow service in service book/sheet/Bible; Display attentive behaviour/body language;	Congregation show sustained attentive behaviour throughout service; various individuals/groups active in service; note taking during sermon; encouragement to participate;
B3	High expectations		Goals/aims stated and encouraged	Expectation of success conveyed; encouragement question/explore issues.	High expectations of success are conveyed; actions are rewarded/recognised publicly;
B4	Social support		Positive support for learning; mutual respect;	demonstrate care/commitment for congregation; positive personal comments;	Positive support for congregation's self-concept and self-efficacy about learning;
B5	Student's self-regulation		Individual actions/ideas encouraged;	Encouragement for personal/small group study;	Encouragement of individual/small group devised/led activities with in service;
B6	Student direction		Suggestions for service/sermon topics encouraged;	Suggestions for service/service elements encouraged; volunteers to assist with service elements encouraged;	Congregational members develop and deliver service/service section;
B7	Learning cycle		Methods used support learning cycles to a minimum extent;	Memory/recall technique used; follow-up (homework) dispensed/used;	Group learning activities / peer interactions within service; high support for learning cycles;
B8	Curriculum goals		Learning curriculum used (Church service calendar, sermon series, term/yearly outline etc); focus on learning;	Alignment of activities and resources to curriculum goals; pedagogy/androgyny elements demonstrated;	Demonstration of church/home partnership (family services, newsletters etc); church policies/practices support ministry team (in teaching); external formal study encouraged/supported;
B9	Feedback and support		Positive feedback provided; methods for feedback provided;	Pedagogy/androgyny scaffolds used when providing feedback;	Appropriate positive feedback provided to groups/individuals regarding learning activities; individuals/groups supported in learning activities;

Appendix 4 cont. – Service Observation Sheet, page 3

Code	Element	Not Observed	Minimum Use	Moderate / Limited Use	Competent Use
B10	Constructive engagement		Ministry team/congregation constructively assess activities/learning	Demonstration of positive motivation for assessment;	Demonstration of non-humiliating, teaching adjusted response to assessment results
Significance					
C1	Background knowledge		Service/sermon topic and/or service activities reflect congregation's personal lives;	Sermon explicitly builds from congregation's background knowledge;	Service/sermon topics reflect previous learning
C2	Cultural knowledge		Cultural background/knowledge acknowledged;	Services cater for individual basic differences/needs;	Services/sermons incorporate cultural knowledge of diverse groupings; services cater for a range of individual differences/needs (eg ethnicity, age, disability, language etc)
C3	Knowledge integration		Service/sermon demonstrate basic links between key learning areas;	Service/sermon demonstrates links between topics and key learning areas;	Service/sermon demonstrates links between learning and application;
C4	Inclusivity		Individuals from various social/cultural backgrounds attend/encouraged to attend services;	Individuals from various social/cultural backgrounds participate in the delivery of the service;	Cultural/social elements are deliberately incorporated into the services (eg singing, dance, furnishings etc);
C5	Connectedness		Service/sermon focus on real-life context or problem;	Clear statement that learning matters; opportunities for outreach presented;	Clear statement of the purpose of learning with respect to future/present situation; opportunities for outreach developed and encouraged;
C6	Narrative		Inclusion of person narratives in to sermons to enhance understanding;	Narrative accounts by individuals encouraged (includes testimonies);	Use of testimonies, videos/DVDs; interviews and other narrative types to enhance understanding;

Appendix 5 – Rector Introduction Letter

Australian Centre for Educational Leadership
located in the Faculty of Education

University of Wollongong

Director
Associate Professor Narottam Bhindi

Honorary Distinguished Advisors
Dr Margaret Wheatley
Dr A Ross Thomas
Margaret Byrne

Dear Reverend

Your church has been chosen to participate in a research project conducted through the University of Wollongong, Facility of Education. The project is entitled:

The Influence of Quality Teaching Techniques on Congregational Viability

Some time ago the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church set forth a mission statement that aims to obtain ten percent of the population of the diocese worshiping in Bible believing churches by 2010. It has been this goal that has prompted the research project, since to succeed in the mission statement it will be necessary to know what factors affect the growth of church congregations.

Approval is sought from you to allow your church to participate in this research. I understand the demands placed on clergy and so this research has been designed to limit any interference to regular church activities to a minimum. In simple terms a researcher will attend and observe two regular church services and record information related to the teaching aspects of the service. During the first of these observation sessions the congregation will be informed of the research and asked to complete a questionnaire focusing on their opinions on various aspects of the service and the church in general.

Associated with this research are also a number of interviews with your self, your extended ministry team and volunteers from the congregation. The times and methods of these interviews can be arranged to suit the participants.

Attached to this letter you will find a Ministry Participation Information Sheets which will explain the processes involved in the research in more detail. Also attached is the Congregation's Participation Information Sheet which will be given to all members of the congregation that participate in this project.

It is hoped that the findings of this research will assist congregations and church leaders to better understand the influence of teaching on congregational viability.

Faculty of Education Australian Centre for Educational Leadership University of Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia
Telephone: +61 2 4221 5477 **Facsimile:** +61 2 4221 4657
narottam_bhindi@uow.edu.au www.uow.edu.au
CRICOS Provider No: 00102E

Appendix 5 cont. – Rector Introduction Letter, page 2

Australian Centre for Educational Leadership
located in the Faculty of Education

University of Wollongong

Director
Associate Professor Narottam Bhindi

Honorary Distinguished Advisors
Dr Margaret Wheatley
Dr A Ross Thomas
Margaret Byrne

If you are willing to allow your church to participate in this research please complete the acceptance slip attached to this letter and return it in the provided envelop. I will contact you by telephone in a few days to discuss this research.

Thank you for reading this letter and I hope that you will consider participating in this research project.

Regards

Theresa Mitchell

Researcher:
Ms Theresa Mitchell
PO Box 379, Berry, NSW
Ph (ah): 4448 7054
Fax: 4448 5485
Email:
ktmitchell@shoalhaven.net.au

Supervisor:
Ass. Pro. Narottam Bhindi
And
Dr. Julie Kiggins
University of Wollongong
Faculty of Education
Ph: (02) 4221 5626
nbhindi@uow.edu.au

Appendix 6 – Rector Consent Form

Australian Centre for Educational Leadership
located in the Faculty of Education

University of Wollongong

Director
Associate Professor Narottam Bhindi

Honorary Distinguished Advisors
Dr Margaret Wheatley
Dr A Ross Thomas
Margaret Byrne

CHURCH PARTICIPATION CONTACT INFORMATION

Thank you for volunteering your church to join this research project.

Research Project: The Influence of Quality Teaching Techniques on Congregational Viability

Researcher: Theresa Mitchell, Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong

Supervisor: Ass. Prof. Narottam Bhindi and Dr. Julie Kiggins, Faculty of Education

Unit: THES912

I have read the information relating to this research project and have had the opportunity to discuss any issues of concern. I am aware that I may contact the University of Wollongong Ethics Officer if I have any concerns or complaints regarding this research or my participation.

I consent to participating in two or more interview sessions with the researcher which will be conducted face-to-face and are estimated to last approximately forty-five (45) minutes to an hour.

I consent for services conducted in this church to be observed and for information to be gathered through observation, photograph and/or audio-recording.

I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time without penalty or adverse effects.

I agree to allow any information provided by myself, whether gathered by verbal, written, audio or visual means to be used as part of this research project.

I understand that at no time will my personal information or that of this church congregation be disclosed or passed on to any other person or entity other than the researcher and research supervisors unless written permission is first gained. Information gathered will be held in strict confidentiality.

Faculty of Education Australian Centre for Educational Leadership University of Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia
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CRICOS Provider No: 00102E

Appendix 6 cont. – Rector Consent Form, page 2

Australian Centre for Educational Leadership
located in the Faculty of Education

University of Wollongong

Church Name: .....

Church Parish: .....

Church Address: .....

Church Phone: .....

Minister's Name[1]: .....

Minister's Signature[1]: .....

Church Position (if not ordained minister): .....

Preferred Contact Day:
- ❒ Any day
- ❒ Monday
- ❒ Tuesday
- ❒ Wednesday
- ❒ Thursday
- ❒ Friday
- ❒ Saturday
- ❒ Sunday

Preferred Contact Time:
- ❒ Any time
- ❒ Mornings 9 am – 12:00
- ❒ Lunch time 12:00 – 2pm
- ❒ Afternoon 2pm – 6pm
- ❒ Evening 6pm – 9pm

Email address: .....

Thank you for allowing your church to take part in this research project.

[1] If there is no ordained minister for the church congregation then the person in charge of the congregation shall sign on behalf of the congregation.

Faculty of Education Australian Centre for Educational Leadership University of Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia
Telephone: +61 2 4221 5477 **Facsimile:** +61 2 4221 4657
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CRICOS Provider No: 00102E

Appendix 7 – Congregation Questionnaire

Church Code:…….. Worksheet #: ……..

Date: ……

Congregational Research Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a doctrinal research study into congregational teaching and its relationship to congregational viability, and is supervised by the University of Wollongong Education Faculty. Participation in this survey is optional and you may withdraw at anytime without penalty.

All information collected from the questionnaire is handled with strict confidentiality and no individuals will be identified unless written permission is obtained.

Most questions require you to indicate your answer by ticking one box from the provided list. Some questions will require short answers. Where a question is not applicable to you please select the No Opinion box. Note: A ministry team consists of all persons responsible for preparing and/or delivering church services.

***Note**: the columns marked '**No Opinion**' are also the place to mark if the question is not applicable to your church or the particular service.*

Section 1.Church Services - General

This section deals with the general types of church services that you may experience in any church.

1. Rate each of the following aspects of church services according to how important they are to the over all service in any church.

		1 Not Important	2 Mildly Important	3 Important	4 Very Important	5 Essential	0 No Opinion
1.1	Sermon	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
1.2	Music	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
1.3	Prayers	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
1.4	Communion / Lord's Supper	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
1.5	Bible reading	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
1.6	Fellowship / social interaction	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
1.7	Congregational singing	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
1.8	Learning Bible facts	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
1.9	Learning Christian beliefs	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
1.10	Learning church history and traditions	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

1.11 Other important aspect not mentioned (*please specify*) ----------

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2. In relation to the physical environment, e.g. buildings, of any church rate each of the following according to their importance to you.

		1 Not Important	2 Mildly Important	3 Important	4 Very Important	5 Essential	0 No Opinion
2.1	Physical access through ramps, wide doors, etc	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
2.2	Crèche that still allows service participation by parents/carers	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
2.3	Air-conditioning in church building	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
2.4	Sound system with provision for hearing aids	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
2.5	Communal meeting area (eg hall)	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

3. The following question focuses on your reason for attending any church service. Indicate your agreement level with each of the statement.

I attend church services because…..		1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Mildly Disagree	4 Mildly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree
3.1	I agree with the beliefs of the particular church	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
3.2	I accept the moral teachings of the church	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
3.3	I feel comfortable with the people attending the church	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
3.4	I find regular church services helpful	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
3.5	attending church services is more important than other activities occurring at the same time.	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
3.6	I gain something out of church services	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
3.7	there are people my age attending the church services	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
3.8	the service times are convenient for my lifestyle	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
3.9	there are activities for the children to do during the service	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
3.10	the church services are stimulating	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

3.11 Are there any other reasons why you attend any type of church service? (*please specify*) ----------

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3.12 In your opinion do you know of any other reason why other people attend church services? (*please specify*) ----------

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Appendix 7 cont. – Congregation Questionnaire, page 3

Section 2.This Church Service

The following questions relate to the church service that you have just attended at this church.

4. Rate each of the following aspects of the church service you have just attended in order of your satisfaction.

		1 Dissatisfied	2 Slightly Dissatisfied	3 Reasonably Satisfied	4 Satisfied	5 Very Satisfied	0 No Opinion
4.1	Sermon topic	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
4.2	Sermon delivery	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
4.3	Organisation of service	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
4.4	Music and/or song selection	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
4.5	Prayers	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
4.6	Communion / Lord's Supper	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
4.7	Bible reading	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
4.8	Fellowship / interaction with others	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
4.9	Congregational singing	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
4.10	Service books or sheets	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
4.11	In service discussion	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
4.12	Church notices	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
4.13	Children's activities	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

Are there any other important aspect of the church service you have just attended that were not mentioned (*please specify*) _____

_____

_____

5. In relation to the atmosphere during the service please rate your agreement with each of the following statements.

		1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Mildly Disagree	4 Mildly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree	0 No Opinion
5.1	The atmosphere during the service was generally welcoming.	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
5.2	The physical church layout during the service was appropriate for my needs	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
5.3	The church furnishings (including pictures, decoration etc) added to the atmosphere of the service	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
5.4	The relationship between service participants appeared supportive.	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
5.5	The relationship between the congregation and the minister / service leader appeared supportive.	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
5.6	The music / singing added to the atmosphere of the service.	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

6. Within the passed twelve (12) months, is this your first time attending this church congregation?

1. ❒ No, ➔ please go to **Section 3 on page 6**
2. ❒ Yes

Complete questions 7on the next page

Section 3.This Congregation

The questions below focus on your association as a member of this church congregation. Please limit your responses to activities and attitudes relating to this church and its associated congregation.

8. Please rate the importance of the following aspects of services at this church to your reasons for continuing to attend this congregation.

		1 Not Important	2 Mildly Important	3 Important	4 Very Important	5 Essential	0 No Opinion
8.1	Family members attend this congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.2	Friends attend this congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.3	I belong to this denomination	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.4	The only church of this denomination in the area	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.5	Style of service (eg traditional, modern, etc)	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.6	Activities for children	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.7	The personal qualities of the minister	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.8	The church focus on learning / growing as a Christian	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.9	Bible and other study groups available	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.10	Close to home	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.11	Availability of social activities	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.12	Size of the congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

8.13 Are there any other important characteristics of this church congregation that influence you to continue attending this congregation (*please specify*)

CONGREGATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 3.This Congregation

The questions below focus on your association as a member of this church congregation. Please limit your responses to activities and attitudes relating to this church and its associated congregation.

8. Please rate the importance of the following aspects of services at this church to your reasons for continuing to attend this congregation.

		1 Not Important	2 Mildly Important	3 Important	4 Very Important	5 Essential	0 No Opinion
8.1	Family members attend this congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.2	Friends attend this congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.3	I belong to this denomination	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.4	The only church of this denomination in the area	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.5	Style of service (eg traditional, modern, etc)	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.6	Activities for children	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.7	The personal qualities of the minister	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.8	The church focus on learning / growing as a Christian	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.9	Bible and other study groups available	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.10	Close to home	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.11	Availability of social activities	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
8.12	Size of the congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

8.13 Are there any other important characteristics of this church congregation that influence you to continue attending this congregation (*please specify*)

---

9. In relationship to the last twelve (12) months indicate how frequently you participate in each of the following activities at this church.

How often do you attend….	1 Weekly	2 Fortnightly	3 Monthly	4 Every 3 Months	5 Every 6 Months	6 Yearly	0 Never
9.1 church services	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
9.2 Bible study groups	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
9.3 prayer meetings	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
9.4 church fellowship groups	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
9.5 church organised events	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
9.6 church music or singing groups	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
9.7 church management / council meetings	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

9.8 Are there any other church based activities that you attend and if so, how often? (*please specify*) .....

.....

10. Do you perform any duties during the services here or at another church? ❒ **No – Go to Question 11 on page 8**

❒ **Yes – Answer the questions below**

How often do you perform the following duties?	1 Weekly	2 Fortnightly	3 Monthly	4 Every 3 Months	5 Every 6 Months	6 Yearly	0 Never
10.1 Act as the Bible Reader	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
10.2 Hand out books or other service material	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
10.3 Collect the offertory / collection	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
10.4 Play a musical instrument	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
10.5 Perform singing either solo or with others in a group	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
10.6 Lead services or parts of services	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
10.7 Deliver sermons or the address	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
10.8 Deliver a testimony	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
10.9 Assist with Sunday School or equivalent	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
10.10 Assist with the crèche	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

10.11 Do you perform any other functions at this church with in the church service? (*please specify*) .....

.....

10.12 Are you involved in activities in other churches, e.g. helping Sunday School or attending Bible Study? (*please specify*) .....

.....

10.12.a. If you do attend activities in other churches are they the same denomination as the church you are attending today? ❒ Yes ❒ No ❒ Mixed

11. The following statements relate to your experience as part of this congregation only. Please rate them according to your agreement.

		1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Mildly Disagree	4 Mildly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree
11.1	I feel supported by the minister or ministry team in this church	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
11.2	I make opportunities to put service / sermon teaching into practice	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
11.3	I feel respected by the minister / ministry team in this church	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
11.4	I apply what is taught in the service to my daily life	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
11.5	I discus sermon topics with others after the service and/or during the following week	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
11.6	Services with this congregation have helped to strengthen my faith	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
11.7	Services with this congregation have increased my Bible knowledge	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
11.8	Services with this congregation have given me a sense of belonging	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

12. Have you previously been a member of another congregation?

1. ❒ No ➔ **Go to question 14**
2. ❒ Yes ⬇

13. What was your main reason for leaving your previous church?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Appendix 7 cont. – Congregation Questionnaire, page 9

14. How often are the following included in church services for this congregation?

		1 Weekly	2 Fortnightly	3 Monthly	4 Every 3 Months	5 Every 6 Months	6 Yearly	7 Less Than Yearly	8 Never	0 No Opinion
14.1	Interviews with congregational members	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.2	Interviews with persons from outside the congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.3	Testimonies from congregational members	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.4	Testimonies from persons outside this congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.5	Drama (skit or plays) performed for congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.6	Video /DVD presented as part of the service	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.7	Discussion relating to the service / sermon topic	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.8	Quizzes	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.9	Dance performances	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.10	Specific musical items presented to the congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.11	Poetry or other reading (not including Bible reading)	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.12	Posters or other visual displays	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.13	Individuals singled out for praise or recognition	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.14	Baptisms during the service	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.15	Confirmations during the service	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.16	Inclusion of the various cultures represented in the congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.17	Specific activities or focus on young people under the age of 16 years	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.18	Young persons (under 20 years) organising or otherwise involved in the service	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.19	Translation of material into other languages	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
14.20	Services focused on the whole family	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

15. The following statements relate to your engagement with the service. Rate the statements according to your agreement.

		1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Mildly Disagree	4 Mildly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree	0 No Opinion
15.1	I take notes during the sermon	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
15.2	It is important to have an opportunity to ask questions during the service	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
15.3	Responding to singing / music by clapping or other actions is appropriate in services	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
15.4	The sermon has my full attention during the service	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

16. How often do the following occur at this church?

		1 Weekly	2 Fortnightly	3 Monthly	4 Every 3 Months	5 Every 6 Months	6 Yearly	7 Less Than Yearly	8 Never	0 No Opinion
16.1	Sermon outline or summary is given to the congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
16.2	Service overview or agenda is given to the congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
16.3	Church/Parish newsletter is distributed / available to the congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
16.4	Ordinary congregational members select service / sermon topics	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
16.5	The establishment of a new congregational goal or focus	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
16.6	Opportunities for asking questions during the church services	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
16.7	Sermon topics are discussed by participants after the church service	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

17. Answer the following questions with relation to this church congregation?

		1 Less than 1 year	2 1-2 years	3 3-5 years	4 6-10 years	5 Over 10 years	6 All my life	0 No Opinion
17.1	How long have you been a member of this church congregation?	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
17.2	How long has the current minister been assigned to this congregation?	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

18. Which one of the following best describes your current Minister / Rector? If there is no minister at this church answer questions in relation to the person or persons who carry out the minister's duties.

		1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Mildly Disagree	4 Mildly Agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly Agree	0 No Opinion
18.1	Our Minister is the ultimate authority in our congregation with respect to religious matters	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.2	Our Minister acts like a coach to help us grow	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.3	Our Minister motivates us in many ways	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.4	Our Minister guides us through leadership and example	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.5	Our Minister doesn't provide answers but helps us find our own solutions	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.6	The Minister is open and accessible if I need information or guidance	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.7	Our Minister accepts suggestions for service or sermon topics from the congregation	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.8	Our Minister regularly visits congregational members at their homes	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.9	Our Minister appears to have a deep knowledge of Bible facts	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.10	Our Minister appears to have a deep understanding of how to apply Bible teachings	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.11	Our Minister's sermons are clear and easily understood	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.12	Our Minister uses words that are easy to understand	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.13	It is easy to talk to our Minister on any subject	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.14	Our Minister encourages feedback from the congregation about the services	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.15	Our Minister tries to include everyone in services regardless of age, gender or ethnic background	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.16	Our Minister's sermons focus on real-life issues	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.17	Our Minister uses a variety of display tools and/or objects to enhance the sermons	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.18	Our minister provides guidance for applying Christian beliefs	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.19	Our Minister helps me to learn about the Bible and Christian beliefs	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.20	Our Minister is an excellent teacher	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.21	Our Minister acknowledges the gifts/skills of congregational members	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒
18.22	Our Minister actively encourages congregational members to use their gifts/skills	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

18.23 Are their any other characteristics about your minister that were not mentioned? (please specify) .....

.....

19. With respect to the last service you attended (not including the one you have just attended) describe your reactions to the sermon?

20. Do you have any other comments relating to sermons or services that involve this church congregation?

21. What activities would you like to be included in church services at this church that are not currently occurring?

Section 4.General Information

This section focuses on your background.

22. Have you undertaken any formal study in religious education (e.g. Christianity Explained, Alpha, Scripture Teacher Accreditation, Leadership training, university etc)? (please specify)

.....

.....

.....

23. How would you rate your Bible knowledge?

1. ❒ Very Poor – I have not read any of the Bible
2. ❒ Poor – I know almost nothing about the Bible
3. ❒ General – I know something about the main events
4. ❒ Good – I know something about each of the books in the Bible
5. ❒ Very Good – I can quote the important passages from memory

24. Any other comment regarding your Bible knowledge? (please specify)

.....

.....

.....

.....

25. Where were you born?

1. ❒ Australia
2. ❒ Other *(please specify)*: .....

26. What is your highest educational qualification (completed or the majority completed)?

1. ❒ Primary school
2. ❒ Early secondary school
3. ❒ New South Wales School Certificate (year 10) or equivalent
4. ❒ New South Wales Higher School Certificate (year 12) or equivalent
5. ❒ Certificate level I, II or III
6. ❒ Certificate level IV
7. ❒ Diploma level
8. ❒ Degree level
9. ❒ Postgraduate studies
10. ❒ Other (*please specify*)

---

27. How long ago did you finish your last formal course of study (including primary or secondary school, university, TAFE and short duration courses)?

1. ❒ I did not go to school
2. ❒ 0-5 years
3. ❒ 6-10 years
4. ❒ 11-20 years
5. ❒ Over 20
6. Other (*please explain*): ----------

---

28. What best describes your current main occupation?

1. ❒ Unemployed
2. ❒ Student
3. ❒ Home duties
4. ❒ Professional (*example architect, lawyer, doctor etc*)
5. ❒ Tradesperson (*example plumber, electrician, bricklayer etc*)
6. ❒ Teacher or educator
7. ❒ General retail or factory worker
8. ❒ Self-employed
9. ❒ Retired
10. ❒ Other *(please specify)* _____

_____

29. What is your age?

1. ❒ under 16 years
2. ❒ 16 – 20 years
3. ❒ 21 – 40 years
4. ❒ 41 – 60 years
5. ❒ over 60 years

30. What is your gender?

1. ❒ Male
2. ❒ Female

31. What is your marital status

1. ❒ Married ➔ Go To Question 32
2. ❒ Single – separated or divorced
3. ❒ Single – never married
4. ❒ Widow
5. ❒ Widower

End of Questionnaire

32. Which best explains your partner's attendance at church?

1. ❒ No partner
2. ❒ My partner attends church services regularly
3. ❒ My partner attends church services irregularly
4. ❒ My partner attends church services on special occasions only
5. ❒ My partner does not attend church services

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Appendix 8 – Congregation Introduction

Australian Centre for Educational Leadership
located in the Faculty of Education

University of Wollongong

Director
Associate Professor Narottam Bhindi

Honorary Distinguished Advisors
Dr Margaret Wheatley
Dr A Ross Thomas
Margaret Byrne

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
CONGREGATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEWS

Research Title: The Influence of Quality Teaching Techniques on Congregational Viability

Researcher: Ms. Theresa Mitchell
PO Box 379
Berry, 2535

Supervisor: Ass. Professor Narottam Bhindi and Dr. Julie Kiggins
University of Wollongong
Faculty of Education
Ph: (02) 4221 5626
nbhindi@uow.edu.au

Research Aim:

This is an invitation to participate in a study conducted through the University of Wollongong. The aim of this research is to understand the relationship between teaching, as it occurs in church services, and church congregation viability.

Research Procedures:

The research will involve the participation of six church congregations and their ministry teams in a series of service observations, interviews and a written questionnaire. Each church will under go two observation sessions of the church's normal services, with the congregation of one being asked to complete a written questionnaire. Interviews with the ministry team and volunteers from the church congregations will complete the churches involvement in this research. The information will be gathered using photographs, audiotape and written text.

Participant Involvement:

This research will require participants to complete a written questionnaire concerning predominantly their opinion regarding church services. This questionnaire will be completed directly after the church service and is estimated to take approximately fifteen minutes.

If desired participants can also volunteer to be individually interviewed to expand on the information gathered in the questionnaire. These interviews can be conducted face-to-face, via telephone or email, which ever method best suits the participant. In the case of telephone and email interviews personal contact information will be collected and used only for contacting the individuals. Interviews will take approximately thirty minutes.

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CRICOS Provider No: 00102E

Appendix 8 cont. – Congregation Introduction, page 2

Australian Centre for Educational Leadership
located in the Faculty of Education

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Young persons between the age of fourteen (14) and eighteen (18) years of age may participate in both the questionnaire and interview sessions. Parental / guardian consent will be obtained prior to interviews with young persons, and a parent, guardian or nominated person known to the young person will be present during these interviews.

Possible Risks, Inconveniences and Discomfort:

Apart from the fifteen (15) minutes of your time completing the questionnaire and the further thirty (30) minutes for the interview (if you choose to volunteer) no other risks are foreseen.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this research project is voluntary and you may refuse to participate if you so desire. Also you may withdraw your participation from the research project at any time without penalty. Participants who withdraw from the project will have their data destroyed in their presence.

Participation Consent:

Consent to participate in the questionnaire section of this research will be assumed for all persons returning a completed anonymous questionnaire form. A separate consent form will be completed by those persons volunteering for the interview section of the research.

Data Collection, Storage and Use:

Personal data gathered during this research will remain confidential at all times. No individuals or church congregations will be identified unless written permission is obtained. References to congregations or individuals will be made through alphanumerical coding, which is known only to the researcher.

The gathered date and results obtained through data analysis may be used in presentations, reports and/or other publications. The data will be primarily published as a PhD thesis and portions published in scholarly journals such as The Journal of Education. It is hoped that these findings will assist congregations and church leaders to better understand the influence of teaching on congregational viability.

The churches will not be individually named or identified resulting in very little risk of a negative backlash to any specific church. The same situation applies to the interviews.

All data, once digitized, will be stored in password secure computer files. Written and audio material will be stored in a secured file for five years after the completion of this research project. Access to this data will be limited to the researcher and the project supervisors.

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Appendix 8 cont. – Congregation Introduction, page 3

Australian Centre for Educational Leadership
located in the Faculty of Education

University of Wollongong

Director
Associate Professor Narottam Bhindi

Honorary Distinguished Advisors
Dr Margaret Wheatley
Dr A Ross Thomas
Margaret Byrne

Concerns or Complaints:

This research has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong.

If at any time concerns or complaints arise relating to this research participants should contact the University of Wollongong Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 4457.

Further Information:

Further information regarding this research project may be obtained at any time from the researcher or the research supervisors using the contacts provided at the beginning of this document.

Thank you for your offer to participate in this research.

Thank you for your participation.

Theresa Mitchell

(Researcher)

Faculty of Education Australian Centre for Educational Leadership University of Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia
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CRICOS Provider No: 00102E

Appendix 9 – Interview Consent Form

Australian Centre for Educational Leadership
located in the Faculty of Education

Research Codes:
CH:……PT: ……

University of Wollongong

Director
Associate Professor Narottam Bhindi

Honorary Distinguished Advisors
Dr Margaret Wheatley
Dr A Ross Thomas
Margaret Byrne

Interview Consent Form

Research Title: The Relationship Between Teaching Quality and Church Viability

Researcher: Theresa Mitchell

Supervisor: Ass. Prof. Narottam Bhindi and Dr. Julie Kiggins, Faculty of Education

Unit: THES912

I have read the information relating to this research project and have had the opportunity to discuss any issues of concern. I am aware I may contact the University of Wollongong Ethics Officer if I have any concerns or complaints regarding this research or my participation.

I consent to participating in one or more interview sessions with the researcher. These interviews will be conducted face-to-face or via email. If face-to-face, interviews are estimated to last between thirty (30) minutes and one (1) hour. I am aware if I prefer the interviews can be conducted via other media and I will discus this with the researcher.

I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time without penalty or adverse effects.

I agree to allow any information provided by myself, whether gathered by verbal, written, audio or visual means to be used as part of this research project.

I understand that at no time will my personal information be disclosed or passed on to any other person or entity other than the researcher and research supervisors unless written permission is first gained.

Name (please print)

Signature

Date

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CRICOS Provider No: 00102E

Appendix 10 – Observation Level Descriptions

NEW SOUTH WALES QUALITY TEACHING MODEL REFERENCE CONTINUUM: OBSERVATIONS / RECTOR INTERVIEWS

The continuum is constructed that each level of use infers the inclusion of the previous level.

Code	Element	Questions	Minimum Reference	Moderate / Limited Reference	Competent Understanding / Ref
Intellectual Quality					
A1	Deep knowledge	24, 41, 45, 46	Service/sermon topic stated/written	Key concepts/ideas identified/stated; learning outcomes stated/written	Key Christian learning areas identified; relationship between concepts identified; demonstration of knowledge of topic; offers answers to questions
A2	Deep understanding	17, 24, 42	Provides minimum responses to questioning;	Relates current topic to prior knowledge; service/sermon adjusted to specific congregation;	Uses new information/questions to provide new/other interpretations; integrates subject knowledge with life experiences/local or world events;
A3	Problematic knowledge	24	Opportunity available to ask/answer questions	Different perspective accepted	Flexible in service/sermon structure/teaching; seeks/uses feedback; errors welcomed;
A4	Higher-order thinking	16, 17	Demonstrates organizing of ideas/information.	Recognizes possible barriers to learning; suggests way to apply knowledge/ideas	Shows evidence of analyses/evaluation of knowledge/ideas.
A5	Metalanguage		Use of specialist/Christian language	Simple explanations of use/context of specialist/Christian language	Expands on Christian language/imagery; uses/explains original/early text/words;
A6	Substantive communication	14.4 – 14.6, 32, 33, 34, 36, 44	Uses some oral, written and/or artistic/music elements to communicate ideas.	Discusses service/sermon topic with individuals or group; provides/encourages discussions in written text;	Extends discussions outside service times; encourages varied forms of expression (mime, dance, posters etc) with in services; uses varied forms of written discussion material (web, email, newsletters, sermon briefs etc);
Quality Learning Environment					
B1	Explicit quality criteria	5, 6, 7, 22	Christian/church standards clearly stated	Church/Christian standards regularly referenced in service/sermon	Actions required by congregation clearly stated and encouraged;

Appendix 10 cont. – Observation Level Descriptions, page 2

Code	Element	Questions	Minimum Reference	Moderate / Limited Reference	Competent Understanding / Ref
B2	Engagement	8, 24, 25, 26	Congregation participate in service requirements;	Congregation follow service in service book/sheet/Bible; Display attentive behaviour/body language;	Congregation show sustained attentive behaviour throughout service; various individuals/groups active in service; note taking during sermon; encouragement to participate;
B3	High expectations	23, 24	Goals/aims stated and encouraged	Expectation of success conveyed; encouragement question/explore issues.	High expectations of success are conveyed; actions are rewarded/recognised publicly;
B4	Social support	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 18, 19, 23	Atmosphere of positive support for learning; mutual respect;	Atmosphere of care/commitment for congregation; positive personal comments;	Positive support for congregation's self-concept and self-efficacy about learning;
B5	Student's self-regulation	9, 11, 15, 18, 30, 31	Individual actions/ideas encouraged;	Encouragement for personal/small group study;	Encouragement of individual/small group devised/led activities with in service;
B6	Student direction	3, 9, 11, 15, 18, 21, 35	Suggestions for service/sermon topics encouraged;	Suggestions for service/service elements encouraged; volunteers to assist with service elements encouraged;	Congregational members develop and deliver service/service section;
B7	Learning cycle	10	Methods used support learning cycles to a minimum extent;	Memory/recall technique used; follow-up (homework) dispensed/used;	Group learning activities / peer interactions within service; high support for learning cycles;
B8	Curriculum goals	16, 17, 20, 22.3, 38, 39, 40	Learning curriculum used (Church service calendar, sermon series, term/yearly outline etc); focus on learning;	Alignment of activities and resources to curriculum goals; pedagogy/androgyny elements demonstrated;	Demonstration of church/home partnership (family services, newsletters etc); church policies/practices support ministry team (in teaching); external formal study encouraged/supported;
B9	Feedback and support	22.3, 37	Positive feedback provided; methods for feedback provided;	Pedagogy/androgyny scaffolds used when providing feedback;	Appropriate positive feedback provided to groups/individuals regarding learning activities; individuals/groups supported in learning activities;

Appendix 10 cont. – Observation Level Descriptions, page 3

Code	Element	Questions	Minimum Reference	Moderate / Limited Reference	Competent Understanding / Ref
B10	Constructive engagement	18, 21, 22.3, 23, 37	Ministry team/congregation constructively assess activities/learning	Demonstration of positive motivation for assessment;	Demonstration of non-humiliating, teaching adjusted response to assessment results
Significance					
C1	Background knowledge	4, 12	Service/sermon topic and/or service activities reflect congregation's personal lives;	Sermon explicitly builds from congregation's background knowledge;	Service/sermon topics reflect previous learning
C2	Cultural knowledge	4, 12, 13	Cultural background/knowledge acknowledged;	Services cater for individual basic differences/needs;	Services/sermons incorporate cultural knowledge of diverse groupings; services cater for a range of individual differences/needs (eg ethnicity, age, disability, language etc)
C3	Knowledge integration	11, 42	Service/sermon demonstrate basic links between key learning areas;	Service/sermon demonstrates links between topics and key learning areas;	Service/sermon demonstrates links between learning and application;
C4	Inclusivity	12, 19, 20, 27, 29, 36	Individuals from various social/cultural backgrounds attend/encouraged to attend services;	Individuals from various social/cultural backgrounds participate in the delivery of the service;	Cultural/social elements are deliberately incorporated into the services (eg singing, dance, furnishings etc);
C5	Connectedness	14.1 – 14.3, 28, 43, 47	Service/sermon focus on real-life context or problem;	Clear statement that learning matters; opportunities for outreach presented;	Clear statement of the purpose of learning with respect to future/present situation; opportunities for outreach developed and encouraged;
C6	Narrative	14.1 – 14.4	Inclusion of person narratives in to sermons to enhance understanding;	Narrative accounts by individuals encouraged (includes testimonies);	Use of testimonies, videos/DVDs; interviews and other narrative types to enhance understanding;

Questions 48-52 and general comments may be applicable to a wide number of sections depending on the interviewee's actual responses.