Autonomy and Compliance:

The Dilemma facing Christian Schools

Bill Rusin

Covenant Christian School

Belrose, Sydney

wrusin@covenant.nsw.edu.au

Preface

"We cannot expect that students will profit from the incongruous messages we send them when we manage for compliance and teach for exploration and risk-taking."1

When Christian schools look to develop policies and procedures that are implemented and become cultural norms, they will often adopt them from other schools including secular government schools or "church schools without carefully examining the presuppositions and underlying assumptions that often undergird these policies and practices. As Christian educators we need to be serious about the way in which we create policies and practices so that they reflect our worldview and not the worldview of others. The whole of life is worship and the impact of the gospel truths that we say govern our (educational) lives need to be allowed to touch all aspects of our endeavors. Not to do so or "putting issues in the too hard basket" creates a dualism that will, if allowed to go unchecked, cause us to go down the path that many other schools have headed - creating a privileged sub culture that teaches children to be elitist and comfortable. The pressure to become bastions of comfortableness and success driven arises from sections of the second-generation parents enrolling the children at Christian Schools. "Success is very seductive and Christians can understandably think that promotion of our success honours God"2 This assertion is also backed up by Justins (2000) who suggests that the marketplace approach to schooling cheapens the ideals from which the initial Christian Schooling movement (in Australia) derive their focus and passion.

This paper is not meant to be definitive but a discussion starter for educators. Much of the impetus for this paper has been driven by a passion that was ignited since coming to Tyndale Christian School in 1989. My position has been constantly changing over the past 9 years and has been informed by research and by discussions with other staff members. At Tyndale we have decided that in such issues we need to adopt a "ratbag" approach to procedures in order to safeguard the integrity of the philosophical stand that we have taken. As a school community, Tyndale is by no means revolutionary, and the children in our care can be difficult and unmotivated. We have been taking constant but small steps in *what* we feel is a direction that is faithful to our understanding of what scripture tells us *about* children and living in community3.

The relationship between the development of moral autonomy within a Christian understanding of obedience as compared to compliance lays at the heart of the different approaches that schools have to the issue of motivating children if they understand the background of research into motivating children. My feeling is however, that few schools have an understanding of the research, and that if some staff members do, they often lack the political will to do anything about it in the context of the school setting. This is because much of the research suggests that common practice in schools may need to be changed.

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1 From the CPCS Principals Conference 1997. Author unknown.

2 Dickens (2000) p2

3 The concept of community has become an increasingly popular concept in the emerging post modern paradigm. According to Goheen (2000) the concern for Christian is that we are in danger of idolising community as we react to the modernist idolatry the individual.

Introduction

"A few years ago I decided to observing extraordinary classrooms… I was particularly keen to see how they dealt with discipline problems… As it turned out I rarely got to see these teachers work their magic with misbehaving children because it seemed as though the children in their classrooms rarely misbehaved.

During my visits, I've been struck with not only what teachers are doing, and how successful it is, but by what they are not doing.

They are not concentrating on being effective disciplinarians" [4]

Schools have looked for ways in which children can engage in the learning process that is satisfying and encourages them to become lifelong learners. This requires on the part of students an approach that is self-disciplined and autonomous. On the other hand, schools also need to maintain minimum standards of behaviour and order for the proper functioning of the classroom. The desire of the school for the students and the need for order for proper functioning creates a paradoxical tension within the school that needs to be carefully monitored if the school is serious about doing both[5]. It seems that many schools are in danger of producing schools that major on order as a simplistic response to this paradox without looking at the implications on the way in which children meaningfully engage in their own education.

The approach can often result in schools that concentrate on coercive patterns of behaviours and approaches that do maintain order by producing temporary compliance rather that is (often unwittingly) at the expense of the movement towards autonomous decision making. For schools in NSW, especially those in the private sector, the market forces can result in school that respond to the perceived need for "strong discipline" – not for their own children, but for all the other "ratbag" types, so that their children may get on with the task of learning. The resulting structures and approaches that are often used are "Skinnerian". Many well meaning educators have produced program after program that are essentially the same in their presuppositions and end up being variations of the same theme.

Programs such as Assertive Discipline, Cooperative Discipline, 21st Century Discipline, Positive Discipline, Discipline with Dignity and Discipline with Love and Logic are all variations of the same theme. This is not to say that they do not have good things to say about the way in which teachers can produce order in the classroom. It is important to recognise what they can and cannot do. Whilst they can produce classes that are quieter and more controlled, it does not necessarily follow that more learning will take place in such an environment.

Pre-suppositions about the nature of human beings underlie the methodologies that have been adopted by educators. There are two main approaches that can be distilled, but is an over simplification of both.

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[4] Kohn (1996) xi, xii.

[5] This is also seen as an important issue by the authors of Discipline with Dignity who state "There is a delicate balance between meeting the needs of the group by maintaining social order and meeting the unique needs of each student" p20

- Humans have a natural tendency to do good.

- Humans have a natural tendency to do evil. This is known as the doctrine of the "Total Depravity of Man".

The presupposition that humans (and hence children) are inherently good necessarily leads to conclusions that children need little or no interference in order to give them the climate to make good and appropriate decisions. Democratic and Progressive schools take this to logical conclusions that engage the children in a process that encourages them to make decisions along with staff and other members of the community. A.S. Neil's "Summerhill" is a prime example of the type of school that has sought to follow this doctrine.

Kohn, in his book "Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community" also has a view that children are inherently good where he states that "(others) have a decidedly dark view of human nature (that arose from the writings of St Augustine)".

A simplistic view of the doctrine of the total depravity of man leads to conclusions that encourage a strict discipline regime that assumes that children will always choose easy way out or make decisions based on selfish reasons. It is however a stilted view of humanity that needs to be carefully unpacked if it is to reflect a holistic Christian view of humans. It is not the intent, nor the scope of this paper to investigate this area.

The other area of thinking that has impacted strongly on this issue is the very pervasive behaviourist view of humans.

This view is well described by Koestler:

> "For the anthropomorphic view of the rat, America (and the rest of western culture) has substituted a rattomorphic view of man."[6]

This animal research based view of humans has lead to a general approach to the issue of motivation, attitudinal development, and morality that is strongly behaviourist, and been unquestioned by many as they seek to create school environment that is conducive to learning in a safe and encouraging environment. Most parents and teachers presume the importance of a punishment and reward scheme in developing this type of environment. The contention that this paper suggests is that a systemised regime of punishments and rewards (recognition, acknowledgements, etc.) may be harmful to the development of autonomous thinkers and learners and that they are in general overused in many schools.

Christian schools need to be aware of the enormous job that is in front of them as they seek to become places where all aspects of their practice and culture are biblically based, informed and driven. Christian schooling in Australia has not been the subject of many studies, but the major study of "themelic[7]" schools was carried out in 1996 by Long. In his

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[6] Koestler in Kohn (1993) p3.

[7] "Themelic schools are those schools that has arisen in the past 30m years and can best be described as Protestant schools with a relatively low fee structure. This includes CCS and CPCS as well as a number of independent Christian schools and the new emerging "low fee" paying Anglican schools. These schools recently changed their term to "moderate fee" paying schools. From the author's perspective Long has an important point. It seems that this is the danger that Christian schools will always face. If they are to be faithful to their

study. Long was quite harsh in his criticism of these types of schools. He concluded that many of the teachers "were unable to clearly articulate a distinctive nature of Christian schooling but identify such concepts such as competency, care, moral value, excellence and individual attention, as being distinctively Christian"[8]. If this is true, Christian Schools need to be constantly seeking to make their practices, policies and procedures conform to the light of the Gospel. Schools also need to be aware of the danger of simply moving to a place where the decisions are made in view of simplistic pragmatism. "To be (simply) pragmatic is to sell out one's principles and follow the ugly path of utility…Revelation must have a key role in telling us what to do…We need a heavenly perspective of the all-wise God, who sees all and knows all, and it is this that we will find in Scripture"[9].This will ensure that they will not work against the school's stated worldview and culture.

The relationship between developing autonomy[10] and compliant[11] behaviour is often seen as being related or not dealt with as an issue by many schools. Some schools recognize that the two issues are quite different but choose to set up policies that assume that compliant behaviour will result in moral autonomy. This is an approach that is behaviouristic in essence and is perhaps the dominant approach in Christian Schools at this time. This paper is based on the notion that behaviouristic approaches are not the best way of dealing with this very important issue and that many schools need to rethink their way of educating children. They should be encouraged to make decisions that are morally autonomous and based on an understanding of the way in which they should act according to the biblical norms. This paper is prefaced by the idea that children are fully human and that they need to approach all tasks as an act of obedience to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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statements of mission, they need to be on constant guard against this. Professional development time and money must be spent on this area if the school is to remain focused.

[8] Rusin, W.N. (1996).

[9] Payne (1999) pp8,9 He goes on in this article to comment about the problem in Anglicanism (Australian) that matters of order and ceremony ought to be separated from matters of faith and be judged by weight of tradition extending from the practice of reason. This type of argument entrenches practices that are very difficult to budge in church (and school?) life.

[10] Autonomy that is to be encouraged in children is not total autonomy. This concept is anti Christian as it implies an independence from God and that right decisions arise completely from within the student. What is meant by autonomy in this context is encouraging ownership of decision-making processes rather than the abrogation of responsibility to those in authority. The autonomy allows children to make decisions as much as possible within the parameters on the non-negotiable norms of Scripture. Christian schools must be wary of the way in which autonomy is understood. This autonomy is tied to the freedom that we have in Christ. It is not the freedom to do anything we want, but freedom to obey God.

[11] Compliance in itself is not wrong. As Christians we would encourage children to submit to authority and to make their own decision to comply. What is important here is **the ownership of the necessity for compliance**. The ownership of the compliance should be the children's, not the parents or teachers.

The use of coercive or compliance producing tactics are an important part of a successful teacher's repertoire. It needs to be acknowledged that even excellent teachers[12] will use them on occasions. The point of contention for educators is how much use of compliant forming strategies should be used and how deeply their usage should be embedded in the policies and practices of the school. Educational leaders such as principals and deputy principals need to make decisions on how tight they need to be on this type of approach, but the common approach in most western schools is one of avoidance of the issue.

In conversations with both Alfie Kohn and Ed Deci in 1998, they were unaware of many schools that have taken a strong stance on the issue. A total of 4 schools were mentioned by these leaders in the field, one of which was the well known "Summerhill" in England whilst the others were in New York. Summerhill[13] was the brainchild of A.S. Neil whose humanist philosophy is well documented. There seems to be very little information on this most important area of school life from a distinctive Christian worldview. Christian[14] schools in Australia that seem to have taken some sort of strong stance are Carinya Christian School, Tamworth, NSW, Heritage Christian School Port Macquarie, NSW, and the two Tyndale Christian School Campuses. Schools such as Mt Evelyn Christian School in Melbourne Victoria have taken a strong position on the issue of developing autonomous learners which is reflected in the way in which they give their students increasing amounts of educational freedom as they move through the school. In discussions with the school principal in August 1998, it was suggested that this was a high priority in the school and would impact in many areas including the type of staff they would employ. The implication was that otherwise "excellent" teachers who used strong coercive strategies in the classroom would not be suitable for employment. This would be a unique position in the Christian schooling movement in Australia.

Other schools such as Chairo Christian School in Drouin, Victoria have tackled the issue of the negative impact of assessment on the motivation and self-worth of students as they have adopted a model of assessment in their newly formed middle school that is based on portfolio assessment and student led conferencing. They have also taken on board the Autonomous Learner Model[15] A small number of other Christian Schools have looked at the

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[12] Excellent teachers often have the ability to produce compliance very quickly in students. This will often be due to personal power and relationship with children. Fear is also a compliance producing factor. When a teacher with a powerful presence in a classroom majors on using these compliant forming behaviors, relationship suffers.

[13] There is a movement of other schools spawned from the ideas of A.S. Neil called Democratic schools. Most are in the USA and the UK. All have a premise that assumes that children who are left to their own devices will become self-disciplined learners. The phrase that is commonly used is that children are given freedom, not license. This assumption is not acceptable for schools that have a biblical understanding of children, as are others human beings, as being fallen creatures. However, the notion that children are fully human and not humans in the process of becoming is similar to a biblical approach.

[14] See the definition in footnote 1.

[15] Betts. (1996)

issue and as far as I am aware, very little has been done with it. Most schools that would have problems with an approach to this issue for a number of reasons;

1. They are not aware of the research about motivation of students.

2. The schools' leadership is not prepared for the possible changes that the research mandates for school policy and procedures.

3. Schools who are aware of the research dispute the universalism of the results.

4. The extreme position that some schools have taken have been observed and rejected.

5. Most of the schools that have taken a strong position on this area have been clearly and strongly humanist with a belief in the innate goodness of children.

"One of the most thoroughly researched findings in social psychology is that the more you reward someone for doing something, the less interest that person will tend to have in whatever he or she was rewarded to do" 16

There are well over a hundred studies that show that some extrinsic motivators [17] are not merely ineffective in the long haul but counterproductive with respect to the things that concern us most: desire to learn, commitment to good values and so on. Of the research articles examined, 2 articles were found that disagreed with the findings of the overwhelming majority, one being a meta-analysis that was then discounted by other researchers.

This well understood principle of social psychology flies in the face of the much of the policies and procedures that schools adopt when developing policy and procedures to enhance and maintain student motivation.

These arguments are overwhelming (in my view) but they are <u>not</u> the main reason for developing policy that reflects this understanding of the way in which humans behave. The main thrust for developing such policies lay in an understanding of what scripture informs us about the nature of humans and the way in which Christian community should be practised. In order to develop policy that reflects our biblical understanding in these areas, we need to briefly look at the scriptural norms.

A Biblical approach

The way I have used the Bible to get an understanding of a biblical approach to this issue has been by looking at broad biblical themes rather than searching for particular texts. However, Ephesians 6:4 is a verse that speaks of the relationship that parents (and teachers) are to have with their children *"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and nurture of the Lord"*. The main areas of biblical thinking that need to be brought to bear whilst considering how best to deal with this issue are the areas of:

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[16] Kohn (1993)

[17] Positive feedback that is perceived as information (by the recipient) is not in itself destructive and can be seen as constructive. Encouragement - helping people fell acknowledged so that their interest is redoubled is not a bad thing.

- Giftedness

- Relational Christianity

- Theology of the child

- Grace

- Heart direction.

The way in which family is seen as a cooperative unit should be kept in mind as a school seeks to create and implement policy in this area. Schools that see themselves as extensions of the home have an intensified obligation to do this. The main problem with this type of thinking is that in families there are only a few children whilst school classrooms have much larger groups. This is most likely on of the reasons why teachers use "mass manipulative" techniques.

Others may bring different broad biblical themes to the argument and it is important that the discussion in Christian schooling circles continue about this very vital issue as its implications impinge on almost every interaction between student and educator.

Banks[18] stated that there is too often a "credibility gap" between our belief statements and our everyday life. As educators we should be keen for this gap not to exist. It is this context that we must explore our beliefs and worldviews as we seek to serve the Lord in the area of education. Unfortunately there is insufficient time to look at these in great detail but schools need to start from these understandings[19]. The following is a representation of the way in which these areas interact to allow us to move to a biblical model for the way in which we encourage our children.

Illustration 1.
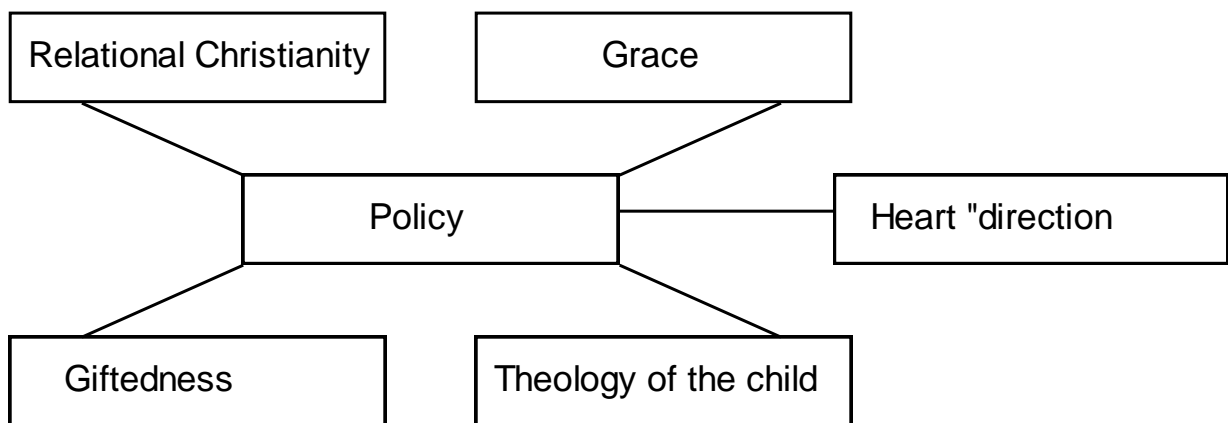
In the section following is a *brief* summary of the main points regarding the broad biblical themes that inform this type of policy:

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[18]Banks (1987). Banks is now recently appointed to the Macquarie Christian Studies Institute in Sydney, Australia.

[19]For a further discussion of this see the article Motivation and Rewards in a Christian School Rusin available from Tyndale Christian School. (1993)

Relational Christianity

The nature of Christians living in community is one that needs to inform our practice if we believe that schools are more like community and family rather than organisation. This has been the way in which many Christian schools have seen themselves and is also the emerging preferred metaphor in the educational community at large[20].

Scripture makes wide use of the analogy of family and body to describe the relationship between people in community. These include;

- 1Thesallonians 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up..."

- Hebrews 3:13a "But encourage one another daily as long as it is called Today"

- Hebrews 10:25b "...but let us encourage one another"

These verses describe the way in which Christians are to encourage one another in a way that is God honoring and profitable to His church. Its emphasis is on cooperation and selflessness, not competition that can be destructive and selfish. In a Christian community gifts are to be used for the benefit of others rather than self and the use of a gift if it is to be seen as an obedient response to the love of Christ for his people. The concept of encouragement is often misunderstood and applied inappropriately in Christian circles. Too often the idea that we need to make people feel good about themselves in order to give them the freedom to deal with the vocation they are called to in the best possible way is seen as what is meant by encouragement. The biblical practice of encouragement refers to the encouragement to go back to the Word of God and to serve Him faithfully rather than to make people feel good about themselves[21].

The question arises about the way in which this should inform our practice at schools:

- How do we encourage all students without the discouragement that can often follow if the encouragement is public and inherently competitive?

- Are the award schemes often used in schools damaging to damaging to the bulk of the students when others are recipients?

- Are these types of schemes effective producing compliant behaviour or does it encourage children to do things without expectation of any immediate tangible reward?

Giftedness

"Try to excel in gifts that build up the church" 1 Cor 14:12.

The main purpose of giftedness is to build up the church and students need to be encouraged to exercise his or her giftedness in this way. Schools need to provide children

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[20] Van Brummelen stated that "Christian schools must deliberately structure their whole program so that students become part of a Christian community" (p12).

[21] Gene Getz wrote an excellent book on this issue. (See references).

with opportunities to use their giftedness for the use of others. Often in schools intellectual prowess and sporting ability are seen as superior gifts and can be seen by students as the measure of worth they are in a school. This is often because these are the easily identifiable gifts in a school are can be seen as the core activities of the school and are the most easily measurable things that occur at a school. They often are what schools choose to "show off" in their promotional literature and brochures. It can be a self perpetuating spiral of expectations and behaviours in schools that may not be in accord with the rhetoric that is found in the policy schools' policy and mission statements. Christian schools need to be aware of the way in which their policies and procedures impact on the way in which schools carry out their mandate.

- Do the emphases that your school places on these gifts cause your children to stumble in this way?

- Does your school emphasize compliance to the detriment of autonomy?

It is important that children acknowledge the author of their giftedness and that children be commended for the use of the gift in the context of community.

Grace

Grace sums up the way in which God deals with His people. Families often operate on grace but are happy to have children dealt with differently at school. Parents will (or should) not hold up one sibling over others simply on the basis of talent. It is the child who is less obviously talented that often requires the most encouragement and acknowledgment in a family. Often schools encourage the more able student to the detriment of the other students. James 2 gives very strong warnings about the practice of favoritism. Kent Hughes in his book "Disciplines of a Godly Man" (p65) warns strongly against showing favoritism in families. It is without question that Christian educators who are parents would be keen to support this (as would many non-Christian parents – especially ones who have lived in countries that have had a history of Judeo-Christian influence). It can be inferred correctly that favoritism is also unacceptable behavior in schools, especially ones that see themselves as extensions of the family or ones that are community rather than organisational in emphasis. It is important for schools to recognize the way in which they see themselves.

This does not mean that all children therefore need to be treated equally (as some school communities seem to translate), but that children need to be treated justly. This has implications in a wide range of school practices including pedagogy and cultural celebrations. Whilst this is not the emphasis of this paper, it is important to make the links and deal with them.

- Does your school operate in a way that implicitly shows favoritism by the way in which children are dealt with at school?

- Are there practices that your school engages in that encourage students with a narrow view of giftedness (a view that emphases academic and sporting prowess)?

Theology of the child.

Children are whole people who are capable of having a relationship with their Creator. Because of their maturity the relationship children can have a different understanding of his or her relationship with God[22]. They, like adults, are God's image bearers and participate in the sinful nature of all humanity. Children are fully human and experience sin, faith, forgiveness and restoration, as can adults. They are not "humans in the making" but rather fully functional but not fully matured beings. Children are gifted and need to develop those gifts in the context of service to the community.

The Nature of the Heart

In his article on the role of the "Religious Heart" Fenema describes the centrality of the concept of the heart in understanding the nature of motivation of humans. The heart is "not only the seat of human emotion or desire, but also the governing centre of a human being"[23]. If this is the case it presents a different understanding of the nature of humans and their motivations. Humans, he argues, along with others authors such as Wolters[24], can be described as having both structure and direction. Whilst the structural nature of humans is essentially good as part of God's good creation, it is the directional side that has been damaged by the Fall. This model of human nature suggests that moral direction of Christians and non-Christians are profoundly different and that this has implications on motivation. The way in which humans are driven by their moral/religious direction needs to be understood if we are to comprehend the nature of the motivational process. "The dynamics of the heart have a profound influence on human motivation and relevance for education"[25].

Motivation

> Motivation is hard like changing the wheel of a car that is going 100 km/hr[26].

There are two schools of thought regarding the way in which children are motivated. They are the ***cognitive approach[27]*** which stress the need of children for autonomy, competence and self actualization and the ***behaviouristic approach*** which relies heavily on the use of rewards and punishment as motivation modifiers. The behaviorist approach is the one that

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[22]For an excellent description of the way in which faith changes with maturity see "Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning" by J. Fowler (1993) Collins Dove, Victoria.

[23] Fenema (1999) p3.

[24] Wolters (1985)

[25] Fenema (1999) p5.

[26] Wheaton, G. (2000)

[27] It is also important to note that the logical conclusion of the cognitive approach is Constructivism which is an excellent tool in understanding the nature of learning, but has relativist presuppositions that need to be guarded against as Christians.

has dominated the approach to how schools have dealt with children. Below is a comparison of the cognitive and behaviourist approaches to learning and learners:

	Behaviourist Theory	**Cognitive Theory**
Motivation	Extrinsic	Intrinsic
Goal	Stimulus response	Knowledge reference
Mechanism	Reinforcement	Construction of understanding
Time frame	Immediate	Long term
Stimulus nature	Sensory	Connections with previous knowledge
Learning • Method • Process • Nature • Outcome	Repetition Linear Retention	Elaboration Organisational Associational Transfer
Rationale	Mastery	Discovery, experience
Context	Lab conditioning	Real life
Learning as	Memorisation	Personal construction
End product	Automaticity	Thought
Instrument strategy	Deductive	Inductive
Learner	Passive receiver	Active processor
Teacher	Teacher centred	Active leader
Productivity	Effective	Efficient

It is this dominance of behaviourist theory that needs to be questioned not only because of its lack of efficacy, but because of the way it can destroy community in the classroom. The assumption made in this paper is that the cognitive model is the better model that fits in with a biblical understanding of humans.

Types of Motivation

Motivation can be thought of in two categories:

- Extrinsic motivation

- Self motivation[28]

> Inspiration without perspiration is a day-dream. Perspiration without inspiration is a nightmare.

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[28]This division of motivational orientations is mine. Most researchers divide motivation into 3 types.

Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation "can be regarded as the self perception that one engages in an activity to obtain an environmental reward"[29]. Extrinsic motivation therefore comes from outside the task and "uses some external contingency to motivate the student"[30]. Extrinsic motivators are those motivators that change the child's environment in either good or bad ways. Types of extrinsic motivators include:

- Fear of punishment[31] (exams, scored assignments etc.)

- Competitive rewards and punishments (book prizes, rankings, class prizes, public tally cards, normative grades etc.)

- Non competitive rewards (certificates of merit, "everyone gets one" awards"[32] stickers[33] etc.).

- Verbal and written praise (non specific and general - not seen as task specific feedback).

- Touches and hugs etc.

- Specific written and verbal feedback.

Some researchers have suggested that there are times where extrinsic motivation is best used, particularly for temporary behavior modification and shallow skill building exercises but that long term and sustained learning took place most efficiently without extrinsic motivation[34]. Fabes et al (1991) found that behavior modification programs which are based on reward / punishment systems are rarely successful at producing lasting change in

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[29]Levine et al (1974)

[30]Taylor (1997)

[31] At the University of Southern Queensland, they have a self help program for students called "Constructive suggestions regarding motivation". In this document it lists fear, grades and academic achievement and high school habits(?) as continuing self defeating behaviour patterns. (http://connect.usq.edu.au/students/q9520838/motivate.html.

[32]Non competitive awards seem to grow out of a dissatisfaction with competitive awards/rewards. Instead of giving out a small number of awards, teachers (and others) chose to give awards to everyone. Teachers try to make sure that all children get something. For an excellent parody on this approach see "Eye on the Prize" in The Good Weekend" Jan 1995 by M. Gleitzman (see the appendix for a copy of this document).

[33] Stickers are seen by the manufacturers to be rewards and motivators; School Merit Stickers P/L in their advertising exclaim <u>"Teachers! reward your students! ... (they) suit every occasion for rewarding and motivating children"</u> in Partners and Teachers, Spring Edition, 1998. In 2000 the same company declares this to be how you motivate children to engage in exemplary behaviour.

[34]Sweet et al (1996)

behavior of children. Fenema suggests that intrinsic motivation is "limited in young children. At the same time extrinsic motivation is strong..."[35]. He does not make a judgement on the moral nature of these motivations and seems to imply that this may not be of significant consequence. This is a different position, if the inference is correct, to that of the author of this paper.

Self Motivation

Self-motivation can be divided into two sub-sets.

- Amotivation
- Intrinsic motivation.

Amotivation[36] is when students "...*do not perceive a link between outcomes and their own actions*"[37]. *This apparent lack of "stimulus"* to do well seems to be a **good predictor of academic achievement in girls and younger students in general**[38]. Amotivation is probably the best description for the way in which teachers would like to see children approach tasks at school. Doing a task without the expectation of a reward, extrinsic or intrinsic seems to best fit the way in which we are urged as Christians to carry out the task of living and working in community.

Whilst the study[39] was conducted in Canada, it used a large number of subjects in the study and there is little reason to suggest that conditions would be different in any other western country.

Intrinsic motivation is a term that has existed for a longer time than amotivation and the literature about intrinsic or self-motivation would have been inclusive of amotivation. Intrinsic motivation "*concerns the enjoyment of school learning and an orientation to master challenging tasks*"[40]. Others have described it as "*the self perception that one engages in an activity because one likes it*"[41]. Some research has suggested that **academic achievement for senior high school students, and in particular boys, is best predicted by the level of intrinsic motivation they display**[42]. The commonality between intrinsic motivation and

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[35] Fenema, J. (1999) p6.

[36] Amotivational syndrome is a medical condition which is involved in describing why some engage in abhorrent behaviour. This is not related to Amotivation as used in educational literature.

[37] Karsenti et al (1996) p9.

[38] Karsenti et al (1995).

[39] ibid

[40] Gottfried et al (1994) p 104.

[41] Levine et al (1974) p 816.

[42] Karsenti et al (1995)

amotivation lay in the avoidance of extrinsic motivators. The difference between them is that intrinsic motivation requires an enjoyment of the task not only the satisfaction of knowing that a job has been well done despite the task itself. Lepper (1988) suggests that when intrinsically motivated, students tend to employ strategies that enable them to process information at a deeper level.

The following diagram represents the desirability of mode of motivation for children.

MOST   **AMOTIVATION**   **DESIRABLE**

INTRINSIC

LEAST   EXTRINSIC   **DESIRABLE**
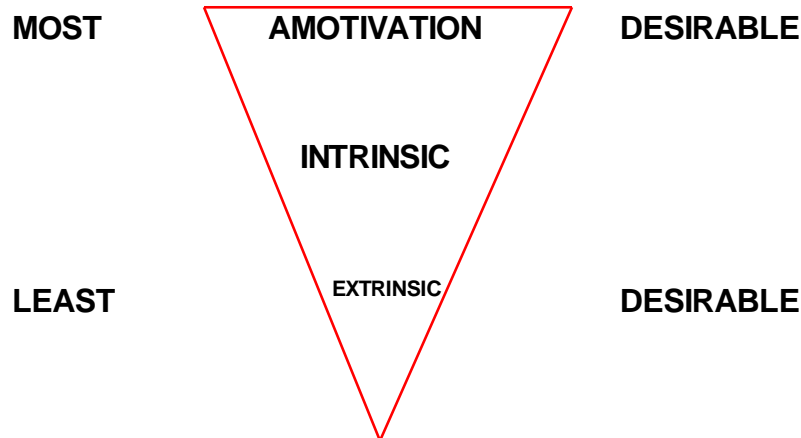
In recent research into middle schooling where students (especially boys) seem to move to a heavier reliance on extrinsic motivators[43] has suggested that any change that a school makes needs to be a macro reform and that "(micro) reforms implemented independently of each other are unlikely to produce a significant rise in student achievement"[44]. A school therefore needs to be careful in examining all its practices and policies if it wishes to be on that increases the possibility of students to engage in educational tasks with more desirable motivations. Various authors have recognized that "schoolwide policies and practices ... stimulate or fill students' hunger for learning... and that schools need to move away from an emphasis on relative ability"[45].
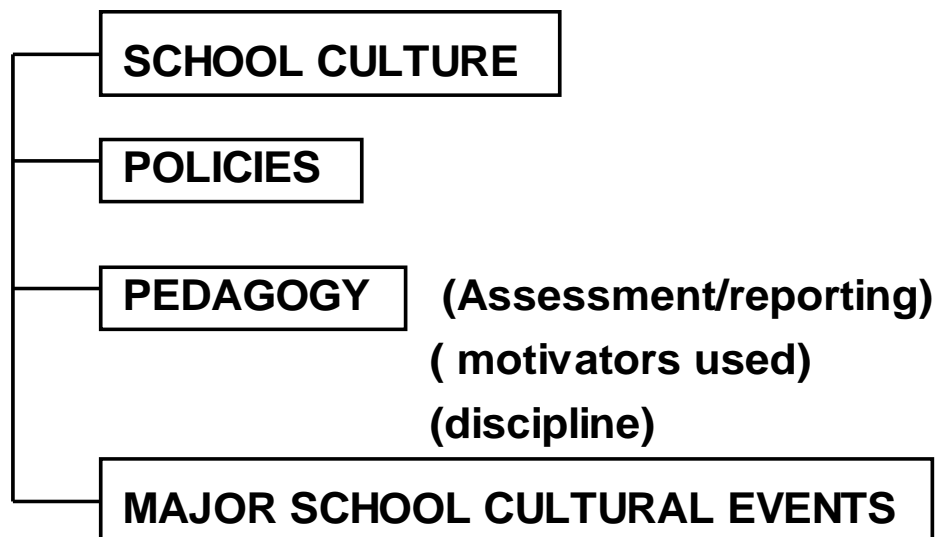
The following diagram is an attempt to show the links between policies and areas in the school that will significantly impact on each other.

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[43] Some would take this to say that we should use extrinsic motivators if this is what gets students to do that which is asked for them. This ignores the basic argument that extrinsic motivation is an inappropriate motivation orientation for Christians. This is an ideal and needs to be striven for, rather than to fall back to the argument that as humans we will always have mixed motivations that reflect our fallen nature as well as our regenerate nature.

[44] Lipsitz et al (1997) p519.

[45] Lumsden (1994)

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┌── SCHOOL CULTURE
│
├── POLICIES
│
├── PEDAGOGY      (Assessment/reporting)
│                 ( motivators used)
│                 (discipline)
│
└── MAJOR SCHOOL CULTURAL EVENTS
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Practices that effect self motivation.

The overwhelming research done in the past 50 years has suggested that the "*more you reward someone for doing something, the less interest that person will have in whatever he or she was rewarded to do*"[46]. In his book "Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans and other bribes" Kohn carefully examines the research and comes to the conclusion that many of the practices that teachers use to motivate children to do well have the opposite effect.

The research also shows the same negative impact of rewards on adults. Practices to minimize damage include:

- **Avoid the use of ability focused goals**. In the early years of schooling teachers tend to use mastery or achievement focused goals. When children feel forced into comparative situations they tend to take less risks and placed into competitive situations. Ability focused tasks "decrease intrapersonal competition and increase interpersonal competition"[47]. The negative impact of competitive structures in classrooms has been known about since the 1930's when researchers found that intra class competition only positively effected effort of the top 2 or 3 students who thought they had a chance of winning - "Generally, the usual classroom incentives call forth a response for maximum exertion from only a few very able pupils while the majority of pupils, knowing that their chances of excelling are limited, fail to be motivated to do their very best"[48].

- **Minimize the use of numerical marks and normative grades**. These types of practices are very common and perhaps the easiest way in giving students feedback about the

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[46]Kohn (1993).

[47]Cunniff (1989)

[48]Zubin (1932)

quality of their work[49]. Whilst this is unavoidable and desirable at times constant use of this type of feedback is comparative. You only need to look at the students after they are handed back test results to see students checking out the pecking order in the class[50].

- **Don't cause disjunctions between the maturity of students and the responsibility given to them**. This is especially the case as students move from primary to high school. Secondary schools are often characterized by "few opportunities to make important decisions, excessive rules and discipline and poor teacher student relationships"[51]. Optimizing the contextual matching of student social and school factors is desirable. This has most significance to the change between primary school and high school.

- **Avoid the use of competitive rewards**. Competitive rewards are those rewards that students need to compete for i.e.; there is a limit to the number of rewards/awards to be handed out. These include "prizes" at the end of the year, small token economies that students can "buy" with good performance in class. **This type of procedure has been widely recognized as being the most detrimental** to achievement and the maintenance of either amotivation and intrinsic motivation (Zubin). Ames[52] identified three types of goal structures: *competitive* in which students try to surpass others, *cooperative*, where children work together for a common goal and *individualistic*, where children try to strive to an absolute standard. She found that competitive goals cause students to avoid failure rather than learn. She recommends the avoidance of these types of goals and an adoption of what she called achievement goals. Achievement or mastery goals as described by Dweck and others (1991) and Como (1992) have shown that these types of goals are much better at maintaining interest in

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[49] Hall states that the "grading system" that we use intentionally or unintentionally communicates what we value in the educational process. Schools that emphasise comparative scores or have little or no attempt to comment on the broader biblical concerns may be giving messages to their community that are antithetical to what the school sates it values and strives to do.

[50] Much research has been done in the area of the use of homogeneous grouping or streaming of students. The <u>overwhelming evidence is that homogeneous groupings are not conducive to the overall academic achievement of the group</u>. This may be in part due to the emphasis on ability and the labeling of students in terms of ability. An increased emphasis on stricter grading practices has also been suggested by some as a negative factor. <u>This has implication for separating children into "gifted and talented classes" and academically selective schools</u>. The moral implications for the rest of the educational community is often not thought about when these types of divisions are made. What is sad is that some Christian schools in the U.S. have taken the logical extension of this approach and have created academically selective schools, excluding children from attending on the basis of ability.

[51] Rusin (1997) p7 quoting Lipsitz et al (1997).

[52] Ames (1992)

the task than competitive or performance goals. It is somewhat surprising then that many schools still have inherently competitive structures built into their school culture. Some argue that the awards and rewards are given as acknowledgment and therefore are not seen as "carrots" to dangle in front of children. Some people working in the area such as Marshall[53] have espoused this type of view. Others such as Kohn and most other researchers see them as being exactly the same, after all, it is the perception of the students that is important, not the intent of the school. Teachers are well aware of the over simplistic view that competition is good for motivation. One could easily imagine the uproar if their school decided to have a publicly recognized "teacher of the year award". Teacher would immediately ask questions such as "What criteria was used?" and "Is it fair to compare teachers from different stages in their career?"

- **Avoid token economies** which have become popular in some schools in recent years but are still seen by students as a reward system. Even though token economies seem to achieve the desired effect researchers who are sympathetic to its use have stated "...the removal of token reinforcements results in decrements in desirable responses and a return to baseline or near baseline levels of performance"[54]. It seems very clear that token economies are to some degree useful, but only as long as the child is on the program. Christian schools should be concerned about producing children who are not dependent on constant inducements but who will do things simply because it is the right thing to do.

- **Don't use non competitive rewards**. Many have responded negatively to the use of competitive rewards and have resorted to the use of non-competitive ones. These include star charts (which may be seen by students as competitive), merit certificates, small prizes etc.

They also have been shown time and time again to have very negative impacts on the way in which children approach tasks. Kohn has quoted many research articles in his attack on the use of reward systems. Other researchers who have come to similar conclusions are McNeil et al (1988), Williams (1995), one of the most fascinating pieces of research was done on a "pizza for books promotion. Students were encouraged to read by being offered a free pizza for every 50 books they read. The intent was to increase the children's willingness to read. The results were exactly the opposite - children's reading habits became worse as they focused on the reward rather than the task. Research with adults have shown time and time again that rewards have a detrimental effect on outcomes (especially long term ones) in anti smoking campaigns, weight loss programs and tasks given to students where risk taking and divergent thinking were required. Proponents of the use of extrinsic rewards have stated that

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[53]Marvin Marshall is a consultant specializing in developing school procedures that do not include reward systems. He can be reached on the Internet at http://home.earthlink.net/-marvmarshall.

[54]Kohn (1993)

because children enjoy receiving rewards then they should be used unless immoral[55] or educationally unhealthy[56]. They also admit that continued use of extrinsic rewards inhibit self-motivation. Megyeri saw that the transition from intrinsic motivation to extrinsic motivation was the reality in middle years of schooling and that teachers need to work in with this shift of motivation orientation.

A further issue is that the rewards and reinforcements that teachers used are often offered in appropriately and conditionally, becoming a contributing factor[57] in the disruptive behaviour of children at school. That students continue in a "cycle of failure" where conditional token on offer to children not only does not help, but is a cause of disruption and lowering of self esteem in some children.

- **Take care with cultural celebrations**. Cultural events such as end of year nights and school assemblies are times when schools undergo rituals and ceremonies that tell the story of the school. They are a chance to re explain the school's values and underlying philosophy. Schools should take great care not to make these events time where some children are held up over others as this can be seen as a competitive reward (remember - it is not the intent that is important but the perception). Schools can often have practices that are simply taken from the experience of the staff. The challenge for school communities is to find practices that are non-reward oriented, but still celebrate highlights of the communal life for the school.

- **Use encouragement rather than praise** even though it is often seen as a very important aspect of a teacher's relationship with a child. *It is often confused with encouragement*. Unlike encouragement, praise[58] causes students to become dependant on the external source(s) of praise where encouragement seeks to internalise the motivation. It is often seen to be that which is lacking in a familial relationship that is cold and non-communicative. What is lacking is not praise, but

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[55] The use of awards can cogently be argued if the position taken is that children DERSERVE to receive praise. If the Christian position is that God is the one who deserves praise and that even our giftedness originates from Him, then the argument that God receives the "reflected" praise via the "recognition" of the child is at best tenuous. The use of praise as explored by Carson in his book "A Call to Spiritual Reformation" is an excellent approach, though his use of the term "praise" is questionable. In this book Carson talks about referring (and always acknowledging) God's authorship of one's giftedness as being the appropriate way of public "recognition". That is, God is being praised, not the person. This, he asserts, is encourages a person to continue using their giftedness.

[56] Megyeri (1992) It is both the issue of morality and efficacy that the author would differ with Megyeri.

[57] Kauffman (1998)

[58] The difference between praise and encouragement is that praise is essentially backward looking whilst encouragement is forward looking. Some make the assumption that in order to encourage, one must praise. This is clearly not the case. Encouragement can take many forms, and the efficacy of praise in engendering good responses from children is questionable.

encouragement. Children thrive on constant and frequent encouragement rather than praise. Praise (which is simply to make a child feel good) has been shown to have a <u>negative</u> correlation with performance on a task[59]. Studies have shown that children who have experienced praise (the exogenous group) immediately before a task have performed worse on the task than a group that received no teacher input at all (the endogenous group). The students in the exogenous group seemed to be put off the task by the praise received. Rowe (1974) found that praise lowered students' confidence in their answers in verbal responses and lowered the frequency of responses whilst Meyer (1981) found that praise could even reduce the effort of the most able students. In using praise as a motivator, Esler, (1983) found that at best, when positive correlations were detected, they were too small to be significant.

- **Monitor parental behaviors which can be detrimental to the educational task**. Studies show that if parents have high levels of interference and gave rewards or held them back depending on the level of performance displayed low levels of academic performance and high dependence on rewards at school,[60] and other studies showed that parental encouragement of task endogeny was strongly related to the way in which children adopted self motivated positions to work[61]. Marshall gives some directions to parents and recognizes the importance of involving them in the motivation of children.

- **Evaluate assessment and reporting regimes[62].** The assessment and reporting regimes are often the tail that wag the dog at schools. Reports[63] that encourage competition by comparative descriptors not only destroy the self-esteem of the struggling students, they also **demotivate** them rather than is intended, spur them to greater heights.

What About Compliance?

Compliance is necessary for the proper functioning of a classroom. Children need to be aware that they are in community and that they have responsibilities to others in the room including the teacher. Unlike secular humanists, Christians see children (and adults) as sinful being who, by their very nature, are prone to sinful actions and attitudes. Teachers therefore need to be able to ensure as far as possible that students comply with normal classroom expectations. Compliance can come about in a number of ways:

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[59]Brophy (1981)

[60]Ginsburg et al (1993)

[61]Gottfried et al (1994)

[62] Rusin (1998)

[63] The move towards students being involved in the process of reflecting on their own learning is one that is very useful in encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning. Student/teacher/parent conferences are a useful tool to this end. It is not the scope of this paper to examine this issue.

- It can be achieved by the use of external contingencies (such as punishments and rewards).
- It can be achieved by children having a sense of moral autonomy[64].

Kohlberg's Moral development theory suggests that there is a development from moral development that moves from understanding of right and wrong based on punishment and reward to moral autonomy. Behaviourist approaches imply that moral autonomy will be attained if children are given enough punishments and rewards at appropriate times. Much of the research has strongly indicated that this is not the case. If children are exposed to a regime of rigid rewards and punishments as a way of choosing right decisions, the impact is that it can stifle the growth of moral autonomy.

Conclusion

The issue of motivating children and bringing a Christian perspective to bear upon the way in which Christian schools approach this is one that has been contentious for some schools for many years whilst others have not dealt with the issue in any significant way. It is the call of Christian schools to ensure that they have all facets of schooling life submitted to the piercing light of the Gospel. All policies and procedures that a school has implemented need to be informed by the worldview that the school espouses or it is only a worldview in name only. All schools will be on a journey of discovery as staff and parents seek to be faithful to the vision that drives the school.

Schools must not put things into the "too hard basket" and ignore big issues they must as a community face them head on. Christian schools are in a unique situation in that they have people involved in the school with a common purpose if not a common vision. It is critical that the school leaders constantly refer to that vision and to examine all practices that the school engages in and to be bold in changing if and when necessary.

Most Christian schools would hold to the common concepts that are the underlying principles behind this paper. The challenge for schools is to look at the conventional wisdom and these principles and to ensure that the solution that has been reached does not compromise that which the school wishes to do.

The position implied in this paper is one that is dynamic and will continue to evolve as new information comes to hand. It is the position of the author that unless a school takes a radical approach to the task of educating children and be willing to makes big changes (if necessary) then any small changes will have little effect. Individual teachers cannot work in isolation in a school and will have great problems in maintaining an approach consistent with the ideas expressed in this paper if they are in a school that works against them in its very essence.

Schools are about educating children for life. Christian schools should give children opportunities to grow and mature and to take on attitudes that are God honoring. Doing

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[64] Great care must be taken in using a concept such as moral autonomy. The sense in which it is being used here is where students engage in behaviours because they know that they are right and proper. The danger of moving into a relativist view of good and evil needs to be guarded against in working with this concept.

things because they are the "right thing" to do is one of those attitudes that we expect our children to take on. We must ensure that what we do does not impede them from doing so. Christian schools should also be places that are "a little foretaste of heaven" where children can live and learn in ways that fit the Christian model of community.

The relationship between moral autonomy and compliance needs to be constantly reassessed so that schools do not encourage either extreme:

- Children whose sense of moral autonomy dips into self righteous indignation to the detriment of the good of the classroom or;

- Children who do not question the status quo and become unthinking consumers of adult decisions and cultural norms.

As children mature they should be given more opportunities to display autonomous decision-making, given more freedom to fail in a safe environment and to own the decisions that they do make. This does not mean that teachers should not use compliant engendering techniques, but that they should be used prudently and sparingly. Schools should look carefully at the goals that they have for the education of the students in their care. Do schools wish to have students that are compliant more than they want students who are capable of making decisions based upon their own understanding of what is right and wrong?

Attitudinal change is much more difficult than behavioural change (producing compliance). Children will come from a variety of background and predispositions to learning. Our job is to create situations in which the children can grow and flourish, to make mistakes and to learn by them, and to have opportunities to serve one another and in doing so serve the Lord with gladness. It is easy to take the route of behavior modification and instant gratification of the wishes of the teacher – this is often necessary and expedient in a classroom situation. It is the balance between compliance forming policies and practices and policies and practices that enhance the moral autonomy of children and give them the most opportunities to take on self motivated approaches to the tasks set at school (and in their wider lives) that needs to be carefully examined. Too often the understanding that comes from research in education that challenges basic structures and practices in schools are dismissed by school leaders as being irrelevant. They are in great danger of "throwing the baby out with the bath water". By ignoring research, they may well be selling short the children in their care.

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