BOOK REVIEWS

Developing a faith-based education: A teacher's manual

Barbara Fisher (2010). Terrigal, NSW: David Barlow Publishing.

Barry Hill

Director of Education, South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Wahroonga, NSW

Barbara Fisher, in this work written with three co-authors, states in the introduction that it is a textbook "oriented towards those engaged in nurturing children's spirituality and faith formation from ages 0–12."

In looking at the introduction and table of contents, the reviewer wondered how much the book was meant to reach beyond Biblical Studies. A reading of the book however gave the feeling that there was much that could apply beyond Bible teaching to all teaching.

The scope of the book

The book divides into three sections. The first describes the 21st Century teacher's worldview. Then Section 2 presents information for teachers preparing to teach a faith-based education. This is really a set of six curriculum elements to consider when teaching faith. With the exception of Chapter 12 the third section on activating faith-based education seems directed at the preparation and delivery of Biblical Studies lessons. The "4 H" framework introduced in Chapter 10 of this section is effective.

The chapter sequence is logical and the content is sufficiently comprehensive to be helpful to undergraduate and other teachers. The structure works well overall but there could be more clarity about the divide between Sections 2 and 3. The difference seems to be that while both focus on attitudes and skills necessary to make effective faith-based teachers, Section 3 deals more with actual lessons.

One anomaly occurs in Section1, *The 21st Century Faith-based Teacher*. The section seems misnamed because its single chapter *Worldviews and 21st Century Teachers* deals much more with the nature of worldviews than teachers. However this chapter does effectively summarise core elements of worldviews and provides a good framework for examining them.

Theoretical model

This is a book about faith-based teaching. While faith itself is an underlying theme, faith is a complex concept, so there is need for a theoretical framework to tie the book's conceptual ends together. The author could have used a stronger theoretical framework for the book, some model involving faith. A possible framework for this task could be the nature of faith itself because, among other things, faith is actually comprised of values, character, worldview, and spirituality, and further is a life-orientation.

There is a good distinction between three of the book's critical elements, namely faith, spirituality and character, but this distinction could go further still. Given its importance, the concept of faith could be explored in more detail. Elsewhere some terms such as "salvation" could be defined more.

Structure

The book is structured well. Its format is practical and mindful of teacher needs. Each chapter starts with an outline and overview. Then interspersed throughout the text are focus discussion questions, scenarios to consider, tables to illustrate key concepts and summary questions at the end of the chapter. This approach means that practical suggestions and questions assist student readers before they get too bogged down in theory overload.

Content

Overall the author has selected content judiciously. While drawing on theory, chapters are practical and teacher-friendly. Each chapter of the book pursues key objectives and includes a useful set of content areas whose scope is sufficient to give undergraduates and all teachers considerable help in teaching faith.

Given the complexity of teaching faith, there could be more material in some sections. For example there would be a benefit gained from a more extensive exploration of teaching values, character development and social/emotional learning. Also a more practical 'how to' section on teaching worldviews could have capitalised on the good foundation in Chapter 1. The 'wish

list' above serves to illustrate the difficulties faced in writing a complex book and the reviewer acknowledges that any book has limits on content.

It is commendable to see the author address assessment in the faith domain. Chapter 11 effectively explores practical ways to assess the learning of faith. While this breaks some new ground it could still go further. For example there is a cognitive component of the affective valuing domain that could be pursued. Assessment tasks can be set on criteria for making judgments, on value ranking priorities, on reasons for making choices, on evaluating moral authorities, and so on.

Style

The writing style is clear, direct and succinct. The teaching of faith is complex and the book does well in summarising many key concepts and themes and simplifying a lot of theory. Further, the reader does not perceive any significant stylistic disparity between chapters and this fact is commendable considering there are four authors.

Every book strikes a compromise between its length and selection of content. Although this book does well with linkage overall, occasionally there could be more introductory explanation of how a chapter or a section within a chapter, is structured and linked. One example is on pages 102–3. The four elements of Figure 7.3 are briefly introduced on page 102, followed by a list of the strengths of teaching Biblical Studies according to faith, and then without further comment the list of the four elements. There could have been more explanation of the model, more linkage between the two elements on pages 102–3 and with the related planning overview wheel on page 110.

Conclusion

In summary, this manual presents many creative suggestions for teaching faith, so that any Christian teacher will find plenty to assist his/her teaching. The book fills an important niche in the educational textbook genre and is something the world of Christian teacher education has been awaiting for some time. The manual makes a valuable contribution to faith-based education in teacher education courses and an additional resource for professional development activities for practicing teachers in Christian schools. TEACH

What's wrong with Anzac? The militarisation of Australian history

Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds (Eds.). (2010). Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.

Zombie myths of Australian military history

Craig Stockings (Ed.). (2010). Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.

Daniel Reynaud

Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Avondale College, NSW

Two books with overlapping themes, both from the University of New South Wales Press, offer teachers of Australian history a refreshingly sound corrective look at aspects of the Anzac legend. Lake and Reynolds' work explores the development of the Anzac myth, exploring parallel histories that have not been mythologised and questioning the embroidering of the Anzac story. The four main authors, highly respected historians, are particularly severe on the politicisation of the Anzac legacy and the entrenchment of a military story as the key to the development and understanding of the national ethos.

In Stockings' volume, ten noted military historians tackle ten Australian military myths that will not die, from the frontier wars of colonial Australia, through Breaker Morant, Gallipoli, *HMAS Sydney* and on to more recent wars such as Vietnam and East Timor. The facts they offer are contrasted with popular beliefs that assume the status of history . For example, they address issues such as Breaker's actual status and behaviour, the strategic unimportance of the much-hyped Kokoda campaign of World War Two, and that Vietnam was arguably a very necessary war for Australia, and not merely one fought because of the Americans.

Both books are powerful correctives to the runaway Anzac legend that is consolidating its hold as the unquestioned 'truth' on which all other aspects of Australian nationalism are founded. Christian teachers in particular should welcome perspectives that question Australia's

new secular religion of Anzac. The books allow students to examine aspects of historiography, as required by the various national and state history syllabi. Since the foundation of a Christian education is to challenge narrow and fallacious thinking, these texts are highly recommended and will prove useful in the school library, as teachers broaden the sympathies and understandings of their students. TEACH

Finding David

Brad Watson (2009). Warburton, Vic: Signs Publishing Company.

Karen Collum

Teacher and children's book author, Brisbane, Qld

For high school student, David, life has become a series of changes. His mum no longer lives in the family home—for reasons initially undisclosed—the rest of the family has had to move to a run-down, shabby house in another town, and David and his sister, Jess, have had to change schools. To make matters worse, half of David's belongings are yet to arrive at the new house, including his beloved surfboard.

The story begins with David facing the daunting first day at his new school. Things don't go well as he lands in dog poo on the bottom of a stack of boys in a random game called "Deathball" and then he gets his first English assignment: presenting a three-minute talk about his family. This is David's worst nightmare, not because he doesn't like public speaking but because he's terrified someone will find out the truth about his mum.

The novel continues with an exploration of family dynamics between David, his father and sister and illustrates a family under pressure. The tension is balanced as David develops strong friendships with James and Sai, two boys from school. Surfing and mountain-bike riding, a good dose of humour and an ongoing theme of adolescent male competitiveness provide a realistic and humorous backdrop for an otherwise serious story. Elements of faith are woven into the narrative but in a subtle and often indirect manner.

As David tries to navigate his way through his new life, he also gets the opportunity to be involved with the school's mentoring program for boys, RiskMEN—Resilience, Integrity, Self-discipline, Knowledge Mentoring. Run by one of the most popular male teachers at the school, RiskMEN provides a therapeutic edge to the novel and illustrates the positive potential of a group of young men working together and the importance of a 'significant other' adult in children's lives, in this case, teacher Mr Jones. Through RiskMEN, David is challenged to step up and deal with his circumstances no matter how frightening they may be. He sets himself the goal of improving his relationship with his parents.

Throughout the book, snippets of information about David's mum are given until finally her secret is revealed: mum is in a psychiatric hospital after a nervous breakdown. To reconnect with his parents, David must first confront his own fear, anger, hurt and issues of faith.

Finding David is written in accessible, modern language and provides a realistic but optimistic view into the inner world of teenage boys. It particularly lends itself to use in the personal development curriculum. Goal-setting, mentoring, risk-taking behaviour and mental illness are all avenues that could be explored after reading the text. It would also provide a wonderful springboard into an exploration of services in the local community for people suffering from or living with someone who suffers from mental illness. Parents may also gain insight into the mind of teenage boys through the novel.

Complete with genuinely funny humour, believable dialogue and a solid storyline, *Finding David* is an excellent read. Never clichéd, it presents a Christian world view through contemporary eyes and doesn't back away from the hard questions. With surfing and mountain bike riding as key components and just a hint of romance, *Finding David* will appeal particularly to teenage boys in grades 8–10. The pace is fast, the characters engaging and the writing tight. Watson combines skilful storytelling with top-quality prose, which puts *Finding David* among my favourite contemporary Christian novels for young people. TEACH